

# **LGBT+: In UK, Ex-Muslims Out & Proud at Pride - In Toronto LGBT Iranians were branded as ‘Islamophobes’**

Thursday 13 July 2017, by [CEMB](#), [NAMAZIE Maryam](#) (Date first published: 10 July 2017).

## Contents

- [Ex-Muslims Out & Proud at](#)
  - [In Toronto LGBT Iranians \(...\)](#)
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## **Ex-Muslims Out & Proud at Pride**

### Press Release

On 8 July, CEMB was at Pride in London in full force highlighting the plight of LGBT in countries under Islamic rule with bodypainting by the award-winning Victoria Gugenheim.

The march went ahead as planned, though police initially tried to remove placards with the slogan “Allah is Gay” because of complaints of “offence”.

Whilst a few were not pleased to see apostates in Pride, we were met with overwhelming and heart-warming support and solidarity. For all of those who participated, it was an unforgettable moment in the struggle for freedom of conscience, expression and the fight for LGBT rights in countries under Islamic rule.

Maryam Namazie, Spokesperson for CEMB, said: “In a world where apostasy, blasphemy and ‘immorality’ are punishable by death in many Islamic states, and religiously non-prescribed sex and women’s bodies are so despised, it becomes all the more important to celebrate them and show very clearly that people have a right to think, live and love as they choose without state or group intervention and persecution. Of course some were and will be offended by our message as we are offended by Islam and religion but offence can never be a reason to silence and threaten nor is blasphemy and offence more important than murder.”

Daniel Fitzgerald, CEMB Pride organiser, said: “CEMB is challenging a narrative. Never before in the history of Pride London since its start in 1972 has a group consisting of those from a Muslim background, including refugees, come together to protest crimes committed to LGBT people in the the name of Islam and topless too! These are VERY brave people who speak from direct experience. All states that have the death penalty for gays are Islamic, yet this alarming fact is ignored time and time again. No more excuses.”

Gita Sahgal, Director of Centre for Secular Space, said: “I marched with... extraordinary activists

who keep alive the idea of international solidarity. In many countries Islamic law decrees the death penalty for homosexuality and sex outside marriage. On a very corporate march we kept alive the idea that refugees are welcome, apostasy is a right and that we weep for those under constant vigilante and state death threats. My wonderful young friend marched with a banner for Xulhaz hacked to death in Bangladesh for the right to love. In some places we cannot celebrate. We honour those struggles.”

**Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain** (CEMB), July 10, 2017

\* <https://www.ex-muslim.org.uk/cemb-pride/>

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### **In Toronto LGBT Iranians were branded as ‘Islamophobes’**

At Toronto Pride on June 25 some ‘anti-fascists’ surrounded Iranian refugees and LGBTQ activists and absurdly chanted ‘No Hate at Pride’ – as if defending LGBTQ people in Iran or countries under Islamic rule is ‘hateful’.

Police intervention ensured that they weren’t able to stop the Iranians from joining Pride as the video below shows.

Video [not linked here]

The irony of “anti-fascist” activists accusing an Iranian holding a sign saying “I am Muslim and condemn the persecution of LGBTQ+ in Islamic countries” of “Islamophobia” was clearly lost on them. It’s just another example of how criticism of Islamism or even Islam is conflated with bigotry against Muslims at the expense of dissenters and to the advantage of Islamists.

If you cannot condemn the persecution meted out by Islamic states and Islamists, well, that’s a pretty good deal for those in power and a pretty raw one for those who want to defend human rights.

That Iranian LGBTQ participants needed police intervention in a place where they must feel safest says much about the world we live in today.

Which makes it all the more important to emphasise that the only states which punish homosexuality with the death penalty are Islamic ones, including Afghanistan, Iran, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, UAE, and Yemen. And that Islam is used as a justification for murdering LGBTQ people (as are all religions – though we don’t have, for now at least – a Republic of Gilead).

Of course that does not mean that all Muslims are homophobic –gay Muslims at Toronto Pride is a good case in point. After all, people are more than the religions they were born into out of very little choice of their own.

It also doesn’t mean that bigotry doesn’t exist – of course it does. But what on earth does defending LGBTQ people (including gays Muslims ) in countries under Islamic rule have to do with bigotry?

The Iranians at Toronto Pride were told their defence of LGBTQ rights “emboldens” “anti-Muslim racists”, but those making this convoluted linkage assume that Muslims are automatically anti-LGBTQ and that they are one and the same as the Islamists – which seems to me to be promoting the

very bigotry they feign to resist. (Unless of course they believe former President Ahmadinejad when he said “In Iran, we don’t have homosexuals like in your country”.)

Video [not linked here]

On July 8, members from the Council of Ex-Muslims of Britain and I will be marching with others, including Muslims, at Pride in London to highlight the persecution faced by LGBTQ people in countries under Islamic rule. We will be focused in particular on the harrowing roundup, detention and torture of homosexuals in Chechnya where its president, Ramzan Kadyrov, has expressed the desire to “eliminate” gay people by the start of Ramadan.

Those who will gasp in horror to see us criticise Islam and Islamism at Pride in London whilst they regularly protest the Pope and poke fun at Christianity and the religious-right would do well to remember that rights are universal and applicable to everyone irrespective of where we live.

The argument that Islam and Islamism cannot be criticised because Muslims are a minority in Canada or the UK is akin to telling an Iranian woman that she cannot criticise Trump’s or May’s misogynist policies because Christians are a minority in Iran! It’s absurd when you use this line of argument for any other situation but it has become the new normal, particularly when it comes to Islam and Islamism.

This perspective denies desperately needed internationalism and real anti-fascism (which must include being anti-Islamist to be worthy of its name).

It defends silence rather than condemnation and solidarity.

What was the saying during the height of the AIDS crisis? Silence = Death.

Well, yes exactly.

**Maryam Namazie**, Wed 5 Jul 2017

\* <http://freethinker.co.uk/2017/07/05/in-toronto-gay-muslims-were-branded-as-islamaphobes/>

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**P.S.**

\* Tuesday 11 July 2017:

<http://www.siawi.org/article14956.html>