

by it. Terrorism does not promote respect. It promotes only disgust, and we all need to stand up to the misguided few who have been corrupted to promote savagery and slaughter. Consequently, Muslims living in the West face discrimination and defamation. In Australia, the federal discrimination watchdog, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, interviewed more than 1,400 Arab -and Muslim- Australians in 2003 and found that 93 percent believed there had been an increase in racism, abuse and violence against them since the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks against the United States.

Muslim scholars need to clarify the true teachings of Islam. They need to teach the faithful to distinguish between religious rulings and mere cultural practices. They need to urge Muslims living in the West to abandon irrelevant or unnecessary practices that fuel hatred toward Muslims and create misunderstanding.

Some Muslims view Western powers as colonizers who are motivated by greed. Moreover, Western extremists are perceived as crusaders who aim to destroy Islam and who believe all Muslims are enemies. Religious scholars in the West and Muslim scholars should work together to find common grounds that unite them rather than engage in confrontation that divide them.

Muslims should not have to compromise on Islam or their beliefs. They should not be apologetic about Islamic principles of piety, celibacy, modesty and acts of worship.

The Australian survey revealed that hijab-wearing women fear being spat upon as they walk their children to school, while others suspect they are refused jobs because they have Muslim names. Muslims in the West are accused of failing to assimilate and not doing enough to condemn extremists. Hard-line positions and intolerant behavior of some Muslims living in the West harms the lives of many Muslims living in the West, jeopardizing both their safety and existence in Europe and the US.

Our scholars need to speak louder than the extremists who have hijacked Islam and have confused Muslims who now need direction