

Freedoms are Sacred for the West

News:

Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, on Tuesday said he has raised the issue of the blasphemous cartoon caricature competition with the Dutch foreign minister and also called upon the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to summon an urgent session for adopting a unanimous position in response to the planned Dutch blasphemous event.

Addressing a press conference in the federal capital, the foreign minister said he had talked to his Dutch counterpart and reminded him that the abominable act of the Dutch Parliamentarian Geert Wilders to hold a competition of blasphemous caricatures was provoking, which had hurt the sentiments of Muslims across the world. Such acts would spread hatred and intolerance. (Dawn, 29/08/2018)

Comment

In response to the latest antics of the Freedom Party in the Netherlands, social media messages have been calling the public in Pakistan to boycott goods from the Netherlands. Some have asked for a boycott of YouTube and Google for 3 days. Others have asked Muslims to be patient and adopt practices from the Sunnah to present Islam and the teachings of the Prophet (saw). Online petitions have been circulated and plans for a protest march are also in place, led by Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), unless the government "cuts diplomatic ties" with the Netherlands.

The action of insulting the Messenger (saw) is not going unnoticed but is also not new. The anger of Muslims will be vented and some level of feeling helpless may be removed by any one of the activities that are being advised.

The problem is really that Freedom of Speech is enshrined in the Western System and this is the defense that is used for this action. Free Speech, however, is not clearly defined and neither is hate speech. This loose interpretation is left for anyone to decide and also to use for their own agenda.

It is believed that free speech will promote ideas and progress, and stifling debate is oppressive. The Church and Monarchy did this in the past, so religion is never accepted as a reason to prevent freedoms and this mindset means anyone and any practice can be ridiculed and mocked.

The contradictions in this are also very well known, where speaking about denial or questioning the holocaust is not ok. We are also reminded that these very nations ban the hijab and niqab and forget the importance they give to freedom in this action.

While Muslim leaders show their anger and also contact the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, there is a distraction from the core issue, which is the value held for Freedoms and that they are fundamental in the Western life.

Prime Minister Imran Khan blamed the recurrence of such incidents a collective failure of the Muslim world, saying he would take up the matter at the United Nations General Assembly's upcoming session.

"This is a collective failure of the entire Muslim world," the PM said in his maiden address to the Senate on Monday.

"The OIC (Organisation of Islamic Cooperation) should have taken up the matter long ago and forged a practicable strategy. But the OIC is yet to wake up to the detestable moves (perpetrated) to hurt the sentiments of the Muslims," Khan said. (The Express Tribune 27/8/2018)

Imran Khan is suggesting the use of pressure on a body that is part of the Western system, the United Nations. It was established to maintain the ideals of Freedoms, and seeks to promote a singular vision of the world. Right and wrong, good and bad, norms and values are all measured by a set standard that is the secular one.

Appealing any Western government, party or the bodies that are meant to uphold and promote the Western way of life is never going to work as their raison d'être is in complete contradiction to Islam.

The hurt, anger and annoyance Muslims feel are linked to the belief we have. Muslims love and respect Muhammad (saw) and all the other Prophets and Messengers (alayhum salaam) as part of our fundamental belief. This will never mean anything to the one who holds freedom as a belief, because man's decision on what is acceptable to insult and what is sacred is left to him to decide.

For Muslims, with no clear leadership, we will always see haphazard responses, lack of direction and then new attacks against our Deen and our Ummah. We cannot appeal to the staunch, secular freedom-promoting bodies or nations to act as we view to be decent. And it will only be a sincere ideological leadership that will lead to the actual change in how non-Muslim states deal with Islam and the sentiments of its followers. It is only the Khilafah state on the methodology of the Prophethood that can present Islam to the world and also defend Islam and its Prophet (saw) in the best way.

Until then, we will see the Muslim rulers play with the Ummah's sentiments and at the same time taking orders and direction from the West, appealing to them for solutions and emulating them in life's affairs while professing to love the Prophet (saw) only in an emotional sense.

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
Nazia Rehman**