

Down Under and Over the Top

by Hugh Fitzgerald



On March 15, a lone lunatic killed 50 people at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand. All over the world, people registered their horror and expressed sympathy for the victims. The Prime Minister of New Zealand received great praise for wearing a hijab when she visited the survivors of the attack; since then, she has continued to wear the hijab in numerous public appearances. For this she has won continued praise. Many non-Muslim women, too, have emulated her, wearing hijabs in solidarity with Muslims, showing their hijabbed selves on Instagram, together with virtue-signaling sentiments of solidarity (“we are with you”), or identity (“we are you”), each text more treacly than the last. And in Australia, too, not to be outdone, a hijab campaign promoted on social media has also taken off among non-Muslim women.

The hijab campaign in New Zealand appears to have been [the idea of Auckland doctor Thaya Ashman](#), who wanted to encourage people to wear a headscarf after hearing about a woman who was too scared to go out because she felt her headscarf would make

her a target for terrorism.

*“I wanted to say: ‘We are with you, we want you to feel at home on your own streets, we love, support and respect you’,”
Dr Ashman said.*

Apparently Dr. Ashman has not heard of the Iranian women who have been beaten and arrested for refusing to wear the hijab. Nor of the untold thousands of other Muslim girls and women who have been punished, even murdered, for not wearing a hijab, such as Aqsa Parvez, who was choked to death by her father. Not all Muslim women are delighted with the decision by some New Zealand women to wear the hijab as a sign of solidarity with Muslims; for them, the hijab is a sign of oppression.

And why must Dr. Ashman insist to Muslims that “we love, support and respect you”? On what basis should we now “love, support, and respect” Muslims? What exactly has changed in the texts and teachings of Islam? Did Islam suddenly become what it never was in 1,400 years, a peaceful and tolerant faith, because of the attack by a single loon in Christchurch? Have the 109 Jihad verses in the Qur’an been rendered null and void? Is the description of Unbelievers as “the most vile of created beings” (98;6) no longer in the Qur’an? Do the Hadith no longer contain Muhammad’s boast that “I have been made victorious through terror”?

As Christchurch locals prayed in front of the Al Noor mosque on Friday, where most of the victims were killed last week, women in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch posted pictures of themselves in headscarves, some with children in headscarves too.

*“Why am I wearing a headscarf today? Well, my primary reason was that if anybody else turns up waving a gun, I want to stand between him and anybody he might be pointing it at,”
Bell Sibly said in Christchurch.*

Last week, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern won the respect of millions around the world when she wore a black hijab when meeting members of the Muslim community following the shootings. On Friday, the country came together in a national day of reflection, which saw Muslims and non-Muslims, including Ardern, appear in hijab.

During the service, the Muslim Call to Prayer (adhan) was broadcast across the country followed by two minutes of silence in memory of those who lost their lives in the terror attack.

The hijab, which has long been assumed to be a sign of oppression, is now a sign of unity. A sign of respect for Muslim women, Islam, and all religions.

The hijab has not become any less a sign of oppression for those millions of Muslim girls and women who are forced to wear it against their will; wearing it demonstrates not unity with Muslims, but only unity with a certain kind of Muslim female, those who submit to wearing the hijab. How is wearing the hijab, which many Muslim women object to, “a sign of respect for Muslim women, Islam, and all religions”? If wearing the hijab were always a free choice, that would be one thing. But since it is forced on women, it is not a sign of freedom, but of Islamic misogyny.

Under the [Instagram pictures](#) of these hijabbed New Zealanders are various virtue-signalling sentiments:

“I stand with our Muslim community today and against hate and violence of any kind. I stand with my Muslim brothers and sisters.”

It is possible to deplore the murders in Christchurch without making such a jejune statement of pseudo-solidarity. How do you “stand” with your “Muslim brothers and sisters”? Do you

want to help them follow the Qur'anic commands to wage violent Jihad against all Infidels? Do you want to "stand with your Muslim brothers" when they misreat "your Muslim sisters," as, for example, when they "beat" their wives if they suspect them of disobedience? Do you stand with your "Muslim brothers" when they take plural wives, and can divorce those wives merely by uttering the triple-talaq? Do you stand with your "Muslim brothers" when they try to impose the Muslim inheritance laws, according to which a daughter inherits half that of a son? Do you stand with your "Muslim brothers" when, in Sharia courts, a woman's testimony is worth only half that of a man – a rule that Muhammad himself explained was "because of the deficiency in women's intelligence"? Do you stand with your "Muslim sisters" only when they wear the hijab, but not if they refuse to wear the hijab? Do you stand with your "Muslim brothers and sisters" if they decide they wish to leave Islam, or do you agree that they deserve the most severe punishment for daring to do so?

