

Jerusalem summit

**EXPOSING GENDER
AND
CREED APARTHEID**

**A Public Diplomacy Strategy
To Meet the Challenge
of Radical Islam**

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A. Defining the Issues

It is clear to any informed observer of developments in international affairs that the civilizational values of the Judeo-Christian cultures are under savage assault. It is also clear to any informed observer that the major and – without doubt, the most proactively vehement – source of this assault is radical Islam and its aggressive and intolerant expansionism.

However, what is perhaps less obvious, and certainly less articulated, is the fact that half of the human race – regardless of religious affiliation – has a vested and vital interest in arresting the onset of Islamic radicalism, in containing its influence and in extricating itself from the threat of its oppressive grasp. This imperiled segment of humanity comprises **all the women of the world**.

A.1 The Oppression of Women – Gender Apartheid

If we do not oppose and defeat Islamic Gender Apartheid, democracy and freedom cannot flourish in the Arab and Islamic world... If we do not join forces with Muslim dissident and feminist groups; and, above all, if we do not have one universal standard of human rights for all – then we will fail our own Judeo-Christian ... ideals.

Prof. Phyllis Chesler,
Testimony on “Gender Apartheid in Iran
and the Muslim World” before US Senate,
December 2005

Under any regime of Islamic fundamentalism, the prospects for womenfolk are likely to be dismal indeed – as is borne out by bitter experience across most of the Muslim world where “**gender apartheid**” of varying degrees of severity is practiced in many walks of every day life. Various forms of harsh gender persecution and discrimination are part of social norms and even formal legislation (see **Appendix I**).

Perhaps the most blatant instance is that of Saudi Arabia where women, whether Saudi or foreign, suffer discrimination and human rights violations as a matter of routine – not only because of the gender bias in social mores and traditions, but because such apartheid-like discriminatory practices are prescribed by law. Strict segregation of the sexes, an integral part of Saudi Arabian society, has adverse and unfair effects on women, who are denied equal educational opportunities, are forbidden to drive, and may work only in certain occupations.

Human Rights Watch reports that apart from Saudi Arabia, women in Morocco, Jordan and Kuwait face government-sponsored discrimination that renders them unequal before the law – including discriminatory family codes that take away women's legal authority and place it in the hands of male family members – and restricts women's participation in public life. Indeed, women's empowerment and employment in the Arab world are among the lowest in the world, as is their participation in their countries' political and economic life (The Economist, July 4, 2002).

A.2 Religious Persecution – Creed Apartheid

Violence also occurs between Muslims, on the one hand, and Orthodox Serbs in the Balkans, Jews in Israel, Hindus in India, Buddhists in Burma and Catholics in the Philippines... Islam has bloody borders.

Prof Samuel Huntington,
Clash of Civilizations,
Foreign Affairs
Summer 1993

Islamic intolerance is not confined to the gender issue, and across the Muslim and Arab world religious repression is the rule rather than the exception. This phenomenon, which can be aptly called “**Creed Apartheid**” or “**Faith Apartheid**”, is certainly not limited to antagonism towards Israel, the Jews and Judaism (as reflected by the vitriolic and ubiquitous anti-Jewish invective – see **Appendix II**), but is far more wide-ranging and extensive. In fact it is directed toward virtually

all other forms of non-Muslim faiths – from the prohibition of churches in Saudi Arabia to the destruction of Buddhist statues in Afghanistan. However, perhaps the fiercest onslaught of Islam is against Christianity – particularly in Africa and particularly against the Evangelical movement which is proving to be the major – perhaps the only – body with sufficient **spiritual energy** and **numerical mass** to constitute an effective bulwark against the relentless advance of Islam in this continent and beyond (see **Appendix II**).

In many countries, conversion to Christianity is a punishable offense that carries heavy penalties – including lengthy imprisonment and even death. The unfortunate fate of Copts in Egypt and their persecution is a matter of documented record. In Saudi Arabia, it is illegal for Christians to gather to practice their faith. Churches are totally forbidden and nothing relating to the Christian faith may be displayed, including personal items such as a necklace with a cross or a Bible. In Sudan, the horrendous plight of Christians (of whom, according to some reports, close to half a million have been butchered by official and unofficial Muslim militias) and other non-Arab ethnicities are regularly reported in the world media ... and equally regularly ignored.

But even outside the geographic confines of Muslim countries, the adherents of Islam persist with an arrogant and discordant asymmetry in their attitude to religion. Thus when Muslim communities emigrate to liberal countries with open societies, they invariably demand, very vocally and assertively, that their customs be respected and that they be allowed to practice these customs openly – in accordance with the commitment to pluralistic tolerance in these societies. However, when Westerners visit the Islamic countries, they are expected to show their respect for the prevailing customs by adhering rigidly to them and by refraining from any public display of their own religion or customs.

