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Tutu and Israel

Avrom Krengel (Chairman SAZF), Jewish Report, 5 November 2010

A few months ago, Archbishop Desmond Tutu with much fanfare announced to the world that he was withdrawing from public life. Despite the pleadings of many to change his mind, he has by and large kept to his word. He has remained silent concerning the government's proposals to curb the freedom of the South African media. The very same media who provided him over many decades with the necessary platform to perform his invaluable work. He has not said a word about Mugabe's continued attempts to retain power in Zimbabwe at enormous cost to his people, nor has he spoken out against events such as the massacres and rapes being perpetrated in the DRC and Sudan.

Strangely enough, the only issue for which the Archbishop deems important enough to defer his retirement is the campaign to isolate Israel. In the opinion of the Archbishop, the suffering of the Palestinians is worse than that experienced by the blacks of South Africa under Apartheid and is due solely to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The SAZF opposes the Archbishop's campaign against Israel and his view of their culpability regarding the suffering of the Palestinians in the strongest possible terms. The attempt by Tutu and others to portray the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians as one of good versus evil will only perpetuate the conflict and exacerbate the suffering of both people.

The simple report to Tutu is that there would be no "Israeli occupation" if the Palestinians and Arabs had agreed to the United Nations partition plan of 1947. Instead of agreeing to the creation of two states, one Jewish and one Arab, they chose instead to invade and attempt to destroy Israel. One can argue strongly that the suffering of the Palestinians is due primarily to the failure by their leaders and the Arab world to reach a peace agreement with Israel which would allow for the creation of a Palestinian state living peacefully side by side with Israel. The refugee camps and suffering of the Palestinians is perpetuated by those who cynically use them as a tool to ensure that the goal of destroying Israel is achieved.

However, as citizens of South Africa's wonderful democracy, we accept that people can hold radically different views about any issue, including the Middle East. What we can't accept are the utterances of Tutu, made in his unsuccessful attempt to dissuade the Cape Town Opera from performing in Israel. Tutu's statement that the Tel Aviv Opera furthers Israel's fallacious claim to being a civilised democracy by luring international artists to perform with it, is particularly disturbing and problematic. We seriously doubt that Tutu would have used such words in relation to America's occupation of Iraq and the Lincoln Centre, or the Russian occupation of Chechnya and the Bolshoi Ballet. It is difficult to come to

any conclusion other than that Tutu made this statement simply because Israel is a Jewish state.

Tutu, as a patron of the Holocaust Centre should understand the gravity of his remarks. The source of every form of persecution of the Jews over the past 2000 years, culminating in the Holocaust, was the classification of Jews as a people "beyond civilisation".

As chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Tutu taught South Africa and the world the importance of taking responsibility for your actions and apologising to those whom you have harmed. We urge the Archbishop to take his own teachings to heart and apologise to Israel and the Jewish people for the remarks he has made, remarks which are simply not befitting of a Nobel peace prize winner.

The Feminist Politics of Islamic Misogyny

by Phyllis Chesler, *American Thinker*, 13 November 2010

<http://www.meforum.org/2780/feminist-politics-islamic-misogyny>

Studying honour killings is not the same as sensationalizing them, but Columbia University professor Lila Abu-Lughod disagrees. Moreover, she believes that indigenous Arab and Muslim behaviour, including honour-related violence, is best understood as a consequence of Western colonialism -- perhaps even of "Islamophobia."

On October 25, 2010, at the American University of Beirut, Abu-Lughod admonished feminists who ostensibly sensationalize honour killings, a position which, in her opinion, represents "simplistic, civilizational thinking." She "warned that an obsessive focus on the so-called honour crime may have negative repercussions" and that "people should be wary of classifying certain acts as a distinctive form of violence against women." (Her remarks are summarized in a press release published by the university. According to the university, the article on which the speech is based will be published early next year in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*).

Abu-Lughod opposed the "concept of clear-cut divisions between cultures, which she viewed as a form of imprisoning rural and immigrant communities," and suggested that focusing on "honour crimes" allowed "scholars and activists to ignore important contexts for violence against women: social tensions; political conflicts; forms of racial, class, and ethnic discrimination; religious movements; government policing and surveillance; and military intervention."

