

After Malala's attempted assassination: Honour the dissenters

Thursday 11 October 2012, by [HELIE LUCAS Marieme](#) (Date first published: 10 October 2012).

The below is a guest post from the brilliant Algerian secularist, Marieme Helie Lucas, to mark Day of Agreement. It is a must read.

Maryam Namazie

In the past few weeks, in several countries, groups of citizens have openly taken a stand against Muslim fundamentalists, including armed ones.

In Mali, on a number of occasions, citizens attempted to stop public amputations, stonings and floggings; Malian women also attacked AQMI (Al-Qaida au Maghreb islamique) in an attempt to stand up against the imposition of a so-called 'Islamic dress code' that is totally alien to their culture (but have you heard anyone in Europe stand up in defence of their right to preserve their culture, their traditional way of dressing which is NOT the freshly imported so-called 'Islamic veil' Saudi style?). In response, fundamentalist armed groups fired at them with sub-machine guns.

In India, in the city of Ahmadabad, two citizens stood their ground facing crowds demonstrating against the anti-Muslim video: *The Innocence of Muslims*. They held posters saying 'just don't watch it!'. They were seriously hurt.

In Iran, a woman beat up a cleric who made comments about her supposedly anti-Islamic outfit. She told him to look the other way, and when he persisted, she beat him up. We can be sure she will pay a dire price for it.

In Libya, on the site of the attack in Benghazi, demonstrators held signs apologising for the murder of the US Ambassador and expressing in various ways a 'not in our name' stance that distanced themselves from the killers. It was also citizens who initiated the expulsion of the armed militia from the cities, whilst government troops only came in later.

In Afghanistan, demonstrators physically confronted the authorities when they renamed a university with the name of a religious-Right leader.

In Tunisia, women regularly take to the streets to defend their constitutional rights and to oppose any setbacks on equality under the law between citizens -men and women.

In Pakistan, women's organisations have been demonstrating for a secular state, with a clear separation of politics from religion, for several years now.

One could give many more examples from other countries.

These citizens are the future of their countries and of humanity. But when have European media properly reported on these events? Where has such news been given front-page attention?

How long will it take for the European Left and human rights organisations to defend the courageous people who stand up to fundamentalists at risk to their lives, rather than their oppressors and killers?

Why is it assumed that fundamentalists, i.e. neo-fascist religious extreme-Right, represent and defend the 'real Islam'?

Why is it assumed that all those who oppose fundamentalists are anti-Islam renegades - and that therefore, if they get killed, well... they deserve to die?

Why are secularists considered 'Islamophobic' when they are anti-fundamentalist?

And why does the Left persistently use the terminology that has been coined by the fundamentalists: 'sharia law', 'Islamophobia', 'fatwa', etc... a terminology that secularists have persistently denounced and deconstructed.

The ten year long resistance to armed fundamentalism in Algeria and its 200,000 victims did not manage to change the views of the Left and human rights organisations vis-a-vis fundamentalism. Nor, it seems, the internal resistance that today, in many countries, is making itself visible.

But something may change their minds: the attempted assassination on a child in Pakistan - Malala Yousafzai, the 14 year old supporter of education for girls. They shot at her and took responsibility for the attack. They declared that they would attack her again if she survives, and that anyone against the Taliban will be executed. Must it not be clear at long last that a child demanding her right to education is considered a supporter of 'the West', an enemy of Islam (since the Taliban claims that they are the only legitimate representatives of Islam), an 'apostate', and one that deserves to be physically eliminated? As all us 'kafirs' deserve to...

We are today's Jean-François Lefevre de la Barre (September 12, 1745 - July 1, 1766) - the young French man who was atrociously tortured and murdered before his body was burnt on a pyre along with Voltaire's "Philosophical Dictionary" for refusing to remove his hat while a religious procession passed by.

No one in Europe would dream of justifying such 'Christian' atrocities in the name of religion today. But it seems presumed 'Muslims' do not deserve an equal access to universal human rights, freedom of thought and freedom of conscience. Presumed 'Muslims' are 'under cultural arrest'; they are bound by customs and religion and should remain so, while the rest of humanity enjoys universal rights.

We are today's Chevalier de la Barre, demanding our right not to believe in any religion without being tortured and killed.

We are today's Chevalier de la Barre, demanding our right not to veil, to be educated, to work for wages, to move freely and to enjoy all citizens' rights.

Jean François de la Barre was 19; Malala is only 14. His legal assassination prompted political changes in France towards secularism. Will hers be the price to pay for our emancipation from state-sanctioned religion and its legal implications on our lives?

Marieme Helie Lucas,

P.S.

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