## The West's Dangerous Enchantment with Islam Muslim Women Thrown "Under the Bus"

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http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4841/west-enchantment-islam

The loudest voices in the West now seem to come from many progressives who say that criticizing of Islam is racist, intolerant, bigoted and Islamophobic. Injustices, they claim, take place all around the world, not just among Muslims or in Muslim countries. The criticism, they go on, comes from wrong interpretations of Islamic teachings. They say that Islam *respects*women, and that there are good and bad Muslims, just as there are good and bad people in all religions.

In just seven years, however, between 2002 and 2009, the rate of murdered women in Turkey has increased by 1400 percent.[[1]](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4841/west-enchantment-islam" \l "_ftn1" \t "_blank)

There are also more than 181,000 child brides in Turkey.[[2]](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4841/west-enchantment-islam" \l "_ftn2" \t "_blank)

When those figures are provided by state authorities, they are based on factual statistics. But when they are expressed in a critical manner by Canan Arin, a lawyer and women rights activist, they are, apparently, a "crime."

Canan Arin, 72, is a feminist lawyer who has dedicated her life to women's rights struggles in Turkey.[[3]](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4841/west-enchantment-islam" \l "_ftn3" \t "_blank)

The Antalya Bar Association, in December 2011, invited her to its newly founded Women's Rights Enforcement Centre to give training to the lawyers on violence against women. There, she delivered a speech about early and forced marriages, and gave two examples -- one from the 7th century, the other from the 20th century -- to clarify her point.

The first example concerned Muhammad, the founder of Islam, who married a girl of seven. The second was about Abdullah Gul, then-President of the Turkish Republic, who became engaged to his wife when she was 14 and married her when she was 15, in 1980.

Although both of those examples are supposedly based on the truth, speaking the truth in Turkey now seems to constitute a crime. A year later, therefore, a warrant was issued for Arin's arrest, and on December 12, 2012, she was brought to court for "insulting religious values adopted by a part of the society" (Turkish Penal Code Article- 216/3) and for "insulting the President" (Turkish Penal Code- Article 299/1).

On May 30, 2013, the court declared its final decision, which was the adjournment of the trial. According to the ruling, if Arin commits a similar crime in three years and receives a punishment for it, her case will be reopened.

"If I do not open my mouth for three years, and do not engage in [discussions of similar] subject matters, this trial will be ignored. Their ruling is like running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. But this trial should have never been opened in the first place," [Arin said](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/23399801.asp" \t "_blank) to the Turkish newspaper, *Hurriyet*.

It is bewildering that any prosecutor actually considers child marriage a "value." [According](http://www.sabah.com.tr/yasam/2012/11/18/turkiyede-181-bin-cocuk-gelin-var" \t "_blank) to the Turkish Statistical Institute, in 2012 alone, the rate of parental consent for legal marriage under the age of 18 increased by 94.2%. This increase is not taking place in a country ruled by Islamic sharia law, but in Turkey, the only so-called "secular" Muslim country.

There are no women's rights in Islam; there are no women rights in most Muslim countries. And as there is no freedom of expression in these countries, people have become virtually voiceless.

Yet many people, especially the so-called progressives, seem to find limitless excuses for fundamentalist Islamic atrocities against women. These include beheadings, stonings, domestic violence, [honor killings](http://www.meforum.org/2646/worldwide-trends-in-honor-killings" \t "_blank), female genital mutilation, official legal inequality, home confinement, child marriages, and Saudi Arabia's prohibition against women driving, to name a few.

Statements that come up with "multicultural" excuses to provide cover for the practices of fundamentalist Islam, however, never have, and never will, help to liberate women who suffer under Islamic misogyny, gender apartheid and jihad.

To make a positive change in Muslim countries, we need to be able to speak openly and tell the (too-often criminalized) truth about what Islamic teachings and traditions actually contain. Yet in Muslim countries, it is impossible speak openly about what is in these Islamic teachings and traditions, without putting one's life at risk.

There is a situation even more frightening. It now seems to be difficult to speak openly about fundamentalist Islam even in Western countries, in part thanks to the dangerous enchantment of Western progressives and feminists who romanticize Islamism.

Women in the Muslim world desperately need the voice of Western progressives and feminists. But when it comes to finding excuses to neutralize critical questions about Islamic violence, Western progressives seem endlessly creative. Known by an increasing number of women as "Excuses for Abuses," these include:

**Criticizing Islam is racist and reveals "intolerance," "bigotry" and "Islamophobia."**

For the record, Islam is not a race. Moreover, if you discuss the violent and misogynous teachings of Islam, it does not mean that you hate or are intolerant of Muslims, just of violence and misogyny.

