

## Taking a Stand against Violence towards Women

Yesterday in the second largest city of the Netherlands, Rotterdam, around 500 people participated in a silent march against violence towards women. The march was organized after the violent death of three women within just one month. A 29-year-old woman was murdered in her apartment and found by her 2 year old toddler, an American student studying at Erasmus University was killed by a male student residing in the same dormitory and most recent the murder of a sixteen-year-old student shot and killed on school grounds.

The city's mayor, AbouTaleb, when speaking to his council called for "new ways" to end the violence against women. He said, "It is difficult to understand, but for some men, no is apparently not a no."

From the press we learn that all the victims knew their assailant in some way. The first victim was a native Dutch woman, and the second was an American student studying psychology and the third was a young Dutch woman of Turkish origin in her exam year, making violence something that effects all women within society.

Also when examining the case of the youngest victim more closely, we see that she had already pressed charges against her attacker for a previous assault. This resulted in him getting a restraining order and a conviction. After he appealed the court's decision, only the restraining order was upheld, and he was able to walk the streets freely until his case was heard again even though he had already served jail time for a prior assault.

His victim and her family weren't as free to roam the streets as he had been made, after putting in an appeal. It had become necessary for her father to take her to and from school because of continued threats. Her father was not able to protect her whilst in school.

So which "new ways" is the Mayor referring to and can a "few new ways" here and there truly lead to the change necessary. Haven't we over the years witnessed many attempts worldwide including changing and creating new legislation to address this very same problem and sadly been disappointed after every attempt because of the continuation of the violence. And what about the ongoing fight for gender equality, believing that this is what lies at the root of the problem, only to be shocked by the statistics found in exactly those countries praised for gender equality. An FRA report showed high percentages of women who reported suffering from violence since the age of 15: in Denmark 52%, Finland 47%, and Sweden 46%.

Isn't it time that we have the courage to take a deeper look into the values and systems these liberal societies, such as the Netherlands, are actually creating and to recognize the many problems which emanate from these values? Or aren't we willing to acknowledge that it might actually be these liberal values that lie at the root of the continuation of violence against women?

Studies have found that domestic violence is always rooted in social and cultural contexts and public attitudes about what is or is not acceptable in intimate relationships that reflect these social and cultural norms. (Gracia E)

One of the most important values within Western (liberal) societies is protecting the individual freedom to pursue his or her pleasure, which is seen as the highest goal in life. This value has not only shaped the individuals living in these societies but has also had its influence on the systems in these societies, e.g. judiciary and penal system. In other words, this value has also influenced how the problem of violence towards women is viewed and looked upon.

It is unreasonable to claim working for a society which protects women whilst allowing them to be an object of lust in advertisement and entertainment under the pretext of freedom and gender equality, and, at the same time, promote the idea amongst men, that their goal in life is to pursue (sensual) pleasure.

Nor can you maintain the notion of protecting women when even the judicial system has been effected by this liberal value. Instead of protecting the safety of the youngest victim who had already been attacked by her murderer, his individual right to appeal the verdict and keep his freedom whilst waiting for the court date took priority above the safety of this young girl. Also we see in these same societies that punishment is often only seen as a way to temporarily restrict one's freedom to his or her pursuit of pleasure and clearly not as a deterrent to end violence against women.

Compare this to a society which will be built upon the most important value which is shaped by Islam. A true Islamic society which through its values and systems will seek not the pleasure of the individual but the pleasure of Allah and by seeking His pleasure, it will attain true happiness and thus the ultimate goal in life.

In this society, the mind-set will be nurtured amongst its citizens to see the preservation of society and the Islamic laws as more essential than one's own desires and whims. They will also have an attitude of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil collectively as obliged: **﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ﴾** **“You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah.”** [3-110]

And for those who still transgress, there will be a comprehensive judiciary system based on Islam which will deal with them. Instead of following the Western rhetoric concerning violence against women, we need to learn about our own Islamic history, and how it bore testimony to protect its women. **﴿أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا وَخَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ خُلُقًا﴾** **“The most complete of the believers in faith, is the one with the best character among them. And the best of you are those who are best to your women.”**

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