

SHIREEN QUDOSI
Senior Contributor, Counterjihad.com

House Homeland Security Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency
September 22, 2016

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Shireen Qudosi. I am a Muslim Reformer. I am a conservative and a feminist. I am an immigrant of Pakistani and Afghan heritage. I have traveled through Iran and Turkey, and was a refugee in Germany before I was lucky enough to become an American citizen. The experiences which shape my identity puts me in a unique position from which to view the larger war against radical Islam. My testimony will largely elaborate on the following points:

- Muslim Reform acknowledges that Islam must change in order to be compatible with life in our free society.
- Islamism is neither a harmless alternative lifestyle nor a collection of harmless beliefs; it is a political system with definable ideas, an intellectual history and, alarmingly, a relatively robust base of support within the United States.
- A government and civil society emphasis on combatting “Islamophobia” actually prevents any hope at Muslim Reform, because it protects Islam from criticism from non-Muslims and Muslims alike. It must be stopped.

As a Muslim Reformer, I am committed to reform within Islam. As a mainstream doctrinal system of law and belief, Islam is in desperate need of change in order to make peace with the values we expect from life in a 21st Century liberal democracy or free society.

Fifteen years ago, the need for change within Islam would have been an unremarkable and obvious observation recognized by Republicans and Democrats. One could hear the truth of this message both on Fox News and on MSNBC, from Muslim and non-Muslim voices alike.

Today, however, even uttering this truth is uncomfortable and politically incorrect, in elite media, think tanks, NGOs—and especially within the capitals of Western nations. I believe this unwillingness to speak the truth on the part of those who are responsible for leading and keeping us secure is intimately tied to the current strategic incoherence of what was once called the War on Terror.

That strategic incoherence takes the form of what has, I believe, been aptly described by former federal prosecutor Andrew McCarthy as “Willful Blindness” to the definable characteristics of the jihad around us.¹ The core of military strategy, Sun Tzu tells us, is know your enemy and to know yourself. It is impossible to defeat what you do not, first, understand.

For instance, on December 2, 2015, the San Bernardino shootings occurred.² One of the shooters, an immigrant from Pakistan named Tashfeen Malik, passed at least three security screenings to be admitted, then helped murder 14 Americans.³ How could this happen? Because the public servants trying to screen out “violent extremists” are barred *by law* to look for Islamists or evidence of political commitment masquerading as religious belief.

In addition to leaving us vulnerable to physical attack, “Willful Blindness” has taken an important cognitive toll, as well. For example, President Bush and members of his administration famously tried to extend a hand of friendship to Muslims after 9/11, by saying, “Islam is peace.”⁴ I am certain they believed it and said it in good faith—as do many Muslims who also say the same today.

Specifically, with regards to Islam, however, the truth is more complicated. The first twelve years of Mohammed’s prophethood in Arabia was, indeed, suffused with a message of peace. What followed the Prophet’s transition to political and military leader, though, was predominantly the establishment and maintenance of a Muslim nation through force and domination. Islamic scholars refer to these distinct phases—delineated by verses in the Qur’an—as either belonging to the Mecca or Medina periods, respectively. That legacy of violence and domination continued in the years after the prophet’s death through the establishment of a Caliphate.

Reformers and others can contextualize this ugly history, recasting and rechanneling its lessons for the Muslims of today. But by proclaiming that, simply, “Islam is peace,” we are distorting the story. Worse, we are ignoring great bulk of Islamic law dealing with relations between the Muslim community and its non-Muslim neighbors which emerged during the Medina period. You will find these verses in the Qur’an, which many Muslims consider the uncreated word of God:

1 Andrew C. McCarthy, *Willful Blindness: A Memoir of the Jihad*. Encounter Books (2008) <https://www.amazon.com/Willful-Blindness-Andrew-C-Mccarthy/dp/1594032130>

2 “San Bernardino shooting updates,” *LA Times*. December 9, 2015. <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-san-bernardino-shooting-live-updates-htmlstory.html>

3 “US Visa U.S. Visa Process Missed San Bernardino Wife’s Online Zealotry,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/13/us/san-bernardino-attacks-us-visa-process-tashfeen-maliks-remarks-on-social-media-about-jihad-were-missed.html?_r=0

4 “Islam is Peace,” Says President: Remarks by the President at Islamic Center of Washington, D.C.” <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010917-11.html> Video at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_ZoroJdVnA

- “Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers, for that they joined companions with Allah, for which He had sent no authority.” (Q 3:151)
- “I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them” (Q 8:12)

These are among the verses that, underscored through scholarship codified into Islamic law or Sharia, form the doctrine justifying and encouraging every jihadi attack today.

