Secular Nationalistic Politics Has Provided the Platform for Islamophobia to Flourish in the West

News:

Over the last fortnight, there has been a spate of horrific Islamophobic attacks on Muslims in the US. On the 3rd of July, Al Jazeera and other media outlets reported that a Muslim doctor was stabbed and then shot twice while heading to the mosque for Fajr prayers in the US city of Houston, Texas. On Saturday 2nd July, a Muslim man was severely beaten outside the Fort Pierce Islamic Centre in Florida. According to the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), the attacker approached shouting racial slurs, including *"You Muslims need to get back to your country"* before assaulting the victim. On the 30th June, two Muslim men were shot while walking to a mosque for Taraweh prayers in Minnesota. And on the 29th June, a Muslim businessman from the United Arab Emirates who was visiting the US for medical treatment was wrestled to the ground, handcuffed and arrested by police in a hotel in Ohio after being accused by a hotel staff member of having pledged allegiance to ISIS while speaking Arabic on the phone. The man sustained several injuries during the incident. Later, the hotel employee admitted that she had lied because she was scared of the man as he was wearing a thobe.

Comment:

There is no doubt that Islamophobic attacks and other hate-crimes against immigrants and minorities within Western states is at epidemic levels. There were around 80 attacks on mosques in the US following the San Bernardino shootings last year. And according to CAIR, there was a 500% rise in hate crimes against Muslims in Florida alone in 2015. This included mosques being vandalized and a number of bomb threats towards Islamic groups. The organization has also stated that more than half of Muslims in the US say they have faced some form of discrimination. In the UK, the National Police Chiefs Council reported a five-fold rise in race-hate complaints following the Brexit vote, with over 330 hate-crimes reported in just 1 week following the EU referendum elections. Many of the victims of these hate-crimes were Muslims. In Birmingham, one of the UK's major cities, Islamophobic flyers were posted through people's doors. Indeed, it has been reported that there was a 326% increase in anti-Muslim abuse in the country in 2015.

Many Western politicians are at pains to demonstrate that they condemn and reject such racist and Islamophobic attacks. British Prime Minister, David Cameron for example, spoke in parliament against the wave of xenophobic abuse that followed the Brexit vote, calling for tolerance towards minorities. However, what such Western politicians conveniently ignore is that it is the very secular nationalistic system that they preside over which has provided the oxygen, platform, and legitimacy for such hatred towards Muslims and ethnic minorities to flourish within their societies. Indeed, such anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant rhetoric has been employed by secular political parties of all hues to win over xenophobic segments of their electorate or in the name of pursuing anti-Islamic government agendas – all of which has essentially endorsed Islamophobic attitudes and created a climate for attacks on Muslims to thrive. In the

US for example, Presidential hopeful Donald Trump may have become the poster boy for spouting Islamophobic and xenophobic vitriol, but anti-Muslim sentiment and expression are embedded and endemic within the secular political establishment. Ted Cruz for example, the former Republican Presidential candidate called for increased surveillance of Muslims in the US, stating that the country needed to, *"empower law enforcement to patrol and secure Muslim neighbourhoods before they become radicalized."* Florida Senator Alan Hayes once distributed literature that said, *"Our religious, political, and peaceful way of life is under attack by Islam and Sharia Law. Save my generation from this ideology that is invading our country and masquerading as a 'religion'."* In addition, since 2013, the US has seen an increase in the number of bills or amendments (around 81) designed to vilify Islamic practices. Infact, at least 32 states have introduced and debated anti-Shariah law bills, aimed at effectively making Islamic principles illegal. Florida's government is trying to ban school books from making any reference to Islamic history. Alongside all this, the US's secular system has provided a free-hand to anti-Islamic organisations to promote - both nationally and internationally - their divisive vitriolic lies against the religion. This June, a report published by CAIR and the University of California, Berkeley entitled, "Islamophobia is a multimillion-dollar industry" detailed about how more than $200 million was spent on promoting fear and hatred of Muslims in the US by dozens of organisations between 2008 and 2013 without any legal repercussions.

All of this has been accepted and viewed as perfectly legal by the secular political system, sanctioned under its liberal value of freedom of expression or pluralism, and deemed as a necessary right within a healthy democracy. This is a model of governance that believes individuals should have the right to express any views regardless of how loathsome, divisive and dangerous they may be – in the name of political debate – despite the detrimental impact this has on the lives of people and community relations. How can such a system ever be hailed as the best model to govern mankind? Truly Islam stands as a shining alternative model in the unrivalled respect and protection it guarantees those of different faiths, races, and ethnicities under its rule. It shuns the corrupt nature of secular nationalistic politics that allows politicians to play on people's prejudices in order to win power. It rejects nationalism which fuels racism and drives wedges between communities from different backgrounds. And it prohibits outright the vilification of the culture and beliefs of any religion, with a truly zero tolerance approach to such despicable behavior. This is why Islam alone is the system that deserves to be hailed as the best model to govern mankind.

"(This is) A Book which We have revealed unto thee, in order that you might lead mankind out of the depths of darkness into light - by the leave of their Lord - to the Way of (Him) the Exalted in power, worthy of all praise!" [Ibrahim: 1]

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