What kind of feminism does Abu-Lughod represent? She is a post-colonial, postmodern, cultural relativist, a professor of anthropology and women's and gender studies who does not believe in universal standards of human rights. However, her allegedly feminist

work primarily serves the cause of one nationalism only -- Palestinian -- and of one tradition only -- Islam/Islamism.

Abu-Lughod has long held the positions she expressed in Beirut. According to her 2002 article in *The American Anthropologist*, "Do Muslim Women really need saving?", Abu-Lughod believes that wearing the Islamic veil signifies "respectability" for Muslim women. More, it can be "read as a sign of educated, urban sophistication, a sort of modernity." She writes,

Why are we surprised that Afghan women do not throw off their burqas when we know perfectly well that it would not be appropriate to wear shorts to the opera? If we think that U.S. women live in a world of choice regarding clothing, all we need to do is to remind ourselves of the expression "the tyranny of fashion."

According to the photo which accompanies the Beirut press advisory and her Columbia biography, Abu-Lughod does not wear a burqa.

In fact, Abu-Lughod herself and her professor parents are all products of an American academic establishment: Her Palestinian-American father, Ibrahim, taught at Northwestern University for 35 years; her Jewish-American mother, Janet Lippman Abu-Lughod, did so for twenty years. Their daughter was raised a Muslim -- but in America, not the Middle East. She attended Carleton College in Minnesota and received her Ph.D. from Harvard. Abu-Lughod is married to another Columbia professor of Middle East studies, Timothy Mitchell, who shares her views about Palestine, Israel, and America. They and others represent an academy which has also sacrificed most real feminist values and curriculum for a hard-left agenda which masquerades as "feminism."

Abu-Lughod suggests that there are many reasons that a woman might veil -- and, if she's talking about hijab (a headscarf), I can agree with her. However, wearing a face- and body-covering that obscures identity, peripheral vision, and all normal social interaction -- that functions, in effect, like a sensory deprivation isolation chamber -- is not an empowered "feminist" choice or even a feminist way of rejecting sexual objectification. The growing Islamist pressure to veil is enormous, and women fear being beaten, never obtaining a husband, or being divorced, jailed, or even killed for their failure to do so. Face- and body-covering is a forced choice, not a free one. Muslim girls and women are punished, and sometimes murdered, for refusing to wear a face veil.

Regarding the benefits of polygamy, Abu-Lughod and others suggest that female relatives, including co-wives, may bond, keep each other company, share isolating and repetitive tasks, and so on. Sounds good -- but neither research nor personal memoirs support this theoretical possibility. Exceptions always exist, but the bulk of what is known presents a far different picture of female-female relations. Many accounts portray Arab and Muslim women mistreating each other, their female servants, and their slaves. They are also either directly cruel or indifferent toward impoverished and racially and religiously marginalized women in their own countries and households.

Even Abu-Lughod notes that pioneer Iranian feminist Siddiqeh Dawlatabadi "imposed on the nine-year-old daughter of her father's secretary a marriage to her seventy-year-old father when he was widowed. She later ignored the girl's cries when she went into labour

and thereafter, when Dawlatabadi's father died, married off the girl to someone else, taking her daughters."

In addition, research on honour killing demonstrates that mothers, sisters, aunts, and second wives conspire in the murder of one of their own female relatives and often have a hands-on relationship to the actual murder.

To be fair, Abu-Lughod has also published some interesting work about Muslim women in the Middle East, and about Bedouin women in particular, including *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. However, Abu-Lughod, like her Columbia University colleague Gayatri Spivak, views a Western-style fight for women's rights in the Muslim world as a dangerous diversion. In *Remaking Women, Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*, Abu-Lughod criticizes Western "colonial feminism" as attempting to undermine local cultures and recommends that we continue to focus mainly on the "colonial enterprise." Why? Perhaps as a way of reminding Western thinkers -- heirs to the colonial adventure -- that, given their ancestors' past crimes, they dare not feel "superior" to the Islamic world, and above all, they dare not intervene to free Muslim prisoners from Muslim tyrants, jailers, and murderers. Indeed, Abu-Lughod is quoted in Beirut as saying that: "the easily sensationalized category [of honour killing] has the political effect of stigmatizing Muslim societies."

