

Alhamdulillah: For Ilhan Omar, All Praise Be To Allah For Her Victory

by Hugh Fitzgerald



A tweet from Ilhan Omar to her “sister” Rashida Tlaib right after the elections:

Congratulations to my sister [@RashidaTlaib](#) on your victory!

I cannot wait to serve with you, inshallah. ????

– Ilhan Omar (@IlhanMN) [November 7, 2018](#)

Why is Rashida Ilhan’s “sister”? And why was it that Ilhan Omar “cannot wait” to serve with her? Because they are both Muslims. That’s enough to make them “sisters.” That’s more than enough.

Ilhan Omar, one of the first two Muslim women elected to the

U.S. Congress, began after her election by treating her audience at her victory speech to a dance performance by fellow Somali-Americans, before [Islamic website](#) explains when the greeting of salaam is impermissible:

A good number of Islamic scholars are of the view that it is prohibited to initiate the greeting of salaam to non-Muslims. They say salaam is meant to be exchanged among Muslims and that the verse of the Qur'an which spoke of greeting with salaam is referring to Muslims alone. This was the view of Ata' bin Rabah They went further to say that salaam is to Muslims as shalom is to Jews. They backed their position with the Hadith reported by Abu Hurairah, where the messenger of Allah (Peace be upon him) said: "You must not initiate the (greetings of) salaam with Jews and Christians,". They say, salaam is a greeting of honor and a non-Muslim (kafir) does not deserve to be honored. Ahmad Bin Hanbal commented on the above Hadith: "Going by this Hadith is better than any other contrary opinion". Ibn Hajar is of similar opinion, while commenting on the above Hadith, he said: "The most credible of all these (views) is what is evident in the above Hadith, although it is specific to the People of the Book. Ibn Katheer also, while commenting on the verse on greeting (Qur'an 4:86) said: "But as to non-Muslim citizens (Alum Dimmit) one should not initiate to them the greetings of salaam." Abu Haneefah and Malik Bin Anas detested initiating salaam with non-Muslims.

Proponents of this opinion argue further that the salaam meant for greeting is among the peculiarities of this Ummah of Prophet Muhammad as reported by Anas bin Malik, who said that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Indeed, Allah has given my Ummah three things that were not given to any other Ummah before me: saying salaam, and it is the greeting of the people of Hannah (Paradise)..."

Imam An-Nawawi reconciled between the ahadith that enjoined greeting and those that prohibit initiating salaams to non

Muslims as follows: "The ahadith that enjoined spreading the greetings of salaam is a generalization (A'am), from which the people of the book were excluded"

This group go further to assert that the salaam that Prophet Ibrahim (Peace be upon him) said to his father in Qur'an 19:47 was a mere farewell and good will, and it was not meant as a greeting.

Omar's "As-salaam aleikum" was thus "affirming, authentic, and relatable," but only for those it was addressed to – the Muslims in her audience. Instead of a normal victory speech, addressed to all of those who helped elect her, contributed money, put up signs, knocked on doors, and got out the vote, Ilhan Omar first addressed only her Muslim supporters with that "as-salaam aleikum" greeting and thrice-repeated "alhamdulillah." Even before Omar's greetings, the room was transformed by the surprising spectacle of a Somali dance. It was a most peculiar moment, reminding the crowd that parts of Minneapolis were now a Little Mogadishu. This was a moment of triumphant celebration, telling the world that not a Democrat, but a Muslim Somali, still rooted in her culture, had won.

It's also not at all uncommon for Christian politicians to use religious language to give thanks, with phrases like, "praise God," and "to God be the glory."

Nonsense. "Not at all uncommon..."? It is most uncommon for Christian politicians to "praise God" or claim that "to God be the glory" of a political victory. When was last time you heard a "Christian politician" at a victory rally "praise God" or say "to God be the glory"? No doubt there may be a handful of holy-rollers among our politicians, but they would be looked at askance – no, raked over the coals – for thanking God in such a public way for their political triumphs. But when Ilhan Omar, smiling, photogenic, gives thanks to God for her victory – three times uttering in Arabic *alhamdulillah*,

alhamdulillah, alhamdulillah – “praise be to Allah” – the very people, at *The New York Times* or *Washington Post* or at NPR, who would be most offended by a Christian political figure doing the same thing, that is, thanking God for ensuring that he, or she, had won an election, apparently found nothing wrong with Ilhan Omar’s exclamation.

