

Sarah Everard, Failed by the System

It could have been any of us women - but it was Sarah Everard, the young woman from London who was tragically murdered by the ruthless maniac PC Wayne Couzens.

On the evening of March 3rd 2021, Couzens used his Metropolitan Police warrant card and handcuffs to abduct Ms Everard under the guise of an arrest, as she was walking home from a friend's house in Clapham, south London.

With Sarah bundled in his car he drove 50 miles before raping and strangling her to death. Days later Couzens even burned her body in an attempt to hide it.

As details of the police investigation emerged during the trial this week, public outcry turned towards the Metropolitan police force for the catalogue of failures carried out during the murder investigation.

Failures that reflect an institution:

The trial revealed that Couzens an off-duty diplomatic protection officer serving at the US embassy had been linked just two days before Sarah's murder to two allegations of indecent exposure, as well as a previous incident of indecent exposure in 2015.

That these incidents were so easily 'missed' by detectives, is damning evidence in itself against both the Kent and Metropolitan police forces, who clearly failed to understand that such perverse behaviour warrants serious attention and that this sexual predator should have already been sacked and sentenced.

To add to this blatant negligence, the trial also revealed that Couzens was on a WhatsApp group with five other police officers who are currently being investigated by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) for gross misconduct. The court heard that together they shared "discriminatory" messages including "misogynistic content". At least three of them face criminal investigations under Section 127 of the Communications Act, which refers to material that is "grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing nature".

As if further proof of Couzens depraved character was needed, his colleagues admitted to the court that he was nicknamed by them as "the rapist".

In light of such undeniable institutional failings, police chiefs and government are desperately focusing on rebuilding the public's trust in the police force. This supposedly by reiterating safety precautions which include not walking alone after dark or using headphones, staying in well-lit areas, texting your location to friends, wearing dark clothes and carrying keys in your hand as a weapon.

However given that several recent high profile murders occurred when women, including the sisters Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman were brutally murdered together in a lit public area, and Sabina Nessa was wearing dark coloured clothes, this safety advice is not only deeply flawed, but it is highly irrational. It lays the burden of safety upon the victims alone, without even examining the causes of the violent crime, sex crimes or questioning why such atrocities are increasingly prevalent in a so called progressive and civilised society.

Understandably the collective pain women feel and the fallout of the investigation has galvanised another generation of women intent on challenging prevailing attitudes towards violence against women and safety. So amid the vigils and protests, 'Reclaim the Night', the 70s movement sparked by the murderer Peter Sutcliff, the Yorkshire Ripper, has been reignited since Sarah's death. As such, the broader public discourse now revolves around misogyny in the police force, the marginalisation of women, toxic, sexist attitudes and outing the grossly misinformed. Such as the North Yorkshire commissioner Philip Allott who sparked fury when he said Ms Everard "never should have submitted" to the arrest by her killer!

However what is missing from this all too necessary discussion is a holistic view towards the interactions that men and women will naturally share in society and what real governance looks like. This is important because the overall view towards women among the wider society will obviously affect police officers, given that they too are a part of that society.

Attitudes:

It is widely recognised that toxic attitudes towards women are widespread in all secular liberal societies, and these are predominantly nurtured via pop culture and the entertainment industry, which now includes social media and apps through which all manner of explicit personal freedoms are expressed.

Likewise liberalism is the systemic aim of every secular Democracy, and as the goal posts of morality and decency continue to shift, more than ever before people escape responsibility for their behaviour. In this way once noxious thoughts, have fast become prevailing social norms which naturally permeate all sections of society including civil institutions and even government. In this way, for too many, life will soon become little more than a lottery between falling victim to egregious behaviour and escaping it.

Islam as an alternative view:

Islam is an alternative doctrine to that of today's secular society as it deals with men and women systematically. The Shariah rules that Muslim's uphold in regards to the interactions between men and women in public and private life are exquisitely orchestrated by Allah (swt) alone.

The laws relating to our dress codes, our gender separation in certain environments as well as the license to interact freely at times of necessity. As well as the recommended mannerisms that are best suited to the nobility of our God given human nature. These are just some of the divine standards which give us knowledge about the honoured status and value of a woman - Islamic standards which indicate the worth of every woman, old or young, regardless of her social status, wealth, beauty, physique or her abilities.

So any crime against a woman in a society where she is deemed so precious will of course be viewed in the most serious way – and the seriousness of the crime will be reflected in the measures taken by the authorities against the perpetrators.

This is epitomised by the example of our beloved Prophet Muhammed (saw) when he lay siege at the fort of Banu Qaynuqa for fifteen days, after the abuse of a Muslim women in which the Muslim who came to her aid was killed. Likewise in 88 AH when Muhammed bin Qasim was sent by Hajjaj bin Yusuf to free the Muslimah captured by pirates in Sindh, the value of a woman and the duty of government was perfectly established as the gold standard of a just rule.

Only with the return the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the way of the Prophethood to the Muslim lands will women be valued and safe, and be able to expect justice from those in authority over them. Islam is the only ideology with a detailed social system capable of taking care of the relationships between men and women. Removing humankind from the darkness of selfish desires and toxic behaviour, into the light of security and justice for all.

Allah (swt) says in the Quran, **﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾** **“The believers, male and female, are friends to each other. They bid virtue and forbid vice and establish Salāh and pay Zakāh and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those are the ones whom Allah will bless with mercy. Surely, Allah is Powerful, Wise”**. [Surah At-Tawbah v 71].

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