

Child Sexual Abuse Is NEVER OKAY In Islam

- Princess R. Lakshman (Sister Iqra)

Recently in a Queensland courtroom, a Muslim female teenager bravely read out her victim impact statement. This news when shared on different platforms on social media garnered different responses - some filled with compassion for the victim and her family and others filled with justifications using hadiths on zina and issues not even relevant to the actual news article.

Today, I write this opinion piece from the perspective of survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

I'm not a Fiqh expert or an Islamic scholar, or a even a born Muslim but I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse.

This is a very serious issue. Irrespective of religion, culture or ethnic background, the most important thing to remember is that when the heinous crime of sexual abuse happens to a child, most often the child does not even have the language in which to express nor comprehend what happened. The experience gets blocked in the subconscious mind until a trigger incident unblocks the memory. Even then, the self-blaming paradigm keeps the victim silent. Until one day she or he can no longer live with the suffocation of injustice and chooses to stand up for herself or himself, even when it means standing alone.

It takes immense courage to speak up and it takes years, decades to be precise, to heal and actually move past the ongoing trigger responses.

This particular case has reminded us as a community to listen, and listen hard, to the stories of those who have been victims and suffering in silence. A heinous crime of this nature is oppressive to the victim and the victim's family. Islam teaches us to rise above oppression.

We need to listen and we need to believe in the broken child that dwells in the teenage body or the adult body that finally decides to speak up about experiences of childhood sexual abuse.

Yes, we pray and make duaa. Yes, we guide the victim to pray and make duaa. But for Allah's sake, we NEVER, EVER blame the victim and we NEVER, EVER ask them to remain silent about it.

I am truly grateful to the young Muslim teenager in this case and grateful to her family for allowing us all to experience what it means to be a Muslim who fights oppression in the right way.

Today, I breathe easier because one strong voice of a young girl has managed to spark a much needed discussion. Today, I promise to keep on fighting and be the voice for many more who need support.

If this girl is reading this, I send you my love and duaa and I thank you for being the reason for me to continue fighting and advocating for the rights of all beings who live with trauma from childhood sexual abuse.

To the perpetrator, if you happen to be reading this, please, I beg you to beg for forgiveness from this girl and her family. How will Allah forgive you, brother, if you do not first seek forgiveness from this girl and her family?

Apologising will bring some closure to both parties.

I was sexually abused when I was 5. The person who sexually abused me was 9. He asked for forgiveness in his 40s. I still manage the trauma triggers but I saw remorse in his eyes. Brother, if you feel even an ounce of remorse, you need to ask for forgiveness. Do it before it's too late.

Lastly, if there is any child or adult (male or female, because child abuse happens to both) who needs assistance in receiving justice, please talk to someone you trust and go to the police.

Or you can contact me on 0451977786 and I will assist you to get your voice heard. You may also contact specialised services such as Gold Coast Sexual Health or Logan's Centre for Sexual Violence.

It doesn't matter who did it, when it happened, where it happened or how old you were when it happened. None of that matter when it comes to speaking out about the heinous crime of childhood sexual abuse.