B. Prescribing the Strategies

B.1 The Conceptual Design

These topics of **gender apartheid** and **religious intolerance/persecution (creed/faith apartheid)**, which arguably embody the two most objectionable aspects of Islamic radicalism today, can, and should, become the target for assertive action by those who feel that their entire system of values and world view are being gravely imperiled by the spread of Islamic extremism. For a concerted drive

to abolish gender apartheid and religious repression on the one hand, and to enhance the status of Muslim women and install religious pluralism/tolerance in the Muslim world, on the other, would do much to underpin Judeo-Christian values and undermine the cause of Islamist radicalism across the international stage. Indeed, an endeavor of this kind, if successful, could be a major force for promoting positive and moderating change in the very fabric of Islamist regimes.

In implementing such a drive, the major thrust of effort should be focused on persuading governments to adopt the type of legislation which reflects the spirit of the Jackson/Vanik amendment¹ in the conduct of their foreign policy. It was this amendment, which made benefits contingent on domestic reform and liberalization, that eventually succeeded in applying pressure on the USSR to allow Jewish emigration and induced greater tolerance in the Soviet regime's attitude to other minority groups.

Similarly, groups that hold Bible-based Judeo-Christian values dear should marshal their resources to influence both incumbent politicians and government officials on the one hand, and civil society elites and opinion makers, on the other, for the incorporation of similar, morally sound principles in their country's foreign policy.

B.2 The Practical Measures

Practical measures aimed at the implementation of the specified strategy should focus on two interrelated levels:

– In the Realm of Public Diplomacy by means of Civil Society Activism

– In the Realm of Official Diplomacy, Parliamentary Legislation and Government Policy

There is a clear symbiotic relationship between these two areas. On the one hand, incumbent politicians can encourage civil society organizations to engage

¹ According to the United States Trade Act of 1974, the Jackson-Vanik amendment, named for its major co-sponsors, Sen. Henry "Scoop" Jackson (D-WA) and Rep. Charles Vanik (D-OH), denied Normal Trade Relations (then called "most favored nation" status) to certain countries with non-market economies that restricted emigration rights.

in activities designed to create a public climate amenable to introduction of the desired changes in policies. On the other hand, independent initiatives by civil society activists can utilize various channels of action open to concerned individual and groups to bring pressures to bear on decision-makers of these changes. Such efforts should be directed both towards the **political system** on the one hand, and towards influential elements within the **civil society** such as the media and educational institutions, on the other.

A “to do” list within the sphere of civil society activism would include the following:

- **Canvassing of politicians and policy makers** (including face-to-face meetings) to explain to them the iniquities of gender apartheid and religious persecution that prevail today in the Islamic world;
- **Organizing of demonstrations and other protest actions** decrying the injustices of discrimination on the basis gender or faith;
- **Initiation of mass letter campaigns** to both politicians and major media organizations (printed and electronic) calling public attention to the injustices perpetrated against women and adherents of Judeo-Christian beliefs;
- **Establishment of contacts with major media personalities** and the conveying to them of factually accurate material on the grim realities in the Islamic world, in particular with regard to the repression of women and non-Muslim believers;
- **Dissemination of truthful accounts and reliable data** on religious and gender persecution in across the Muslim world via internet, e-mail mailing lists or and other communication vehicles;
- **Setting up of proactive monitoring facilities** to document and disseminate information on gender and religious discrimination, repression and persecution;
- **Monitoring of academic organizations and research institutes** that tend to understate, conceal, disguise or distort the cruel realities which women and non-Muslims are exposed to;
- **Engaging educators, heads of teachers' organizations, school principals** etc. to inform and educate on the true fate of the victims of gender and religious persecution in the Islamic world.

