

You Don't Have To Be Muslim To Love Ramadan

by Hugh Fitzgerald

Why is it that Western politicians, including Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and David Cameron, think they must send out messages of such heartfelt solidarity to the world's Muslims on Ramadan? Of course they send out messages as well for Diwali (Hindus and Buddhists), Passover (Jews), Christmas and Easter (Christians), but not with the suggestion that this or that religious holiday is somehow meant to include all of us as well-wishers, when some of us only wish to be counted out, or – equally disturbing – to sing the praises of a religious observance that is insufficiently understood.

Why does Ramadan appear to get special treatment? And why do these politicians presume to speak for us, as when Hillary Clinton sends a brief message that starts “As we begin Ramadan,” with that “we” implicating non-Muslims in what is, after all, a religious observance for Muslims only. That “we” is properly a “they.” Why did she not write, more accurately because less inclusively: “As Ramadan begins, I wish all Muslims...” or “As Ramadan begins for Muslims, I wish them...,” thus being polite, but no longer implying that “we” all share in Ramadan?

David Cameron offered an especially treachery and “inclusive” Ramadan greeting this year, and the very first sentence of his message to Muslims everywhere insists on implicating all of us in what should only be *their* epithet:

It's the holy month of Ramadan...

Why did Cameron have to say that Ramadan is “holy” to non-Muslims? Why could he not have said “It's Ramadan, that month

holy to Muslims,” or “It’s the month of Ramadan, holy to Muslims”?

– a time when mosques open their doors, community centers welcome in their neighbors, and even churches and synagogues offer up their spaces as Muslims break their fasts – and people of all faiths and none are often asked to join.” (But these open-to-all iftars are not just for simple breaking-bread fellowship, but occasions for propagandizing, or even proselytizing, for Islam, as those who have attended these affairs well know.)

Coventry Cathedral is holding its own multi-faith iftar. In Manchester, they’re combining an iftar with England’s European Championships appearance. And homeless shelters up and down the country are holding ‘Iftars with the Homeless’.

Of course, fasting is what comes to mind when we think of Ramadan.

Not all Muslims agree; what comes to mind for some of them, when they think of Ramadan, is that it’s the perfect time to conduct Jihad: “The month of Ramadan in the life of the Prophet (pbuh) and the righteous ancestors was a month of forthcoming. The greatest battles during the lifetime of the Prophet (pbuh) occurred in this blessed month, the month of jihad, zeal, and enthusiasm.” For more on Ramadan as the month of Jihad, see [here](#).

It’s part of the month that really puts Muslims’ faith to the test, especially during these long, warm days. But there is much more to it. There is all the energy and money people donate to those who are less fortunate, and all the extra time spent in prayer and contemplation.

Cameron ought to know, but may not, that Muslim charity is directed only toward fellow Muslims; he ought to have said

“all the energy and money Muslims devote to less fortunate fellow Muslims” – which changes the sense considerably.

Uppermost in all our minds...

“All our minds”? Are we all Muslims now?

...this Ramadan are those whose lives have been torn apart by the twin evils of Assad and Daesh,...

Are these equivalent evils – the Alawite aligned with Shi’a Muslim Iran and hereditary despot, Assad, and the Sunni Muslim fanatics of Daesh (the Islamic State)? Or are the latter far more dangerous to non-Muslims than the former?

...all those families spending this holy month...

The epithet is again imposed on non-Muslims for whom Ramadan is not “holy.” Why?

...in refugee camps, mourning loved ones, yearning to go back to school or to work...

News of the scandal of the “Syrian refugees,” so many of whom are not from Syria, but assorted Muslims from as far away as Pakistan and Afghanistan, many of them seeking “refuge” in those European countries offering the most generous benefits, where they need not trouble themselves to seek work, has apparently not reached 10 Downing Street. Just consider the demonstration of the Muslim migrants’ “yearning for work” in Sweden where, last year, out of 162,000 “refugees” who arrived, exactly 464 are now employed. Some yearning.

...wondering whether they’ll ever return home again.

And how many of those Muslim “refugees” have given any sign, over the last decade, of wanting to return home from Europe?

Our thoughts, whatever our backgrounds or beliefs, are with them.

Again Cameron presumes to speak for all of us: “*Our thoughts.*” Notice, too, the casual feelgood dismissal of differences – “whatever our backgrounds or beliefs” – which no Muslim would endorse.

And we must continue to support the people of Syria and the region, as we work towards a lasting political solution. Because that’s who we are as a country. We won’t walk on by again.

So this Ramadan, let’s renew our resolve to help those victims. Let’s continue to come together for iftars and community events. Let’s celebrate the proud, multi-racial, multi-faith democracy we live in.

Cameron attributes to Ramadan a significance for non-Muslims that it does not as yet possess: it’s because it’s Ramadan that, he suggests, we renew, we continue, we celebrate. That is, all of us, in first-person-plural harmony. He might have written more to the real point: “Both Muslims and non-Muslims should renew their resolve to fight fanaticism and to ensure that minorities everywhere are safe.” Not a sentiment to which Muslims could openly object, even if they know to whom – themselves – it is really being addressed. And the distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim is usefully maintained.

To everyone in Britain and around the world, Ramadan Mubarak.

Ramadan Mubarak “to everyone,” not just Muslims? Are we all Muslims now? And greetings not only in Britain but “around the world”? Why not at least limit greetings, if greetings there must be: “To Muslims in Britain, Ramadan Mubarak”?

