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Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories From The Fight Against Muslim Fundamentalism

YOUR FATWA



DOES NOT



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KARIMA BENNOUNE



Synopsis

Eye-opening accounts of heroic resistance to religious extremism. In Lahore, Pakistan, Faizan Peerzada resisted being relegated to a "dark corner" by staging a performing-arts festival despite bomb attacks. In Senegal, wheelchair-bound Assatou Ciss produced a comic book to illustrate the injustices faced by disabled women and girls. In Algeria, publisher Omar Belhouchet and his journalists struggled to put out their paper, El Watan ("The Nation"), the same night that a 1996 jihadist bombing devastated their offices and killed 18 of their colleagues. In Afghanistan, Young Women for Change took to the streets of Kabul to denounce sexual harassment, undeterred by threats. In Minneapolis, Abdirizak Bihi organized a Ramadan basketball tournament among Somali refugees to counter the influence of Al Shabaab. From Karachi to Tunis, Kabul to Tehran, across the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, and beyond, these trailblazers often risked death to combat the rising tide of fundamentalism within their own countries. But this global community of writers, artists, doctors, musicians, museum curators, lawyers, activists, and educators of Muslim heritage remains largely invisible, lost amid the heated coverage of Islamist terror attacks on one side and abuses perpetrated against suspected terrorists on the other. A veteran of 20 years of human rights research and activism, Karima Bennoune draws on extensive fieldwork and interviews to illuminate the inspiring stories of those who represent one of the best hopes for ending fundamentalist oppression worldwide.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book addresses the charge that Muslims are doing nothing to end fundamentalist violence. The author, fluent in Arabic, French and English, interviewed nearly 300 people from almost 30 countries -- from Afghanistan to Mali -- and has compiled story after story of brave people resisting those who practice violence in the name of the Muslim faith. These stories make it clear that what's happening in the Muslim world is a clash within civilizations, not between civilizations. These stories are about brave people living in (exiled in some cases) Muslim-majority societies that westerners can relate to as being reasonable people. Unfortunately, this book is also filled with stories of horrible atrocities of Muslim extremist killing other Muslims. According to a 2009 study, 98 percent of al-Qaeda's victims were Muslim between 2006 and 2008. Many of these were innocent apolitical victims of violence, and of course those featured in this book who openly resist are often targeted in particular. So on the one hand this book carries an optimistic tone of a rallying cry of resistance against Islamic terrorism. But my impression of international news is that the trend seems to be headed in the wrong direction (as if I write this, ISIS is in the news). Thus I come away from this book feeling discouraged, pessimistic and sad. At the same time I admire those who are brave enough to resist against what appears to be insurmountable odds. Human rights groups and academics will be surprised to learn that this book includes them for criticism of their relativist stances. The author believes they are overly sympathetic to the notion that "Islamists represent ordinary people, and their opponents are simply elite."

At first glance, Karima Bennoune's "Your Fatwa Does Not Apply Here: Untold Stories from the Fight against Muslim Fundamentalism" might look, to the naïve reader, like the statement all America has been waiting for since September 11, 2001. Finally, a "moderate Muslim" speaks out against Muslim terrorism. Bennoune grew up in Algeria and the US. She identifies with Muslim culture, though she is an agnostic. She condemns Al Qaeda unequivocally: "I hate Al Qaeda" (267). She condemns Muslims for "whitewashing" their message by saying one thing in English and another in Arabic (17). She despises "left-wingers who have been drinking a certain kind of multicultural Kool-Aid" who "tell us how great a Sharia really is or can be if you just reinterpret it a little" (19-20). She critiques CAIR (221). She sneers at Pakistani conspiracy theories that attribute Taliban atrocities to Americans, Hindus, and Jews (243). She insists that US drone attacks do not justify Taliban killings (247). She sniffs at invocations of Edward Said's concept of "orientalism" to muffle criticism of terrorism (249). She rejects the idea that Islamic supremacists should be invited to participate in national life on the basis of tolerance and diversity, since they reject tolerance and diversity, and their inclusion would result in "One man, one vote, one time" (294-5). "Compromise

with Political Islam is Impossible," she quotes, approvingly (341). She records in heart-wrenching detail the hideous, massive, and inexcusable suffering Muslim terror has wreaked on the lives of Muslims from North Africa to South Asia. "Fatwa" is published by WW Norton, a respected academic and popular publisher.

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