I am among a handful of both Muslim and non-Muslim feminists who humbly but adamantly question this approach. The politicization of the feminist academic world, especially in terms of its "Palestinianization" and its anti-Americanism -- has become the universal point of view for feminist academics. Abu-Lughod, Leila Ahmed, Suha Sabbagh, and Gavirati Spivak all share a profoundly negative view of the West and its values. This is their real passion. They may study women for complex reasons, but they use their work to condemn the West again and again. Sadly, they are all speaking the same politically correct "feminist" language from which a universal concept of human rights for women has been utterly banished.

Wall Street Journal Puzzles Over Obama And Israel

In an editorial this week, the Wall Street Journal wonders why President Obama chose the world's most populous Muslim country as the platform for criticizing Israel for authorizing construction of apartments in its capital Jerusalem. The editorial ends with the fact that Indonesia prohibits Israelis from traveling to its country.

The prohibition seems to run counter to President Obama's declaration that Indonesia is the beacon of religious tolerance. Of course, Indonesia's record of intolerance of Christians fills the public record. Two to three hundred thousand Christians have been butchered by Muslims in Indonesia.

The Journal said:

So what did President Obama talk about upon arriving in Jakarta yesterday? Israeli construction projects.

Why Mr. Obama chose to pick this fight from the distance of Southeast Asia is anyone's guess. Israel's decision to proceed with the building of some 1,000 housing units in the Har Homa neighborhood of municipal Jerusalem - a "settlement" only in the most jaundiced sense of the term - was made in October. Israeli governments of both the right and left have encouraged similar building projects since Jerusalem was reunified in 1967. And construction of the new housing will not begin for months if not years.

None of that deterred Mr. Obama, who warned the Israeli government that "this kind of activity is never helpful when it comes to peace negotiations." The State Department also chimed in, saying it was "deeply disappointed," while Palestinian spokesman Saeb Erekat added that the new construction proves "that Israel chooses settlements, not peace." This is the same Mr. Erekat who recently wrote an admiring letter to Ahmed Sa'adat, the mastermind of the 2001 assassination of an Israeli cabinet member.

All Israel has done is insist that Jews have a right to live anywhere in their capital city, something that might be controversial in Ramallah but ought not to be in Washington. Mr. Obama's public endorsement of the Palestinian view of what constitutes a settlement only puts the negotiated peace he seeks further out of reach.

Meanwhile, the Indonesian government forbids Israeli citizens from visiting their country. If Obama wants to bridge the distance between Jakarta and Jerusalem, maybe he can start with that one.

The threat of global anti-Semitism

Rick Hellman, KCJC.com, November 16th, 2010

Post-Holocaust taboos against anti-Semitism are breaking down, and it is seeping into the mainstream of social and political discourse in the West — even America.

So says Mark Weitzman of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, who spoke on "The Threat of Global Anti-Semitism" last week in the USA.

"One of the things I am going to talk about is the mainstreaming of anti-Semitism, and Helen Thomas is an excellent example of that," Weitzman said. He was referring to the longtime White House correspondent who resigned in disgrace in June after her critical remarks about Israel devolved into a rant about how its Jews should "go home ... to Germany."

Weitzman pointed to other signs of this creeping trend toward defamation — and the conflation of anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism — including the publication of

the 2007 book *"The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy"* by otherwise respected academics John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt.

"The Mearsheimer and Walt book basically revives the myth that Jews can't be patriotic citizens," Weitzman said. "Then there is some of the campaign stuff today. In New York, a candidate was nominated and then dropped by the GOP — to its credit — who had written for hard-core, extremist publications in the past. I don't mean politically conservative, but violently extremist."

Weitzman noted that the Academy Awards has announced plans to give a special Oscar next year to French director Jean-Luc Godard, who has a history of anti-Semitic statements.