Within the sphere of official diplomacy, parliamentary legislation and government policy a **three-pronged approach** should be adopted consisting of:

- a) **“Carrot and Stick” Legislation** modeled on, but expanded beyond, the **Jackson/Vanik** amendment, which in spite of a rather inauspicious start, was a major factor in securing the emancipation of Soviet Jewry and subsequently other oppressed religious minorities including evangelical Christians and Catholics. In essence, this type of legislation would condition various benefits accorded foreign nations on the abolition of (or at least progress in abolishing) gender and creed apartheid. Such benefits may relate to trading status, access to know-how and technology, foreign aid etc.
- b) **Allocation of resources for overt and covert funding of:**
 - Activities of organizations for advancement of Muslim women, which operate both inside and outside the Islamic world;
 - Defense of activists and organizations against physical assault from proponents of male dominance which may not be long in coming. This could include instruction and training of women’s rights activists by special forces and covert advisors to enable them to fend off attacks by radical adversaries as indeed was/is the case in Afghanistan, Iran and other countries across the Muslim world. Such assistance may also include equipping them with the means (ordnance) to conduct such defense.
 - The establishment of channels for the propagation of information and ideas supportive of advancement of Muslim women. This could include a modern-day version of the kind of activity embodied in the broadcasting of **Radio Free Europe** which was directed at the Soviet Bloc. In a similar fashion, **“Free Lady”** media channels should be directed at the Muslim world extolling the merits of enhancing the status of women and underscoring the detriment involved in their oppression.
- c) Instituting domestic sanctions and punitive measures against representatives of regimes that implement or tolerate repressive measures against women and religious minorities. Displeasure at such regimes’ policies may be expressed in curtailing diplomatic privileges of embassy staff, boycotting dignitaries from “offender states” and functions organized by them, etc.

In implementing these measures, the underlying rationale that should be driven home is that there is no reason why **discrimination** and **persecution** on the

basis of **gender** and **faith** should be considered any less heinous or be met with any less vigor than **discrimination** and **persecution on the basis of race** and **ethnic origin**.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that the advocated policy proposals should be adopted not only because of the overwhelming **moral merit** they embody but also because of the **long-term practical benefits** that they are likely to provide.

Indeed, it would appear that these proposals constitute a strategic initiative with little “downside” risk. **On the one hand**, should they prove successful and the status of women is indeed enhanced and greater religious tolerance is indeed introduced into the Muslim world, there can be little doubt that the result would be a dramatic and positive transformation of Islamic society. If, **on the other hand**, they meet vigorous opposition by those dedicated to the preservation of male/Muslim dominance, they are likely to generate tremendous internal turmoil in such societies which would be compelled to divert significant resources to contend with the initiative, thus reducing the energies available to assail other external objectives.

In either case there can also be little doubt these would be developments of tremendous benefit not only to those who hold the Judeo-Christian values dear, but to the entire international community as a whole.

The ensuing appendices present additional information that could contribute toward the design and promotion of a framework for the formulation of the proposed legislative and/or policy initiatives.

Appendices

Appendix I

Topic:	Eradication of "Gender Apartheid" and Enhancement of Status of Women
Objective:	<p>Passing an expanded Jackson/Vanik- type amendment focusing on: The Enhancement/Advancement of the Status Women – as a Major Force for Promoting Change in Islamist Regimes.</p>
Background/ Rationale	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One of the major cleavage lines in fundamentalist Islamist society is that of gender with harsh discriminatory practices in place in most countries where such radical theocratic values prevail. 2. Focusing on this issue of what is in effect “gender apartheid” would permit the mounting of a sustainable offensive strategy against repressive Islamist regimes. Such an ideological offensive would conform entirely to the moral tenets of liberal democracy – and thus be relatively immune to criticisms from the usually obstructive “politically correct”. 3. Moreover such an offensive would, on the one hand, effectively target one of the most sensitive foundations of fundamentalist fanaticism and on the other, generate pressure for a positive, moderating transformation in Islamic society. 4. It would be difficult to imagine any other measure which would cut the ground more effectively from under the pillars of extremist Islamist society than a radical upgrading of the status of women in such societies. Indeed, experience shows that advancement of women produces effects that run strongly against the factors which nourish fundamentalist extremism.

5. For example, improvement of the status of women is usually accompanied by **lower birthrates** (hence smaller families), **higher income levels**, and **better standards of education**. This is a phenomenon acknowledged by many in the Muslim world itself. For example, such sources commonly cite the low status of women in Arab countries as one of the major causes of the underdeveloped and backward state of this part of the globe.

6. There can in fact be little doubt that an Islamic world, in which the status of women approached that of women in the West, would constitute an entirely different and a certainly less implacably hostile adversary than it does at present.

7. It would therefore be a definite interest of the liberal democracies of the world to prepare for a long-term, comprehensive and vigorous campaign, designed to foment demands for women's liberation in Muslim societies, to promote pressure for upgrading their status and for acquiring civil rights currently denied them.

8. Such an initiative would provide considerable PR and diplomatic advantages:

(a) It would facilitate a diplomatic offense against repressive extremist regimes – underscoring that if half their population is kept in a state of unproductive suppression, lack of economic progress in their countries is inevitable.

