

# Islam without Muslims, Muslims wi

By Lubna Hussein

*Muhammad Abdo wrote that when he visited the West he found Islam but no Muslims and upon his return to the Arab world he countenanced many Muslims but no Islam. I am beginning to see his point*

**“W**HAT happens if a woman goes to court here?” asked my father.

“What do you mean?” I counterquestioned.

“What I mean is that if a woman goes to court is she treated as an individual or are her rights based on her gender?”

“Depends on the case, I guess,” I said.

“Come on,” he interjected sarcastically. “Don’t start telling me that women are treated in the manner that has been commanded by God. According to His Law they should be treated as equals. You know

that that’s not the case here.”

“You just have to look around at the horrific miscarriages of justice to know that that’s definitely not the case,” he emphasised. “My point is that as much as we try to find fault with the West, one thing is for sure: I would feel far more secure with their system of justice if I were a woman than I would with the one we have here.”

“Yes, in a way you’re right,” I began, “but Islam did give women rights over 1,400 years ago that the so-called civilised world has only started to recognise recently.”

“You’re intelligent enough to know that having rights and not being entitled to them is just as good as not having them at all. In the Quran, when a man decides to divorce his wife, God Orders him to leave his wife on an equitable basis and is required to support her. Am I right?” he asked, quoting the verse and chapter.

“Of course,” I agreed.

“So if we are really honest with ourselves, does the law here enforce that or even recognise it in part?”

“Not that I know of,” I admitted.

“Alright. This means that a woman can quite literally be booted out of her house on to the street with nowhere to go; and if she

“No,” I conceded thinking of all the women I knew who had had this scenario forced upon them without any hope of recourse.

“Exactly,” he said, having won the argument. “It’s disgusting to think that the courts can overlook the word of God when

escaped their veils or question the identity of the men around them; but when it comes to guaranteeing them their God-given rights they miraculously disappear!”

“Yes,” I said, reflecting upon what he said. “You’re right.”

“A woman cannot even gain custody

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tries to extract any right or entitlement from her husband, will the court support her in this? Have you ever heard of a Saudi man who is scared of the consequences of not paying his wife alimony or stealing her dowry because he might be taken to court?”

it comes to preserving and upholding the whole concept of male domination. Judges relish sentences that chastise women for petty matters. You see the way the outwardly pious love to stop women in the street to point out strands of hair that may have

of her children in a court of law. What sort of a mandate gives the automatic guardianship of little girls over to the hands of a father and stepmother even when a mother is perfectly capable of looking after them? You of all people should know what that

# Without Islam

feels like. What's more, the status and importance of a mother in Islam is such that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself said that paradise lies beneath the feet of one's mother and that a mother's value is three times greater than that of any other individual."

"Yes," I agreed.

It was this very conversation that played in my head when I read two articles printed side by side in the paper this week. One of them highlighted the fact that there are many single mothers and divorcees in society who are denied welfare due to trivial bureaucratic matters and thus forced to live below the poverty line. Imagine that. In Saudi Arabia, one of the wealthiest countries in the world, women are reduced to begging on the streets because the law does not recognize their needs. What kind of an interpretation of Islam is that when our faith is based on a spirit of egalitarianism?

When verses upon verses of the Quran command us to look after the wretched of our society?

As if that was not bad enough, the adjacent piece highlighted the obstacles that Saudi women married to foreigners have to endure. Whereas a Saudi man may obtain citizenship for his wife and his children, a Saudi woman is not entitled to the same privilege if she marries a non-Saudi. Upon what spurious logic this decision is based upon I do not profess to know, but what I do know for sure is that it has nothing to do with religion.

The great Islamic scholar of the 19th century, Muhammad Abdo wrote that when he visited the West he found Islam but no Muslims and upon his return to the Arab world he countenanced many Muslims but no Islam.

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