

The Islamist War on Muslim Women

By [Jeff Jacoby](#)

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THE "QATIF GIRL" won a reprieve last week. On Dec. 17, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah pardoned the young woman, who was sentenced to 200 lashes and six months in prison after she pressed charges against seven men who had raped her and a male acquaintance in 2006. Two weeks earlier, Sudan's president extended a similar reprieve to Gillian Gibbons, the British teacher convicted of insulting Islam because her 7-year-old students named a teddy bear Muhammad. Gibbons had been sentenced to prison, but government-organized street demonstrators were loudly demanding her execution.

In January, Nazanin Fatehi was released from an Iranian jail after a death sentence against her was revoked. She had originally been convicted of murder for fatally stabbing a man when he and two others attempted to rape her and her niece in a park. (Had she yielded to the rapists, she could have been flogged or stoned for engaging in nonmarital sex.)

The sparing of these women was very welcome news, of course, and it was not coincidental that each case had triggered an international furor. But for every "Qatif girl" or Nazanin who is saved, there are far too many other Muslim girls and women for whom deliverance never comes.

No international furor saved Aqsa Parvez, a Toronto teenager, whose father was charged on Dec. 11 with strangling her to death because she refused to wear a hijab. "She just wanted to look like everyone else," one of Aqsa's friends told the National Post, "and I guess her dad had a problem with that."

No reprieve came for Banaz Mahmud, either. She was 20, a Kurdish immigrant to Britain, whose father and uncle had her killed last year after she left an abusive arranged marriage and fell in love with a man not from the family's village in Kurdistan. Banaz was choked to death with a bootlace, stuffed into a suitcase, and buried in a garden 70 miles away.

More than 25 such "honor killings" have been confirmed in Britain's Muslim community in recent years. Many more are suspected.

There has been no storm of outrage about the intimidation and murder in Basra, Iraq, of women who wear Western-style clothing. Iraqi police say that more than 40 women have been killed so far this year by Islamists; the bodies are often left in garbage dumps with notes accusing the victims of "un-Islamic behavior."

By Western standards, the subjugation of women by Muslim fanatics, and the sometimes pathological Islamist obsession with female sexuality, are unthinkable. Time and again they lead to shocking acts of violence and

depravity:

In Pakistan, a tribal council ordered a woman to be gang-raped as punishment for her brother's supposed liaison with a woman from another tribe.

In San Francisco, a young Muslim woman was shot dead after she uncovered her hair and put on makeup in order to be a maid of honor at a friend's wedding.

In Tehran, a father beheaded his 7-year-old daughter because he suspected that she had been raped; he said he acted "to defend my honor, fame, and dignity."

In Saudi Arabia, the Islamic police prevented schoolgirls from leaving a burning building because they were not wearing headscarves and abayas; 15 of the girls died in the inferno.

The president of Cairo's Al-Azhar University, a renowned center of Islamic learning, described the proper method of wife-beating in a television interview: "It's not really beating," Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayyeb explained on Egyptian television. "It's more like punching."

When the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in 1996, the repression of women was among their first priorities. They issued a decree forbidding women to leave their homes, with the result that work and schooling for women came to a halt, destroying the country's healthcare system, civil service, and elementary education.

"Forty percent of the doctors, half of the government workers, and seven out of 10 teachers were women," Lawrence Wright observed in "The Looming Tower," his Pulitzer Prize-winning history of Al Qaeda. "Under the Taliban, many of them would become beggars."

Women are not the only victims of this rampant misogyny. Mohammed Halim, a 46-year-old Afghan schoolteacher, was dragged from his family and horribly murdered last year - disemboweled and then dismembered - for defying orders to stop educating girls.

All these are only examples - the tip of a dreadful iceberg that will never be demolished until Muslims by the millions rise up against it. As for the rest of us, we too have an obligation to raise our voices. It took a worldwide outcry to spare "Qatif girl" and Nazanin. But there are countless others like them, and our silence may seal their fate.

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