

The Rise of Sharia in the West

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The following speech was given by Raheel Raza at a meeting on ["Religion, Law, Democracy and Human Rights"](#) jointly hosted by the National Secular Society and the [International Humanist and Ethical Union](#) (IHEU) on 14 March 2012 in conjunction with the 19th session of the UN [Human Rights Council](#) in Geneva.

I'm a Pakistani by birth, a Canadian by choice and Islam is my spiritual journey. I use the term spiritual intentionally, because it's important to clarify right at the beginning that faith is not politics, and politics is not faith. And this ladies and gentlemen is the difference between political Islam or Islamism and the spiritual message of my faith.

If you were to ask me whether I implement sharia in my life, my answer would be yes.

Before you get your backs up, let me inform you that the word sharia is mentioned only 3 times in the Quran, where it means moral and ethical guidance. Observant Muslims implement the moral and ethical guidelines of sharia in their life governing strictly PERSONAL religious matters such as diet, fasting, charity, prayer, pre-nuptial agreements, birth etc. without any side-effects because A, they are not forcing it in the public sphere and B) they are not using it as a parallel legal system in a non-Muslim environment.

Muslims are not new immigrants to the West and like us, did not come here to flaunt blatant religiosity but to enjoy religious freedom and in some cases freedom from religion – an asset we only find in western liberal democracies. If sharia had been such an important aspect of a Muslims life, we would have heard about it twenty years ago. Neither is the spread of sharia an intrinsic element in the life of every Muslim in the West. Therefore, the claim made by some Muslims that the "Shari'ah" is "divine" cannot be validated logically or theologically. Neither is it necessary to call the sharia the "holy" Sharia, as is the practice within these walls. But sharia is a path, not an entity, and can only be as holy as the intentions of its practitioners.

That "Shari'ah" played a pivotal role in Islamic history as a means of bringing diverse groups of Muslims within a single legal religious framework, is beyond dispute. But over time sharia was frozen, with no development, reasoning and logic and therefore started to stink - which is what happens when water is left stagnant. Eventually it became what we see today – man made law without ethical and moral boundaries, no regard for human life and specifically anti-women.

This is a recent phenomenon. Why? 35 years ago the Wahabbi ideology crashed in upon us, taking over the mosque structures. According to a Washington Post survey, almost 80 % of the mosques in America are now controlled by the Wahabbis, and some 60% of British mosques are now controlled by the equally hard-line Deoband.

In recent times, a more radical interpretation of Sharia has evolved, based upon relatively recent texts written by ideologues such as Abul Ala Mawdudi from Pakistan and Sayyid Qutb from Egypt, whose teachings promote violence leading to terrorism. These, as well as material published and disseminated by the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood, are primarily, if not exclusively, aimed at using Islam to advance a violent political agenda and treat women as second class citizens.

Where has this politicization and distortion of the message left us? The Center for Islamic Pluralism undertook a study: A guide to Sharia law and Islamist Ideology in Western Europe 2007 - 2009.

According to this study, the core argument of the Islamists pushing radical Sharia and parallel systems of law is that human law as represented by western canons can be superseded by the presumed-divine law embodied in Sharia, and therefore secular law may be avoided or violated at will.

So it's no surprise that a Muslim group in the United Kingdom has launched a campaign to turn twelve British cities – including "Londonistan" – into independent Islamic states. The so-called Islamic Emirates would function as autonomous enclaves ruled by Islamic Sharia law and operate entirely outside British jurisprudence. The Islamic Emirates Project, launched by the Muslims Against the Crusades group, uses the motto "The end of man-made law, and the start of Sharia law," and was launched exactly six years after Muslim suicide bombers killed 52 people and injured 800 others in London. A July 7, 2011 announcement posted on the Muslims Against the Crusades website, states:

"In the last 50 years, the United Kingdom has transformed beyond recognition. What was once a predominantly Christian country has now been overwhelmed by a rising Muslim population, which seeks to preserve its Islamic identity, and protect itself from the satanic values of the tyrannical British government."

By the way, this same "satanic, tyrannical" British government has allowed about 80 sharia courts to operate in the UK, so please don't miss the irony and hypocrisy of using Western freedoms to perpetuate religious ideologies.

It does not help that Baroness Warsi, chairman of Britain's ruling Conservative Party agreed with the Pope that secularism is the enemy, without so much as mentioning the problems with British Islamists who are now spreading their tentacles into the USA. A well known Islamist, Anjem Choudary who once said 'the flag of Islam will fly over the White House' has announced he will lead a demonstration calling on Muslims to establish Sharia law across America. Some states in USA are considering sharia law as a parallel system despite strong protests.

A 20-year-old Muslim man in Australia was accused of whipping a Sydney man 40 times as part of an alleged sharia law punishment for drinking alcohol. Shockingly the accused has been granted bail. I am also aware of the presence of an extremist organization known as Hizb ut Tahrir, banned in other countries, who wish to establish a Caliphate in the West. When I wrote a scathing article about their annual conference in Australia, they replied in anger and scorn, threatening me, and implying that as a Muslim I should shut up because this applies only to Muslims"!

Well hello – We are Muslims who don't want sharia or a Caliphate in the West and have come here to get away from dogma, theocracy and forced religiosity.

In Canada, few years ago a group of Muslims tried to implement sharia law in the Province of Ontario, a move that was thwarted and the law allowing religious arbitration was trashed. However even today The Muslim Association of Canada (MAC) declares on its [website](#) that it aims at applying Islam "as understood in its contemporary context by the late Imam, Hassan al Banna". Hasan al Banna for those of you who don't know was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood and a well documented 50-point manifesto of the MB promotes an application of sharia that leads to a one-party State, the prohibition of dancing and music, the censorship of books and movies, the implementation of different curricula for boys and girls and even a dress code for all citizens enforced by religious police as in Iran and Saudi Arabia. *I must say they believe in having fun!*

These are the people who wish to impose sharia in the West and are gaining ground for three reasons.