A more correct way to put it would be, “Islam is peace *and* war.” Censoring the word “war” does nothing to alter what Islam is or isn’t. Those who do this try to press the truth into a narrative they, understandably, are more comfortable facing. Refusing to acknowledge the obvious, though, only undercuts people like me who are working at real, doctrinal reform.

President Obama and members of his administration have taken the mistaken mantra that “Islam is peace” several steps forward in the same, misguided direction. Not only do they refuse to utter the words, “Islamic terrorism,” they argue that even speaking those words is counterproductive and damaging to our efforts to combat it.⁵

They have so thoroughly disassociated cause and effect that they view acts of violent terrorism (now called the meaningless euphemism, “extremism”) as completely separate both from the world’s Muslim population and the doctrines of Islamic religious law.

Instead, the lens through which the President and others see this conflict playing out, especially within the United States and its Muslim population, is as a conflict between races and identities or between majority and minority individuals and communities rather than one between competing political systems. Perhaps this is to be expected in the context of America’s history on recent civil rights battlegrounds; it is, in this case, incorrect.

The obsession with stamping out the public’s “Islamophobia” in the mold of previous anti-racism campaigns moves Islam from a religion into a racial or biological context. Islam is a religion—that is, it is merely set of concepts and beliefs. As such, ideas, concepts and beliefs do not have human rights; individuals do.

The most targeted and slandered voices today under “Islamophobia” are those who take aim at those ideas, not people. By calling criticism of the tenants of Islam or its doctrines “Islamophobic” or “hateful” speech, we are placing a political system beyond the reach of criticism—and ultimately, any analysis at all, in fear of causing offense.

⁵ “Why Won’t Obama Say Radical Islam?” NBC News, June 13, 2016. <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/orlando-nightclub-massacre/why-won-t-obama-say-radical-islam-n591196>

This isn't theoretical; the censorship of threat-focused training materials for law enforcement and the intelligence community is something that happened under the Obama administration. At the urging of Islamists groups beginning in 2009, the Departments of Justice, Defense, Homeland Security and the Central Intelligence Agency came under attack for so-called "Islamophobic" analysis that dealt with the enemy threat doctrine in general—and Islamic law and the Muslim Brotherhood in particular. ⁶Eventually, these efforts proved successful, as the agencies purged training materials, cancelled lectures, fired personnel and essentially stopped teaching who the enemy is. ⁷

The doctrines of Islam are not a race or a protected class; they are not human beings with rights and feelings. Political systems, like opinions, must be questioned. They must be lampooned and mocked and derided—not because they are all deserving of such treatment, but because ideas that we are not permitted to attack are the ideas that control us.

It's neither racist nor bigoted to say that Islamism exists, and that it is both horrific and a threat to our way of life. It is no more deserving of respect than Communism or Nazism, or any other idea or belief system in history – all of which have gone through rigorous scrutiny. Islam as it has evolved to a 21st Century is a political ideology that must be studied, understood and defeated. While previous generations defeated these totalitarianisms, our leaders are now standing in their own way, seemingly paralyzed, avoiding the task ahead of them.

Many who accuse others of "Islamophobia" believe they're doing good, protecting a vulnerable minority from a majority culture they are suspicious of. What they actually do is two very dangerous things: (a) promote the idea that the only legitimate expression of Islam is Islamism, and (b) ratify the Islamists' hold on the Muslim community through the organizations it legitimizes through outreach.

First, when criticism or analysis of Islam's doctrines are not permitted lest the critic be accused of "Islamophobia" or "hate speech," it becomes impossible for Muslim Reform to succeed. The version of Islam embraced by today's Islamic authorities is undemocratic and totalitarian. It remains protected only because it masquerades as religion, when it is, rather, a tyrannical, political parasite feeding off a religion.

