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Islam says no to terrorism

By Veven Bissetty

An Islamic scholar says Muslims have a clear and unequivocal stance on violence

The dust had barely settled after killer bomb blasts rocked American embassies and a US-owned franchise in Cape Town when fingers started to point at Islamic fundamentalist and other Muslim organisations as being the culprits.

Whether the Cape Town blast was a retaliatory move after the US missile strikes in Sudan and Afghanistan is still to be confirmed. No one has yet claimed responsibility for the explosion after a bomb exploded inside the Planet Hollywood restaurant last Tuesday.

Three Muslims suspects were arrested, questioned about the blast and later released. No matter what, the recent spate of attacks drew condemnation from around the world. And rightly so, too. Attacks such as these in which innocent lives are destroyed are inexcusable, no matter what the cause.

The bloody acts were described as being perpetrated by “cowardly bastards” and the blasts scenes were displayed in newspapers and on television screens worldwide. At least 275 people were killed and 5 000 were injured in the blasts in Africa, while the pipe-bomb attack at the restaurant killed one and injured 27 others.

The Mercury asked a prominent local Muslim scholar Sayed-Iqbal Mohamed

to outline an Islamic perspective in the aftermath of the Cape Town blast – in light of the fact that “Muslim fundamentalists” and Pagad were the first target for suspicion. He said the recent spate of bombings highlighted the fragile state of the world, where the sanctity and dignity of life was not respected. He also referred to the American action against so-called terrorist targets and the individuals responsible for several bombings.

“These actions are appalling and cannot be justified either in the name of religion or superpower politics.

“For a Muslim, actions are measured against the Qur’an and the Sunnah (practical examples) of the Prophet Muhammad’s life. The Qur’an states that every human life is a sanctified life; to save a life of a person is equivalent to saving the life of mankind. Even in a state of war, there are fundamental principles laid down by the Prophet, e.g. innocent lives (men, women and children) even in the enemy camp must be protected; the right to freedom of religion of people of other faiths must be ensured; plants must not be destroyed; no acts of aggression are allowed, and, most important of all, every attempt must be made to enter into a truce.

“The Prophet himself as head of the state entered into numerous peace agreements, even though he was in a position of overwhelming strength. Peace and love are the hallmarks of Islam, and God almighty is the abode of peace and all loving. “In an Islamic country, the ideal examples were the period during the life of the Prophet and his four successors, who governed the Islamic state in accordance to the laws of God almighty. In Islam, the government implements the law of God and the head of state is democratically elected by the people to observe the laws. The head of State or the Assembly is voted out of power when the Shari’ah (Islamic Law that regulates every facet of life) is not observed,” Mr Mohamed said.

He asked: “Is there justification in Islam therefore for people to carry out acts of terror?”

“Not at all. Acts of terror and aggression must be dealt with effectively and swiftly within the rules of law. “In Islam, a person is considered innocent until proven guilty. However, the punishment must suit the crime in a way that it acts as a deterrent. “Muslims cannot protect a person for his or her crime because the Qur’an states that a person has to act justly, even if it means against oneself, friends or relatives.

“We are off course living in a situation where an act of aggression by a few misguided Muslims is labelled as an act sanctioned by Islam. This is a hostile portrayal of Islam.

“Similarly, Muslims condemning all Americans or Europeans are equally guilty of stirring up hostility.

“There is no doubt there are agendas to smear the image of Islam, as it gains support in the world as an alternative to all other systems of government. A few misguided Muslims, should they be found guilty of acts of terror, are only helping the smear campaigns.

Sayed-Iqbal Mohamed is the chairman of the Organisation of Civic Rights in Durban. He studied Arabic and Urdu and has a BA Degree in Psychology, Arabic and Islamic Studies, with Honours in Arabic cum laude and Islamic Studies.