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Letter from an Iranian reader

Islam and the Left - a reply to Salma Yaqoob

- Debate - Marxism and Religion -

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An Iranian reader takes sharp issue with Salma Yaqoob's October article on Islam and the Left. (For obvious reasons the name of this correspondent is being withheld).

Dear International Viewpoint

What is the difference between a Muslim in power and a Muslim outside of it?

I read the comment of Ms. Salma Yaqoob. Firstly, I was astonished how a leftist website has published an article in defence of Muslims and "their contribution to peace and anti-imperialist struggle" without any response to it.

As if we, the people living under tyranny of despotic regimes in the Middle East, don't have the right to call ourselves a part of humanity and cry out our sufferings.

As if it is not political Islam that has created a catastrophe in these societies not only at present time but also from centuries ago. I am also surprised when European leftists forget the modernist traditions of France and Italy in the war against fanaticism and the oppressive rule of the religion.

Undoubtedly, the seclusion of religion and its waning role in the West, has caused leftists to forget the danger of its revival that has become a threat as internal crises of capitalism grow. The US is a good example where Christian fundamentalism is going to introduce itself as a main current.

Since, Ms. Yaqoob has pointed to my country - Iran - in her comment, let me give a response. She says "though what has Iran got to do with me?" and tries to absolve herself, and get rid of bearing the stigma of a supporter of Iranian Islam. She says everything is OK and Muslims and socialists can work together.

When I hear these words I remember speeches of Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris who said "everybody even communists will be free to work under our rules, women will not have to observe hijab [Islamic code of dressing for women]".

Yes, Muslims give good promises before seizing power but create a bloodbath after seizing it. Please don't tell me there are various factions among Muslims. I do know this well, but the truth resides largely in ideological teachings of Islam.

As you know Islam is based on certain dogma. Even most modernist Islamic intellectuals don't deny this. Islam does not tolerate relativity and doubt, and Muslims must believe in absolute concepts. Indeed, what's wrong with Islam stems from this fact that Islam has not been 'Protestanized' and has not yet been expelled to the realm of private life.

This is our painful and tragic experience in Iran, where thousands of leftists were killed and tortured to death. I would also like to know how Ms. Yaqoob thinks about

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stoning men and women for adultery, cutting hands and legs of thieves, qisas (mutilating body members as an Islamic punishment), lashing men and women for having relations as opposite sexes, and many other examples of inhumane behaviour in our country.

I would like to know whether she has protested against the barbarous conditions imposed on women in Iran and other countries of the Middle East, or whether she prefers to remain silent and fight "imperialism and war" hand in hand with "anti-imperialist" regimes of the Middle East such Iran, former Bathist regime, Syria etc.?

As the people tolerating much pain and torture in the last quarter of century please let us doubt these words.

Best Regards

A friend from Iran