Sexual Harassment of Women

Monday 6 November, 2017

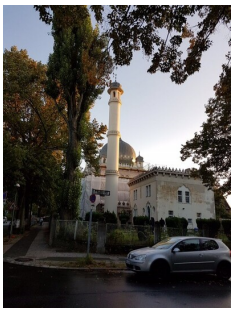
The sexual harassment of women has again hit the news. It is being treated as if it were a new phenomenon, yet the fact is that the sexual harassment of women by men, and — though given less recognition until recently — of men by men, has been going on since ancient times. This is why Islam has set clear boundaries which cannot be crossed. Islam did not put the whole burden of responsibility on women, but included men in it as well. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (*s*) told men: *"Be chaste yourselves, and women will be chaste as well"*. These boundaries place the responsibility on each individual, as illustrated by the following incident from the life of the Holy Prophet (*s*).

- A strikingly beautiful woman was among those accompanying the Holy Prophet (*s*) on his Farewell Pilgrimage. Fadl ibn Abbas, a boy riding pillion on the Holy Prophet's (*s*) camel began to stare at her because of her beauty. Noting this, the Prophet Muhammad did not scold the woman for dressing immodestly or revealing her beauty. Instead, he *"reached his hand backwards, catching Fadl's chin, and turned his face to the other side so that he would not gaze at her"*. Thus, the Prophet Muhammad once more established that men are responsible for ensuring that there is no sexual harassment of women.

The Holy Quran also commends *"the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard"* (33:35). This means that men and women are each responsible for avoiding sexual harassment by the other. In Islam, it is simple: there are clear boundaries. There is to be no physical contact or so-called 'banter' between the two. The conversation is to be professional. Anything else simply causes confusion and leads to the situation we find ourselves in. **It is not enough to provide a procedure for complaint because by then the psychological damage to the victim has been done.**

The Ahmadiyya Association for the Propagation of Islam (*Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat Islam*) was established in Lahore in 1914 to promote the informed understanding of Islam in the West. In the UK it operated the Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking until the early 1960s. Its new headquarters is at *Dar-us-Salaam*, 15 Stanley Avenue, Wembley, HA0 4JQ, UK. In 1924, in Berlin, it built the first mosque in Continental Europe of the modern era. The Berlin Mosque is now recognised by the German government as part of the German national heritage. From its European and other centres around the world this organisation has taught that Islam promotes peace, harmony and mutual respect between all communities and nationalities.

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