"What was shocking to me was not that they are honoring him," Weitzman said, "but a quote at the end of the story from a defender of Godard, saying D.W. Griffith got an Academy Award, and he was horribly racist. Well, the Academy was new at that time, and that was before the Final Solution. Hasn't this guy learned from history? It's as if the Holocaust did not happen; holding up something that people did in 1936, as if it's fine to do now."

Weitzman is director of government affairs and director of the Wiesenthal Center's Task Force against Hate and Terrorism, as well as the center's chief representative to the United Nations. His speech here was scheduled to take advantage of the fact that he was coming to town for a meeting of the board of directors of the Association of Holocaust Organizations, on which he sits alongside MCHE's Executive Director Jean Zeldin.

"I heard him talk last summer, and I wanted to have the community learn what the threats are, in terms of anti-Semitism, and what's being done about it on the international level," Zeldin said. "Mark is in a position to speak to both sides of the issue."

Catholic concerns

In a phone interview from New York, Weitzman also expressed concern about anti-Semitism within another solidly mainstream group — the Catholic church. He wondered aloud where negotiations between the Vatican and the schismatic Society of Saint Pius X were going. (*For background on this issue, see Chronicle story, "Alumnus says anti-Semitism ruled SSPX Seminary," April 2, 2010*)

"Hopefully, an acceptance of Nostra Aetate — the church's revolutionary 1960s document filled with positive stuff about Jews and Judaism — will be the price of readmission to the church," Weitzman said. "The fact that they are still negotiating, I am not sure if that is good or bad; we need to keep an eye on it."

Then there was a meeting of Middle Eastern bishops last month at the Vatican, at the conclusion of which Lebanese-born, US-based Archbishop Cyrille Bustros said "We Christians cannot speak of the promised land as an exclusive right for a privileged Jewish people. This promise was nullified by Christ. There is no longer a chosen people ..." *See related story below.*

Weitzman was appalled.

“This is the respectable, mainstream part of the church, and they are basically saying that Jews have no specific rights to Israel and using traditional Christian theological anti-Semitism as a basis,” he said. “The statement produced out of that meeting supported a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But the fact is that somebody could come up and say that is an example of the mainstreaming of anti-Semitism and its conflation with anti-Zionism, and we are seeing it around the world.”

Targeting Jewish institutions

Then there are the cases in which anti-Semitism moves from insulting rhetoric to violent action, and Weitzman and the Wiesenthal Center keep close track of them, too. Although the packages were intercepted before they could explode, reports that two bombs shipped from Yemen to the United States last month were addressed to Chicago-area synagogues is a reminder of the threat to Jewish institutions, Weitzman said.

“I think the threat is very real,” he said. “We have to walk a fine line between being very careful about security and yet ... we can’t let it inhibit us from doing the things that mark us as Jews and as Americans. It’s not a local issue, but it is local, because the bombs were addressed to synagogues in Chicago. I am not sure that the intent was to blow these things up in the air only. The fact that Jewish institutions were targeted is significant.”

The incident also shows that as much as we love and rely on modern technology, it complicates security, Weitzman said.

“People are buying equipment in North Korea and shipping it to Yemen,” Weitzman said. “The operatives are trained in Iran, and Afghanistan, and their targets are in the West. ... The technology of the iPhone and Google make it easier to target and manipulate the system, so we have to figure out how to deal with it. We can’t put the genie back in the bottle and wipe Google Earth off the Internet, so how can we deal with the fact that anyone can get a fix on any person or organization? It will require governmental bodies and security organizations getting together, making sure this technology is not being twisted to become a tool for the support of tyranny.”

Muslim Hypocrisy: On the Violation of Religious Freedoms
by Prof. Jonathan Fox, BESA Center Perspectives, November 14, 2010

<http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/perspectives120.html>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Muslim protests against Western Christian violations of Muslim freedoms are clearly a case of people living in glass houses throwing stones. Any such violations pale in comparison to the pervasiveness and severity of violations of the religious freedom of Christians in Middle Eastern Muslim states.

Introduction

The treatment of Muslim minorities in Western Christian states has become a high profile issue in world politics, yet the significantly poorer treatment of Christian minorities in Muslim states has not been given nearly as much attention. Two recent laws embody the nature of these issues in the West.