Muslims would not have taken kindly to having Cameron presume

to speak for them by having them appear to share in his Christmas or Easter or Passover or Diwali greetings, and he has been careful not to do so. Muslims are taught not to acknowledge the religious observances of others. But he does presume to speak for all non-Muslims in his specious sharing of the observance of Ramadan.

As for his “proud, multi-racial, multi-faith democracy,” this is a pollyannish figment of Cameron’s imaginative multicultural boosterism. Not everyone in Britain has forgotten the Muslim terrorist attacks on the buses and Underground, the butchering of Fusilier Rigby, and the sex-grooming gangs up and down the land, all contributing to a justified and growing anxiety over the Muslim presence in the country.

Barack Obama has issued his own equally fulsome Ramadan greetings:

For many...

Should this not be “For many Muslims...”?

...this month is an opportunity to focus on reflection and spiritual growth, forgiveness, patience and resilience, compassion for those less fortunate, and unity across communities.

To repeat yet again: “compassion” – i.e., charity – “for those less fortunate” is, in Islam, limited to fellow Muslims; Muslims are not supposed to give alms (*zakat*) to non-Muslims. This is often overlooked, because many non-Muslims are unaware of it, and even if they do know about the rules for Muslim “charity,” it seems churlish for non-Muslims to mention them (“Muslims are supposed to aid only other Muslims”), and Obama does nothing to set things straight. He might, however, simply have omitted that misleading phrase about “compassion for

those less fortunate,” or he might have praised Muslims for “making a special effort during Ramadan to support less fortunate members of their own community,” which is less stark than “Muslims offering support for less fortunate Muslims.”

As for Ramadan being the perfect time to “focus on...unity across communities,” Obama presumably means a “unity” of Muslims with other faith groups. But Muslims are taught to regard themselves as the “best of peoples,” and non-Muslims as the “vilest of creatures” for whom all manner of punishments await. What “unity” could there possibly be between the “best of peoples” and the “vilest of creatures”?

Obama also remarks on the history of Muslims in America: “There are those whose heritage can be traced back to the very beginning of our nation, as well as those who have only just arrived.” This fits in with incessant Muslim attempts at backdating their presence in America, to insert themselves into the historical narrative much earlier, as a means of legitimizing their presence, and then pushing that “Islam has always been part of America” nonsense. This campaign reached its absurd zenith when State’s Phyllis McIntosh issued a report in 2004 entitled “Islamic Influence Runs Deep in American Culture.” In this report, she found a non-existent Muslim in Columbus’s crew: “Islamic influences may date back to the very beginning of American history. It is likely that Christopher Columbus, who discovered America in 1492, charted his way across the Atlantic Ocean with the help of an Arab navigator” (flatly untrue). “May date back” and “It is likely that” are weasel words designed to protect from criticism a claim that is made up entirely out of whole cloth. Then there is the other dubious claim – made with very slight supporting evidence – that, among the African slaves brought to America were some who had been Muslims in Africa. But even were that to have been true, a handful of Muslim slaves, living in an overwhelmingly Christian environment, outside a Muslim community, without either mosques or the texts necessary to

help perpetuate the faith, would have had their Islam extinguished by the next generation.

In fact, a scarcely discernible, and very tiny, Muslim presence came very late to America. The first community of Muslims to have founded a mosque in the United States did so in a building borrowed for that purpose, in 1929; the first building erected as a mosque dates to 1935. Obama ought to have left out claims that Muslims arrived “at the very beginning of our nation,” rather than transmit what is a staple of Muslim propaganda. Or he might have written, with studied vagueness: “While many American Muslims have only just arrived, others can trace their heritage to earlier periods of our history.”

Then there is Obama’s parting remark about wishing “to honor the contributions of Muslims in America and across the world.” I have no idea what impressive contributions he has in mind, but along with others “in America and across the world,” I await with bated breath President Obama’s detailed list of Muslim Achievers.

To sum up:

Despite their extravagant expressions of solidarity with, and admiration for, Muslims on the occasion of Ramadan, nowhere in their remarks do either Cameron or Obama demonstrate real understanding of Islam. They should be – are they? – aware that Muslims are forbidden to reciprocate, that is, to offer similar greetings to non-Muslims on the occasion of any non-Muslim religious holiday – e.g., Christmas, Easter, Passover, Diwali. Some Muslims become incensed even at the *non-religious* observances of non-Muslims; campaigns by clerics to convince Muslims not to participate in such innocuous holidays as Valentine’s Day, or Thanksgiving, are not unknown. That being the case, there should be even less felt need or sense of obligation for non-Muslims to offer up such fulsome praise for this Muslim religious observance; a few sentences would have

been quite enough.

In their choice of words, both Cameron and Obama make it appear that Muslim charity is extended to non-Muslims, but the only sanctioned object of Muslim alms-giving (*zakat*), during Ramadan (as at all other times), is fellow Muslims. And neither one explains why, during this month which – Obama informs us – “is an opportunity to focus on reflection and spiritual growth, forgiveness, patience and resilience,” Muslim violence does not recede, but surges.

One hopes that other commentators – freer to speak the truth than do our leaders, or those “taking a leadership role” – will continue to correct the record, dialing back on this insensate Infidel enthusiasm for Ramadan, both silly and sinister, before it becomes “not just for Muslims anymore.”

First published in