

Progressive Islam in Practice

Takfir Series: Part VI

Takfir Case

Studies Part III

**Progressive Muslims, Non-Muslims
& Ex-Muslims**

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There is a lack of critical engagement with some of the vast diversity of interpretations which have always been a part of our tradition. They get swept under the rug today because everything gets summarised into a simple formula of anti-imperialism under the name of Islam. I call it the takfiri factor.

They will call someone “not a Muslim” if their interpretation of what is Islam is different from the interpretation that has the dominate control in terms of [being] conservative and patriarchal but if anybody examines the aspects of Islamic intellectual history – which is ongoing – then they will see that there has never been a consensus over any of the multiple factors that impinge upon the way in which we actually get to live our Islam.

Dr. Amina Wadud

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"Moderate" Governments & Takfir

- Across the Muslim world, so called "moderate" governments also utilize *takfir* as a tool of political control and electoral clout.
- Governments like Malaysia, have *takfired* the founder of MPV, Ani Zonneveld, our partner organization KMU, Muslim feminists, and LGBTQ+ advocates as a way to silence anyone who challenges their own patriarchal and oppressive interpretation of Islam.
- Radical religious leaders and their followers in Western societies also threaten progressive Muslims. As citizens, progressive Muslims are often unprotected by the State.
- As we see in the case studies below, these "moderate" Muslim governments are themselves facilitators to radical opposition to Freedom of Religion and Belief.

**"To you be
your way,
and to me
mine."**

Amina Wadud

- In 2005, Amina Wadud made history by leading Friday prayer for a mixed gender congregation.
- The event was protested by a small group and the larger global Muslim community expressed outrage after the event, including the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar.
- Following this first prayer event, she led another mixed-gender prayer in the United Kingdom where attendees were threatened with disownment from local imams.
- In 2013, a scheduled lecture in India was cancelled because of opposition from local Muslim groups in Chennai.
- The State Secretary of India Towheed, an Islamic Organizations claimed that her progressive views were against the basic tenets of Islam.

Yahaya Sharif-Aminu

- Yahaya Sharif-Aminu, a member of the Tijaniyya Sufi Order, is a Nigerian Muslim religious singer who has been detained in the country since 2020.
- In March 2020, after a private audio messages from Yahaya praising a Sufi Imam went public, backlash erupted across the country and he was forced to go into hiding after protestors burned his home.
- A few weeks later, he was detained under the country's Shari'a Penal Code and charged with insulting the religious creed.
- Months later, after a closed trial he was found guilty and sentenced to death by hanging.
- In 2021, the conviction was overturned by a high court but since his conviction, he has been detained without access to a lawyer or his immediate family.

Bonya Ahmed

- Bonya Ahmed is Bangladeshi secularist activist.
- Alongside her husband, Avijit Roy, she wrote pieces on freethinking and secularism on the platform Mukto-Mona, which Roy founded.
- The work was criticized throughout Bangladesh and in 2015, during a book signing in Dhaka, the couple were attacked by a mob of Muslim-extremists.
- Bonya was gravely injured and her husband, Avijit, died after the machete attack.

"While the international community has offered help with the investigation, the Bangladeshi government has failed to mention a word about Avijit's gruesome murder since the day it occurred, this turning of a blind eye feeds both the public's sense of cynicism and the terrorists' sense of invincibility".

Seyran Ateş

- Seyran Ates is a Turkish-German human rights lawyer and activist based in Germany.
- She is highly critical of the conservative Muslim society in Germany and has been attacked more than once during her work as a women's rights activist.
- She went into hiding in 2008 prior to the scheduled publication of her book Islam Needs a Sexual Revolution because of the threats directed at her.
- In 2017, when she opened the Ibn Ruschd-Goethe mosque, a liberal mosque that allows mixed-gender prayer and female imams, the attacks on her heightened and she was the recipient of a fatwa issued by Al-Azhar University and the Turkish religious authorities.

Mohammed Hegazy

- In 2007, Mohammed Hegazy became the first Egyptian to seek recognition of his conversion from Islam to Christianity after his conversion in 1998.
- The case sparked outrage across the country with many calling on the government to give him three days to repent or issue the death penalty.
- A number of fatwas were issued against him and his wife, who had also converted, with one fatwa calling for the killing of their daughter when she reached 10 years of age.
- After the judge ruled against his conversion, he was unlawfully detained and subjected to various abuses during his imprisonment.
- He was eventually released after he declared his return to Islam, which many human rights activists called "scripted" and "forced".

Ulil Abshar Abdalla

- Ulil Abshar Abdalla is an Indonesian scholar and academic of progressive Islam and member of the Indonesian Liberal Islam Network.
- In 2002 he wrote an article, *Menyegarkan Kembali Pemahaman Islam*, or *Rejuvenating the Islamic Understanding*, which clerics across the country considered to be heretical.
- As a result, a group of Indonesian clerics from the Muslim Ulema Forum issued a fatwa against him calling for his death.
- He was also the target of a bomb sent to the Liberal Islam Network office, which injured a police officer and security guards when it was detonated.
- In 2014, he was banned from entering Malaysia after the government called him a "deviant Muslim" for his progressive views.

References

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- Meet Jamida Beevi, the first Muslim woman to lead Friday prayers in India by TA Ameerudheen
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