

Headlines:

- **The Next EU President wants Muslims to be Banned. Why are Cameron, Merkel and Hollande Silent?**
- **Saudis Exerted Massive Pressure on U.N. to be Removed from Blacklist**
- **Officials: White House OKs expanded Afghanistan airstrikes**

Details:

The Next EU President wants Muslims to be Banned. Why are Cameron, Merkel and Hollande Silent?

Unfortunately British Muslims have no choice. They need to ask whether it is safe for them to remain part of a European Union which is being steadily captured by anti-Muslim bigotry and hatred. The latest example of this dangerous trend concerns the dreadful remarks made two weeks ago by the Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico. "Islam" declared Fico, "has no place in Slovakia". Fico made clear that he was not calling for a secular Slovakia. He wants to keep Muslims out as part of what looks and sounds very much like a crusade for a Christian Slovakia - and by extension a Christian Europe. Fico was not talking out of turn. He was reiterating comments he had already made during his general election campaign earlier this year. Fico thinks that "multiculturalism is a fiction", says that he is "monitoring every Muslim in our territory", and refuses to take Muslim refugees under the EU quota system. This is not just deeply troubling in itself. It is of much more than local significance. This is because Fico is set to take over the rotating presidency of the European Union in three weeks' time. Throughout the second half of 2016 he will be able to direct the trajectory of the European Union, make decisions about legislation, and set the tone for the EU as a whole. Let's put it another way. From 1 July, the man in charge of the European Union will be a rancid Islamophobic bigot set on keeping Muslims out of his country. One would have expected this to cause deep anger and revulsion inside the EU. Yet this is not the case. Astonishingly Fico's remark that "Islam has no place in Slovakia" has been met by silence. There has been no word of complaint from Angela Merkel, Francois Hollande - or, so far as I can discover, by any other European leader. This collective silence from the EU leadership is deafening. One need only imagine the denunciations that would be pouring on Fico's head had he asserted that Jews, homosexuals, gypsies - or any other minority - had no place in his country. This collective failure to condemn Fico makes other European leaders morally complicit in his anti-Muslim rant. Fico's remarks are just a symptom of a far larger pan-European problem. The outlook for Muslims across large parts of the continent is grim. The Czech President Milos Zeman has claimed that it is "practically impossible" to integrate Muslims into the Western world. Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban opposes refugees on the grounds that he wants to keep Europe Christian. In Austria the hard right, anti-Muslim Austrian Freedom Party came within an ace of taking power earlier this year. [Source: Middle Eastern Eye]

Islamophobia in Europe is transcending the population to government officials. It won't be long before Europe's elected politicians openly expound negative Islamic views and expel Muslims. Muslims in Europe need to unify and take on the wide spread vitriol against Islam before it's too late. They must openly challenge and debate the failures of European values.

Saudis Exerted Massive Pressure on U.N. to be Removed from Blacklist

Saudi Arabia and Muslim allies demanded to be removed from a blacklist for killing children in Yemen by applying huge pressure on U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, a U.N. official tells CNN. The Saudi-led coalition -- made up of several Arab countries -- began a military campaign in Yemen in March 2015 aimed at preventing Houthi rebels allied to Iran and forces loyal to Yemen's deposed President Ali Abdullah Saleh from taking power. But last month, a U.N. report claimed the alliance was responsible for 60% of the 1,953 children recorded as killed or maimed in the conflict in 2015 -- a sixfold rise since the previous year. They were added to a blacklist of groups violating children's rights in armed conflict, before dropping off the list again earlier this week. That's because Saudi Arabia made a threat of a "total rupture" in relations between the Kingdom and the U.N., placing in doubt hundreds of millions of dollars in financial contributions to U.N. humanitarian agencies and causes, the U.N. official said. There were also suggestions clerics in Saudi Arabia could meet to issue an anti-U.N. fatwa, declaring the organization "anti-Muslim." The pressure was "massive ... beyond anything ever seen," the official said. A spokesperson for Ban confirmed that the coalition had been removed from the blacklist, saying it had agreed to a joint review with Saudi officials of the cases and numbers of casualties mentioned in the report. Human rights organization Amnesty International described the U.N.'s actions as "blatant pandering" to Saudi Arabia that "undermines all of the U.N.'s work to protect children caught up in war." The U.N. official said the pressure came in the form of diplomatic phone calls and visits by U.N. diplomats at the organization's headquarters in New York. Despite the U.N.'s apparent capitulation, it remained adamant its report on the parlous situation in Yemen was accurate. "Every word stands and we stand by the figures and the information contained in the report," U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters Wednesday. "It paints a horrific picture of the suffering of Yemeni civilians, especially the Yemeni children." In an open letter to Ban, Human Rights Watch and 19 other organizations called on the U.N. to immediately return the Saudi-led coalition to the "list of shame." [Source: CNN]

