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### **Demands to the State**

Strong of their faith that show them united as if they were one big family and aware that Islam is a religion that dictates the rules of daily living (religion, society and state), Muslims urge to get a lot of support from the state, unlike other religions with no claims.

The grounds according to which religion cannot be separated from the State are the followings: within the Koran and Sunna there are all the rules of everyday life and Islam is structured to function as a complete civil and social code.

Articles 8, 19 and 20 of the Italian constitution provide that the Italian government may conclude agreements with the representatives of different religious communities.

But who has the right to represent Muslims in Italy? Even if there have been agreements with some representative groups, this is the first problem to solve as a single leader is hard to find.

Legally speaking the organizations operating in Italy are extremely diverse amongst them - moderate, secular and fundamentalist - and they claim to be leaders in various capacities.

The basic problem is that Islam is still going through a settlement's phase and communities have not yet recognized any leader. It would perhaps be better facing urgent requests at local place and waiting for a homogeneous community's development.

The demands to the government are usually made in the name of minorities' and different identities' protection. But our law is often ambiguous and therefore there will always be injustice.

It is necessary to move within a compatibility framework with the Italian legal foundations without any ambiguity. Italian cornerstones are: the secular state and therefore the distinction between spiritual and state level, equality between men and women and freedom of awareness.

Having said that many requests have already been reached, for example **butchery** according to Islamic ritual (by sticking and with the blessing). At the beginning

there were doubts about the mistreatment of the animal which were overcome by the fact that there is a form of respect in thanking God for the sacrifice that the animal does for our benefit.

Even the religious assistance in **prisons, hospitals and barracks** is meeting the Muslims' spiritual demands and it can easily be managed with the condition that the imams should also be recognized and selected by the Italian government because they may suggest fundamentalist behavior.

As for **Islamic cemeteries**, it is easy to offer a room devoted to pray separated from prayer rooms for other religions.

It becomes more expensive to provide different burial spaces for every religion. In Egypt, for instance, Christians are buried in the Muslim cemetery. It is hoped that in death we are all equal at least and be in the same cemetery.

**Headscarf** is more than welcome, but only if it is an individual choice. But the veil wearing practice is not recognized as important by all Islamic countries.

Actually it is used for political or religious propaganda or as a reference to Islamic mores. This is an Islamic radical tendency which has progressively imposed the veil's use in the last thirty years. The veil is also a sexual and possession's reminder.

The Koran says to hide all parties that may lead to temptation. Any attractive part could become subject to temptation and over the years everything that could be a sexual attraction has been covered till hiding hands or eyes.

On the subject of sexual separation, at the Islamic cultural grounds it is possible underline a difference between Western and Eastern Europe's civilization: marriage is a *Remedium concupiscentiae* to give vent to sexuality and have a family.

Since not everyone can get married, it is bad taste to tempt people on the streets showing one's sexuality through the performance of the body.

In Europe and America, however, the body is shown till excess and this has also led to a wrong use of sexuality, now decadent and perverse. The middle path would help the East from not being overly possessive and fanatic, and the West to rethink its own exaggeration.

With regards for **Friday as the weekly** rest day – such as being absent from school to take part of the prayer or Ramadan or recognizing as State holiday some celebrations in the Islamic calendar – a few steps have already been taken towards the respect of individuals. But the Koran does not prescribe men to rest on Fridays.

The only religious requirement scheduled on Fridays is the Community prayer to be held at noon and lasts about half an hour so that it is compatible with the normal work activities' performance. However, in the countries which the majority of Muslims living in Italy comes from, Friday is not a holiday: Albania, Senegal, Tunisia and Turkey have chosen Sunday.

In Morocco there is a free choice between Friday, Saturday or Sunday or on the market day.

About the Islamic tradition of the **five daily prayers**, I remember that it allows to group them into three moments of the day: for example, the first and the second prayer can be made before going to work, the third one during the lunch break, the fourth and fifth ones can be made when returning home from work. This custom, for example, is carried out in the most religious Iran. In Sicily, Lombardia and Veneto Regions there are many entrepreneurs who have offered prayer rooms to recite prayers.

**CELEBRATING RAMADAN** in Italy? **Yes.** A religion cannot be hindered by making difficult the celebration of its rites, but those requests which do not clash with the Italian law should be encouraged.

Workers following Ramadan do FAST. This starts with puberty, not by force, but gradually.

Generally speaking, the community helps those who fast and who does not by checking.

