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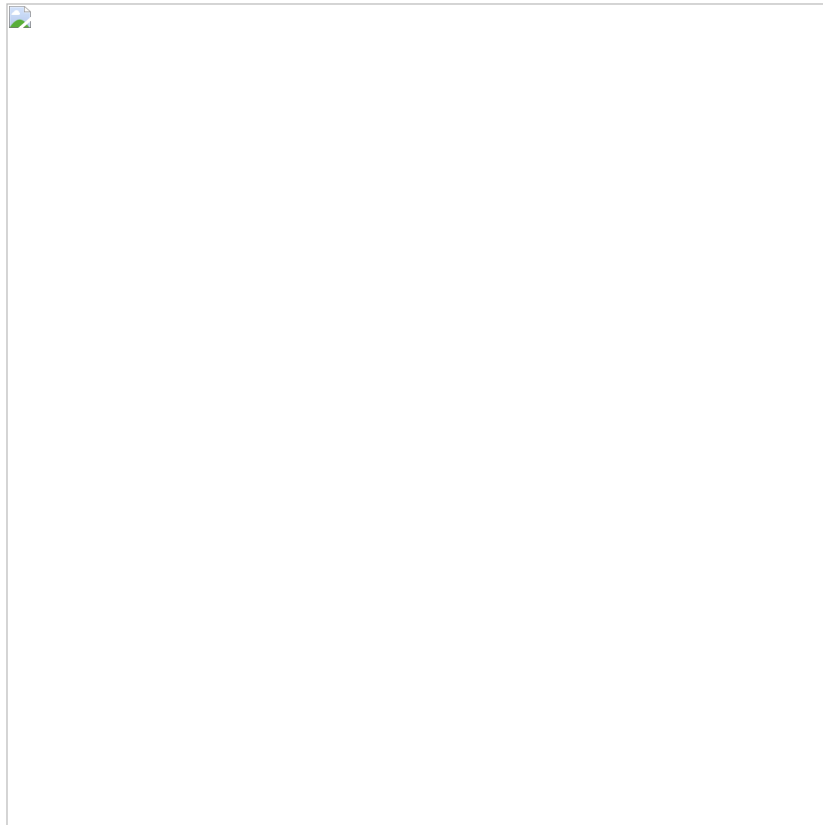
## Opinion: The Sultan of Brunei's Sharia Law Is the Antithesis of Islam

Monday - April 1, 2019 by [Ani Zonneveld](https://wehonline.com/author/anizonneveld/) | 5 Comments

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The Beverly Hills Hotel, owned by the Sultan of Brunei's Brunei Investment Agency. (Photo: Jon Viscott)

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Last week, the Sultan of Brunei proclaimed death by stoning as the penalty for same-sex intercourse and illicit sex.

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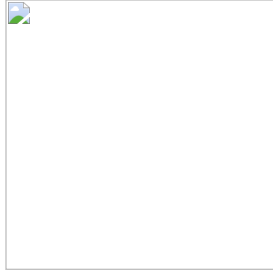


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the condition that it doesn't contradict sharia law" which is the rule of thumb for most these Muslim-majority countries, especially those led by tyrants. Their definition of sharia law is God's law, of which they are implementers. And what they and their religious cronies have continued to do is to talk of UNDHR as a "Western agenda to undermine Islam".

As a human rights organization, Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV) often stands alone against the Muslim tyrants who have destroyed millions of life in the name of religion. In America, the secular left is too uncomfortable with us liberal Muslims being self-critical, lest they be accused of being "Islamophobe," while the political right hates us as our liberal narrative undermines the very basis from which they have built their prejudices on.

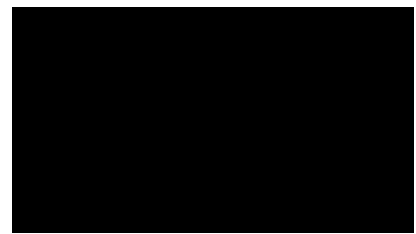


It is therefore heartening to read George Clooney's call for a boycott of the Sultan of Brunei's luxury properties. We have to start somewhere, and we should also call on businesses, particularly those who have signed on to the [U.N. Global Compact](https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-ugc/mission/principles) (<https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-ugc/mission/principles>), to adhere to the principles they signed on to namely:

Hassanal Bolkiah, Sultan of Brunei

- Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

- Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.



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And now to argue against the religious justification.

First, let's address the problem with the claim that Sharia law is God's law. If Sharia law is truly God's law, then why is it different in just about every Muslim country with a Sharia court?

