

Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood

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Late in March 2007, I read in *Elaph*, the daily Arabic online newspaper, a report about the “**Conference on the Plight of Minorities and Women in the Middle East and North Africa,**” that was held in Zurich, Switzerland, between 24 and 26 March. All the lectures were delivered in Arabic, and are appearing gradually on *Elaph*’s website. By early April, I had downloaded several conference papers that dealt with this issue. I hope to work on their translation, and ultimately, to share some of their contents with the readers of FFI.

The opening lecture was delivered by a former member of the *Muslim Brotherhood*; its title was: “***Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun: (The Muslim Brotherhood), Source of the Persecution of the Minorities and Women***” Here are excerpts from the lecture; followed by my analysis and comments.

“As we consider the status of minorities and women in the Arab and Muslim world, we become very disturbed about their condition. At the same time, we notice that minorities living in the civilized world enjoy their complete rights. It is a well-known fact that Muslims consider both women and minorities as inferior. A non-Muslim is not equal with a Muslim on account of his religion; whereas a woman is worth half a man, because of her gender.”

“Now I would like to offer myself as an example for the possibility of bringing about a change in the Arab and Muslim world. Up till 1990, I was a disciple of al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun, having adopted their thoughts, and being willing to defend them till death. Why not, does not our faith possess absolutely the whole truth, for all time and place; and is not our holy book perfect? But after coming to France, I discovered a new world; a world that has no place for hat red, resentment, selfishness, or a sickly religious narcissism. It is a world where one’s ability enables him or her to get a job, regardless of color, religion, or race. I found myself, an Egyptian Muslim immigrant, enjoying all the rights that French citizens have, except the right to vote in their elections.”

“So I asked myself, how could France’s motto, “justice, equality, and fraternity” (1) be considered as “kufir,” (2) while our minorities and women are discriminated against daily in the name of Islam? I came to the conclusion that al-Ikhwan al-Muta’aslimeen (3) are the main cause for this tyranny, and for the persecution of minorities and women. They managed to accomplish their designs by taking control of the fields of education, information, religious discourse, and al-Azhar University. They filled the textbooks with passages that encourage hatred for the “Other,” calling him a “kafir” (2). The teachers who follow the Ikhwan’s ideology explain verse 7 of the Fatiha, (the first chapter of the Qur’an) “The path of those whom Thou hast favoured; not the (path) of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray” as follows: “those who earn Thine anger” are the Jews; and “those who go astray,” are the Christians.”

*“They choose **Hadiths** that demean women forcing them to wear the **hijab**, making it a required Islamic practice. I read in the 10 March 2007 issue of the magazine **Rose el-Youssef**, that a government school in Upper Egypt forces Christian girls to wear the **hijab**.*

*“The Islamist ideology is basically exclusivist, and advocates the doctrine that Islam is the only true faith. They base their claim on Surah 3 and Aya 85 of the **Qur’an**: **“If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good).”** (Translation of Yusuf Ali) I used to look at this text as propounding an absolute and permanent truth, not open to any discussion or interpretation, teaching all Muslims that **there was no other true religion on earth except Islam**.*

*“The **Ikhwan** taught me that a woman was similar to Satan since she is a tempter of man. After all it was Eve who tempted Adam, and caused him to leave the Garden where he had enjoyed an eternal bliss! Furthermore, these Islamists did not stop with the various **Hadiths** that denounced women, but they advocated the necessity of depriving women of enjoying their sexual life by advocating their circumcision. They ignored the fact that this custom dates back to the time of the Pharos of Egypt; and that neither the Prophet nor his associates ever practiced the circumcision of their daughters. The degradation of women and the minorities in the teaching of the **Ikhwan** could be also seen in their forbidding women and non-Muslims, from holding any important positions in government.*

*“I turned against the **Ikhwan** when I discovered that they were the source of our misfortunes in our Arab and Islamic Umma. It was in France that I learned that the **‘Other’** was not my enemy, but my friend and comrade. Getting to know the **‘Other’** and understanding him, freed me from the lies of the **Ikhwan**. I remember that after coming to France, a young beautiful lady worked in the same department with me. At first, I was rather attracted to her. But when I discovered she was Jewish, I distanced myself from her. I became afraid of her; I convinced myself that she was ugly! I could no longer be friendly with her, since that would have compromised my faithfulness to my religion and country. **In fact, I began to work on a novel that portrayed Jews plotting against Egypt!** That was the extent of my fear of the **‘Other!’***