Someone else, also smiling and hijabbed, offers this statement:

"To pay respect [sic] and show our support to the Muslim community"

Did that hijabbed woman go to the French embassy in Auckland to "pay respects and show support" for France and its people after the attack on Charlie Hebdo and the kosher market that left 17 dead, or after the attack on the Bataclan nightclub and cafes that left 130 dead, or after the Bastille Day murder of 87 French people as they walked along the Promenade in Nice, by a Muslim driving a truck? Not after any of the three? Did she, do you think, go to the Israeli embassy to "pay respects and show solidarity" for the dozens of terrorist attacks over the last few years? Of course not. But why not visibly show support when it is Unbelievers who are killed? Is it only Muslims who deserve these displays of solidarity?

And what does it mean to “show our support to the Muslim community”? Does it mean we have to accept, perhaps even approve, of Muslim attitudes and behavior toward Unbelievers? Why can’t we express sorrow for the killings, without being put in a position of having to say we support or endorse Islam? We non-Muslims are sorry for the killings at the two mosques. How many times must that be said? There is no need to “love, support, and respect” Muslims.

“Standing with our Muslim sisters” [the statement of yet another hijabbed woman in New Zealand]

How should these New Zealand women “stand with [their] Muslim sisters” beyond getting their pictures taken wearing hijabs? Wouldn’t a better way to “stand with [your] Muslim sisters” be to support campaigns against clitoridectomy in Muslim lands, to support international efforts to ensure that Muslim men no longer get away with light sentences for “honor killings,” to ensure that cover, from hijab to niqab, chador, and burka, is a free choice, and to support the right of Muslim women to refuse to cover, to help women in Muslim countries who are working to end child-marriage, the practice of polygyny, and the triple-talaq as a way for Muslim men to divorce? These undertakings would actually mean something to your “Muslim sisters,” not all of whom are delighted – see below – with this hijab hysteria.

“I stand with our Muslim community today and against hate and violence of any kind.”[yet another hijabbed woman]

“Hate and violence of any kind”? Do you, Ms. X, mean to include the “hate and violence” that are such a salient feature of the Qur’an and hadith? Do you have in mind the more than 100 Qur’anic verses that command violent Jihad, including a number that explicitly call for “striking terror in the hearts of the Infidels”? Do you hope that just as non-Muslims, including yourself, have rallied around Muslims, that Muslims

will return the favor, and distance themselves explicitly from those 109 Jihad verses? Do you expect them to denounce the antisemitic verses in the Qur'an, such as the following, compiled by Robert Spencer:

"The Qur'an depicts the Jews as inveterately evil and bent on destroying the wellbeing of the Muslims. They are the strongest of all people in enmity toward the Muslims (5:82); as fabricating things and falsely ascribing them to Allah (2:79; 3:75, 3:181); claiming that Allah's power is limited (5:64); loving to listen to lies (5:41); disobeying Allah and never observing his commands (5:13); disputing and quarreling (2:247); hiding the truth and misleading people (3:78); staging rebellion against the prophets and rejecting their guidance (2:55); being hypocritical (2:14, 2:44); giving preference to their own interests over the teachings of Muhammad (2:87); wishing evil for people and trying to mislead them (2:109); feeling pain when others are happy or fortunate (3:120); being arrogant about their being Allah's beloved people (5:18); devouring people's wealth by subterfuge (4:161); slandering the true religion and being cursed by Allah (4:46); killing the prophets (2:61); being merciless and heartless (2:74); never keeping their promises or fulfilling their words (2:100); being unrestrained in committing sins (5:79); being cowardly (59:13-14); being miserly (4:53); being transformed into apes and pigs for breaking the Sabbath (2:63-65; 5:59-60; 7:166); and more."

Would you be outraged if Muslims refused to denounce the verses that command Jihad against all Infidels, or those that express antisemitic sentiments? Or would you give them a pass? Haven't you claimed to be against "hate and violence of any kind"? Would you still wear your hijab as a sign of solidarity with Muslims?

Another hijab wearer, under her Instagram photo, has the declaration "**Defeat Islamophobia.**"

“Islamophobia” is the word invented by apologists for Islam to suggest that any criticism of Islam, no matter how sober, measured, and evidence-based it may be, is actually “an irrational fear or hatred of Islam.” The word is meant to deliberately misrepresent all reasoned criticism as merely a “phobia.” This sleight of word, by dint of repetition, has had its effect in silencing many potential critics of Islam who do not wish to be seen as “islamophobes.” They need a word to describe themselves; the best candidate, I have often suggested, is the sober “islamocritic,” which does not condemn those who are critical of Islam.

Another new hijab-wearer is delighted with her Muslim and non-Muslim “sisters” coming together:

“I have never seen this kind of solidarity in my entire life.”