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Truth is, Sharia law is a 100% man-made construct. Throughout history, it has been a mash-up of Quranic interpretations as extrapolated by medieval misogynistic political men of power, with customs and secular norms of the day such as child/forced marriage, FGM/C (female genital mutilation and cutting) and, "authenticated" by a mullah on the politician's payroll. And there you have it, sharia law!

And here's the problem with a sharia law that punishes same-sex intercourse: there's no punishment for homosexuality in the Quran, nor did Prophet Muhammad ever punish homosexuals or trans folks in his community. It is actually that simple, and the first Muslim country to understand that was Turkey when the Ottoman Caliph decriminalized homosexuality in 1858.

Second, let's talk about stoning for illicit sex. That, too, is not prescribed in the Quran. The secondary text that is being used to justify such a sharia law is the "hadith," a collection of writings compiled 100 years after Prophet Muhammad died, claiming to record what he did and what he said. As you can imagine, there are a lot of tall tales in this collection of writings, which includes the stoning of a Jewish woman for illicit sex as dictated by her religious community at that time. Yes, you read right: Jewish law used for Islamic law.

MPV has been working to affirm LGBTQ+ rights here in the U.S., and at the United Nations. At the U.N. the pushback we get from most Muslim-majority countries is that we are just an American tool propagating a Western agenda. Fact is, much of the Muslim world and global South never had any discriminatory laws against homosexuality prior to colonization. It was the Christian colonizers who introduced it to them and, as such, Penal Code 377 is an article established across much of the British Commonwealth criminalizing consensual homosexual conduct as a "carnal intercourse against the order of nature." It is unfortunate that much of the Muslim society, and the Global South, have now embraced this discriminatory belief as their own with such religious fervor.



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Here in the U.S., homophobic teachings still run rife in mosques and religious institutions, and that is why 75% of American Muslims don't care to attend a mosque. And not a single established Muslim religious leader in America has signed on to our #NoToHomophobia campaign, a call to "pledge to eradicate all homophobic teachings in my community and in the religious institutions".

The Quran, by contrast, is rife with passages of compassion, justice and the preservation of life, which directly invalidates capital punishment: "And for you, in the law of equality, there is saving of life, O you with understanding: so that you may restrain yourselves!" (Qur'an: 2:179) and "not take life which God has made sacred" (Qur'an: 17:33).

I, Ani Zonneveld, therefore make the argument that the Sultan of Brunei is actually implementing non-Islamic values he inherited, and falsifying it as "Islam."

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## 5 About Ani Zonneveld

Ani Zonneveld is founder and President of Muslims for Progressive Values (<http://www.mpvusa.org/>), the oldest progressive Muslim organization in the U.S. which advocates for women and LGBTQ rights, for freedom of expression, and of conscience. Since its inception, Ani has presided over MPV's expansion to include chapters and affiliates in 8 cities in the U.S., and spearheaded the founding of an umbrella

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organization Alliance of Inclusive Muslims with members spanning five continents. Through her work at the U.N. she has secured MPV's ECOSOC status, serves as a Faith Advisory Council member to the U.N. and commissioned by the UN Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect to create a workshop on reforming anti-hate speech curriculum for Muslim societies. She has organized numerous interfaith arts and music festivals, is the co-editor of MPV's first book, an anthology titled "Progressive Muslim Identities – Personal Stories from the U.S. and Canada"; executive producer of a video series "LGBTQI Rights in Islam"; has contributed to many forewords and numerous anthologies and Op-eds. She gave her TEDx talk titled – Islam: As American As Apple Pie, and is the subject of an award-winning documentary titled "al-imam" featuring Ani's activism works to be screened at the American Pavilion at Cannes Film Festival in 2019. As a Grammy certified songwriter, she uses the power of music and the arts in countering radicalism as she speaks-sings her message of social justice and peace from a progressive Muslim woman's perspective.

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**Enlightening** 4 years ago

Thank you for your thoughtful and enlightening words that underscored my perceptions about this issue gleaned through discussions with many my colleagues in the Middle East.

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**Dave** 4 years ago

So a man can plow a goat but not another man? That makes no sense at all.

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**Alison** 4 years ago

Wasn't there a boycott of his hotels already? I remember hearing about one from a few years ago. Did it die out and now a new one has been called for or is this a call from a new group. I'm confused.

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**Ralph Khelil** 4 years ago

Thank you for standing with love, open mindedness & tolerance as the guiding light of faith.

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