It does mean that you care about Muslim women; that you do not want them to be forced to find four male "witnesses" to "prove" they have been raped, or to be punished by Islamic courts as adulterers if their rapists do not confess. It means you believe that their testimony in court, or their inheritance, should be valued as highly as a man's; that you do not want them to be the victim of honor killings or child marriages at the hands of their Muslim family members, and that you do not want their husbands to be able beat them with impunity.

It also means that you want children to grow up to be honest, informed, compassionate adults, filled with love for life and fellow human beings, and who can speak up for rights and liberties that can never be taken for granted -- all gained as a result of centuries-long wars, struggles and social movements.

It means you do not want to see children blowing themselves up on a bus, or people buying or selling women, or killing their sisters for not wearing the *hijab*. And finally, it means that you do not want children getting married at the age of seven, especially to men they have never met, or to be hypocrites who have to say, "Islam is a religion of peace" to defend themselves every time another Muslim commits a crime justified by proclaiming Islamic beliefs.

**"Injustices against women take place all around the world, not just against Muslims or in Muslim countries."**

If the oppression of women is rooted in the culture, shouldn't one be asking, 'what *makes* a culture that misogynous?'

What is progressivism if its objectives do not include helping emancipate women from Islamic oppression, such as honor killings, child marriages, stonings, flogging and punishing rape victims (while releasing rapists) -- all of which are employed in the Muslim world, in line with Islamic teachings, allegedly to "protect" and "respect" women and to keep them "pure," but more probably to keep women in their place?

**"What you are seeing is not the real Islam; Islam has been hijacked."**

The problem with this view is that Islam actually does teach that a woman is worth less than a man. Many teachings in Islam are misogynous -- from wearing veils; requiring four male witness to prove rape; issues of inheritance; court testimony; rules of marriage; rules of divorce and remarriage; a man's "right" to marry up to four women and then beat them, and so on.

If Western progressives and feminists care at all about their Muslim sisters, they need to protest against the actual roots of this injustice: these Islamic teachings.

Many progressives, however, seem not even to want to learn about them, let alone speak out against them. Perhaps they fear that if they knew more, they might actually have to speak out. Or perhaps they remain silent from indifference or inertia. But if all they really care about in the West is their (understandable) ability to get abortions and equal pay for equal work, they have badly failed to grasp the consequences of a theocracy on everyone, not only on women.

If they wished to inform themselves, they might read just the verses of the Quran relating to women and glance at the *hadith sunnah* literature -- all easily found on the internet. Then -- if they sincerely wished to raise future generations with humanitarian values, equal justice under law, and a respect for human rights -- they might educate others about those teachings, while basing their opinions on knowledge, not on wishful thinking.

"If you accommodate Islamic misogyny," [says the writer Pat Condell](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8mX3Bb5Bk34" \t "_blank), "you legitimize it and you invite it into your own life and into the lives of your children ... because it's coming your way. You also help to ensure that the woman in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, who gets beaten every day, will continue to be beaten and treated as a piece of property, as will her daughters and granddaughters all the way down the line."

**"It is not about Islam. Crimes were committed and are being committed in all places throughout history."**

The world is no paradise, but in the West, if economic, political or social causes of injustices are freely discussed, why should religious, or Islamic, causes be exempt from discussion?

In many Muslim countries, where only Islam -- but not the people -- has the right to survive, such discussion is impossible without extreme risk. Even in Turkey, considered one of the most "liberal" of Muslim countries, if you dare to discuss or criticize the teachings of Islam, you can be killed, arrested, attacked, exposed to social and psychological lynching campaigns, brought to court and given a prison sentence.

Do progressives not oppose supremacy and oppression? Why then do they turn a blind eye to Islamic supremacy and oppression?

In Gaza, for instance, for whom Western progressives claim to have so much sympathy, women are [systematically murdered in honor killings](http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/honor-killing-gaza.html" \t "_blank), and the Hamas government does not protect them. Appeals court judge Ziad Thabet, told *Al-Monitor* that "during his time in the judiciary, he had noticed that honor killing defendants were usually given light sentences. Three years in prison was the harshest.... Life sentences or execution were never a consideration."

[Al Jazeera also reported](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2014/03/upsurge-palestinian-honour-killings-gaza-201432372831899701.html" \t "_blank) that "the number of so-called 'honor killings' in Palestine doubled in 2013 from the previous year. ... For the past three years, the number of women killed has increased each year."

