

FULL COMMENT

Imam Sikander Ziad Hashmi: There is no honour in killing



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Following is a condensed version of a sermon delivered by Imam Sikander Ziad Hashmi of the Islamic Society of Kingston:

Every now and then, a controversy arises regarding Islam or Muslims.

As a community, we have a responsibility to respond appropriately. When it's due to incorrect actions of Muslims, we must confront the issue and work towards making sure it doesn't continue. The Koran commands us to: "Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, the rich or poor..." (Koran – 4:135)

Currently, there is much discussion regarding "honour killings" – the idea that the killing of a family member somehow brings back family honour (allegedly lost due to the action of the victim).

There is misunderstanding that this relates to Islam, further compounded by the fact that such crimes are committed by some Muslims in North America.

First of all, this barbaric practice is by no means limited to Muslims. Such crimes have been committed by members of other faiths, even in Canada.

The penal codes of countries such as Argentina, Venezuela, Peru and Ecuador, allow for the use of a defence of honour, according to a 2002 UN report. Until 2009, "provocation" (which includes discovery of an adulterous wife), was a legal defence in England for a man who killed his wife. A 2004 EU report identified the Romas, female immigrants from Bulgaria, Romania and Poland at risk of honour crimes in Greece.

This barbaric practice occurs in many cultures and cannot be traced back to Islam. However, we acknowledge that such practices are committed by some Muslims and are established in some Muslim societies. This is totally unacceptable.

Our position, as Muslims, must be unequivocal: Islam does not sanction domestic violence, and especially, not murder.

There is no such thing as "honour killing" in Islam. I ask you to find me one classical Islamic religious text that sanctions the murder of a family member to preserve honour. It just doesn't exist.

In fact, one of major practices in Arabia, prior to Islam, was female infanticide. It was abolished with the advent of Islam.

"Honour killing" is similar. Why are girls singled out? Have you ever heard of a son killed to preserve family honour? No, girls are being singled out. This is similar to female infanticide.

That's not to say that boys should be killed. Honour killings shouldn't exist – not for girls, not for boys, not for anyone, because this is a practice of deep ignorance. The Qur'an categorically prohibits murder.

Let me be very clear: killing a girl or a woman, for having an affair, a relationship, a boyfriend, not wearing hijab, and so on, is not a license for murder.

Murder is an extremely serious crime; and cannot be justified in any way, especially for girls who are under the care of their parents.

The prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) never hit a woman. He repeatedly emphasized kind treatment of women, advising men: "The best of you is the one who is best to his women."

Honour is an important Islamic value. But it comes ultimately from God, as does dishonour. Honour is associated with that which is commendable; dishonour with that which is reprehensible. We should try to set examples for our children, instill good morals and

have healthy relationships.

But any misbehaviour certainly should not be addressed by murder. That is dishonourable and reprehensible. Furthermore, Muslims are obliged to follow the law of the land.

This is not to say that sexual licentiousness is not a serious issue, or that our children can do whatever they want, or that we should condone prohibited actions.

We need to take a wise approach. Discuss with your children the changes and pressures they face. Let's be open and prioritize. Don't create stiff regulations – such as forcing your child to marry a cousin. Be flexible. If there are problems, seek help.






If, in spite of your sincere efforts, your family member does not heed your advice, and does something that you consider shameful, know that you've done your job. You aren't responsible for their actions.

The last thing you should do is unlawfully take the life of a loved one and create dishonour for yourself. We must keep away from such crimes and must unequivocally say no to honour killings.

National Post

Sikander Ziad Hashmi is an imam at the Islamic Society of Kingston in Kingston, Ont.

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 **Sassylasie** · 10 months ago
If honour is such an important part of Islam's teaching how come men are not obligated to act with any honour? Why imprison women with the burden of protecting Islam's males' honour are the men to emotionally weak to act with honour or are they devoid of it because of the teachings in the koran which excuse every vile act as justified in the name of Islam?
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 **theotherguy** · 10 months ago · parent
Here's a few possibilities where what you said can be forgivable: Either you don't live near muslims, or don't have the time to research about Islam from the right sources. You may live near muslims, but they're probably the same 'cultural' muslims that carry out honour killings. You have time to do proper research, but haven't found the right sources since there are so many people out there on the internet that can act as authorities on the matter, and you decide to accept the worst explanations.

I'm not an authoritative figure, as in taught and certified in an Islamic school to interpret the quran, but as a muslim, I can tell you that men are the first to be instructed in modesty. In the quran, there is a series of verses which tell the believing men and women to lower their gazes. The verse for men to lower their gaze comes first, indicating that men should lower their gazes first, i.e. be expected to act in modesty first.

Anyone can use any school of thought to justify vile acts

Anyway, you can look at one of my previous comments where I explain the culture problem.
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 **Nanowit** · 10 months ago
This article seems to say that some Muslims are against violently disciplining women and girls. This is a hopeful sign. We should support this stand and hope that it will spread throughout their culture.

Perhaps they will come to believe that women also have honour that is to be valued and supported.
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CodexCoder · 10 months ago

I would like the Imam to provide one historical example from the media of a "male" child being killed as a matter of honor. I would also question whether Mohammed as the warlord ever killed a woman (surely there must have been some women at the famous massacre of Jews). And why are there constant arguments throughout the Muslim world about the matter of disciplining a wife (which usually end in the idea that light slapping is appropriate) if Mohammed never ever hit a woman.

