

Does a Muslim and non-Muslim Resistance Movement Really Exist?

By Phyllis Chesler

The Secular Islam Summit in 2007 was a signal event. It was meant to signify that there was—and still is—an anti-Islamist, or as the brave conference organizers put it—an anti-Islam resistance movement. This was 17 or nearly 18 long years ago.

I was privileged to have been there as a moderator. I wrote about it for the Times of London and more recently, posted a piece about it [right here at Substack](#).

I initially published a piece about this conference at the Times of London in 2007 which was widely reposted. I did not choose their title and I opposed having to bring in my own experiences in Kabul, but they insisted that I do so. I was willing to pay any price to make sure that this event did not get “disappeared.” I now cannot find it at the Times (but I’m not a tecchie, not at all), but [here it is at one of the sites](#) that republished it. *At [the Times here](#), but behind a paywall; There are ways behind paywalls, about which I couldn’t possibly comment. EW editor.*

I am proud to be a co-founder, together with Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, Yasmine Mohammed, Asra Nomani, Raheel Raza, Nina Shea, and many others, of the Clarity Coalition: Champions for Liberty Against the Reality of Islamist Tyranny. You may read their [Statement of Purpose here](#).



This Coalition is not comprised of secular Muslims only. Clarity includes religious Muslims as well as people of many faiths who oppose what is being done in the name of Islam.

Both the secularists of 2007 and the Clarity co-founders are pro-Israel as well as in favor of human rights for all. In 2007, I very gently suggested that a resistance movement must be open to both religious and non-religious people of all faiths; to atheists too. Clarity is just that. In fact, one of those who attended the St. Petersburg Conference, a religious Muslim, refused to sign the Declaration for that reason. That's a separate story. I and others were not allowed to sign this Declaration because we were not Muslims or even ex-Muslims. Clarity has gone beyond that.

I am now sharing with you both the 2007 Declaration and the names of the signatories. They are all heroically determined to expose and to resist tyranny and coercive control of the state by any religion. It is the beginning of a resistance movement. May it go from strength to strength.

The St. Petersburg Declaration April 5, 2007 [Secular Islam](#)

Originally published in 2007, this declaration was released after the Secular Islam Summit that was held from the 4th-5th of March, 2007 in St. Petersburg, Florida.

We are secular Muslims and secular persons of Muslim societies. We are believers, doubters, and unbelievers brought together by a great struggle—not between the West and Islam but between the free and the unfree.

We affirm the inviolable freedom of the individual conscience. We believe in the equality of all human persons.

We insist upon the separation of religion from state and the observance of universal human rights.

We find traditions of liberty, rationality, and tolerance in the rich histories of pre-Islamic and Islamic societies. These values do not belong to the West or the East; they are the common moral heritage of humankind.

We see no colonialism, racism, or so-called “Islamaphobia” in submitting Islamic practices to criticism or condemnation when they violate human reason or rights.

We call on the governments of the world to

- reject Sharia law, fatwa courts, clerical rule, and state-sanctioned religion in all their forms
- oppose all penalties for blasphemy and apostasy in accordance with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights;
- eliminate practices such as female circumcision, honor killing, forced veiling, and forced marriage that further the oppression of women;
- protect sexual and gender minorities from persecution and violence;
- reform sectarian education that teaches intolerance and bigotry toward non-Muslims;
- foster an open public sphere in which all matters may be discussed without coercion or intimidation.

We demand the release of Islam from its captivity to the totalitarian ambitions of power-hungry men and the rigid

strictures of orthodoxy.

We enjoin academics and thinkers everywhere to embark on a fearless examination of the origins and sources of Islam and to promulgate the ideals of free scientific and spiritual inquiry through cross-cultural translation, publishing, and mass media.

We say to Muslim believers: there is a noble future for Islam as a personal faith, not a political doctrine; to Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Baha'is, and all members of non-Muslim faith communities: we stand with you as free and equal citizens; and to nonbelievers: we defend your unqualified liberty to question and dissent.

Before any of us is a member of the Umma, the Body of Christ, or the Chosen People, we are all members of the community of conscience, the people who must choose for themselves.

Endorsed by:

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Magdi Allam
Mithal Al-Alusi
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Nonie Darwish
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First published in [Phyllis' Newsletter](#)