Can Western feminists not stand up even against a terrorist group, Hamas, on behalf of Gazan women, who cannot speak up for themselves for fear of reprisals? Or would this not be as pleasurable as condemning Israel, the only Middle Eastern country where Muslim women do have equal rights? Or can these progressives only parrot propaganda, [such as](http://blog.unwatch.org/index.php/2014/04/08/un-when-palestinian-men-beat-their-wives-its-israels-fault/" \t "_blank), "Palestinian women are exposed to honor killings by angry Palestinian men due to the Israeli occupation"?

**"Not all Muslims are the same. There are good and bad Muslims, just as there are good and bad people in all religions."**

First of all, thank you very much for this genius discovery. But how can it help reduce the Islamic violence around the world?

Of course it is true that there are many good Muslims, whose values do not follow Islamic teachings verbatim, but also include humanitarian values. They do not wage war on other religions or try to bring them under submission to Islam. In the eyes of jihadis or Islamists, however, who live by the harshest interpretation of most doctrinaire Islamic teachings, such a quality makes them "bad Muslims."

**"All religions are essentially the same."**

Well, not quite. Biblical values are far more benign than Islamic ones, and generally descriptive rather than proscriptive. Furthermore, the most violent of them were long ago abandoned.

No religion, for instance, other than Islam, has ever commanded that those who insult or leave it should be put to death. (See Surahs 6:93, 33:57, 33:61)

On September 24 after being found guilty of "heresy" and "insulting prophet Jonah," [Mohsen Amir Aslani](https://hra-news.org/en/tag/mohsen-amir-aslani" \t "_blank), 37, an Iranian psychologist, was hanged in a prison near the city of Karaj west of Tehran, according to the Human Rights Activists News Agency. Aslani, it seems, had given religious classes where he provided his own interpretations of the Quran. In one of his classes, he apparently told his audience that Jonah could not have emerged from the whale's belly; it was this statement that led to his charge of insulting the prophet Jonah, the Iran Wire website [reported](http://en.iranwire.com/features/6038/" \t "_blank).

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| http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/pics/large/783.jpg  Left: Canan Arin, a feminist lawyer arrested in Turkey for "insulting religious values adopted by a part of the society" and "insulting the President," after she mentioned that the Muslim prophet Muhammad married a 7-year-old girl and the President of Turkey married his wife when she was 15 years old. Right: Mohsen Amir Aslani, an Iranian psychologist who was hanged in Iran for the crimes of "heresy" and "insulting prophet Jonah," after he said that the biblical prophet Jonah could not have emerged from a whale's belly. |

How much time will pass until Islam is reformed or reinterpreted? How many people will be killed, attacked or enslaved until that happens? How many Muslims have the free will or courage to speak out? Will Islamists even ever allow them to, without threatening retaliation? Are the Islamists so uncertain that what they are preaching can stand on its merits -- as the Quran instructs, "without compulsion" -- that they cannot even tolerate even a single comment about one of their prophets?

What Western progressives and feminists are doing for the sake of political correctness -- or a well intentioned, if misguided, "multiculturalism" -- does nothing to help Muslim women. On the contrary, "political correctness," silence, or making excuses for atrocities caused by Islam, can only add to the suffering of women in the Muslim world.

If progressives truly want to protect Muslims, they cannot achieve this goal by "protecting" Islam from criticism.

If one is called "racist" or "Islamophobe," the answer is that these are accusations bullies always use to silence people who disagree with them. The real Islamophobes are those who degrade, abuse and kill their fellow Muslims.

The worst thing any Western progressive or feminist can do in the face of the suffering caused by Islamic teachings, is to stay silent.

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[[1]](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4841/west-enchantment-islam" \l "_ftnref1" \t "_blank) According to the [Turkish Ministry of Justice, 2009](http://www.milliyet.com.tr/Guncel/HaberDetay.aspx?aType=HaberDetay&KategoriID=24&ArticleID=1159501&Date=08.11.2009&b=7%20ayda%20953%20kadin%20olduruldu" \t "_blank).

[[2]](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4841/west-enchantment-islam" \l "_ftnref2" \t "_blank) According to the [data of the Turkish Statistical Institute](http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/turkiyede_181_bin_cocuk_gelin_var-1108338" \t "_blank) in 2012.

[[3]](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/4841/west-enchantment-islam" \l "_ftnref3" \t "_blank) Arin co-founded the Purple Roof-Women's Shelter Foundation, the Association for the Support of Women Candidates and the Women's Rights Enforcement Centre of the Istanbul Bar Association. Between 1994 and 1997, she acted as an expert on violence against women for the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe.