

# An in-depth reflection to the core of the communal conflicts in Myanmar

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Burma Times: By Harun Yahya 1 Sep 2014

It is an acknowledged fact that a genuine approach to a problem requires a closer look and a broader perspective. And when one aims to get to the root of a communal conflict, the concerns and worries of all the related parties should be sincerely taken into consideration and addressed in due manner. This is no different for Myanmar and the communal conflicts that have been going on between Muslim Rohingya people and the Buddhist majority of the country.

Looking at the news reports and media coverage, we can have a very precise image of the problem. We all know that the

sectarian violence between Buddhists and Muslims which began in western Rakhine state a few years ago has taken the lives of hundreds of Muslims and caused about 140,000 people, mostly Muslims, to be driven from their homes. Later on the violence spread to other parts of the country. The Muslim population – which constitutes about 4% of Myanmar's roughly 60 million people – suffered throughout the country. While they suffered under this persecution, the Myanmar government and the international community have been heavily criticized for not doing enough to protect them. But these criticisms didn't bring about any results; if we genuinely want to attain results, what we need to do here is to hear what the concerned parties claim and do something about them.

As the Burmese opposition leader, Aung San Suu Kyi – who refrained from condemning anti-Muslim violence and insisted that there is no ethnic cleansing in Myanmar – stated, the problems in Myanmar has to do with fear on both sides. Even though many who heard her equivocal attitude towards the violence suffered by Myanmar's Muslim minority found it deeply disturbing, we need to look into what she means and address these fears as well if we want to get to the bottom of these conflicts. In an interview she gave during her visit to Northern Ireland, Aung San Suu Kyi said, "The fear is not just on the side of the Muslims but also on the side of the Buddhists as well. Muslims have been targeted but also Buddhists have been subjected to violence. Global Muslim power is very great and certainly, that is a perception in many parts of the world and in our country as well."

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At this point what we should do is not to prove her personal opinion right or wrong but to address it correctly. To understand what Aung San Suu Kyi means by this mutual fear let us also lend an ear to what a very controversial name has to say about these conflicts.

Wirathu is a Buddhist monk who refers to himself as the “Burmese Bin Laden”. As this reference makes it obvious, he has extremist tendencies. Wirathu will be the one who undoubtedly will say the most extreme things on the Buddhists’ side. But knowing what he says will make us understand what lies at the root of the Buddhists’ rage against Muslims. He surely is a controversial personality and undoubtedly does not represent the ideas of every single Buddhist living in Myanmar; however as the person who’s known to be behind the recent conflicts, and as the leader of the 969 movement which organizes the anti-Muslim violence, responding to his claims will prove to be useful in resolving these provoked conflicts. After all, the Buddhist and Muslim population of Myanmar actually lived side by side in peace for centuries in Myanmar before this movement started their provocations.

As the man who has been stoking hatred against Muslims, Wirathu denounces Muslims as “crude and savage.” Wirathu says, “Their religion is the most abusive toward human rights. They are seriously abusing the freedom of belief.” Wirathu claims that the Muslims in the country are being very protective towards each other and abusive towards Buddhists. He claims that Muslims try to overtake their lands. He also claims that they marry Buddhists and force them to convert to Islam and prevent their freedom of belief. He has also made many other extreme claims, but these are enough for us for now to come to a general conclusion.

Now this is the point that we, as the Muslims of the world, should address. Before all else, we are the ones who will communicate the message of our religion. Islam is a religion of peace and condemns all acts of violence. Islam never gives way to any kind of abuse. As God commands in the Holy Qur’an; “There is no compulsion in religion.” (Qur’an, 2:256) Living by a religion of peace, it is not possible for any true Muslim to abuse human rights or prevent freedom of belief. In fact the message of Islam is based on freedom of belief.

In the Qur’an, God says;

“Say: You who deny the truth, I do not worship what you worship, and you do not worship what I worship. Nor will I worship what you worship nor will you worship what I worship. You have your religion and I have my religion.” (Qur’an, 109:1-6)

Islam demands Muslims communicate this message and let all people to live by their own religion.

Furthermore, God says;

“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair admonition, and argue with them in the kindest way. Your Lord knows best who is misguided from His way. And He knows best who are guided.” (Qur’an, 16:125)

So we should let the world, along with those who claim otherwise, know that Islam can never be associated with any act of violence or abuse and those who resort to violence and claim that they are acting in the name of Islam and that they are Muslims are not true Muslims living by the true values of Islam. They should also be taught about the true Islam as God commands.

The Muslim minority living in Myanmar are no different than other Muslims of the world. We all live by the moral values of the Qur’an and act as God commands. There might be some who claim to act in the name of Islam but engage in terror, just as there might be some who claim to act in the name of Christianity or Buddhism or any other religion yet engage in terror. But that does not make it right for anyone to profile or generalize them.

Calling to the way of our Lord with wisdom and fair admonition and arguing in the kindest way is Muslims’ way to ensure peace in the world and to resolve any conflict. And this is what we should do in this particular situation as well; communicating the peaceful message of Islam and uniting as people of belief. When we act in unity and make the whole world, along with the Buddhist population of Myanmar, understand that no harm will ever come to them from Muslims, we will see that the problems can be resolved on their own.

As God commands;

“Repel evil with what is best. We know very well what they express.” (Qur’an, 23:96)

“A good action and a bad action are not the same. Repel the bad with something better and, if there is enmity between you and someone else, he will be like a bosom friend.” (Qur’an, 41:34)

This is our only way out.

Adnan Oktar's piece on Burma Times:

<http://burmatimes.net/an-in-depth-reflection-to-the-core-of-the-communal-conflicts-in-myanmar/>  
<https://www.harunyahya.info/en/articles/an-in-depth-reflection-to-the-core-of-the-communal-conflicts-in-myanmar>