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Islamophobia

By Iftekhhar Hai

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A SMALL NUMBER of terrorists have rattled the super power of the world.

The global war on terror is a war against radical Islamists, but some in the media have taken a different slant.

It spreads "Islamophobia" where all Muslims are targeted collectively. It has to be clear that extremists are the target and radicals are the ones to be taken care of. Not all Muslims.

Some think tanks and lobbyists have contributed significantly to the Islamophobia that affects the mental growth of Americans of all faiths. **My grand daughters 8 and 9 year old are also suffering.**

Many Americans did not like it when Congressman Virgil Goode of Virginia and Dennis Prager of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council objected to U.S. Congressman Keith Ellison using the Quran to take oath in a private ceremony; it signaled a new era of promoting religious tolerance. **This also means American Muslims must rid themselves of religious extremism too.**

It is unconscionable that the election of one Muslim congressman, whose ancestors were brought in chains as slaves in the 18th century, should trigger a debate demanding changes in the immigration laws, "To decrease or stop Muslim immigrants to USA," because Americans someday may elect American Muslims to state and federal offices. One must faith in the American system and American people. **Let them decide democratically not through religious discrimination.**

Vested interests and a few lobbyists are busy casting all American Muslims in a negative light, pinning the label of "terrorism" to exclude them from ever getting elected to Congress. Muslims are easy to stereotype because dumping on them is fun, cheap and

easy. They are seen as poor, powerless and helpless in all fields. **This goes against the traditional chivalry of Americans.**

The reluctance of good Americans to confront Islamophobic incitement reminds me of what Jewish people faced when the wave of anti-Semitism ran rampant in Central and Eastern Europe. I see Islamophobia as one of the branches of Anti-Semitism and racism lurking round the corner.

Several Internet sites associated with Neo-conservative organizations unfairly target Islamic religion and cultures without giving American Muslims an opportunity to debate.

Other scribblers of anti-Islamic slant have begun to cast Muslim-owned and managed businesses, such as the Islamic Development Bank, in the role of sinister malevolent entities, just as 19th- and 20th-century anti-Semites depicted Jewish-owned and managed financial institutions, like the Rothschild or Bleichroeder banks as forces of darkness and disloyalty.

I believe some journalists and Hollywood movie producers look upon defaming Muslims as virtuous activity and write articles against Muslims and Islam. And CNN and Fox News are constantly manipulating polls and putting up questionnaires where the outcome is bound to be anti-Muslim and anti-Islamic.

In a democratic society like ours, engaging in a debate is fundamental to arriving at the truth. It is un-American to collectively marginalize, demonize and to delegitimize American Muslims without a fair trial. Even their institutions and businesses are all suspect without due process and all evidence against them are held confidential. **The Neo-Cons have become judges, jury and witnesses against Muslims and use the global media to spread the Islamophobia.**

In other words, Muslims are all guilty without trial and due process.

If the American political leadership does not have the courage to stand up to those who try to normalize Islamophobia, our democracy will be lost because the enemies using the slogan of freedom and liberty will not stop with American Muslims. American democracy should never become a mechanism to deprive groups of American citizens of their legal rights and protections.

It is time for American Muslims to say, "Give me Liberty or give me Death."

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