



A Dangerous Woman. Why Islamists want to kill Ayaan Hirsi Ali

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[Clifford D. May](#)

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Theo van Gogh was a modern Western man, a believer in reason, tolerance and multiculturalism. And so it is perhaps fitting that his last words were: "Can't we talk about this?"

He asked that question of Muhammad Bouyeri, a Militant Islamist outraged over "Submission," a film van Gogh had directed, a film which took an unsparing look at the oppression of women in Islamic lands. In broad daylight, on a street in van Gogh's hometown of Amsterdam, Bouyeri responded to the filmmaker's appeal for civil discourse by shooting him, sawing into his throat with a butcher knife and then stabbing a five-page letter into his chest.

Prominently named in that letter was Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the remarkable woman who wrote "Submission." Bouyeri vowed to kill her as well.

Such intense hatred and violence is difficult for many of us to comprehend. Not so Hirsi Ali. Growing up in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia and Kenya, she experienced multiple forms of cruelty and became, for a time, a devout believer in the radical brand of Islam preached by the Muslim Brotherhood. She has now written "Infidel," a book about her extraordinary geographical, spiritual and intellectual journey. Anyone who aspires to understand the global conflict now underway - why it's happening and where it may be leading - needs to listen to her.

Hirsi Ali's personal story is by now familiar. She grew up in poverty and on the run – the daughter of a celebrated Somali revolutionary. When she was 22 years old, her father arranged for her to marry a man he thought suitable. She ran away, settling in the Netherlands where she cleaned toilets and worked on a factory assembly line. Before long, she also learned fluent Dutch, attended university and was elected a member of parliament.

But after van Gogh's murder, the threats against her life and the controversy surrounding her views impelled her to leave Holland for Washington where Christopher DeMuth, the far-sighted president of the American Enterprise Institute, gave her a place to think and write about freedom, religion and ideology.

In the U.S., Hirsi Ali may be safer from physical attack than she would be in Europe. But nothing can protect her from the attempts at character assassination emanating from the pages of the *Economist*, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post* and other elite publications.

Her detractors -- who would never object to criticism of Christianity or Judaism -- are apparently outraged that Hirsi Ali dares to question Islamic doctrine and practice. They are offended by her refusal to agree that Islam is intrinsically "a religion of peace" and that only a lunatic fringe has "hijacked" the faith to justify flying planes into buildings and dispatching suicide bombers to murder children.

Hirsi Ali argues instead that there are shortcomings and perhaps even pathologies within Islam that must be acknowledged and addressed. Such ideas came to her immediately after the 9/11/01 attacks. The chairman of the Dutch Labor Party said to her: "It's so weird, isn't it, all these people saying this has to do with Islam?"

"I couldn't help myself," Hirsi Ali writes. "I blurted out, 'But it *is* about Islam. This is based in belief,'" in particular the belief that a war must be waged to force infidels to submit. Al-Qaeda members are not protesting policies, they are fulfilling what they see as religious obligations. To fail to recognize this is, Hirsi Ali writes, "a little like analyzing Lenin and Stalin without looking at the works of Karl Marx."

She adds: "The kind of thinking I saw in Saudi Arabia, and among the Muslim Brotherhood in Kenya and Somalia, is incompatible with human rights and liberal values."

Although Hirsi Ali is no longer an observant Muslim, it is unfair to call her anti-Islamic. The Prophet Mohammad, she says, "did teach us a lot of good things. I found it spiritually appealing to believe in a Hereafter. My life was enriched by the Quranic injunctions to be compassionate and show charity to others." But what she found increasingly difficult to accept, particularly as she disobediently befriended infidels, was the teaching that "if you don't accept Islam you should perish."

Hirsi Ali believes that just as the West long ago “freed itself from the grip of violent organized religion” so, too, must Muslims today “hold our dogmas up to the light, scrutinize them, and then infuse traditions that are rigid and inhumane

with the values of progress and modernity.”

Those are revolutionary ideas. No wonder Muslim totalitarians plot to kill her and Western apologists for Islamism conspire to discredit her.

[Clifford D. May](#), a former New York Times foreign correspondent, is the president of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a policy institute focusing on terrorism.