

# The evidence we want

## ISLAM | Where on earth has the ‘beautiful religion’ of Islam created anything like an attractive society?

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Don't you get a little weary of having the experts remind you that you shouldn't get the wrong impression, that Islam really isn't as violent as you might have quite erroneously been led to believe, and that Muslims in general are at their roots a people of peace?

Ignore the evidence, we're told. Forget what your eyes and your ears have been telling you on the nightly news. Pay attention instead to the Muslim clerics in Detroit, the Ivy League academics, the Washington think tank specialists, and the network anchors and authorities. Oh. And don't forget that even the president of the United States has also assured you, several dozen times, that Muslims around the world, perhaps more than any other people, yearn for peace. And so, for good measure, did the president's predecessor.

All this is worse than a mere display of political correctness. It's lower than condescending. "Wait a minute!" millions of us ought to be saying. "We can figure this out for ourselves. We've watched this movie enough times to have a sense of how it goes." We're grown-ups. We don't need to spend our whole lives wearing blinders, kidding ourselves while nodding in polite acceptance of things we really don't believe.

So here's the evidence we'd like to see—the evidence a watching world deserves. Central to your display should be that Islamic country or state to which millions of people from the rest of the world are streaming because it is so compelling and attractive. Where, on this whole globe, is the Islamic society where this "beautiful religion" (to use President Obama's words last week) is practiced in a way that prompts people by the millions to move there and to live for the rest of their lives?

When I visited Saudi Arabia briefly some 25 years ago, I was warned not to speak in public to a woman, and if in conversation with any Saudi man, not to mention Jesus. Either kind of misbehavior, I was told, could result in my arrest. And that was in an Islamic country known as *friendly* to the United States. Want to spend your next vacation there?

The reverse, of course, is the reality. Muslims, by the millions, have forsaken their homes across North Africa to enjoy the freedoms offered by European countries like France. But once there, they think nothing of joining protests and marches against the very freedoms they have come to enjoy.

Nor can it be argued that we're moving in the right direction. In 2001, I listed in this column five Islamic countries considered by many as "frontispiece" societies exhibiting a moderate practice of Islam: Syria, Indonesia, Egypt, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Of those five, 14 years later, only Indonesia retains a right to display itself on a travel poster.



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Three explanations for all this are common—but bogus. It isn't for lack of time. Islam has had well over a millennium to get its act together. It isn't for lack of money. Islam has had, and still has, access to all kinds of global wealth. It isn't for lack of power. In at least 20 of the world's 190 countries, Islam has been dominant in the political driver's seat.

None of this, of course, can ever be suggested as warrant for harassment of Muslim people. When that occurs, Christians should rise up promptly and vigorously to disown such behavior as unbiblical and obnoxious.

But we are not engaging in harassment when we ask questions like this: If a group of radical Christians had, anywhere in the world, done what a small band of Muslims did in Paris a couple of weeks ago, the rest of us Christians shouldn't have been surprised if we were asked to engage in a straightforward and candid conversation. It's one thing for the leaders—and defenders—of Islam to say that what we've just seen isn't the true fruit of what they teach. It's another thing for them to show us where the true fruit is.

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