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## NEWS

# No honour in 'honour killings': Imam



By Tori Stafford, Kingston Whig-Standard  
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The Whig-Standard

Nothing within the Islamic faith condones the concept of so-called honour killings, Imam Sikander Hashmi told those gathered to hear his sermon Friday.

"Any humiliation or dishonour certainly cannot be made up through murder or killing," Hashmi said.

"That in itself is dishonourable and shameful, because it is something that is prohibited and reprehensible."

Citing passages from the Qur'an, Hashmi deconstructed the very concept of honour killings.

"I'd ask you to find me one Islamic classical religious text that talks about family members killing other family members who do something you consider dishonourable," he said to a group of more than 50 people gathered in the mosque of the Kingston Islamic Centre.

"It just doesn't exist."

Hashmi said that, in light of the recent conversations both in the media and the local Muslim community regarding honour killings, clarification was necessary.

Reading from Arabic texts and the Qur'an, Hashmi explained that Allah clearly tells his followers that, above all else, justice must be upheld.

"As Muslims, we have a responsibility to stand out for justice."

Hashmi said the very idea of killing a woman or a girl who is involved in something that brings shame to a family in order to restore their honour is often associated with the Muslim faith.

"This misunderstanding is further perpetuated by the fact that some of these crimes that we hear about are committed by Muslims," he said, but the idea that honour crimes have solely been committed by Muslims is incorrect.

Citing a report on honour-based violence in Greece financed by the European Union, Hashmi said groups identified as those at risk for honour crimes included the Roma, who are a majority Orthodox Christians, as well as immigrant women from Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, and those who are Muslim.

He spoke of other non-Muslim countries who've recently dealt with similar issues with so-called honour crimes.

"The penal codes of many non-Muslim countries, for example, Argentina, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, allow for partial or complete use of a defence of honour, and this is according to a report by the United Nations in 2002," he expanded.

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"In England, provocation, code word for adultery, was a legal defence for men who killed their wives until 2009, so this is only two years ago that this was changed."

The fact that these practices have occurred in the past doesn't justify them, Hashmi told the congregation.

"We must be very clear in understanding that this barbaric practice occurs in many countries and cannot be traced back to Islam," he said.

"At the same time, we accept that such practices are committed by Muslims too, and are in fact established in the culture of some predominantly Muslim societies, which is totally unacceptable."

Hashmi said that the practice of burying female infants in Mecca was in fact ended by the introduction of Islam.

The Imam also noted that the idea of singling out females didn't make sense.

"Have you ever heard of someone killing their son in a honour killing? No, girls have been singled out, and this is very very similar to the practice of the days of ignorance when infant girls were buried alive," he said.

"Honour killing should not exist, not for girls, not for boys, not for anyone, because it is a practice of deep, deep ignorance."

The notion of honour killing shouldn't occur to the Muslim mind, Hashmi said. For all believers, murder is the most serious crime one can commit.

He said honour, in the Islamic faith, can only be bestowed by Allah, and is associated with things that are commendable, not those which are reprehensible.

Islam teaches the law of the land on which you stand needs to be held in the utmost regard by Muslims, he said.

"Punishment cannot be carried out by private individuals," he said. "Rather, they must be done by an authority who has permission to carry out sentences under the law of the land."

Muslims, he said, must make their position known.

"Our position, as Muslims, as Muslim leaders, as educators, as parents, must be very, very clear," he said.

"Islam does not sanction violence, domestic violence, and especially not murder."

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