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Ritual Slaughter

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After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 foreigners have been kidnapped by Islamic extremists for purposes of putting political pressure on the United States and other coalition nations. The kidnappers threaten to behead the victims if their demands are not met. The Jihad terrorists have also seized other Muslims as hostages (often Shia or Non-Arabs). Gruesome videos of the beheadings were sent to the media.

That beheading actually appears in the Quran is a matter of verifiable fact:

God revealed His will to the angels, saying: "I shall be with you. Give courage to the believers. I shall cast terror into the hearts of the infidels. Strike off their heads, strike off the very tips of their fingers." (Sura 8, Verse 12)

"When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield strike off their heads."
(Sura 47, Verse 4)

The formal way to behead a human for purposes of punishment is usually the quicker method by axe or guillotine. But these killers deliberately use a slower less effective



method consistent with Halal slaughter. This is meant to degrade the victim to the status of an animal. The killers flashing the head in front of the camera is also meant to further devalue the victim and to assert dominance over the infidel. This effort to behead the Kafir in a manner similar to Halal slaughter is meant to have significance to the Muslim community.

To understand what this means to devote Muslims, we must understand the current political battle over Halal slaughter, that pits Muslims against Animal Rights groups. The Eid al Ahda, or Feast of Sacrifice, is the most important feast of the Muslim calendar. The three-day festival concludes the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and commemorates Abraham's willingness to obey God by sacrificing his son. Abraham was childless and God (Allah) promised him a son and gave him this son. But God tested Abraham's faith by ordering him to sacrifice his son. Just as Abraham was about to kill his son, the angel Gabriël told him to sacrifice a sheep instead. In gratitude of God's mercy Muslims sacrifice one or more sheep every year.

Hundreds of thousands of animals slaughtered for the Muslim Eid al-Adha festival each year. The ritual slaughter in Islam is termed as Zabah. Literally, the term Zabah means to purify. The purpose of Zabah is to purify the flesh of the animal from flowing blood. In Islam flowing blood is impure and prohibited for consumption. Halal food means permitted, allowed lawful or legal for Muslims. The opposite of Halal is Haram meaning prohibited, not allowed, unlawful, illegal.

Under Jewish and Muslim law, an animal must be healthy and uninjured when it is slaughtered, but many authorities from both religions oppose the stunning of an animal prior to slaughter. This has resulted in a political clash between the religious rights lobby and the animal rights lobby, with many Muslims believing that religious intolerance is the true reason behind the ban on their ritual slaughter practices.

Animal Rights advocates have insisted that killing the animal without pre-stunning is inhumane. This method of killing is often attacked by animal rights activists as barbaric bloodthirsty ritual slaughter. In Britain, it is thought that about 90 per cent of halal meat is electrically pre-stunned; although many Islamic consumers insist this is not acceptable.



However, Jewish law is far less flexible, and all pre-stunning is forbidden. Jewish and Muslim groups in Britain have expressed outrage over a recommendation by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC), a government advisory panel, that ritual slaughter of animals according to the practices of the two religions should be banned.

Many Muslim authorities were angry. Dr Abdul Majid Katme is a spokesman on halal meat for the Muslim Council of Britain has publicly stated that. "Observant Muslims will not accept this...Stunning is wrong. It hurts the animal and makes the blood ooze into the meat. It makes the animal *haram* (forbidden to eat)".

The German federal administrative court banned Muslim ritual slaughter in 1995, as the practice did not seek to lessen animals' pain before death through electric shock or other methods. In recent years, Muslims in Germany seeking halal food prepared according to Islamic rules had to buy imported meats.

Because of a ban on Halal slaughter in Belgium, many Muslim families had arranged to have meat imported and asked relatives in other countries where Halal slaughter was permitted to do their Eïd al Ahda sacrifice. Recently the Brussels police responded to the complaints from Animal Rights groups, who said that Muslims were secretly slaughtering animals. The police sent out questionnaires to several Muslims asking

questions about their activities during Eïd al Ahda. The Muslim community saw this as an affront to their religious freedom.

The significance of ritual must not be forgotten. Ability to observe traditional Muslim ritual sacrifice is a rallying point for Muslims all over Europe. So while the western world saw only the beheadings on the videos, the Muslim world may have seen a ritual slaughter. Under Islamic rules animals are slaughtered by a cut across the neck to ensure maximum flow of blood. The butcher has to say "In the name of God" while cutting.

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