

# **Foundations of Muslim Extremism and the Marginalization and Violence against Women**

**A Lecture by  
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In this presentation I argue that Muslim women issues are symptoms of the widespread crisis in understanding Islam. Being the results of Muslim extremism on all fronts, I also argue that these issues are the active drive to understand the foundations of such extremism. To better understand this crisis, a radical shift is required to analyze the mind-set of the extremist Muslims, the majority of whom are males. Although these extremists claim to adhere to Islam, they are violating the basic principle of Islam by coercing people to follow their own rules under threat of force or rape. Yes, they call for the rule of shari'a, but the meaning of "shari'a" has been largely abused for many centuries. Extremists' behavior is mainly based on few Islamic texts that are either taken out of context or fabricated to justify their violent acts.

For example, extremists use some of the reported narratives (*Hadith*) on the authority of the Prophet Muhammad (also known as his tradition or *sunnah*) that are not corroborated by the Qur'an to enforce social structure that negatively affect Muslim women, like issues of modesty, leadership, and testimony. This abuse of the reported narratives, I argue, is the main cause of the crisis in understanding Islam. Hence, these narratives must be carefully evaluated and should not replace Qur'anic guidance, the only divine and binding text of Islam. Muslim women, therefore, need to rethink the Hadith because it is still being used as a source for applying the Qur'an, or as the primary source before the Qur'an, even when the contents of some narratives are not corroborated by the Qur'an.

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