One, because there is a failed attempt to understand the psyche of radical Islamists and uncover their covert methods in blackmailing and coercing immigrants into their way of thinking

Two, there is deafening silence from the majority of moderate Muslims who are sitting quietly on the fence

Three, Western governments have failed because of their mistaken acceptance of dominant religious leaders as the sole legitimate representatives of Islam in the West, while ignoring women and the more moderate liberal voices.

This is why the Islamists are still here in the West. Otherwise they would have left when politely asked to do so by the Australian PM. Many of us would be willing to pay for a one-way ticket. We are very proud of Stephen Harper, our PM in Canada who has also identified the Islamist threat as real. It's about time, that the leader of the free world, Barack Obama also spoke of this threat in the US where some recent disturbing events have taken place.

E.G. A coalition of organizations that includes the American Jewish Committee (AJC) is supporting use of Sharia law in United State's courts. They believe that banning Sharia law is "an attack on religious freedom".

Who are they kidding? Can an interpretation of a faith that legitimizes violence in the name of divinity qualify for religious freedom? Do they really believe that a man-made law that brutally violates religious freedom and kills apostates is about religious freedom? That a law that protects heads of State from punishment for theft, robbery and murder [Codified Islamic Law Vol 3 – 914C, Hanafi law Hedaya page 188] is about religious freedom?

This does not even touch the issues that relate to women. The entire discourse in Qur'an on women is rights-based but in the Shari'ah, thanks to man-made laws based on concocted hadiths, the entire discourse is duty-based for women and right-based for men. It was too hard for men to accept equal dignity for men and women in the feudal

society within which Shari'ah rules were compiled. Sharia rules harsh punishments including lashing and stoning to death for women's voluntary sexual activities. And it's because of these perceived elements of religious support, few Islamic governments dare to enact any criminal law to ban these barbaric practices against innocent girls.

So must we in the West allow Female Genital Mutilation in the name of "religious freedom"? Of course not! Islamists will tell you FGM is not "Islamic but cultural"; but it has at least nine roots in secondary Islamic scriptures and man-made law.

The question we must ask ourselves why is anyone supporting the idea of a parallel legal system in the West?

We cannot support religious practices that violate [human rights](#). Sharia law as it exists today, violates human rights. That is why it is not acceptable as a manifestation of religion. It kills its followers' natural instinct to relate to others, dehumanizing those who differ from them. Muslim women are its primary victims. It has destroyed countless lives, brought Islam a bad name, and launched the worst cultural assault on human civilization.

Are we going to look sideways when our women are murdered in the name of honour? In Canada recently four women from one family were murdered in an honour killing.

Furthermore, it's on record that the Sharia-lovers in the West are doing nothing to stop the terrible violence against Jews and Christians in Muslim countries. Yet in the West their tactic is to seek the support of ill-informed Jewish and Christian leaders. That gives the establishment of Sharia law a false credibility of "Interfaith action", a term that has now been tainted. A mix of what I call 'liberal white guilt' combined with ignorance of the details, and a false understanding of multiculturalism, has given Islamists wide scope to infiltrate governments and organizations where they relentlessly pursue their subversive agenda.

I would also like to suggest some solutions.

According to my friend, Hasan Mahmud who is a researcher with the Deen Research Center, and an on expert on sharia law, this is what western countries need to do.

Mahmud writes, "A constitution is a constitution only when it recognizes the limit of religious freedom and protects its citizens. The ban on using Sharia law in State courts in the USA perfectly complies with the constitution because it bans not Islam but the violent interpretation of Islam. The first major conspiracy against the spirit of Islam was when the sharia lovers changed the meaning of the word Sharia from "ethical guidance" to State Law. For Westerners, Islam and Sharia law became synonymous. Unbelievable as it may seem to some Westerners, traditional Islam is tolerant, peaceful, gender-just and pluralistic. Unlike Sharia law it does not play hide-and seek with scriptures. Its theological base is much stronger than that of Sharia law: the strongest weapon in the battle against the Sharia. Lest we forget Sharia-doctrine is the informal constitution of Radical Islam."

Let me also add that sharia itself states that it cannot be introduced into a non-Muslim country.

This perception is reinforced by a remarkable incident in Florida, where a local magistrate, Judge Richard Neilsen, ordered at the beginning of March that shariah-based arbitration should be recommended by the state authorities in a civil dispute between a Shia mosque, the Islamic Education Center of Tampa, and four members removed from its board of trustees.

An Islamic scholar in Texas decided that the quartet had been dropped from the board unjustly. In a ridiculous display of patronizing rhetoric presumably intended to flatter the Muslims and assure them of his goodwill, Judge Neilsen commented: "Islamic brothers should attempt to resolve a dispute among themselves. If Islamic brothers are unable to do so, they can agree to present the dispute to the greater community of Islamic brothers within the mosque or the Muslim community for resolution."

The Shia mosque, however, rejected the adoption by the American court of shariah guidelines in their dispute, arguing through their attorney, as follows: "The mosque believes wholeheartedly in the Koran and its teachings. They certainly follow Islamic law in connection with their spiritual endeavors. But with respect to secular endeavors, they believe Florida law should apply in Florida courts."

For Muslims living in a non-Muslim country, this is an exemplary position to take.

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