First, a 2004 French law prohibited public school students and employees from wearing “conspicuous religious symbols,” including headscarves, skullcaps and large crosses. While this law technically applies to all religions, Muslims perceive the law as directed primarily against the wearing of head-coverings by devout Muslim women. Second, in 2009 a Swiss referendum banned the building of minarets, the prayer towers that are an integral part of mosques.

Both of these laws have been accurately portrayed as restrictions on Muslim religious freedom. More importantly, these are not isolated incidents, with similar practices occurring in other Western democratic states. Yet, Muslim protests against these laws also represent an international double standard.

Muslims across the world often take to the streets to protest such violations of religious freedom in the Christian world while at the same time Muslim states regularly engage in more pervasive and severe violations of the religious freedom of Christians. In order to demonstrate this I compare the treatment of Muslims in 26 Western democracies to the treatment of Christians in 17 Middle Eastern Muslim states. (Israel and Lebanon are not included due to participation by non-Muslims in government).

The Religion and State project (www.religionandstate.org), which collects information on state religion policy worldwide, has identified 29 types of restrictions placed by governments on either the religious practices or institutions of minority religions.

After examining this data, accusations that Western governments place constraints on Muslims appear to be accurate. Sixteen out of 26 Western democracies (61.5%) place at least one type of restriction on Muslim minorities and four (15.4%) of these states place five or more types of restrictions on them. In comparison, all 17 Middle Eastern states place restrictions on Christian minorities and all but two (88.2%) - Iraq and Syria - place five or more such limitations. Thus, the average Middle Eastern state places about five times as many types of restrictions on Christian minorities as does the average Western state on Muslim minorities.

The 2009 Swiss Minarets referendum did not occur in a vacuum. Calls for such bans had previously occurred and were rejected in the legislative bodies of several of Switzerland's cantons including Solothurn, Bern and Zurich. In practice, however, minarets could not be built because local governments denied building permits on technical and bureaucratic grounds.

This type of behavior is common in Western democracies. Local governments in Austria, Australia, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta, Norway and Spain have all used similar tactics to restrict the building of mosques. Though, to be clear, in these countries some, not all, local governments engage in these practices and there is no country-wide ban on mosques. Switzerland remains unique among Western countries in that there is

a national-level restriction on mosques though it limits only the construction of minarets, not that of the entire mosque.

The same cannot be said for the building and maintaining of churches in the Middle East. Ten of 17 Muslim-majority Middle Eastern states (58.8%) place some form of restriction on churches, most of which go well beyond local governments using these tactics to block construction. Saudi Arabia bans houses of worship of all religions other than Islam. In Egypt, which has one of the Middle East's largest indigenous Christian populations, Ministry of Interior regulations specify a set of 10 conditions that must be met for a new church to be built. For instance, a church may not be within 100 meters of a mosque and it must be approved by the neighboring Muslim community, essentially giving locals an absolute veto over church construction. In addition, any repairs to a church, no matter how minor, require the approval of the regional government and before 2005 such repairs required presidential approval. In Tunisia operational churches generally date back to the 19th century or earlier. The government has rarely permitted the building of a new church since then. While not all of the restrictions on churches in the Middle East are this severe, they are distinct from those in the West in that they are all based on national, rather than local, policy.

The head-covering issue raised by France's 2004 law is becoming more pervasive across Europe. France's law is distinct from that of other European countries in that it was enacted nationally and consciously applied to all religions. In all other cases, the bans on head-coverings were by local or regional governments and apply specifically to Muslims. For example in 2003, Germany's Federal Constitutional Court upheld a state-level ban on headscarves for civil servants. By the end of 2008 at least eight of Germany's states had enacted such a ban. Similarly, several municipalities in Belgium including Antwerp and Brussels enacted bans on head-covering by municipal employees.

As Christians have no overt dress code it is hard to compare this issue directly to the policies of Middle Eastern states but it is arguable that the Bible, like a Muslim woman's head-covering, is a potent religious symbol and a necessary possession for a practising Christian. Six Middle Eastern states (35.3%) place restrictions on bibles. In most cases these are not outright bans on bibles but rather heavy regulation. For example, Kuwait officially bans the publishing of bibles but, in practice, allows recognized churches (as opposed to the many unrecognized churches) to print religious literature for their congregations and permits one company to import bibles.

