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The Muslim Oath Project 2020: Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution

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Public officials appointed or elected at the local, state, and federal levels take an oath of office that requires them to swear, or affirm, to support the *United States Constitution*. This is based on Article 6, Clause 3 of that *Constitution* (the "Oaths Clause").

As David Shestokas noted:

This constitutional requirement is binding upon every government official in the United States from state governors and judges to members of city councils, police officers, firefighters or board members of mosquito abatement districts and library boards.^[1]

In the last few years there have been repeated efforts by Muslim American organizations to encourage more Muslims to run for public office in order to increase the political influence of the Muslim community in the United States. This was reflected in the comments made by U.S. Congressman Andre Carson, a Muslim convert, at the January 10, 2019 *CAIR Community Congressional Reception* in Arlington, VA:

It's more than just about having three Muslims in Congress. I think symbolically it has great value, but I won't rest until 2020 we have five more members of Congress; 2022 and 24, we have ten more Muslims in Congress. In 2030 we may have about 30, 35 Muslims in Congress. Then we're talking about Madame Chair Rashida. We're talking about Madame Chair Ilhan. Hell, we could be saying Speaker of the House Ilhan, Speaker of the House Rashida, Senator Rashida, Governor Ilhan, President Fatima, Vice President Aziza, Inshah' Allah... Each and every one of us has a directive to represent Islam, in all of our imperfections, but to represent Islam and let the world know that Muslims are here to stay, and Muslims are a part of America. And we will, we will have a Muslim caucus that is sizable, that is formidable, and that is there for you.

A "directive to represent Islam" as an elected official the United States? As I showed in my 2019 book *Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution: The Dilemma for Muslim Public Officials*,^[2] there are many core tenets of Islam that are in direct conflict with much of the *United States Constitution*. This conflict was the genesis for the Muslim Oath Project (MOP).

The purpose of MOP 2020 was to find out how Muslim public officials or candidates resolved the conflict between their religion and the *Constitution* that some had already sworn to support, and that the successful candidates would be swearing to support.

As a result, over the last twelve months I used email, Facebook, and Twitter to contact 263 Muslim public officials and candidates running for election to public office in thirty states and in Washington DC. I asked each of them the following Four Questions:

No. 1: *Will you go on record now and state that our 1st Amendment right to freedom of speech gives the right to anyone in the United States to criticize or disagree with your prophet Muhammad, and will you also go on record now and state that you support and defend anyone's right to criticize or disagree with your prophet Muhammad, and that you condemn anyone who threatens death or physical harm to another person who is exercising that right?*

No. 2: *Our 1st Amendment guarantees freedom of religion in the United States. As part of that freedom, anyone in the United States has the right to join or leave any religion, or have no religion at all. Will you go on record now and state that you support and defend the idea that in the United States a Muslim has not only the freedom to leave Islam, but to do so without fear of physical harm, and will you also go on record now and state that you condemn anyone who threatens physical harm to a Muslim who is exercising that freedom?*

No. 3: *According to the words of Allah found in Koran 5:38 and the teachings of your prophet Muhammad, amputation of a hand is an acceptable punishment for theft. But our U.S. Constitution, which consists of man-made laws, has the 8th Amendment that prohibits cruel and unusual punishment such as this. Do you agree with Allah and your prophet Muhammad that amputation of a hand is an acceptable punishment for theft in the United States, or do you believe that our man-made laws prohibiting such punishments are true laws and are to be followed instead of this 7th Century command of Allah and teaching of Muhammad?*

No. 4: *According to the words of Allah found in Koran 4:3, Muslim men are allowed, but not required, to be married to up to four wives. Being married to more than one wife in the United States is illegal according to our man-made bigamy laws. Do you agree with Allah that it is legal for a Muslim man in the United States to be married to more than one woman, or do you believe that our man-made laws prohibiting bigamy are true laws and are to be followed instead of this 7th Century command of Allah?*

In theory one would think that after a Muslim public official had taken an oath to support the *United States Constitution*, and the Muslim candidates running for election knew they would have to do so if successfully elected, having to publicly choose between either following that *Constitution/our* manmade laws or following Islamic Doctrine would be simple: a Muslim public official/candidate would abide by the oath of office and choose the *Constitution/our* manmade laws.

However, the results were quite different. Of the 263 Muslims contacted, only seventeen would express support for the *United States Constitution/our* manmade laws, and six of those would not give me permission to use their names. Here are the seventeen that expressed that support:

Deedra Abboudd - Candidate Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, Arizona

Dalia Al-Aqidi - Candidate U.S. House of Representatives, Minnesota

Iman-Utopia Layjou Bah - Candidate U.S. House of Representatives, Arizona

Christopher Benjamin – Florida State House of Representatives

Nada Elmikashfi - Candidate Wisconsin State Senate

Mohammad Iqbal - Kane County Board, Kane County, Illinois

Turan Kayaoglu - Puyallup School Board, Puyallup, Washington

Rashid Malik - Candidate U.S. House of Representatives, Georgia

Shammas Malik - City Council, Akron, Ohio

Ali Mazarei - Candidate California State Assembly

Imtiaz Ahmad Mohammad - Candidate U.S. House of Representatives, Florida

Candidate for Public Office Preferred Anonymity - Central U.S.

Candidate for Public Office Preferred Anonymity - Eastern U.S.

Candidate for Public Office Preferred Anonymity - Western U.S.

Public Official Preferred Anonymity - Eastern U.S.

Public Official Preferred Anonymity - Western U.S.

Public Official Preferred Anonymity - Western U.S.

246 of them would not express support for the *Constitution*/our manmade laws.