(b) Since women are clearly the group likely to be most drastically and adversely affected by the propagation of Islamist values, focusing on the issue of the plight of women under such values will contribute to raising public awareness of the inherent special menace such doctrine entails for half of humanity.

(c) As this issue transcends conventional political divisions, it has potential for harnessing considerable public support regardless of party affiliation. It is thus likely to provide a rare opportunity where both religious conservative and secular liberal forces can combine efforts and cooperate in promoting an issue which, for differing reasons, coincides with their opposing world views.

	<p>9. Due to the explosive sensitivity of the gender issue in Islamist countries, even if the proposed measures do not succeed in bringing about a tangible positive transformation, it will at least throw these repressive regimes off balance and onto the defensive, forcing them to divert significant resources to deal with the consequences of the initiative.</p>
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Appendix II

Topic:	Religious Tolerance, Pluralism and Freedom of Faith
Objective:	<p>Passing an expanded Jackson/Vanik- type amendment focusing on:</p> <p>Propagation of religious tolerance and pluralism Protection/Empowerment of Christians /Christian heritage against persecution/ eradication in Muslim countries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In Africa - In the wider Middle East - In the Palestinian Authority <p>Elimination of anti-Semitic incitement and the racist hatred propagated by the Palestinian media</p>
Background/ Rationale	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Christians and Christianity are under savage assault across the Muslim world. Religious repression is the rule rather than the exception. In many countries, conversion to Christianity is a punishable offense that carries heavy penalties – including lengthy imprisonment and even death. 2. This is particularly true in Africa and the Middle East. 3. <u>In Africa:</u> Christianity is emerging as the only spiritual bulwark against Islamist domination of the continent. This is perhaps why it and its adherents have been subjected to such virulent attacks from their Muslim compatriots.

In Sudan, particularly in the Darfur region, the horrendous plight of Christians and other non-Arab ethnicities is a matter of well-documented fact. Relief aid to starvation-hit areas is reportedly made contingent on conversion to Islam. Across the continent, forced conversions to Islam are said to be conducted via the kidnapping of young Christian boys and girls. In Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, there appears to be a determined attempt by the Muslim North (which makes up about half of the population) to impose Islam – including Sharia Law – on the entire country. Indeed, some commentators claim that an endeavor is under way to make Africa into the first Islamic continent.

4. In the Wider Middle East: Across the Arab world, Christians also face grim realities. In some places, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, converts to Christianity may even face death. Significantly, the only Middle East country where the Christian community is not decreasing is the much-maligned, always-reviled, often-boycotted Israel. Here the Christian community has grown in the last decades, despite emigration and a low birthrate. According to *Le Figaro*, in the last 30 years the Christian-Arab population grew to 117,000 in 2004 from 80,000 in 1976. This is in stark contrast to the situation throughout the region – including **the Palestinian Authority** (see below).

5. In the Palestinian Authority: Under the Palestinian regime Christians also have to face discriminatory and intimidatory policies which are reducing the Christian population at an alarming rate and obliterating signs and symbols of the Judeo-Christian heritage in the Holy Land. Documented research of persecution of Christians by the Palestinian Authority includes **Social and Economic Discrimination; Boycott and Exortion of Christian Businesses; Violations of Property Rights; Crimes Against Christian Women; Palestinian Authority Incitement Against Christians; and Failure of the Palestinian Security Forces to Protect Christians.**

One of the places most affected is the birthplace of Christ, Bethlehem. Although for decades they constituted the majority, today Christians currently account for only 30,000 of the district's 130,000 residents. Numerous accounts point to a purposeful Palestinian effort to undermine – even eradicate – the Christian character of Bethlehem in favor of an overwhelming Muslim dominance. Complaints include cases of the defacing of Christian property, appropriating lands of the Greek Orthodox Church in Bethlehem and building mosques on formerly Christian land.

6. Anti-Semitic Incitement and the Racist Hatred in the Muslim World

(a) The Muslim media (including organs under direct government control) continuously propagate messages of hate and demonization of Israel and Zionism, and well as of Jews and Judaism.

(b) In many respects, the diatribes of media in the Muslim world (particularly in Arab countries including the Palestinian Authority) strongly resemble that of the Nazi propaganda machine.

(c) Needless to say, the conduct of the Arab media serves to deepen the feelings of enmity, widen the rift between Jews and Arabs and perpetuate the violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Similar sentiments are cultivated in Muslim and Arab education systems (including the Palestinian system), where the same Nazi-like, dehumanized portrayal of Israelis and Jews, and the same hateful racist sentiments, are conveyed to the youth via school textbooks and other pedagogic materials.

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