When the Saudi ruling family's personal reputation is at stake, they can muster pressure on the U.N. to reverse its decision. However, when the U.N. supports action against the Muslim world and Islam, the Saudi regime behaves like a deaf blind mute.

Officials: White House OKs expanded Afghanistan airstrikes

After months of debate, the White House has approved plans to expand the military's authority to conduct airstrikes against the Taliban when necessary, as the

violence in Afghanistan escalates, senior U.S. and defense officials said Thursday. Several officials said the decision was made in recent days to expand the authority of U.S. commanders to strike the Taliban and better support and assist the Afghan forces when needed in critical operations, using the U.S. troops already in the country. There is a broad desire across the Obama administration to give the military greater ability to help the Afghans fight and win the war. The 9,800 U.S. troops still in Afghanistan, however, would still not be involved in direct combat. The officials were not authorized to talk publicly about the discussions so spoke on condition of anonymity. The decision comes as the Afghans struggle with a resurgent Taliban, particularly in the south. But it is fraught with political sensitivities because President Barack Obama had made clear his commitment to get U.S. forces out of Afghanistan. That effort, however, has been stalled by the slow pace of the development of the Afghan military and the resilience of the Taliban. The decision will give U.S. forces greater flexibility in how they partner with Afghan forces, but the new authorities must be used in selective operations that are deemed to have a strategic and important effect on the fight. The Taliban are refocusing their attention mostly on the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan, according to U.S. and Afghan military officials, although the insurgents also have struck elsewhere, such as in Kunduz province in the north, where they overran and held the provincial capital for a few days last fall. The U.S. has continued to conduct counterterrorism strikes against al-Qaida and Islamic State militants in Afghanistan. But strikes against the Taliban were largely halted at the end of 2014, when the U.S.-led coalition's combat role ended. Limited strikes have been allowed in cases of self-defense or when Afghan forces were in danger of being overrun. Gen. John Nicholson, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, has discussed with Defense Secretary Ash Carter his recommendations for moves the U.S. can make to further assist the Afghans. And there have been repeated conversations with the White House in recent weeks. Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook, asked Thursday whether the administration was looking at expanding the U.S. military's authorities to strike the Taliban more broadly, said: "In every step of our review of Afghanistan, the question of what's the best way to use our forces is something we're constantly looking at. It's also in the same sense that we're looking at the number of troops. We are always looking at the authorities question and the best use of our troops." Nicholson's predecessor, Gen. John Campbell, made it known before he left Kabul in March that he believed Carter should consider expanding U.S. military authorities to take on the Taliban. Also under discussion is whether the U.S. should reduce the number of American troops in Afghanistan to 5,500 as planned by the end of this year, or if a higher number is needed. Campbell favored keeping the troop level at the current total of 9,800 into next year. [Source: Daily Mail]

America's troubles in Afghanistan show no sign of abating. The occupation of Afghanistan is America's longest war, and the super power is unable to show any sign of victory. What is visible is a mumbled policy that continues to drain American resources and blight its prestige. What started as a short war has become a global embarrassment.