Non-Muslim women are expressing “solidarity” with Muslim women, but the reverse is not true. No Muslim women in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, or anywhere else have demonstrated in solidarity with the thousands of English girls who were groomed and held as sex slaves – passed around like candy – by Muslim grooming gangs. No Muslim women have expressed solidarity with the 2,000 German women who endured sexual assaults by 1,400 Muslims in Cologne on New Year’s Day on 2016. No Muslim women have expressed solidarity with the Yazidi girls who endured every kind of savagery when they were forced to become sex slaves of the fanatical Muslims of the Islamic state. It appears that the “solidarity” is only in one direction.

Furthermore, these hijabbed non-Muslims, expressing their “solidarity” with their “Muslim sisters,” are unaware of those Muslim women who find their hijab campaign so very wrong.

While the New Zealand campaign won support and appreciation from the Islamic Women’s Council of New Zealand and the NZ

Muslim Association, it has opponents in New Zealand and beyond.

In an unsigned opinion piece on Stuff.co.nz, a Muslim woman called the [#headscarfforharmony] movement “cheap tokenism.”

Mehrbano Malik, a 22-year-old woman from Pakistan also writing for Stuff.co.nz, said while she was “deeply touched by the sentiment”, the #headscarfforharmony movement reflected “Orientalist ideologies”.

“There are many, many Muslim women who do not veil,” she wrote.

“Veiling is not an inherent part of Islam. It is not mentioned anywhere in the Quran.”

Mehrbano Malik is herself clearly against wearing of the hijab, or other more extreme forms of coverage (niqab, chador, burka), and would prefer some other way of expressing sympathy for the Christchurch victims than wearing what she sees as a symbol of oppression.

Still another opponent of the “#”scarvesinsolidarity movement has been “the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Culture, Karima Bennoune, [who] took to Twitter to challenge the movement, pointing to the case of Nasrin Sotoudeh, who was convicted and faces years in prison for defending women who took part in a viral protest against mandatory headscarves in Iran.

An Islamic studies lecturer, Raihan Ismail, answered some common questions about Muslim veils on Twitter.

“Can I respectfully ask those thinking of participating in #scarvesinsolidarity [to] please also consider that millions of #Muslim #women do not wear [the] hijab, don’t want [to] wear it, [and] many like #NasrinSotoudeh take great risks [to] defend this opposition?” she wrote on Twitter.

Asra Nomani, a former journalist in Washington, who has campaigned for Muslim reform, urged women not to wear a headscarf for harmony.

“It is a symbol of purity culture antithetical to feminist values. We have women in jail and dead, for refusing the interpretation of Islam you promote,” Professor Nomani said on Twitter.

There are ways to express sympathy for the victims of the Christchurch attack other than that chosen by many women in New Zealand, who have been proudly wearing the hijab, which, as we have just seen, is understood by many Muslim women to be a symbol of oppression, one which millions of Muslim women object to; some have been imprisoned, and even killed, for refusing to wear the hijab. The lawyer Nasrin Soutoudeh was recently sentenced to 38 years in jail merely for defending women in Iran who had removed their hijab.

In New Zealand, some non-Muslims have been expressing, in ever more absurd rhetoric, what they think of as “solidarity.” “We Support and Love You,” “We Are You,” “We Are One.” What does that idiotic phrase “We Are You” mean? And why should you proclaim that you “love” Muslims? Do you “love” Americans because of 9/11? Do you “love” the French because of the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo*, the Bataclan nightclub, the Promenade in Nice? Of course not. You are sorry for those who died and enraged at those who killed them. That’s it. That’s enough. The New Zealand Prime Minister, who initially set the tone, need not have worn the hijab except when she was visiting a mosque; her decision to wear it even outside the mosques no doubt contributed to the mania for wearing hijabs to express “solidarity” with Muslim “sisters.” A dignified visit to the wounded, an expression of sympathy, a deploring of the attack, was all that was called for. There was no need for New Zealanders to fall all over themselves in quite unnecessary and idiotic expressions of love for, and total

identification with, Muslims. This behavior is both foolish and dangerous.

Perhaps a few dozen of the best-known Muslim women who work to reform the faith, and deplore the #scarvesinsolidarity group, could write a collective letter, to be published in New Zealand's main newspapers and online, in which they can explain their objections, and describe the difficulties Muslim women face, including severe punishment by the state, or by male relatives, if they refuse to wear the hijab (or niqab, chador, or burka). This might cause some in New Zealand to reconsider their insensate enthusiasm for the hijab and for something they know so little about but claim to love and respect – they call it “Islam” – and ideally, to redirect their sympathies to Muslim reformers, who need all the help they can get.

First published in