Islamism is a political philosophy with its own intellectual and religious history. In addition, of course, to Islamic law and doctrine, in both theory and practice Islamism owes a debt to various modern conceptions of Western statism. Because of the totalitarian nature of Islamic law, it has occasionally intertwined and cross-pollinated with fascism, socialism and communism. ⁸ It is

⁶ "Lawmaker Questions FBI Materials Purge," Investigative Project on Terrorism, May 4, 2012. <http://www.investigativeproject.org/3566/lawmaker-questions-fbi-materials-purge>

⁷ "Cruz chews out Johnson over DHS 'purge' of 'Islam' references in terror reports," Washington Times, June 30, 2016. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/jun/30/ted-cruz-chews-out-jeh-johnson-over-dhs-purge-of-j/>

⁸ "How Islam got political: Founding fathers," BBC News, November 10, 2005. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4424208.stm

important to note that Islamism has not mixed—and, in fact, does not mix—with a tradition of liberty or freedom.

In the modern era, Islamism is a political movement that works to compete explicitly with our conception of Enlightenment liberal democracy in order to advance the role of Islam as an explicit governing system. It has its own political philosophy which is necessarily at odds with the Rights and Freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and its Amendments.

While I am a Muslim, I reject Islamism because I embrace our country's Constitution, and the Rights and Freedoms it explicitly protects. A reformed Islam can coexist quite comfortably within this Constitutional framework; Islamism, on the other hand, is in direct conflict. Because of these views, the Obama administration has never included me in a meeting. And yet the thousands of Muslim Reformers still waiting to emerge are the only truthful allies America has in this fight.

Defeating the global scourge of Islamism is going to require breaking the political ideology, and also taking on the theology. Tackling the theology through which Islam is understood is necessary to push past second-hand sources—such as the infallibility of the Qur'an and its Messenger. This is where Muslim Reformers—rather than those who would claim a meaningless descriptor of simply “moderate Muslims”—have our work cut out for us.

Muslim Reformers are staring up at the immense wave of Islamism about to crash to shore. Because the climate is hostile to us, we need all the help we can get. We must activate networks of truly open-minded Muslims and create a platform to amplify their voices. Presently change agents continue to work with minimal resources, near zero funding, and face a combative pro-censorship environment.

Reformers must work to reinitiate a tradition of philosophical questioning that has been lost to Islam. Islam did not arrive as a static faith; even the Prophet's core message changed substantially, leading to the abrogation of key doctrines even during his lifetime. Post-Muhammad, there were two hundred years of scholarly devotion to understanding the faith. However, this spirit of inquiry that advanced the faith and the ability to re-contextualize long-established doctrines was lost. Muslim Reformers and their allies have successfully reinitiated a spirit of inquiry.

Unfortunately, however, virtually every major Muslim group in America is working against the Reform project. They are working against me, as a Muslim Reformer, as I try to bring Islam into modernity. And, for this reason, they are working against you as well.

Recently, Facebook shut me down for speaking out on reform. Islamists in the United States attack me for exposing them and defending truth-tellers.⁹ At the same time, Islamist front groups

⁹ “Facebook Banned Me for Criticizing Islamists, But I Got the Last Laugh,” Shireen Qudosi, Counterjihad.com, September 2, 2016. <http://counterjihad.com/facebook-banned-criticizing-islamists-got-last-laugh>

with ties to both terror and sedition enjoy privileged status in the media, the White House and before in Congress.

What does it say to Muslim Reformers when the Secretary of Homeland Security attends the convention of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), a group whose Fiqh Council members have issued fatwas (rulings of Islamic law) that condone “seeking martyrdom” by attacking U.S. military personnel, support the murder of homosexuals, and oppose and condemn Muslims who “befriend” non-Muslims?¹⁰

What message does it send when the President gives a speech from a mosque where women are forced into separate and unequal spaces¹¹ and whose prayer leader was part of an organization designated for funding terrorism?¹²

Or when the Department of Justice meets with groups like CAIR, which was the Justice department itself has said was founded as a conspiracy to support Hamas, they are offering an implicit support for a group which has labeled Muslim Reformers as “Islamophobes,” opening them up to accusations of blasphemy, apostasy, and even death threats?¹³

America isn’t simply a physical space; it is a set of shared ideals that are codified into law and custom. Even in a highly partisan political climate, to function fairly and comfortably in the United States, there is an unspoken social contract. The presence of citizens with Islamist ideas within a polity has consequences for citizens of a free society.

In order to get a clearer picture of the danger posed by Islamism, what follows are some examples of values or principles on which we, as Americans, should be able to agree, and the Islamist doctrines that could come into conflict with each.

