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URBAN TERROR DON'T DEMONISE AN ENTIRE COMMUNITY

SA Muslims working for peace and justice

The NG Kerk supported the programme of the apartheid regime and sanctioned violence and mayhem in the name of Christianity. Christianity was not at fault, neither was the Holy Bible. There are many of us as who as Muslims continue to criticise and challenge certain misguided Muslims who, in the name of Islam, commit atrocities.

I consider Max du Preez an outstanding journalist, a man of deep introspection and an exceptional critic. It is unfortunate, though, that Du Preez, in his most recent article, "Muslims must reject these acts of terror", cavils and perverts the truth about Muslims. He disparages Muslims who have publicly denounced acts of human terror.

Unfortunate, because his article contains vituperation, generalisation and stereotyping of Muslims and Islam as being aggressive and violent. It is unfortunate too, that he not only finds Pagad guilty in the absence of evidence, but sentences the entire Muslim community to acts of criminality as silent observers or accomplices.

His extravagant and melodramatic statements only inflate the existing misconception of Muslims. The effect of his articles on the mind of readers can be therefore compelling, to say the least.

There were many Christians who denounced apartheid and suffered enormously as a consequence. I personally know of many conscientious objectors (from the end of Conscription Campaign) and activists that included many priests. IN SPITE of these, people unjustly accused Christianity for the atrocities perpetrated by the apartheid regime in the name of Christianity. Du Preez renounced the NG Kerk for its support of the apartheid regime, and for this he must be commended.

Since there is no church in Islam, surely Du Preez cannot expect Muslims to renounce Islam, which is not responsible for certain Muslims or groups (e.g. Abu Syyaf) evidently and unmistakably involved in acts of terror. As for the spate of terror in the Cape, people from all walks of life and religions have vehemently condemned it.

Pagad in the past was criticised by Muslims and Muslim leaders when it took the law into its own hands in its struggle to overcome the twin threats of gansterism and drugs. In the case of urban terror that has gripped the citizens of Cape Town, no evidence has yet been presented regarding the culprits. Should it be proven that Pagad is involved, the law must take its course.

For Muslims, Islam has clearly laid down fundamental principles in the Qur'an and the teachings and practical examples of Prophet Mohammed (God's peace and blessings be upon him).

These include the following points:

- ❑ Every human life is sacred.
- ❑ Every person is a dignified being.
- ❑ To save a life of a person is, in the sight of God, tantamount to saving the life of all humanity.
- ❑ To take a life unjustly equals taking the life of all mankind.
- ❑ MUSLIMS PROMOTE justice for all people, even if it means exposing fellow Muslims, kith and kin, and even if it be against oneself for being unjust.
- ❑ There is no compulsion in the way of life one chooses.
- ❑ A person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.
- ❑ No one is allowed to take the law into his/her own hands.
- ❑ Muslims must show respect to all religions, Prophets and divine scriptures. It is forbidden for a Muslim to mock the beliefs of others, including those of atheists and agnostics.
- ❑ Muslims must not engage in strife and discord.
- ❑ To protect the environment in its totality.

Any Muslim or Muslim organisation that deviates from the fundamental principles- some of which are mentioned above- acts unjustly and in violation of the Shari'ah (Islamic law). There are many of us who- as Muslims- continue to criticize and challenge certain misguided Muslims who in the name of Islam commit atrocities. We have publicly denounced violence and hostage taking. We have challenged

organisations, even legally, who in the name of Islam have attacked the beliefs of others. We have criticised Muslim rulers who have violated the fundamental rights of their citizens.

For this we have been criticised and even threatened by certain perpetrators. In South Africa we consider ourselves one small component in nation building. Du Preez can be assured that there are many Muslims who like other South Africans, work arduously to ensure peace and justice for all. This task is more challenging when Muslims as an entire community is demonised.

One cannot ignore the onslaught by certain world leaders and journalists against Islam. Edward Said, an outspoken world-renowned Palestinian Christian journalist and writer, has exposed the propaganda of certain Western media with its fixation of Islamophobia and stereotyping. It is a pity that Du Preez has fallen into this trap, perhaps unwittingly.

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