

Canada and the Saudis: Lashings and Tongue-lashings

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Nobody likes to have their faults exposed, much less to have a demand made of them that they change their behaviour “immediately.” Some countries are more sensitive than others and react more strongly when annoyed.

Last week a tweet from Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland ignited a firestorm of hostile communications between Canada and Saudi Arabia.¹ In her tweet, she called on Saudi Arabia to release Raif Badawi along with his sister Samar Badawi and other political prisoners. Raif Badawi is a blogger imprisoned and flogged in the Saudi kingdom for his tweets, which were considered anti-Islamic. He’s been sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes. Some accuse him of apostasy; in Saudi Arabia, conviction of apostasy is a death sentence.

Of course, Chrystia Freeland and Justin Trudeau are correct in identifying the treatment of Raif Badawi as a human rights violation of the most egregious kind. To deny freedom of speech and freedom of religion to any human being is a violation of their person and of the rights and freedoms we take for granted in our Western democracies. To condemn any person to prison, flogging or death merely for criticizing the state religion—practices common in countries operating under Sharia law—is to deny conscience, dignity, and personal responsibility.

Several questions, however, arise in the wake of this sudden break in relations between Canada and the Saudis:

1. If the Government of Canada’s real concern is human rights, why pick only on Saudi Arabia? Plenty of other countries are also violating the principles of free speech. Pakistan routinely treats non-Muslims much the same way as Saudi Arabia does.² Egypt also punishes those who speak out for women’s rights. China—in addition to its egregious one-child policy and forced abortions (which have resulted in the deaths of over 400 million pre-borns³—still imprisons members of the underground church and has been known to sell organs harvested from executed prisoners. Cuba, for many years under Fidel Castro’s dictatorial regime, was a place of torture and bloodshed away from the sandy beaches so loved by Canadian tourists and Castro’s admirers . . . like Justin Trudeau.
2. If PM Trudeau believes that bloggers should be able to voice their criticisms of Islam—as Raif Badawi allegedly did—why did he and his Islamist-influenced caucus force through Iqra Khalid’s Motion 103, a motion specifically designed to limit the freedom of Canadians to speak openly and accurately about Islam? It’s true that in Canada, prisoners of conscience are not publicly flogged, but prison sentences, massive fines, and destructive law-fare are not empty threats for those who challenge radical Islam, Sharia law, and the undermining of Canada’s Christian culture.

3. If the PM and his Foreign Minister are really concerned about human rights, why not start at home by freeing Mary Wagner, whose only crime is seeking to prevent the killing of the pre-born? Why have Mr. Trudeau and his adoring caucus not risen up to defend Linda Gibbons' right to peacefully protest the killing of the innocents? She's spent more than 10 years in jail for her faithful witness. Why has the PM not spoken in defence of Bill Whatcott's right to express his opinion about the health hazards of homosexuality? Bill was recently arrested and jailed after a nationwide warrant went out for his arrest. His crime? Handing out truthful information about gay sex at the Toronto Pride Parade. Why is Chilliwack School Trustee Barry Neufeld battling a concerted attack by BC's homosexual-promoting Education Minister, the BC Teachers' Federation and the BC Human Rights Commission? Why are the defenders of life and innocence the ones on the defensive? Why is it not the promoters of death and child abuse?

It's all very well to set a high standard for human rights and dignity on the world stage, even if it costs us.⁴ There is—after all—a price for pursuing justice. Canada ought to do so consistently. Before casting too many stones, however, we should first make sure we apply those standards at home.

It's time to challenge political parties and politicians who selectively apply high-sounding standards according to political expediency. It's virtue-signalling without the virtue.

For a consistent application of an unchanging standard of right and wrong, it's time to support the Christian Heritage Party of Canada.⁵ Our standards are not our own invention; they arise from our deeply held beliefs: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Love your neighbour as yourself. Rescue those who are perishing. Speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Footnotes

¹ globalnews.ca/news/4378208/canada-saudi-arabia-spat/

² www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/29/which-countries-still-outlaw-apostasy-and-blasphemy/

³ www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34666440

⁴ www.durhamregion.com/opinion-story/8809486-canada-gets-called-out/

⁵ www.chp.ca/get-involved