Sometimes these bans are unofficial yet pervasive. For example, Morocco has no law banning non-Muslim religious literature; however, in practice the government bars Arabic-language versions of the bible. Outright bans exist as well. For instance, in Saudi Arabia any non-Islamic religious literature is banned although foreigners may bring bibles with them for personal use.

While a total of 15 of the 29 types of religious discrimination tracked by the Religion and State project are present in at least one Western democracy, only three of them exist in more than two or three Western states. These include head-covering bans and limitations on mosques as discussed above. As well, many Western governments require all minority religions to register with the government in order to gain official recognition – not incumbent on the majority religion. In most cases this is a bureaucratic

formality and failure to register does not influence freedom of religion but may influence a religion's ability to gain tax free status, open a bank account and rent or buy space.

In contrast, 27 of these types of discrimination exist in at least one Middle Eastern state and 18 exist in four or more states. While discussing all of these forms of discrimination is beyond the scope of this essay some examples highlight their seriousness. In 14 countries Christians are not allowed to proselytize and in 12 Muslims are restricted from converting to Christianity. In 11 countries, Christians attending public schools are required to take courses in Islam. In six countries Muslims are given preference in child custody arrangements upon divorce.

In sum, the record of Western democracies on religious freedom requires improvement, but these violations pale in comparison to the pervasiveness and severity of violations of the religious freedom of Christians in Middle Eastern Muslim states. Clearly, any violation of religious freedom is wrong.

There is a worldwide consensus on this, at least in theory, enshrined in international treaties and evidenced by the fact that over 90% of the world's constitutions have religious freedom clauses - though these clauses in practice are often not fully observed.

That being said, Muslim protests against Western Christian violations of Muslim freedoms are clearly a case of people living in glass houses throwing stones. Many Western Christian states do need to clean house on this issue. However, when they do so, they should overtly link their actions to the necessity of providing religious freedom everywhere.

***Bits and Pieces* Clips from various media in the Middle East and elsewhere**

ICEJ News, 18 November 2010: The Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center published a transcript of a recent vitriolic anti-Semitic speech of the senior Hamas member Mahmoud al-Zahar. In the speech, Al-Zahar blames the Jews for all the persecution they've suffered and draws a conclusion that the destruction of Israel and the expulsion of Jews from all over Palestine is an inevitable historic step.

ICEJ News, 18 November 2010: Muslim terrorists set fire to at least 10 houses belonging to Coptic Christians in the village of al-Nawahid in southern Egypt. The reason behind the attack that sparked the fire was a rumor about a Christian resident having an affair with a Muslim girl.

JTA Mobile Briefing, 16 November 2010: The Simon Wiesenthal Center has called on President Obama to release a 2006 Justice Department report disclosing that the U.S. government provided a safe haven for Nazi war criminals.

JTA Mobile Briefing, 16 November 2010: U.S. Jewish groups condemned rulings by rabbis in the Israeli city of Bnei Brak that ban residents from renting apartments to African refugees.

ICEJ News, 16 November 2010: Israel's chief rabbis are calling on the public to pray for rain, and declared this Thursday a special day of fasting and prayer to atone for the sins that are likely preventing the direly missing rainfall. Chief Ashkenazi Rabbi Yona Metzger and Chief Sephardi Rabbi Shlomo Amar wrote in a letter that the state of the waters in the Land of Israel is under great distress, especially since this is not the first year of drought. Both Rabbis agree that the land is dry due to the people's many sins.

ICEJ News, 16 November 2010: Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor told *Army Radio* that Prime Minister Netanyahu's Security Cabinet will not vote on a US proposal for a three-month freeze on new building in West Bank settlements until the proposals put forward by the Obama administration and the guarantees attached to them are officially made in writing.

ICEJ News, 16 November 2010: The official Iranian news agency reported that the Iranian military kicked off its five day "Defenders of the Sky" war-games on Tuesday, simulating air attacks against the country and other nationwide military situations.