The complete list of the 263 I contacted is available at the MOP website:

<http://www.liberato.us/muslim-oath-project.html> (thanks Liberato!). The names of the 246 who would not express support are also listed there by State.

From among those 246, I did receive twenty-seven responses. These responses consisted of a combination of twelve actual replies, but with an unwillingness to express support for the *Constitution*/our manmade laws, and fifteen "auto-responses" simply acknowledging receipt of my email. Some of those actual replies can be found at [Islam and the U.S. Constitution - Responses from Muslim Public Officials and Candidates](#).^[3]

At the end of MOP 2020 I had received email/Facebook responses from a total of forty-four Muslim public officials and candidates located in a wide variety of states and holding or running for public offices at various levels.

Maybe They Didn't Get the Four Questions?

One might speculate that the reason the vast majority of Muslim public officials/candidates did not respond was because they never received my attempts to contact them.

However, the email addresses and Facebook Messenger contacts I used were those listed on active political campaign sites, current public office sites (e.g. city council, state legislature, school board) and current business/organization sites. When the information was available, I would also include the e-mail addresses of affiliated staff members or campaign advisers. Because of the locations where these e-mail addresses and Facebook accounts were listed, I believed that each individual public official or candidate considered that particular e-mail address or Facebook account as a valid way for a political supporter, constituent, or someone interested in their business/organization to get in touch with them.

I also sent some of my inquiries to active Twitter campaign accounts. I did not receive any replies. However, I later found out that four of those I had contacted on Twitter admitted to receiving the Four Questions in a separate Twitter exchange. This exchange began on May 5, 2020 with a Tweet by Shahana Hanif, a candidate for New York City Council. She posted a picture of the questions I had sent her and made the comment, "Just in case you're wondering what it's like to be a Muslim woman from Brooklyn running for office." Among the replies to Hanif were those of three other Muslims to whom I had sent the Four Questions (two in New York and one in Virginia). Each of these three acknowledged in their Tweets that they had received my questions. However, none of these four Muslims in this Twitter thread ever replied to my Four Questions (see the Twitter thread^[4]).

Telephone Contact?

It was suggested that I contact Muslim public officials and candidates by telephone. However, I took the written approach because I wanted the individual Muslim to have sufficient time to consider each of the Four Questions before responding. Presenting the questions in writing ensured that each received the same exact questions that others had received and prevented any possible claims that I

had worded the questions differently based on the individual. The written responses also ensured that I accurately reported how the individual Muslim had replied.

Conclusion

There is an importance attached to taking an oath of office to support the *United States Constitution*. The Framers of the *Constitution* considered the "Oaths Clause" a way of integrating the original thirteen states into a federal union. It was also a way of binding those taking that oath "to abstain from all acts inconsistent with it," and "to observe the limits" it placed on their authority.^[5] As Thomas Jefferson so succinctly put it:

In questions of power then, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief by the chains of the Constitution.^[6]

The *United States Constitution* is the foundation of our nation. If we are to expect our public officials "to abstain from all acts inconsistent" with the *Constitution* and to observe its limits, then it is only natural to raise specific questions when a public official or candidate for public office claims to follow a religion that is rife with teachings and commands that are in conflict with that *Constitution*. And it is incumbent on Muslim public officials and candidates to be willing to specifically answer how each resolves that conflict. Unfortunately, only 6% of the Muslims I contacted for MOP 2020 were willing to express support for the *Constitution*/our man-made laws, and of those a surprising one-third, consisting of both public officials and candidates, did not give me permission to mention their names.

If Muslim public officials or candidates see their name on the MOP 2020 list and believe they did not receive the Four Questions, I hope they would contact me at [The Muslim Oath Project](http://TheMuslimOathProject.com) website so I could send them those questions and they could then go on record as to how they would choose between the *United States Constitution*/our man-made laws or Islamic Doctrine.

What can you do about this? Go to the "Take Action" page of the MOP website for ideas.^[7]

Keep this in mind:

Defending the Constitution is part and parcel of maintaining the Republic. Republics don't maintain themselves. It takes work...Every citizen is obligated to do something to help maintain the Republic, and there is no better way than to ensure that our elected officials support the Constitution.^[8]

Dr. Stephen M. Kirby is the author of six books about Islam. His latest book is *Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution: The Dilemma for Muslim Public Officials*.

[1] David Shestokas, *The US Constitution and Local Government*, January 7, 2014, <http://www.shestokas.com/constitution-educational-series/the-us-constitution-and-local-government/>.

[2] Stephen M. Kirby, *Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution: The Dilemma for Muslim Public Officials* (Washington D.C.: Center for Security Policy Press, 2019). A free, searchable PDF copy of my book is available for download at <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2019/12/03/csp-press-releases-primer-on-islamic-doctrine-versus-the-u-s-constitution/> or at <https://islamseries.files.wordpress.com/2020/07/islamic-doctrine-versus-the-us-constitution-the-dilemma-for-muslim-public-officials.pdf>.

[3] <https://islamseries.org/responses-from-muslim-public-officials-and-candidates/>

[4] Twitter thread: <https://islamseries.files.wordpress.com/2021/01/the-muslim-oath-project-2020-twitter.pdf>

[5] Edwin Meese III, Matthew Spalding, and David Forte, *The Heritage Guide to the Constitution* (Washington DC: Regnery Publishing, 2005), p. 295.

[6] "The Kentucky Resolutions of 1798, Jefferson's Fair Copy," Resolution No. 8, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, Princeton University*, <https://jeffersonpapers.princeton.edu/selected-documents/jefferson%E2%80%99s-fair-copy>.

[7] <http://www.liberato.us/take-action.html>

[8] Liberato, <http://www.liberato.us/take-action.html>.

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