بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Society Reaps what it Sows

As Muslims living in the West, we are seeing a gradual increase in anti-Muslim sentiment across the different countries. This sentiment is clearly felt in the general atmosphere we are living in and we can't speak any more of a few right-wing loose cannons. This seems to be stemming from a common policy, that is setting the standard in society. In other words, we are seeing different people in different settings conveying the same anti-Muslim message. When we take a deeper look at how a society is made up we see that this phenomenon can become a normal occurrence.

Societies are made up of two components; individuals and the permanent relationship these individuals have with each other. The relationship between these two will be shaped and governed by common thoughts, common emotions under a common system.

The common system we see in Western societies is the liberal secular system. From this system, individuals and societal institutions (governments) will shape both the common thoughts and emotions.

In other words it is the liberal secular system together with individuals and the societal institutions which will shape the emotions and thoughts within society and influence society politically, economically, socially, legally and judicially.

So it is fair to say that, what these governments project onto society, will automatically have a great influence on the thoughts and emotions of the individuals in that society. And that any problem we see in society will be a direct reflection of its system and of the individuals and institutions shaping the thoughts and emotions.

When looking at the thoughts and emotions which have been set as a standard towards Islam and the Muslims, who are a minority group within these societies we can fairly say that this has become increasingly negative over the past decades. The anti-Islamic rhetoric has not only been expressed verbally by most European leaders it has also been used to change the laws of these societies and thus influencing the way its citizens approach their fellow Muslim residents.

Verbally we have heard many negative thoughts on Islam, statements such as "Islam is not part of Germany made by Horst Seehofer, Germany's interior minister, or "The Koran is a fascist book which incites violence," said by the Dutch politician Geert Wilders; and the quote made by the former French president Sarkozy who said: "No headscarves, no burkinis, no specific swimming times at the public pools, and strict equality when it comes to the rights of men and women - that is the French republic" have become part of the general political arena.

These statements (thoughts) are made by "the leaders of these societies". Politicians who within the liberal secular system are elected to run the country and who have a huge influence on the ideas and sentiments within society. The impact of these negative thoughts are witnessed, when new laws are taken on, regarding the Muslim community and when the liberal secular system does not protect them.

For example Denmark and the Netherlands, countries praised for their so called progressiveness both recently passed a law to ban the wearing of the face veil. Even though both countries claim freedom of religion. Belgium, Austria and France already held a similar ban inciting the same negative stance by criminalizing Islamic symbols. Also Britain's

conservative party has been accused of being so poisoned by Islamophobia that the MCB (Muslim Council Britain) has called for an independent inquiry after what it calls "more than weekly occurrences" of the problem. A clear results of this hate speech is PREVENT (a UK government scheme that uses early intervention to try to stop people from becoming "radicalised".) A policy which has been described as "inherently flawed" according to the UN and labelled as toxic, racist and creating hatred towards Muslims by many professionals.

All these negative thoughts and emotions towards Islam and the Muslims is also having its effect on how the individuals in these society are viewing each other. Especially the viewpoint of the majority towards the Muslim community, which has become increasingly negative. According to a recent report by Germany's Ministry of Interior, crimes motivated by far-right tendencies have reached a record high of 23,555 cases in 2016, including 1,698 of which were classified as violent attacks.

Sadly this reality isn't confined to Germany, in a report by EUROPOL it stated that, Islamophobic crimes against mosques and the Muslim community had increased in 2015. It was found that Poland, the number of cases concerning Muslims and Muslim institutions had doubled in comparison to 2013-2014 and in France, numerous incidents of Islamophobic hate crimes occurred, including firebombs, vandalism and threats."

And just this week a young Muslim woman was attacked in Belgium whereby her hijab and clothes were torn off and the two assailants reportedly inflicted deep marks with a sharp object across her bare chest, legs and stomach. The Inter-federal Centre for Equal Opportunities (UNIA) spokesman Bram Sebrechts thought the attack was motivated by Islamophobia. He said Muslims were increasingly becoming targets of anti-Muslim attacks. Islamophobic attacks are gradually evolving and need to be averted, he added.

In conclusion, the negative stance against the Muslims and Islam in Europe, or against Muslims, Latino's and Hispanics in the US are a direct result of the system of these secular liberal societies, which allow the individual together with societal institutions to spread their venom at any cost.

Muslims therefor need unite in their thinking about their future within Western liberal society on how they need to counter attack this negativity towards their Deen. They will need to step up in spreading the Islamic message by explaining and inviting others to the true message of Islam and also by remaining steadfast and by not feeling intimidated by these attacks on our beliefs. Also by understanding that the Liberal secular system is actually what lies at the basis of this trend.

And to the victims of these hate crimes, remember that anyone can become a victim of crime, oppression or violence during their lifetime, but when you are attacked solely because of your steadfastness upon the Deen, the reward in the hereafter will only be greater.

﴿فَاصْدَعْ بِمَا تُؤْمَرُ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِينَ * إِنَّا كَفَيْنَاكَ الْمُسْتَهْزِئِينَ﴾

"Then declare what you are commanded and turn away from the polytheists. Indeed, We are sufficient for you against the mockers" [15: 94-95]

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