

Observations from Bosnia

First Observation - Lack of closure

Throughout our meetings with local people in Sarajevo and Tuzla there was an apparent *moving forward with life without proper reconciliation*. There appears to have been no closure through dialogue and discussion or admission of culpability of the atrocities that were committed. If this is so how can we possibly move forward when new graves are discovered regularly?

Second Observation - Help from outside

In discussions with colleagues there was a reliance on the outside community (international) to help resolve the current situation where we have huge layers of administration with none of those in power willing to let go of it for the common good of the country moving forward. I do however acknowledge that the current structure was as a result of the Dayton agreement internationally facilitated which does leave the wisdom of that agreement to be questioned.

Third Observation - European Islam

This was a profound experience for me during my time in Bosnia. For someone from a South Asian Heritage tradition of Islam it was most interesting seeing the physical manifestation of Islam in a European context where Islam has been present for circa 600 years and is rooted in the Ottoman Empire. This was reflected in how people dressed, their demeanour, the architecture of the Mosques, all characteristics which left me most impressed and envious. The most profound observation was The Mufti of Tuzla who in a very humble manner was reading Friday prayers (Jumuah) in the middle of the congregation (as opposed to the front row) without his usual robes and attire.

Final Observation - Horror and Hope

We visited Potocari where now stands a memorial and mass graveyard of the victims of the atrocities committed by forces loyal to Milosovic and Karadic. This was a very upsetting and disturbing experience for the whole group which left a hollow feeling inside. Tuzla however was much more promising due to the many committed people we met from the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Muslim faith traditions. Despite the lack of political activity in trying to discuss the not so recent past I do think that the Faith communities have a role in using dialogue and reconciliation as a tool to heal still open wounds.

Observations from the UK

First Observation - Interfaith Scene in the UK

Interfaith relations in the UK have been established in the UK for at least 22 years (formation of Inter Faith Network UK). In that sense Inter Faith dialogue and more recently social action has been taking place for the last 20 or so (most likely 30 years) in the UK. There are a number of historical incidences due to which relations between faiths in the UK have been strained but the telling factor has been that almost 99.9% (except 7th July 2005) of these events have taken place abroad whereas in Bosnia the

conflict, bloodshed and massacre took place literally on the doorstep making it more difficult to deal with.

Second Observation - British Islam

The influence of Islam in Britain is not a new phenomenon but contemporary influence has been from the Indian Subcontinent mainly. Contrasting this with European Islam in particular what we saw in Bosnia I do hope Muslims in both countries can learn from each other in order to shape a forward looking vision for Islam in Europe and the UK (without compromising any of the non negotiable aspects of Islam)

Practical suggestions

- Unified memorial for all victims regardless of ethnicity
- Facilitated peace talks between the leaders of the main groups
- National Remembrance Day for atrocities committed in the recent past
- Leadership Programme for Young People from all of the stakeholder groups

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