I respect that you are trying to make your faith appear more moderate, but the weight of evidence is overwhelmingly against you.

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theotherguy · 10 months ago · parent

From the article: "Honour killing" is similar. Why are girls singled out? Have you ever heard of a son killed to preserve family honour? No, girls are being singled out. This is similar to female infanticide.

He clearly mentioned that girls are being singled out. It's not a matter of finding examples of males being killed.

Also, the thing about it being an argument in the muslim world, I hope I can answer that. The biggest problem is cultural b.s.

As a first generation Canadian, I have been dealing with cultural stuff being mixed in with religion. While this honour killing isn't in my culture, it's still an example that some of us have to deal with. The largest factor I believe, from experience, is a lack of education. Something may have been brought down through the culture and when the family converted to Islam, never let go of that practice, and so they begin to believe it is apart of the religion. I try removing such beliefs from the older generation, but I've come to realize that just like me and most of the world, people become set in their ways through aging, and that stuff like this may take a generation or two to phase out unfortunately. Funny enough, realization of this fact has allowed me to slowly become more open minded.

As it happens, most of the muslim population is situated in the third world, where education may be unaffordable, and where the newer generations that are finding the opportunity to go beyond elementary school. Most of my family from back home, including my parents and their siblings, were only able to afford education up to the equivalent of grade 8-9. I may be digressing a little, but my point is, lack of education is a big factor, both in religious and worldly matters.

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Rock Strongo · 10 months ago · parent

An excellent, thoughtful post.

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sometown · 10 months ago

"The last thing you should do is unlawfully take the life of a loved one and create dishonour for yourself. We must keep away from such crimes and must unequivocally say no to honour killings."

I think the Imam just proved that honour killings occur because one cannot say either yes/no to something that does not exist. It is not an abstraction, honour killing is a gender based crime as to date there are no documented cases of males being killed for the same reasons. He also implies that there is a judgement and a choice for a person who feels that the behaviour of a loved one has impacted one's sense of dignity and respect.

Although Imam Sikander Ziad Hashmi attempts to establish that within his understanding of his religion, gender equality is divinely mandated. Perhaps, but I have yet to hear of Muslim women having their male relatives in hijabs, burqas or niqabs, and allowing a male to travel alone without a female relative chaperone.

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theotherguy · 10 months ago · parent

The imam set out a point to say that honour killings DO exist and that they HAVE been gender biased thus far. He also says that the muslim community has to confront the issue. Logically, to confront an issue, you have to recognize that it exists.

The "implication" that "there is a judgement and a choice for a person..." would mean the choice to not commit murder.

It is true, muslim women do have hijabs or burqas or niqabs. I follow the opinion in Islam that men have to have beards, some may say that's equivalent to a hijab on a women, or not. Men also have a sort of 'burqa', and that is to make sure their body is also properly covered. The main purpose of the burqa is to cover the body and its shape. It angers me greatly when I see a muslim husband in tight butt-hugging jeans and his wife is in a burqa. It is true, there is a lot of emphasis on 'female purity' but men have been ignoring their own stance in the religion, which is when the cultural b.s. comes in and honour killings happen.

Although, the fact that such problems are being recognized and confronted is a great step.

Step-by-step we'll get there.

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Ian Fae · 9 months ago

Honour killings and the control of female sexual morality has been a component of eastern cultures and religions for millennium, including those "Peoples of the Book". It took hundreds of years for Jews and Christians to first put this aside and then virtually eliminate the concept this century. The process is still ongoing for those from less progressive cultures, whether as old as Hinduism or as young as Islam, that choose the freedom and opportunities of "the West" as the way of the future. I commend this Imam for leading in that change of attitude. We know from bitter experience what he is risking.

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mrbuddhafreak · 10 months ago

It would be a good thing if this sermon was read in every mosque where the iman had the slightest suspicion that an 'honor' killing was possible. If somebody in my church was considering an action that would be anathema and degrading to my religion, I would hope that there would be someone who would have the sense and courage to speak out against them.

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Rock Strongo · 10 months ago · parent

Well said my friend.

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drvajra · 9 months ago

The imam should be given credit for tackling subject which is taboo in most religious societies. He is willing to accept that there are some ignorant among his faith who kill for honour.

Now I call upon all Christians, Jews, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and others whose societies are plagued by killings and murders of not just only women, but children as well, and also sodomy and rape, and no one is safe from reverends, priests, and rabbis, fathers, mothers, sons, cousins, teachers, football coaches and coaches of other sports - it is a miasma which is taken for granted, but occasional Muslim wrong-acts are exaggerated and overblown, for spreading hate.

Honour killing is recorded to have started 1200 years BEFORE CHRIST, but yet, some hatemongers insist on making a connection to Islam. We, in India hold the worst record. According to New York Times article "Missing: 50 million Indian girls", killing girls is a daily occurrence. Every year half a million baby girls are being killed, in addition to burning women alive in dowry killings.

In the US, according to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes every year. Everyday, more than 600 women in the U.S. are raped or sexually assaulted in 2006. Are these women worthless and we should only focus on a tiny number of Muslim women who are being killed? As the Holy Bible says: "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. Matthew 7:5

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