These Muslim propagandists quoted in the article are simply engaging in Tu-Quoque, claiming – falsely – that “Christian politicians do” routinely what Omar did. When she turned her victory rally into a display of Islamic solidarity and triumphalism, she was not merely doing, as her defenders claim, “what so many non-Muslim politicians do.”

Hill said that saying “Alhamdulillah” is an act of humility for Muslims.

Saying “*alhamdulillah*” is an “act of humility” because it ascribes to Allah, not to Ilhan Omar or her supporters, her election victory. All praise be to Allah. Despite the claims of Huda Hawa and Margaret Hill that Christian politicians make similar statements praising God for their victories, I have neither heard, nor read, of Christian politicians who routinely used those phrases. Indeed, by searching online, I found exactly one example: Senator Ted Cruz used the phrase “praise be to God” once, when he defeated Donald Trump in the Texas Republican primary. And no doubt such a phrase may have been uttered by a few holy-rollers among our politicians, especially in the past, but they would now be looked at askance for attributing their political triumphs to God. In a democracy, not a theocracy, politicians thank their families, their supporters, their party. They do not claim that it was because of God (“all praise be to God”) that they won.

“We don’t bat an [eye] when Christians reference their faith in victory speeches, in moments of silence, or opening prayers,” Hill said. “If we as Muslims are questioned for

using phrases which are part of our daily life, then that speaks a lot to the climate of anti-Muslim bigotry.”

Actually, as I keep insisting, we would bat an eye – we would be deeply disturbed – were some Christian politician to proclaim “all praise be to God for my victory.” These Muslim defenders of Omar are engaged in Tu-Quoque, attributing to non-Muslim politicians the same kind of rhetoric as she employed. But how often have you heard language from Christians thanking God – “praise be to God” – for an election victory?

Hearing Omar open her acceptance speech by wishing blessings on her supporters and thanking God is “no different than hearing other members of Congress or public figures thank God for their successes,” Hoda Hawa, director of policy and advocacy at the Muslim Public Affairs Council, told HuffPost.”

Again, Hoda Hawa tries the tu-quoque: Omar “is no different than...other members of Congress...[who] thank God for their successes.” Hoda Hawa is simply plucking this supposedly widespread practice out of the air; she cannot produce any examples of non-Muslim politicians who have been “thanking God for their successes,” but hopes you won’t stop to think this through.

Omar’s election is seen by her and her supporters not as her victory, or theirs, alone, but as a victory for Islam. The two new Muslim members of Congress, Omar and her “sister” Rashida Tlaib, to whom she tweeted out her “inshallah” greeting, are signs that Islam is on the march. *Alhamdulillah, alhamdulillah, alhamdulillah.*

What ought to have been a dignified speech of thanks to her supporters became an occasion filled with the signs of a triumphant Islam. “Assalaam aleikum” is a Muslim-to-Muslim

greeting, *Alhamdulillah, Alhamdulillah, Alhamdulillah* is a reminder that Muslims owe everything to Allah, and that includes election to a seat in Congress.

As for the repetition of "*alhamdulillah*" three times – "All praise be to Allah" – this diminishes the significance of democratic elections and of the voters. It implies instead a kind of *inshallah*-fatalism – we won because Allah wanted us to win, and Allah Knows Best. Omar's victory was being treated by her as a victory for Islam. And Ilhan Omar tweeted only one other person who had similarly been victorious – Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian-American and fellow Muslim.

Rashida Tlaib, let's not forget, chose for her victory night appearance to drape herself in the Palestinian flag. It was now time not to hide, but to flaunt her real sympathies.

That's a sympathy shared by Ilhan Omar, who back in 2012 tweeted:

Israel has hypnotized the world, may Allah awaken the people and help them see the evil doings of Israel. #Gaza #Palestine #Israel

9:15 AM – 16 Nov 2012

Ilhan Omar is young and mediagenic, with a winning smile. She proudly wears a hijab. She's getting a lot of attention, held up as an inspirational model and example of our splendid diversity. Non-Muslim supporters at her victory speech did not realize that her "as-salaam aleikum" was not meant for them. And we are being misleadingly assured that her recital of "*alhamdulillah*" is no different from Christian politicians who attribute their victories to God.

Ilhan Omar is someone to watch. One can only hope that she doesn't manage to snooker too many people during her resistible rise, as she has done so far. Let's hope, too, that

her curious arrangement with a man whom she once claimed to have “married” – and who [here](#), [here](#).