

"The Fight Against Xenophobia, Islamophobia and Racism" must begin with an understanding of what is True Tolerance in a society that recognizes some absolutes including but not limited to the "sanctity of life" of every individual, the inalienable right of liberty and pursuit of happiness of each individual and that there are certain actions that are agreed upon as evil/wrong. We need to see that in the name of pseudo-tolerance people (not allowing people to speak out against myths & lies (because feelings may be hurt) and for truth) actually fuels the flames of Islamophobia.

Using the dictionary definition of "**Tolerance**" as being... the capacity for recognizing and accepting religious or social characteristics that differ from one's own.¹

England passed a "Toleration Act of 1688", which granted complete freedom of worship to all... with the exception of Roman Catholics and Unitarians!

Arguments for toleration...

1. We cannot be so sure that our own opinions are sound, that we are justified in suppressing other opinions.
2. Toleration of free speech is more likely to produce a general spread of true opinion than is the suppression of it.
3. It is unjust to punish a man for sincere opinions.
4. Liberty is good in itself.
5. Toleration cools the temper of debate. It induces moderation and makes constructive solutions more likely.

However... Tolerance can be confused with indifference, or even with agreement. Liberty of thought and action must not be allowed to justify evil.

Bernard Shaw said; "We may talk gibberish of toleration as we will, but society must always draw a line somewhere between allowable conduct and insanity or crime..."

Richard Robinson suggests; "We may interfere with the liberty of persons who are likely to interfere with everyone's liberty... We have the right not to tolerate the intolerant."

¹"Tolerance," Microsoft® Encarta® 98 Encyclopedia. © 1993-1997 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

There is a time when we must be willing to stand up to what is not right. It is time for all good men, reasonable men, including our Muslim brothers and sisters to stand up against the "innocent killing of men, women and children" and terrorist acts that undermine Truth and Freedom in every society. To have real social cohesion we must make a stand against behavior that is bent on destroying the freedoms and liberties of society. Pseudo-tolerance that does not allow people to speak out against myths and lies actually fuels the flames of Islamophobia.

Questions to ask...

1. Where does the tolerant man draw the line? Or will he tolerate anything?
2. How real is the danger of the self-consciously tolerant liberal being intolerant? How can this danger be avoided?
3. What is a state prepared to allow its citizens to do before it passes laws to prevent them from doing it?
4. How much liberty will a government allow the people? This is a familiar problem of state control versus the liberty of the private citizen.
5. Are tolerance and conviction incompatible?
6. Is there a necessary connection between intolerance and belief in absolute truth?
7. Why are new ideas often repugnant to society?
8. Should society be tolerant of violent demonstrations?
9. Should society be tolerant of violent terrorist attacks?
10. Why do so many overlook the history of the Arabs, Islam and the Qur'an when asking; "what are the causes of terrorism?"

So as individuals, most if not all of us here who desire peace and detest violence where to we begin? Individually we need to speak out about violence, wherever perpetrated. But we can also do something in a positive way. I get this thought from my living true Guru who said; "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?' "'An enemy did this,' he replied. "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?' "'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'" "

It is by recognizing that all people are creatures of God, even the evil ones and begin to do good toward them—even if that means "tough love".

On the Sermon on the Mount He gave a good rule for everyone to consider... **Jesus also said; So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."** (NIV)

This week begin by reaching out to someone different than you, not to only convince them of your position but to understand their position.

Understanding the Muslim mind set (including the small percentage of them that are extremists, fundamentalists and terrorists).

1. One interruption of the Qur'an... although the Qur'an is the primary source of Islamic law, it is not the only source, so other material has also contributed to the classical Islamic understanding of this subject.

There is no doubt that the Qur'an includes a strand of passages extolling violence and Jihad which have always served as justification for Muslims involved in such actions down through the ages. Some voices in contemporary Islam are calling for a more peaceable reinterpretation of such passages, arguing for example that they were only applicable in a particular historical or geographical context. However, traditional and classical Islam - still espoused by many Muslims today - has always taken these passages at face value, and the generally accepted doctrine of abrogation has always asserted that the later aggressive Medinan passages have abrogated the more peaceful earlier Meccan verses.²

Violence perpetrated by certain Muslims is not happening simply due to current economic or political policies (though these are very real issues that need to be addressed in a 'civil' manner.

"For terrorist groups it is easily possible to interpret certain passages in the Qur'an (See below some of the "sword verses" of the Qur'an) as calls to violence and war against the unbelievers, which they consider to be still valid for today, and to find support in the example of Muhammad treating his enemies. At the moment these groups feel that the Muslim world is suffering from another „humiliation“, for which the decadent West is called to account.³

2. The Near Eastern understanding of honour and disgrace⁴

The Near Eastern understanding of honour and disgrace plays an important role in the Muslims' way of thinking. The superiority of the West and the helplessness of the Muslim world is considered to be a loss of honour. Honour is more important than life. Women are responsible for the honour of a family. Through their behaviour they either maintain or destroy the honour of their families. If a woman has endangered the honour of her

² Adapted from: VIOLENCE IN THE QURAN@BF2005.doc

³ It is a fact that many crimes have been committed in the name of Christianity, innocent people have been killed and nobody can deny the crusades. But these "religious wars" so to say have always been in contrast to biblical teaching as well as to the one who calls himself the „Prince of Peace“. Christian mission in its very sense should never be anything else than a loving invitation, through our words and deeds towards our neighbours to the only one who can give true love to mankind. „He who lives with the sword, shall die by the sword" and „Put back your sword" (Matthew 26:52) are not just last words of Jesus Christ before he was captured and his death came by, but also underline the Christian message, which stands against all forms of violence and teaches respect for others. Yes, it even teaches to esteem one's own brother higher than oneself.

⁴ #2 adapted from: Islam@ReligionOfViolenceOrPeace@DrS2001.doc by Christine Schirrmacher, Bonn/Germany

family, there is nothing she can do to get it back. Her husband, father, brother or uncle has to win the family's honour back which is always connected with drastic measures, which may even include killing his wife, mother, sister or niece.

So open disgrace because of suspicion uttered by the West will always cause very strong reactions! Because in the Muslim world a family tries very hard not to lose their honour - and no one can live without having honour - one of the defense mechanisms is to blame others. Unsolved problems and conflicts in the Near East (shortage of jobs, crisis in education, missing infrastructure, corruption, overpopulation, economic inefficiency) are blamed on the existence or the supposed conspiracy of the Western world against the Muslim world, who try their best to harm and even destroy the Near East. That is why we hear of the many conspiracy theories in connection with the terrorists attacks, which to non-Muslims sound so illogical.

As long as the West does not understand in which categories these extreme Islamic groups think, little can be done to avoid further attacks. It seems imperative to start thinking in new categories, and to try to find new solutions for living together with each other. Christians should think about how they want to handle the challenge of Islam being present in Europe, cultivating relationships with one another and getting to be well informed about Islam, as well as inviting their Muslim neighbours to meet the "Prince of Peace".