Fundamentalism is a problem that only Muslims can solve

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Another barbaric bombing attack occurred in a Western country. Although the perpetrators are suspected to be Muslims, no mosques were burned, no neighborhoods were devastated and no one was lynched. Compare this, for example, to what happened a few weeks back when just the suspicion of desecrating the Quran had led to bloody riots in several cities of the Islamic world which left gratuitous destruction and death.

The main conflict facing the globe today is neither a religious war nor a conquest by the West for strategic or economic gains. It is the result of a clash between two cultures. It is a war between backwardness and bigotry against freedom and tolerance. It is a war between Islamic fanatics and the rest of the world including a large majority of the Muslims.

The Muslim nations have always provided fertile breeding grounds for religious extremism. Most Islamic countries, especially in the Arab world, allow no individual freedoms and are plagued by rampant ignorance and poverty. The masses are therefore easily enticed by the fundamentalists' promises of glory and empowerment. The long years of indoctrination in a twisted ideology have produced easily excitable mobs blinded by religious fervor and manipulated by their spiritual leadership.

In the West, children learn to listen to, accept and tolerate the Other while the fundamentalists' children are taught to silence, reject and eliminate the Other. The West's democratic systems are based on laws protecting the universal rights of each individual while their "Shariaa" is based on what they alone believe to be right. Politics in the civilized world evolve with the needs and developments of the times while their politics are founded on narrow

interpretations of Islamic laws as old as the religion itself. In the civilized nations, criminals are punished and brought to justice regardless of their victims' ideology or identity while the "Believers" glorify and praise aggressions against the "Infidels".

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Venomous ideologies justify bad actions to otherwise good people. Although some in the West are still confounded in their political correctness to do so, it is time to frankly ask good Muslims to take a responsible and historic stand against extremism in Islam. Muslims have to understand that their ambivalence is only strengthening the fundamentalists. While a few are courageously fighting back, more Muslims should join to halt the evil that is done in the name of their religion. This includes requiring more reforms in the Islamic countries and establishing a clear separation of religion and State. Only the Muslims can change the terrorists' culture of death and destruction into a culture of life and prosperity. They alone can rescue their coreligionists from the grips of the backward forces who want to imprison them in the dark caves of fundamentalism.

For Islam to be truly a religion of compassion and peace, all Muslims should be liberated because only free minds can have genuine compassion and live in lasting peace.

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