You must believe that the Constitution is the supreme law of the land, not that:

- It’s wrong to obey laws or help law enforcement officers if that might lead to negative consequences for you or someone else belonging to your religion (Reliance of the Traveler/’Umdat al-Salik, Book R, Holding One’s Tongue, Section r7.0, Giving Directions to Someone Who Wants To Do Wrong, p. 743-44);

¹⁰ “Fiqh Council of North America,” Muslim Brotherhood Unmasked. <http://www.brotherhoodunmasked.net/organizations-connected-to-the-muslim-brotherhood/fcna>

¹¹ “Obama’s mosque visit demonstrates tacit acceptance of a form of gender apartheid,” New York Times, February 3, 2016. <http://nytlive.nytimes.com/womenintheworld/2016/02/03/obamas-mosque-visit-demonstrates-tacit-acceptance-of-a-form-of-gender-apartheid>

¹² “Islamic American Relief Agency, Long Accused of Terror Finance, Pleads Guilty on Sanctions Violations,” Counterjihad.com, July 26, 2016 <http://counterjihad.com/islamic-american-relief-agency-long-accused-terror-finance-pleads-guilty-sanctions-violations>

¹³ “CAIR’s ‘Islamophobia’ List Is a ‘Hit List,’ Say Critics,” Breitbart, June 23, 2016. <http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2016/06/23/cair-islamophobia-hitlist/>

- Laws passed by an elected Congress or a parliament are, by their very nature, illegal and that only laws revealed by the deity of your religion are allowed (Q 8:39); or that
- Any government established by laws and rules other than the ones allowed in your religion should be overthrown by force or subversion and replaced with one that only allows your religion (Q 8:39; Q 9:5; Q 9:29).

You must believe in freedom of religion, not that:

- Beheading [or otherwise harming] those who do not believe as you do is what God wants (Q 47:4);
- Jews are an inferior people who should be denigrated and demeaned and not treated equally in court (Q 2:65, Q 5:60, Q 7:166);
- Anyone outside of your religion is legally forbidden from building or repairing a house of worship (Reliance of the Traveler/'Umdat al-Salik, Book O, Justice, Section o11.0, Non-Muslim Subjects of the Islamic State (*Ahl al-Dhimma*), p. 607-9) (Pact of Umar);
- Verbal or written criticism of your religious beliefs should be criminalized, possibly even by the death penalty (Reliance of the Traveler/*Umdat al-Salik*, Book R, Holding One's Tongue, Section r2.0, Slander, p. 730; Q 49:12; Q 104.1; Q 68:11);
- Deciding to leave the religion of your family should be a death penalty crime (Q 16:106); or that
- Offensive warfare to force those who don't accept your religion to submit to it is not only permissible but obligatory before God (Reliance of the Traveler/'*Umdat al-Salik*, Book O, Justice, Section 01.2, p. 584; Book O, Justice, Section o9.0, Jihad, p. 599, Q 8:39).

You must oppose cruel and unusual punishments, not believe that:

- Chopping off hands and/or feet is an acceptable legal punishment for theft (Q 5:38-39);
- Lashing people in public for moral offenses, like having sex outside of marriage, should be the law (Q 24:2); or that

- Adultery should be punished by stoning to death (Sahih al-Bukhari, “*Bab al Janaiz*, Vol. 2, p. 90; Vol. 3, “*Bab al Wakalah fi al Hudud*”, p. 65; Vol. 7, “*Kitab al Ayman*”, p. 218; Vol. 8, “*Bab al Rajm*,” pp. 24. 29. 34, 135; *Sunan Al Tirmidhi*, “*Kitab al Hudud*”, Vol. 4, pp. 27, 33, 34.).

You must value life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, not believe that:

- A parent may kill their own child for any reason with no legal consequences (Reliance of the Traveler/’*Umdat al-Salik*, Book O, Justice, Section o1.2, pp. 583-84);
- Government should enforce public dress code rules (Reliance of the Traveler/’*Umdat al-Salik*, Book M, Marriage, Section m2.3, p 512; Section m2.7, pg. 513);
- Slavery should be legal (Q 23:5, Q 70:30, Sahih Bukhari, Vol. 7, p. 137),

You must believe that all men and women were created equal, not that:

- A woman should have to have four adult male witnesses to prove she’s been raped or face charges of adultery (Q 24:4-5);
- The word of a man in a court of law can only be countered by that of two women (Q 2:282);
- A sister should inherit one-half what her brother inherits (Q 4:11);
- A man has the right to multiple wives, but that a woman should only have one husband (Q 4:3);
- There is no such thing as marital rape, because a man should be able to use his wife when and how he likes, with or without her consent (Q 2:223); or that
- Females should be “circumcised” – have their genitals mutilated – to ensure their chastity (Reliance of the Traveler/’*Umdat al-Salik*, Book E, Purification, Section e4.3, pg. 59).

