

Violence Against Women Will Never be Solved Under Any Liberal System

News:

On 2nd July, hundreds of people joined a vigil for Zara Aleena who was killed on her way home in Ilford, East London. The 35 year old law graduate was just minutes from her front door when she was dragged, kicked and stamped on by a male stranger. She suffered multiple serious injuries and was found bleeding and struggling to breathe. Her murder stands alongside other high-profile murders of young women in the country, such as Sarah Everard and Sabina Nessa, and has once again sparked a national debate about the 'epidemic' level of violence affecting women in Britain.

Comment:

According to the Office of National Statistics (ONS), between April 2020 and March 2021, 177 women were murdered in England and Wales alone, 92% of whom were killed by men. These are not crimes committed only by strangers alone. Rather according to the ONS, 60% of women killed in England and Wales knew their suspected killer and one third of suspects were their current or former partner or husband. In fact, in the UK, two women are killed each week by a current or former partner (ONS). Furthermore, this is a crime in which both victims and perpetrators come from all walks of life. The man who murdered Sarah Everard for example was a serving police officer.

Vigils in memory of young women and girls killed while walking the streets of Britain are starting to become commonplace in the country. However, Britain is not alone in the horrendous scale of femicide and violence against women. The crime is rampant within other liberal states from east to west. In France, a woman is killed every three days by a partner or former partner, while marital violence affects 220,000 French women every year (The Guardian, 2019). In the US, nearly three women are killed every day by domestic violence (Bureau of Justice) and one in five women have been raped in their lifetime (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention). In Australia, a woman is hospitalized every three hours due to domestic abuse (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare). And in Turkey, four out of ten women in the country suffer from domestic violence (Turkish Statistical Institute), and according to the Turkish Ministry of Justice, from 2003-2014, there was a 1,400% increase in the number of murders of women.

The murder of Zara Aleena has once again raised discussion on why so many women are subject to violence at the hands of men within Britain and the utter failure of successive governments to tackle the issue. Clearly, the concept of 'Gender Equality', advocated by many within secular liberal states as the way to establish respect for women, has failed to deliver basic security for women. Britain for example is a signatory to CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention on Violence against Women; it is part of the European Commission Gender Equality Engagement Strategy; it has a number of gender equality acts signed into domestic law, such as the Equality Act 2006 and 2010, and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 2002; it has a Minister for Women and Equalities and a Women and Equalities Committee. Similar acts and conventions are enshrined into laws and constitutions within other liberal states, yet they have failed to even dent the scale of violence against women in these countries. Furthermore, states such as Turkey and Tunisia who are leaders in

advocating and implementing gender equality policies and laws in the Muslim world, are also amongst world leaders in violence against women.

It is clear that establishing gender equality in household roles and rights, or within the workplace or even within politics is not the recipe to create respect and safety for women within a society. Rather, achieving these outcomes depends upon the view that men have towards women and other social aspects within societies. Within secular states, liberal personal and sexual freedoms which encourage men to view and treat women according to their whims and desires, coupled with the systematic devaluing of women through their objectification and sexualization in entertainment, advertising, pornography and other industries as well as hedonistic lifestyles plagued with alcohol and drugs have created a dangerous cocktail with regards to the safety of women. Furthermore, the absence of clear roles, responsibilities and right of the genders in marriage and family life under secular liberal systems is a recipe for disaster for it creates confusion, competition and tension over duties and entitlements which exacerbates rather than minimises domestic violence.

Islam in contrast has a defined multi-level approach to preventing and tackling violence against women. Firstly, it rejects sexual and personal liberal freedoms and rather promotes the concept of Taqwa (God-Consciousness) within individuals which nurtures a mentality of accountability and responsibility in the way men view or treat women in private or public life. Secondly, Islamic evidences oblige men to view and treat women with respect and protect their dignity and wellbeing always. Allah (swt) says: ***“O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will; and you should not treat them with harshness...”*** [TMQ An-Nisa: 19]. Thirdly, Islam unequivocally prohibits any form of abuse or violence towards women. Allah (swt) says: ***«وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ» “And do not harm them (i.e. women) in order to oppress them.”*** [Al-Talaq: 6] And the Prophet (saw) said: ***«لَا تُضْرِبُوا إِمَاءَ اللَّهِ» “Do not beat the female servants of Allah”*** (Sunan ibn Majah). Fourthly, Islam prohibits the sexualization and objectification of women, or any action that degrades their status in society, including their engagement in any work or service which exploits their body or beauty for profit. Fifthly, Islam prohibits drugs, alcohol and any form of hedonistic lifestyle which contributes to violence against women. And finally, Islam organises the duties and rights of men and women within marriage and family life in a detailed and complementary manner – for example defining the man as the guardian and provider of the family and the woman as the home-maker and primary caretaker of the children. This ensures the rights and needs of all family members are fulfilled, creating harmony and minimising disputes and conflicts over responsibilities which can exacerbate domestic violence. When such principles and laws are implemented on a state level by the political system of Islam – the Khilafah (Caliphate) based upon the method of the Prophethood, it creates a society in which women feel respected and safe within their homes, the streets and in general public life.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Dr. Nazreen Nawaz

Director of the Women’s Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir