

7-2018

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Recommended Citation

Cerić, Mustafa (2018) "Messages to European Muslims," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 38 : Iss. 3 , Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol38/iss3/4>

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MESSAGES TO EUROPEAN MUSLIMS¹

By Mustafa Cerić

Mustafa Cerić is the Grand Mufti Emeritus and the former Reisu-l-Ulema of Bosnia. He received his education in Sarajevo at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt, and his PhD at the University of Chicago in the United States. He has given lectures throughout the world and served as representative of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and the World Congress of Bosniaks, where he is president at hundreds of locations abroad. He is the co-recipient of 2003 Felix Houphouet-Boigny Peace Prize UNESCO for distinguished contribution to interfaith dialogue, tolerance and peace, Paris. His article, “Invitation: A Declaration of European Muslims” was published in OPREE, Vol. 37, No. 5, Sept. 2017.

I

My Letter to an Imagined Muslim Girl Living in the West

Sarajevo, Bosnia

Ramadan 12, 1438

June 7, 2017

Dear Noorina,

This letter is long overdue. Sorry, I was scared to write you. Indeed, I was wordless. I was dumbstruck. My whole body was frozen. I couldn't walk. I couldn't talk. I couldn't do anything but think of what happened the other day in London. How're you doing? Are you scared

¹ A series of three essays by Dr. Mustafa Cerić, the Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia, the first two in the form of imaginary letters, about his concerns on the dilemmas of European Muslims.

like me? I wanted to tell you not to be scared, but caught myself in an additional fear. I was afraid you would think of me as a hypocrite if I tell you so. And I don't want to look like a hypocrite. I want to be honest with you. I want to tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Indeed, I want to tell you how I feel about Naron, DeFire; Sharroon, McEvil; and Damoon, El Bloodey. Don't be confused. I gave them these names as they really represent to my mind the Fire, the Evil and the Blood. They are terrible. They have hijacked your faith and poured it into blood. And mine as well. I thought they couldn't do this to me. I pretended that I am strong enough not to allow them to do so. But, I have to admit, I was too meek to prevent them from this evil. I am ashamed before you, my Noorina. I am ashamed because I was unable to spare you from the bad feelings you have right now. And this is exactly what I wanted to tell you in this letter: you shouldn't be ashamed of anything.

Your faith is clean from their evil. You are Noorina, DeLight, like Malaika, like Angelina... Indeed, you are the *Noor*, the Light of our faith. And they are their own evil. They crept into our faith... they stole its *Noor*, Light, and they made it look like the *Nār*, the Fire; they corrupted the good of our faith and made it look like the *Sharr*, the Evil; they twisted the trust of our faith and made it look like the *Dam*, the Blood. Therefore, I named them DeFire, McEvil and El Bloodey. They don't belong to us. They belong to the one who was created from the Fire. He is called Demon. I hate him as I hate them who are embarrassing you right now as you are walking on the street of London, Paris, Berlin, New York, Sydney, Manila... with your *hijab-veil*. But don't be ignominious by any means. You are the light of this world as you are innocent of their evil and pure in your soul. Be always that way. Don't change your mind. Be what you are: the Light in the darkness of the human mind and the Beacon in the evil of human deed.

Don't listen to what they say about your faith. They are ignorant about your soul and benighted about your mind. Don't be disappointed by their ignorance. They like their prejudices. They don't want to see the light of your faith. Instead, they are surveilling the fire in your soul; they are searching to find the devil in your brain. Don't blame them. DeFire, McEvil and El Bloodey who claim to hold our faith but scare them. Tell them though that you are more scared than they are because of them. Tell them, also, that your fear is ceaseless as the acts of terror of these Demons are haunting over our Faith Community. I know that you would have liked to pose some questions to the Demons as to why they are shooting fire against innocent people? Why they are doing this awful evil against common sense? Why are they shedding blood on the European streets? Also, you would have liked to ask them why they are endangering our stay in Europe? Indeed, you would have liked to ask them why they are spreading hatred against our faith and culture in the West?

But they are out of your reach because they are possessed by the Devil's preaching. He, the Devil, is their chief. These ghosts of Devil's mood don't speak their mind. They only perform Devil's sickening goal. Therefore, don't try to know what they think. They have no mind... they have no soul... they have the poison in their blood... they have evil thoughts in their hearts... You should focus on your noble work. You are the light against darkness... you are the hope against despair... you are the love of faith... you are the beacon of life... you are the pride of this time... Dear Noorina, this is what I wanted to tell you as I am like you in the state of soul-searching to find the right way forward in these difficult days for all of us who care about our future in Europe and elsewhere. I know there are many questions lingering in your mind about who are we and what are we supposed to do to cleanse our faith from a pollution caused by some irrational and irresponsible people who claim to belong to our faith. Perhaps this is not the right time for

all answers to all questions that we have on our mind right now. We need time to comprehend some of these questions in order to find right answers to them. I hope this message will reach you wherever you are. Please, pray for me as I will pray for you in this holy month of Ramadan!

Sincerely yours with warm Salam,

Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia

II

After the civil attack in London and Manchester, Dr. Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia-Herzegovina, sent "An Appeal to the European Muslims: Let Us Have a Common Word with Our Neighbors." There is no recipe for success, but there is a recipe for failure. The recipe for failure is violence "in the name of Allah."

I have never felt so shocked nor so ashamed as I felt while listening to the world media about the bloody London Bridge attack claiming to be carried out "in the name of Allah." I cannot accept it because this is not my faith. This is not the Allah I believe in. My Allah is not a hater! My Allah is not violent! My faith is not the knife! My faith is not terror. My Allah is Loving and Merciful! My faith is common sense and a warm word. But how am I going to explain it to my neighbors in Europe? After the Manchester and London attacks, they have no will to listen to me anymore. They don't buy my faith's stories of love; they don't care about my faith's beautiful narratives. They are no longer interested in the stories of my faith. They want to know what I have done to stop the bloody violence "in the name of Allah" in the streets of Europe. I have done a lot, but it seems it is not enough.

I confess, I have never felt so confused and so helpless to explain what is going on in and around my faith community. I used to interpret it as a conspiracy against Muslims. I consoled myself that it was just a transitory episode. I argued that it was an act of extremist minorities. I avoided being pressed by it. I explained that it was just a political game by big powers to gain the Muslim wealth. I was listening to those who say: "They hate Muslims." This was all I could think of to avoid the clear and loud confession that my Faith Community has a big problem in and around itself. But now I confess: my Faith Community has many problems. And the biggest of all is the problem of denial as well as the delegation of its problems to others to be solved. I have realized that I have to be clear and loud that my Faith Community has a problem, which can no longer be denied, nor can it be delegated to others to be solved. Indeed, my Faith Community (my *Ummah*) must solve the problem within itself before it can solve the problems around it. Indeed, the problem inside my Faith Community is much more difficult and dangerous than the problem outside of it.

I know there are those who will assert that I believe that the bloody attacks against innocent civilians in Manchester and London are more important than the attacks in Palestine, Kabul, Mosul, Sa'an, and Misrata. It is not more important, but it is certainly more dangerous for Muslims in Europe, a majority of whom have fled from Muslim majority countries to seek peace and security for their children in Europe. Now, this peace and security that they have experienced so far is greatly threatened. After the attacks in Manchester and London, and before that in Paris, Berlin and Zurich, a great cloud of uncertainty hovers over Muslims in Europe. European Muslims must be aware of this. Therefore, the European Muslims must be loud and clear not only to condemn the violence "in the name of Allah," but they must also take concrete steps against the abuse of Islam in any way. European Muslims must have a united, clear, and

unequivocal voice in the fight against violence claimed to be in "the name of Allah." It is no longer a matter of the good will of individuals and groups working on interfaith dialogue, but this is an existential question of Islam and Muslims in Europe.

Therefore, I urge European Muslims to immediately gather around the "common word between us and them," our neighbors in Europe, regardless of their faith, race, and nationality to take an oath before God, ourselves, and our neighbors in Europe to cherish and promote peace, security, and neighborly cooperation to which we are bound by our Islamic faith and our Islamic culture. Indeed, we must take an oath that we will do whatever it takes to fight violence against innocent people together with our neighbors. We, the current generation of European Muslims, owe this to our descendants—we must not leave our debts to our innocent descendants!

There is no time for hesitation!

There is no room for calculation!

There is no excuse for procrastination!

There is no justification for waiting!

There is no salvation in silence!

There is no point in indecision and indifference!

There is no collective innocence without the conviction and the isolation of individuals!

There is no future for Islam or Muslims in Europe except in coexistence and tolerance with our European neighbors!

If we do not do our sacred duty today, our descendants will curse us tomorrow for our failure!

III

The International Conference on Islamic Studies in Tirana, Albania, April 5, 2018

Today, the Islamic world and Muslims living in non-Islamic countries are faced with many external and internal challenges. It is our responsibility to find a solution and to serve it to all Muslims in order not to fall back on these challenges.

Grand Mufti Emeritus of Bosnia Mustafa Cerić, PhD, KEP (Knowledge Exchange Program) Advisory Commission Chairman, served as keynote speaker at the 1st International Conference on Islamic Studies at the invitation of Dr. Ferdinand Gjana, the Rector of the University College Bedër in Tirana, with a very challenging topic: “Challenges of Muslims in 21st Century Society.”

Prof. Dr. Ferdinand Gjana, I am honored by the invitation of the Rector of the University College Bedër in Tirana to attend this first international conference on Islamic Studies with a very challenging topic: “Challenges of Muslims in 21st Century Society.” And I am challenged to speak about the Muslim challenge of this age.

I am pleased by the presence of Grand Mufti of Albania here with us today, H. E. Skënder Bruçaj, who fulfilled his promise to me a year or so ago in Abu Dhabi that he will invite me to Tirana. And here, I am very grateful to have the opportunity to meet my brothers and colleagues in the Balkans and to speak with them about the Muslim challenges of our times. Thus, here I am to witness the fulfillment of the promise of the Grand Mufti of Albania, who has already earned a great respect in the Muslim world as much as the great Albanian hero of the twentieth century, Shaikh Sabri Khoja, who deserves to be remembered not only as a hero of Albania, but also as a hero of the Balkans and the Muslim world as a whole for his human and

Muslim faith perseverance in difficult times of the absence of religious freedom in the Balkans.
/Al-Fatiha/.

It goes without saying that it's extremely important that we Muslims in the Balkans meet often to discuss our Islamic affairs and to be good examples in promoting the faith of Islam in a truly reasonable way. The Albanians and Bosnians are not only the indigenous and autochthonous nations in the Balkans but also in Europe. Therefore, we have the right and duty to be the frontrunners in explaining and defending the true meaning of Islam and the true nature of Muslims in the world. This is what the Muslim world expect from us to do and this is what Europe is waiting to hear from us to say our word about our inalienable human rights as we are trying to find our right place in the Balkan and European societies. We should invite our brothers from the Muslim world to explain our situation here, but also to give our important contribution to a betterment of the image of Islam and Muslims in the world. I speak here in the capacity of the Advisory Commission Chairman of the Knowledge Exchange Program with the headquarter in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as well, and I can say that our work in promoting the way of *Wasatiyyah* and tolerance of Islam is very appreciated by all people in the Muslim world who are committed to spreading the desirable peace and security in the world.

So, let me begin my presentation today by saying that, perhaps, I am not entirely eligible for the task you have delegated to me today, but, for sure, the task is entirely a daunting one not only on me but also on all Muslims who are nowadays politically responsible and morally sensitive. Indeed, Islam and Muslims are in focus today, rightly or wrongly, more than any other world faith and faithful group not only in the world media, but also in the world academia, politics and general public. As Shiraz Maher observed, the Graeme Wood's essay for *The Atlantic* in February 2015, titled "What ISIS Really Wants" was an instant success. It was the

most read article in *The Atlantic's* almost 160-year history and was the most read digital story of 2015— receiving more than one million page views the day it was published. Some Muslim protagonists see this phenomenon of interest in Islamic affairs as a divine providence based on the Prophet Muhammad's Hadith that this religion, meaning Islam, will reach everywhere in the world.

مَدْرَ بَيْتَ اللَّهِ يَنْزُكُ وَلَا وَالنَّهَارُ اللَّيْلُ بَلَغَ مَا الْأَمْرُ هَذَا أَيْبُلُغَنَّ وَسَلَّمْ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى اللَّهُ رَسُولُ قَالَ قَالَ الدَّارِي تَمِيمٍ عَنْ
مسند 16509. الْكُفْرَ بِهِ اللَّهُ يُذِلُّ وَذُلًّا الْإِسْلَامَ بِهِ اللَّهُ يُعِزُّ عِزًّا دَلِيلٌ بِذُلِّ أَوْ عَزِيزٌ بِعِزِّ الدِّينِ هَذَا اللَّهُ أَدْخَلَهُ إِلَّا وَبَرٍّ وَلَا
أحمد.

Tameem Ad-Dari reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said: “This matter will certainly reach every place touched by the night and day. Allah will not leave a house or residence but cause this religion to enter it, and the honorable will be honored and the disgraceful will be disgraced. Allah will honor the honorable with Islam, and Allah will disgrace the disgraceful with unbelief.”

Staunch Muslim protagonists interpret this Hadith in the light of a unique worth of an Islamic message which cannot but be noticed by everyone regardless of his/her attitudes towards it. These people say that the news about Islam through the major world media, regardless of whether it be positive or negative, is proof that Islam is worth serious attention by those who are friendly to it, to strengthen their faith in it, while those who are unfriendly to it are being exposed to it, to be acquainted with it, despite their adversarial attitudes toward it. This reasoning is strange, but it is present in the minds of those who cannot accept that Islam is by any means wrong, even if it appears to some that there is something wrong because of the acts of violence by some irresponsible groups who claim to act in the name of Islam or in the name of Allah. Those who have strong belief in Islam cannot have any doubt in the goodness, righteousness and tolerance of their faith of Islam. This conviction of a tolerant Islam is like a myth that cannot be

eliminated from their conscience. However, there are some Muslim antagonists who are frightened by an apocalyptic prediction of another Prophetic Hadith:

عَنْهُ اللَّهُ رَضِيَ طَالِبِ أَبِي بِنِ عَلِيٍّ عَنْ ، رُومَانَ أَبِي عَنْ ، قَبِيلِ أَبِي عَنْ ، لَهْبَعَةَ ابْنِ عَنِ ، وَرَشْدِينَ ، أَوْلِيْدُ حَدَّثَنَا لَهُمْ يُؤْبَهُ لَا ضَعْفَاءَ قَوْمٌ يَطْهَرُ نَمَّ ، أَرْجُلَكُمْ وَلَا ، أَيْدِيَكُمْ تُحَرِّكُوا فَلَا الْأَرْضَ فَالزَّمُوا السُّودَ الرَّايَاتِ رَأَيْتُمْ إِذَا " : قَالَ أَسْمَاؤُهُمْ ، أَهْلِهِ مِنْ وَلَيْسُوا الْحَقَّ إِلَى يَدْعُونَ ، مِيثَاقٍ وَلَا بَعْهَدٍ يَفُونَ لَا ، الدَّوْلَةَ أَصْحَابُ هُمْ ، الْحَدِيدِ كَرَبْرَ قُلُوبُهُمْ ، مَنْ الْحَقَّ اللَّهُ يُؤْتِي نَمَّ ، بَيْنَهُمْ فِيمَا يَحْتَلِفُوا حَتَّى ، النِّسَاءِ كَشَعُورِ مُرْحَاةٍ وَشَعُورُهُمْ ، الْفَرَى وَنَسِبَتُهُمْ ، الْكُنَى (573) " الفتن كتاب " في الله رحمه حماد بن نعيم رواه (يَسَاءُ

When you see the black flags, stay where you are, don't move your hands or your feet, and when some miserable people appear to you, do not pay attention to them. Their hearts are like the iron of the iron, they pretend that they are the owners of the state, but they do not abide by a covenant or a contract. They claim the truth but they do not behold it. They have nicknames and their backgrounds are rural, their feeling is soft as the feeling of women, so much so that they disagree with each other very easily, but, then God will give the whole truth to whomever he wants.

Staunch Muslim antagonists against extremists are applying this Hadith to contemporary extreme groups within the Muslim societies. Indeed, the Muslims who believe in an inclusive Islam are extremely embarrassed by the acts of violence, terror, and intolerance in the name of Islam, but they are unable to stop these extreme protagonists who claim to be Muslims, but whose real identical background is unclear except that they act in the name of Islam or in the name of Allah. It seems that we are faced with an unprecedented phenomenon of the actors of violence on the global scene where no one knows their real identity or some know who they are but hide them because they must hide their own identities which, if somehow discovered, might be used against them in such a way to show the real actors behind this bloody circus on the world stage—which is being labeled as Islam and Muslims around the world—but which is insane, stupid, silly, idiotic, and mindless.

No, I am not seeking excuses for anyone. I just wanted to bring about these two *Hadiths* as an illustration of the state of the Muslim situation today, in terms of two opposite viewpoints about the present image of Islam and the present position of the Muslims in today's world: one is missionary optimistic and the other is apocalyptically pessimistic. As I said, reading the first *Hadith*, the missionary optimistic people believe that the very talk or debate worldwide about Islam, whether positively or negatively, is a fulfillment of the Prophetic promise that Islam will reach every household on this planet, while those Muslims who are pessimistic about the state of Islam in the world today read the second *Hadith* as a sign of a menace of the Muslim world, nay, of the future of Islamic civilization as a whole.

Indeed, Muslims today are before an Islamic civilizational challenge which is unprecedented in their entire history. Should I remind you of the fact that Islamic civilization is still a living civilization by a relevant account of Matthew Melko, who made the total 12 world civilizations in history: “seven of which have vanished (Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Cretan, Classical, Byzantine, Middle American, Andean) and five of which still remain (Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Islamic, Western).” And, as Niall Ferguson quoted: “Shmuel Eisenstadt counted six by adding Jewish civilization to the club.” Furthermore, Ferguson pointed out that:

The interaction of these few civilizations with one another, as much as with their own environments, has been among the most important drivers of historical change. The striking thing about these interactions is that authentic civilizations seem to remain true unto themselves for very long periods, despite outside influences. As Fernand Braudel put it: civilization is in fact the longest story of all... A civilization ... can persist through a series of economies or societies.

It is in the context of the interactions of these authentic civilizations that I would like to bring to our discussion one of “the most dangerous philosophers in the West..” (Adam Kirsch, *New Republic*), a Hegelian philosopher, Lacanian psychoanalyst, and political activist, Slavoj Žižek, of Slovenia, who is “wanted” by his opponents because of his insistence on the European

roots of the project of universal emancipation; of his critique of the elevation of refugees and immigrants into a new form of global proletariat; of his insistence on the problems of cultural identity; of his doubts about some ideological components of the LGBT movement, and of his support for the ‘fascist’ Donald Trump, as he said . Žižek’s sharp eye sees what many people do not see, and I would say what some Muslims don’t see today and that is that we, as Muslims, don’t live in an isolated island. On the contrary, we are, indeed, part and parcel of living in a great global world, to which we have contributed a lot for it to be as it is today. Thus, we, as Muslims, are both a part of the problem and a part of the solution of this global world. It is upon us to choose which part of these two parts, problem or solution, we want to be. I believe that a majority of the Muslim world want to be a key part of the solution and not one bit of the problem. Žižek stated that the only true question today is: Do we endorse the predominant acceptance of capitalism as a fact of (human) nature, or does today’s global capitalism contain strong enough antagonisms to prevent its indefinite reproduction? I feel that I, as a Muslim, am part of this question too. And I am part of his four such antagonisms as well:

(1) the commonality of culture in the broadest sense, of ‘immaterial’ capital: the immediately socialized forms of ‘cognitive’ capital, primarily language, our means of communication and education, not to mention the financial sphere with the absurd consequence of uncontrolled virtual money circulation;

(2) the commonality of external nature, threatened by human pollution: all particular dangers—global warming, dying of the oceans, etc.—are aspects of a derailment of the entire life reproduction system on earth;

(3) the commonality of internal nature (the biogenetic inheritance of humanity): with the new biogenetic technology, the creation of a New Man in the literal sense of changing human nature becomes a realistic prospect;

(4) the commonality of humanity itself, of the shared social political space: the more capitalism gets global, the more new walls and apartheid are emerging, separating those who are “in” from those who are “out.”²

By this quotation, I want to highlight two sets of the challenges of the Muslim societies today. They are external or global and internal or domestic. In other words, the Muslim societies today are in between an “in” or an “out” of the civilizational frame, with both a historical and contemporary advantage of it as being the holder of a prestigious title of a living civilization among the other living civilizations of today, especially the Western civilization, as the two, the Islamic and the Western civilizations, stand, by all accounts, as Siamese twins in the world. Indeed, these two civilizations are inseparable and inalienable from each other no matter how much some people from both camps would like to separate them or alienate them from each other. These two civilizations share all four of Žižek’s commonalities: culture as an immaterial capital; threats of environmental pollution; biogenetic change of human nature; and social political space. Each of these four commonalities is important, but the commonality of social political space, it seems to me, is the most challenging of all.

Although, the external or global and internal or domestic affairs in the Muslim societies are strongly converging; and despite the fact that it is not always clearly recognizable as to which one of them is more influential on the overall Muslim social political development, I would say that the internal or domestic affairs are more challenging to the Muslim soul and mind today than

² Slavoj Žižek, *The Courage of Hopelessness - Chronicles of a Year of Acting Dangerously* (Penguin Random House, 2017), "Introduction", p. xix.

the external or global ones. And, contrary to a common perception that the lack of a strong Muslim unity is the biggest obstacle to an overall Muslim stability and prosperity, I would say though that the lack of the clear notion of diversity in the Muslim theological and political thought is the key cause for a disturbance and even bloody violence in the Muslim societies. By far, the Muslim faith and the Muslim faithful people are more united in their basic creeds than any other religious group in the world. Indeed, without exception, all Muslims around the world have the same belief in the divine origin of the Qur'an, in the authenticity and eligibility of the last Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, in the right direction in Muslim prayers towards the K'aba in Mecca, in the right and same day of Arafat of the Hajj pilgrimage, etc. So, there is no Muslim disunity issue here in regard to their basic Islamic creeds.

Hence, the Muslims should spare time taking about unity which is obviously there. Instead, the Muslims should start talking about the fact of their diversity, which is obviously there as well, but which is not rightly recognized in the sense of a creative and enriching way as it should be and as it has always been. Therefore, the biggest challenge of the Muslim societies today, as I see it, is to learn how to live the unity in diversity of their ethnic, national, racial, cultural and political background, and their abundant creative potentialities. In short, the Muslim societies today must learn how to respect each other's diversities as much as they love each other for the sake of their having the same faith and cultural identity. This, indeed, is more challenging than anything else, namely, it is more challenging today to appreciate the Muslim diversity than to insist on the Muslim unity as an empty propaganda that leads some Muslim individuals and groups to a cheap populism and demagogy. Let me say, then, that if Muslims were to respect each other's life, faith, freedom, property, and dignity as much as they love each other because of their common belief in God, in the Angels of God, in the Books of God, in the Prophets of God,

in the Last Day of Judgement, and in God's final decree of their ultimate destiny, their societies would be a lot better in terms of their cultural and social political life, which they share with others as well, and they would be a lot better in their self-sufficiency of cultural, political and civilizational development.

And the second challenge that is on the Muslim mind today is somewhat of a new phenomenon but an old pattern of an intentional misinterpretation and misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims in the world. Therefore, this new phenomenon got a new name as well—islamophobia. It is not entirely clear what islamophobia means, but it is, no doubt, aimed to embarrass Islam and Muslims around the world in whatever way possible. It is similar to antisemitism, but it is not the same. It is not racial, but it has something to it; it is not cultural, but it has something to it. It is like bigotry, but it is not fascist. It is simply antagonistic to the presence of Islam and Muslims in certain places in the world. Indeed, islamophobia is a fear from unknown, which is known as Islam, and which is labeled as Islamic, Islamist, Jihadist, Salafist, Wahhabist, terrorist, etc.

Again, contrary to a common perception that islamophobia is meant to frighten or terrorize or even to proselytize non-Muslims around the world, especially in the West, I would say that the islamophobia is primarily meant to frighten and inflict a kind of pain on the souls and minds of Muslims around the world. Non-Muslims, particularly Jews and Christians in the West, have no reason to fear either from Islam as a pure faith or from the Muslims as true faithful people. These three correlative monotheistic religions, the religions of God's Books, have accommodated each other through sweet and bitter experiences throughout a long history and thus, they know exactly the potentials of each other and they are aware of the fact that there is no alternative to their common coexistence by an inevitable mutual respect as to have and to hold

forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to work together for peace and to cherish each other for good of all, till death do them part. All these three religions have learnt by now that the heirs of this earth will be neither the meek nor the aggressive, but cooperative.

However, what is at stake here is somewhat an overdose visibility of Muslim religiosity in some places not only in the West, but also in the Muslim societies, the kind of religiosity which has almost disappeared, particularly in the West, due to an anti-religious philosophy of Niche, Russell, Sartre, and other European philosophical minds who have propagated a kind of godlessness or faithlessness in favor of a rational enlightenment. I agree the Muslims are sometimes overloud in highlighting their religiosity which often irritates some people in Europe, not only among the Christian laity, but also among some Muslim laity, and not only in the West, but also in the Muslim societies. Therefore, my advice would be to those Muslims in Europe who like to be somewhat religiously visible and loud, I would like them to consult this verse of the Holy Qur'an, from the sura Al-Isra' (17), the verse 110, which reads:

وَابْتَغِ الْوَسِيلَةَ أَلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ أَدْعَاكُمْ أَوْ تُدْعَوْنَ أَوْ يَسْتَجِيبُ لَكُمْ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَلَوْ كُنْتُمْ كَافِرِينَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَسْتَجِيبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ۗ

Say to them Muhammad: - Pray to God Almighty or pray to Rahman, the most Merciful, and you may pray to any of His beautiful names, but don't be either overloud in your prayer or over-shy in it. Instead, you follow the right way, the middle way in your prayer.

Indeed, the truth does not need to be overloud because it is the truth. The lie needs to be overloud to silence the truth. Islam is truth, peace and tolerance. Therefore, it does not need to be overloud to irritate others or to terrorize them in whatever manner.

In conclusion, then, I would like to say that the Muslim societies today have two biggest challenges of all: one is the unity in diversity and the other is islamophobia which is aimed at them to alienate them from Islam both as faith and culture. Indeed, I see the latter challenge, the

islamophobia, as a Muslim self-alienation, as the most pressing challenge of all. It is not because there is something wrong in Islam or in Muslims, but because we live in the world today which is a “topsy-turvy world” as it was in the time of Hegel, who stated in one of his most bizarre passages in the “Phenomenology,” that this world is a topsy-turvy world where sweet becomes sour, white becomes black and north becomes south. The inversions cover moral laws as well as natural ones: honor becomes contempt and punishment becomes pardon.³

The final word in this presentation of mine today before this noble audience in Tirana I give to the great Arab prose writer and author of works of literature, Mu’tazili theology and politico-religious polemics Al-Jahiz Abu ‘Uthman ‘Amr ibn Bahr Al-Kinani Al-Basri (776-869), who said: “If you think deeply about the conditions of people, you will find those who are most concerned with the faults of others to have the most faults themselves. And this is our message to all islamophobia people wherever they are and whoever they might be.”

Thank you and God bless you!

³ From *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §158, quoted in Žižek, *op.cit.*