In Italy there is no real community control as it is unlikely that a Muslim drags a true fasting for 30 days. During the fast all healthy adults (the prepubescent, pregnant women, the sick, the elderly and the disabled are exempted) must abstain completely from ingesting food, coming in contact with gaseous substances (perfume or smoke) and performing any sexual act: all this from sunrise to sunset.

When 'the white thread blends with the black one' eating and drinking etc..are allowed. This penance practice is quite burdensome, especially if instead of meditating hard work is required and it is not easy to continue. So I would suggest entrepreneurs to be patient on the first days of Ramadan insisting on workers not much 'productive'. They have time to catch up.

Moreover, Ramadan strengthens social and family bonds, making a more cohesive and peaceful society.

**Teaching Islamic religion in schools** would require a whole series of preliminary enlightenments regarding programs, teachers and books.

Lessons should be given in Italian to assist the integration process into society and also because the content of lessons in Arabic language is difficult to control. Nothing prevents however that the Arabic language is taught. All this because there are people who fear staff infiltration linked to the more radical organizations which could turn the religion class in an anti-Western-style drill. So far, our Arabic teachers were chosen in agreement with Morocco government, as in Islamic countries there is a Ministry of Religion training prepared teachers to go abroad.

Hanging the crucifix? According to Islam, the **Crucifix** does not represent Jesus Christ, who is revered as a prophet, but another person died in his place (Judah). According to Koran's tales, different from our Gospels, Jesus ascended to Heaven as soon as the soldiers were about to arrest him in Gethsemane. Therefore Muslims believe that we worship a dead man and not the same Prophet revered by them. The Madonna instead is a symbol shared by both religions. But it is obvious that the Cross symbol has more meanings.

Another issue is to recognize **Islamic marriage**. It allows polygamy, repudiation especially by male side without the court recourse, the custody of children to the father in case of divorce, double inheritance to sons compared to daughters, the requirement for children to follow father's religion. These aspects are not compatible with the Italian Law. Do not forget that the religious and civil plans for Islam are not separable and sharable and often Islamic jurists' response is that 'God is not subject to a State's Law.

Experts are developing proposals to make compatible some aspects of Islamic marriage with the Italian rite, introducing a kind of "double track" (based on citizens' beliefs), which provides for the recognition of certain prerogatives in a private capacity without civil consequences. The risk is that many anomalous

situations create injustice. The **temporary marriage**, however, in my view is a very civil custom because protects women and any eventual children born from a relationship and decreases either the prostitution's immorality or having fickle lovers.

**Divorce** is much easier in Muslim countries, if women have as the same right to divorce as men, written on paper, but it is not so in reality.

Generally speaking it is better that in family law's subject a sort of 'parallel law' should not be encouraged, established according to citizens' religion or their country of origin, because secularism is an acquisition which the civil society and the State cannot back out of, and this may represent an opportunity to encourage a modernization's process also favorable of the Muslim world's 'rebirth'.

Among demands to the State there is also the one for **land or financing or building permits to build mosques**.

It is good to know that the mosque is of two types.

There are two terms to indicate mosque: masjid and jami'.

The latter is the most widely used in the Islamic world.

The first word comes from j-i-d root and means to bow down, the second word derives from j-m-' root and means to gather.

The mosque is a place where the community comes together to deal with prayer, social, cultural and political issues.

Community decisions are made here.

On Fridays after the prayer, sermon from Imam follows which faces the most important issues of the moment that go beyond spiritual aspects, sometimes political decisions. Considering a mosque a place of prayer is therefore limiting.

It is like a cultural centre where various disciplines are taught: from science to literature, from politics to language.

The minaret, as well as having a practical value - which is calling the faithful to the prayer - has also the symbolic value of affirming the presence of an Islamic community.

The only issue to remember, no secret, is that most of the mosques and Islamic centres in Europe are funded by foreign governments and particularly by Saudi Arabia which, as it pays, puts an Imam of its trust.

Both the collectings for zakat (charity) and the Jihad take place in the mosque.

Some of Italian behaviors done with the best intentions but naively have been ambiguous and damaging – for example granting churches or parishes to Muslims - in the name of social solidarity or ecumenism.

These opening and naive doing-good make people think that a Christian is a bland believer because he abdicates his faith and therefore implicitly recognizes Islam's superiority.

Every place devoted to Islam, in fact, is also legally considered some sort of Islamic property.

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