For the most committed liberals and conservatives—the most partisan Republicans and Democrats—can you not see that the issues that divide you are relatively small and inconsequential in comparison?

These doctrines are cited from the most authoritative texts within Islam, including the Qur'an, the Hadith, and recognized texts of Islamic jurisprudence. It is important to note that, while an individual Islamist could disagree personally with one or more of these, they are part of authoritative, Islamic law according to the rules of Islamic jurisprudence and by the consensus of Islamic legal scholarship.

This means that, for Islamists, even if there is a personal distaste for some of these tyrannical and barbaric practices, there is nonetheless the understanding that, as these doctrines are part of Islamic law: (a) they will not do battle against them through a process of Reform; (b) they will turn a blind eye as communities indoctrinate their children; and (c) they will demonize anyone who raises the problem as an "Islamophobe."

No other idea in human history has ever received the level of insulation that Islam is receiving today. Western society needs to remember that not all things should be tolerated; not all ideas are equal.

Speaking about his refusal to use the words "Islamic terrorism," President Obama asked, rhetorically, "So, someone seriously thinks that we don't know who we're fighting?"¹⁴

I would raise my hand emphatically. If called upon, I'd respond respectfully that, "Mr. President, you don't know who you're fighting because you don't know who or what you're dealing with. You don't see a monster for what it is because it tells you it isn't a monster. Or, to carry the metaphor further, because it tells you there's no such thing as monsters."

There is an inner struggle among Muslims today and growing conversations and collaborations that are pushing for the change that comes through critical dialogue and exposure. Yet this evolutionary leap is being held back by a Western society insulating it from critical thought by the politically correct impulse to and the Islamist campaign to silence criticism through hysteria about "Islamophobia."

Even if Islamists never pick up a physical weapon, they are on the other side in this fight. The battle isn't just an issue with ISIS, which has become the predominant focus of most leaders and public opinion. This war will never end by simply playing whack-a-mole and taking the fight *over there*. There is no "over there." The war is taking place multiple fronts and in several forms. It is, ultimately, a war of ideas and the battlefield is the mind.

Today, there is no greater challenge than the challenge of Islamism. This enemy does not wear a uniform; it has neither a distinguishable accent or a unified language; it does not have the same country of origin. In fact, there is nothing that unifies them beyond Islamist ideology.

For this challenge we need leadership of the same character resolve that got us through World Wars and Cold Wars in generations past. We're going to need leaders who are unafraid of being

¹⁴ "President Obama Slams 'Yapping' Over 'Radical Islam' And Terrorism," National Public Radio, June 14, 20016.
<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/06/14/482041137/president-obama-slams-yapping-over-radical-islam-and-terrorism>

disliked, because what needs to be done to protect both America's national security and the Rights and Freedoms guaranteed by our Founding documents. Nothing less will suffice.

RECCOMENDATIONS

- (1) Identify and understand the ideological conveyor-belt Islamists use to create jihadists, both outside and inside the United States.**

This process, as well as the infrastructure that supports it, is not much different in Pakistan than it is in Michigan; the foundational concepts and texts are the same. This means monitoring fundamentalist mosques and communities in addition to Islamic State websites and message boards. Law enforcement must be aware of the physical space rather than just the digital space.

- (2) Insist that those coming to our country share our values, which means restricting the ability of known, identified Islamists to immigrate.**

This means identifying the defining characteristics of Islamism, including the major political parties and movements that embrace it. There are hundreds of such groups, and all they have in common is that they ultimately want to impose seventh-century Islam on the entire world. Just as you shouldn't import jihadists, you need to also stop importing Muslims who are likely of activating as radicals or Islamist. It is also not good enough to import people who are tacitly compliant in the face of Islamism. This makes the job of the Muslim Reformer more difficult.

- (3) Initiate outreach efforts that require new Muslim immigrants to interact with Muslim Reformers and secular Muslims.**

Recognizing that not everyone who needs to be kept at bay will be kept at bay, it is critical to allow reform-minded communities (rather than Islamist organizations) to help integrate new immigrants or refugees of Islamic background. At present, almost all new Muslim immigrants stay within an enclave that is racially segregated and almost impossible to penetrate. This must change, as it is not in the interest of social cohesion, integration or national security to encourage ghettoization.