*“When I was in Egypt during the period of my attraction to Islamist ideology, I had a Christian friend who was very dear to me. One day, I told him, **‘I want you to embrace Islam.’** He asked, **‘Why?’** I answered, **‘Since you are dear to me, I don’t want you to go to hell.’** He laughed, and said, **‘But why should I go to hell?’** I replied, **“Over heaven’s gate stand these words: “La ilaha illa Allah, Muhammad Rasul Allah.”** (4) So, no one enters heaven but a Muslim. **These words summarize the Ikhwani mentality.***

*“There is no way for minorities and women to get their civil and human rights but through the spread of a culture of tolerance. It is necessary to use our minds as we read our sacred texts, and to oppose the role the Islamist teachers are playing in our schools. They fill the minds of students with the hatred of the **‘Other’** and of **women**. From their*

earliest days, students should become acquainted with other faiths; and that their religion is not the only true faith, but one among other faiths.

*“I remember when I was a teacher in Upper Egypt back in 1987 there was only one Christian girl in the public school. Once she told me that on her way home after school, there were students who used to throw stones at her. Her only crime was that she was a Christian! That was the impact of the Islamist mentality at work in Egypt, thanks to the teachings of the **Ikhwan!**”*

*The solution for the plight of minorities and women is to be found in two words: **citizenship and ‘Ilmaniyya** (6). All religions should be practiced in freedom. **‘Ilmaniyya** is not against religion, but in the service of religion. The state would become a nation for all its citizens, with no discrimination on account of religious faith or gender. **The Ikhwan reject the concept of separation of religion and the state, and prefer to have a religiously-based state, with the imposition of the Jizya tax on non-Muslims.** Oh, how I thank God for delivering me from their ideology; otherwise I would still be feeding on their lies and fantasies.*

Analysis

The thesis of the opening lecture at the **Zurich Conference** reveals the destructive and discriminatory nature of the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. No one but a former member of the movement could have described it in such a clear and objective way!

Comments

The meeting and the papers that were read at the Zurich conference constitute a landmark in the history of the modern Arab world. Those who met there represented a cross-section of Mideastern and North African intellectuals. There were Arab Christians and Muslims, men and women, Kurds and other ethnic minorities. They pointed to a deep-seated problem that has plagued the region since the early years of the 20th century.

It’s over two weeks since the Zurich conference has met, and I have yet to see one report about it in the Western press. Unfortunately, neither mainline Western media, nor agencies of Western governments, seem to have been interested to learn the facts about the true nature and source of the problems of the Middle East and North Africa. Not only that, but soon after the conference was held in Switzerland, a troubling piece of news appeared on the website of **Fox News**, on Saturday, 7 April, 2007

“Hoyer Meets Official From Egypt's Banned Muslim Brotherhood”

“House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer met with the Muslim Brotherhood's parliament leader, Mohammed Saad el-Katatni, twice on Thursday — once at the parliament building and then at the home of the U.S. ambassador to Egypt, said Brotherhood spokesman Hamdi Hassan.”

It is beyond belief that a U.S. House Majority leader should consider meeting in Egypt

with a member of an organization that has been the source for the resurgence of Islamic radicalism since the early 1920s?! How much Middle East history does Mr. Hoyer know? Did he realize, for example, when dialoguing with Saad el-Katatni, that on 6 October 1981, President Anwar Sadat was assassinated by members of *Al-Jihad* movement, an off-shoot of *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*?

What a pity that some U.S. members of Congress, knowing next to nothing about the history of the Middle East, imagine that by visiting the area, and holding talks with dictators and members of terrorist organizations, they are working for the welfare of the region! Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer should have gone to Zurich, rather than to Damascus and Cairo. Their real education in the affairs of the Middle East would have taken place in Switzerland, while listening to the impassioned papers that were delivered at the **Conference of the Plight of Minorities and Women in the Middle East and North Africa.**

Notes

(1) Actually, it is: “*Liberté, égalité, et fraternité*” that translates, “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.”

(2) *Al-Ikhwan al-Muta’aslimeen* is a new construct which implies that this group is not truly Muslim, but claiming Islam. Another way of denying them legitimacy.

(3) *Kufr*: Unbelief; *Kafir*: Unbeliever.

(4) The Islamic creed: ***There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.***

(5) *Ilmaniyya*: This Arabic word does not carry the same connotation as the English word, “secularism.” It is closer to the French word, ‘*Laic*’ implying separation of religion from the state.