



## Hypocritical leftists willing to give Muslim extremists a pass

Maureen Callahan

June 30, 2017

He's a former Muslim extremist who speaks out against such extremism — yet he's been labeled an extremist.

Last October, the Southern Poverty Law Center called British author and activist Maajid Nawaz, 39, “part of the ‘ex-radical’ circuit of former Islamists who use that experience to savage Islam.” During a recent appearance on Bill Maher’s show, Nawaz announced he’d be suing the SPLC for defamation.

Citing what he calls “the poverty of low expectations,” Nawaz argues that Islam, like any other religion, should not only field criticism but withstand it. Why, he asks, does the Western world — and liberals, in particular — refuse to condemn what they otherwise find abhorrent?

The SPLC, he says, fights against the oppressions of Christian fundamentalism, yet “the same causes they fight for within America are somehow deemed illegitimate for people like me to fight for within our own communities.”

To wit: The current case in Michigan — the first federal case of its kind — over female genital mutilation, practiced among a Shiite Muslim sect there. The New York Times, incredibly, has framed this as a potentially legitimate custom. “Michigan Case Adds US Dimension to Debate on Genital Mutilation,” ran a June 10 headline.

Debate? Really? An estimated 100 girls have been brutalized in this specific community since 2005 — yet because this barbarism is contextualized as Islamic, far too many liberals seek to justify what is plainly child abuse, a gross violation of human rights.

There are plenty of Catholics and fundamentalist Christians who believe abortion is morally wrong, yet Roe v. Wade remains the law of the land. Why should Islam get special dispensation? Isn't it a supercilious attitude to take — that a muscular religion of 1.6 billion people requires deference to the point of infantilization?

Also on the SPLC's list is Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the Somali-born author and activist who herself survived female genital mutilation and a forced marriage. Ali and fellow activist Asra Q. Nomani recently appeared before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and were shocked that none of the four female Democrats on that panel — including Kamala

Harris, who'd become a feminist cause célèbre the day before, after male colleagues interrupted her interrogation of Attorney General Jeff Sessions — asked a single question.

In a June 22 Times Op-Ed, Ali and Nomani called out Harris along with Sens. Maggie Hassan, Heidi Heitkamp and Claire McCaskill.

“What happened that day was emblematic of a deeply troubling trend among progressives when it comes to confronting the brutal reality of Islamic extremism and what it means for women in many Muslim communities here at home and around the world,” they wrote. “When it comes to the pay gap, abortion access and workplace discrimination, progressives have much to say. But we’re still waiting for a march against honor killings, child marriages, polygamy, sex slavery or female genital mutilation.”

These are horrors, misogyny masquerading as religion, and it’s a Jedi mind trick that works almost every time.

Sen. McCaskill, for example, said she was “worried” about Ali and Nomani’s testimony.

“Anyone who twists or distorts religion is an exception to the rule,” she said. Tell that to women in Saudi Arabia, who cannot drive, work or travel alone, or to women in Pakistan, where a so-called “women’s rights bill” was passed last year allowing men to beat their wives, instructions included.

“These recommendations are, according to the Koran and Sunnah, the prophet’s teachings,” a state official told the BBC. “No one can dispute that.”

Reformers like Ali and Nawaz do, and they continually exhort those Muslims who disagree with such diktats — and those outside the religion — to speak up.

In her Op-Ed, Ali noted the false argument so often made, that to criticize Islam is bigotry. Her ideas, she writes, are often labeled backward and conservative, “as if opposition to violent jihad, sex slavery, genital mutilation or child marriage were a matter of left and right.”

Her critics would point to the success of Muslims in America, a deeply assimilated population that, according to multiple studies — including one published by the Cato Institute in October 2016 — is among the most educated and affluent. Their cultural views don’t deviate as much from non-Muslims either. It’s hard to quantify why, but our national DNA surely contributes; we are a county and a culture of immigrants. We don’t force newcomers to learn English, but life’s easier if you do. Nor do we grapple with dress codes, burqa bans and other such debates that have consumed Europe for years. According to the Cato Institute, American Muslims are the most religiously tolerant and socially liberal in the world and are becoming more so. Has this population self-selected to America, or are their views encouraged by our open society?

No one really knows, but Nawaz and others believe that Europe’s tendency to isolate Muslims — or allow them to isolate themselves — rather than integrate only fuels alienation and resentment. Such communities live parallel to society under their own rule of law, and rather than combat Islamic extremism and jihad, such neglect foments it.

Yet such fear of offending remains that Theresa May, upon becoming prime minister last year, said that England “could benefit a great deal” from the estimated 100 Sharia courts operating there.

“Ideas are more dangerous than people,” Nawaz writes, and a 2016 survey bears that out — 58 percent of British Muslims believe homosexuality should be outlawed and one-quarter said they’d support Sharia law replacing British law. A poll of Muslim immigrants and natives in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium and Sweden, published in December 2013 by Professor Ruud Koopmans of the Berlin Social Science Center, found that 75 percent believe the Koran can be interpreted only one way, that 60 percent would not befriend someone who is gay and 54 percent think the West wants to destroy Islam.

In his new book, “The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam.” author Douglas Murray argues that Europe — Germany especially — has a tendency to overcorrect for past injustices and atrocities. He cites the left’s rejection, in 2015, of concerns raised by Angela Merkel, David Cameron and Nicolas Sarkozy that Europe had erred in allowing some citizens to live in opposition to their nation’s own laws. In an interview with NPR on Tuesday, Murray raised the irony of liberals supporting illiberal beliefs.

“This is a big problem,” Murray said. “As well as speaking the language of inclusion, we have to speak the language of exclusion — what it is that we won’t tolerate as well as what it is that we do.”

Nawaz himself believes extremism is fertilized by three subsets: Islamist theocracies, hard-right populism and what he calls the regressive left — those who argue for genderless bathrooms but won’t acknowledge that honor killings happen in Europe and the United States. In compiling their list, he says, the SPLC has employed a tactic used by those they should condemn.

“Just imagine how ex-Muslim Islam-critic Ayaan Hirsi Ali must feel to be included in your list,” he wrote in October.

“Her friend Theo van Gogh was murdered on the streets of Amsterdam in 2004. And back then, there was another list pinned to Theo’s corpse with a knife: It, too, named Ayaan Hirsi Ali.”