



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 20, 2014

Muslim Columnist: Regulation, “Diversity” Could Stop Negative Newspaper Coverage of Islam

While Britain already has hate-speech laws that stifle criticism of Islam, this isn't enough for the political director of the Huffington Post UK, Mehdi Hasan. Speaking at a London media industry event hosted by Mindshare UK last Thursday, the columnist complained of what he called “demonizing press coverage” of Muslims and said it will not “change unless ... there is some penalty.” He entertained the idea of “externally imposed” regulation as a possible remedy and also called for efforts to increase “diversity” in newsrooms.



The Guardian [reported](#) on the story:

The columnist ... said the press has proven “singularly unable or unwilling to change the discourse, the tone or the approach” towards Muslims, immigrants and asylum seekers.

Hasan ... said: “We’re not going to get change unless there is some sanction, there is some penalty. This is not just about Muslims; it is about all minorities.”

“Therefore you have to ask questions about: does it need to be externally imposed, either by better regulation or via some form of commercial imperative? Though, that requires a separate campaign to get companies to give a damn about this stuff,” Hasan added.

Hasan characterized much Islam coverage as “misinformation” and said it was “morally wrong.” He also complained of a double standard in which statements routinely made about Muslims would not be tolerated were they made about Jews. He asked, “Why isn't anti-Muslim bigotry as unacceptable in the press as anti-Jewish bigotry?” He did not specify, as far as we know, whether this double standard is why there are so many more newspaper stories about Muslim suicide bombers than about Jewish ones.

Speaking of double standards, bigotry, and printed words that may require amending, some are pointing fingers right back at Hasan and the Islamic faith, which he has often defended. As an example, Thomas Lifson at *American Thinker* [asks](#), “I wonder how concerned Hasan is about the Koran’s portrayal of Jews as apes and pigs?”

For Hasan’s part, he says he has been mischaracterized. Defending himself in a piece yesterday entitled “Hiding Anti-Muslim Bigotry Behind ‘Free Speech’ Won’t Work,” he [wrote](#) that during his Mindshare UK appearance he was simply outlining “the various ways in which sections of the British press routinely demonises, discriminates against and fearmonger about British Muslims, especially in the form of inaccurate, misleading and dishonest headlines, images and stories.” He then also stated, “I suggested that, in the context of an [ongoing British debate over the best form of press regulation](#), there needed to be tougher action by any proposed new regulator against the promulgation of falsehoods and smears against marginalised minorities of all types — Muslims, Gypsies, asylum-seekers, etc. I made no



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mention of the religion of Islam, to beliefs, practises, theology and the rest.” Yet this seems belied by the fact that, as *The Guardian* reported, he hosted a session at the Mindshare UK event entitled “The Muslims are coming!”

Hasan’s comments have caused a backlash against him in certain quarters, which is no doubt why he had the aforementioned *Guardian* piece updated on Monday to include the statement that he is “all in favour of free speech and the robust criticism of all religious beliefs.” Yet critics find this hard to take at face value given Hasan’s history of having, as Lifson put it, “flexible” standards. For instance, while Hasan preaches against bigotry, as Breitbart [pointed out](#):

In 2013 Hasan caused controversy when he [told](#) a Muslim audience “We know that keeping the moral high-ground is key. Once we lose the moral high-ground we are no different from the rest of the non-Muslims; from the rest of those human beings who live their lives as animals”. Saif Rahmen, author of *The Islamist Delusion* [sic] called upon Hasan to apologise for the comment, saying “I don’t want apologetics, nor condescending articles attempting to brush the matter off: I’d appreciate an apology with a sprinkle of humility.... You might fool some of the British public by cloaking yourself in Arabic and throwing a cultural relativistic smokescreen over it, but not all.”

Another example of flexible standards, say observers, is criticism Hasan leveled at the *Daily Mail* during a 2013 BBC appearance when he called it an “immigrant-bashing, woman-hating, Muslim-smearing, NHS-undermining, gay-baiting” newspaper and implied that it hates Britain. Yet as Breitbart also reported:

The *Mail* promptly revealed that just three years earlier, Hasan had written to their editor asking for a job. He wrote “I’m very keen to write for the *Daily Mail*.... I have always admired the paper’s passion, rigour, boldness and, of course, news values.... I admire your relentless focus on the need for integrity and morality in public life, and your outspoken defence of faith.... I am also attracted by the *Mail*’s social conservatism on issues like marriage, the family, abortion and teenage pregnancies.”

How the *Mail* went in short span of time from the “relentless focus on ... morality” to a purveyor of what Hasan calls “morally wrong” has not been explained.



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