

Host: Ibtihal Bsis Ismail.

Guests – Nazreen Nawaz (Women's Media Representative for Hizb ut Tahrir) and Dalia Mogahed (Senior Analyst for Gallup Centre).

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[Programme begins with a brief welcome to viewers and description of 2009 Gallup poll]

[01:58]

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: I just want to introduce my guests. On the line we have got Dalia Mogahed from the USA. Dalia is a Senior Analyst and Executive Director of the Gallup Centre for Muslim Studies. She was one of the people who spearheaded this study along with other studies. I think her most recent study was back in 2009 [sic] which talked about the global study of interfaith relations – but that's another show inshallah. Dalia is also on the advisory council which advises the president, the president of the United States Barack Obama, which advises the president on various issues including specifically the US engagement in the Muslim world so inshallah Dalia will be able to tell us a little more about the survey if we ask her. On the couch I've also got Dr Nazreen Nawaz, who we all know is a regular on Islam Channel. She is the Women's Media Representative for the pan-Islamic political party Hizb ut-Tahrir. She has written on a number on a number of issues relating to women, quite specifically she has written a three part series on 'does Islam oppresses women?' She has also written a leaflet on what a future for the Muslim women [sic] and has appeared on BBC, Sky News, has given lectures in Indonesia and Australia, has been invited to discuss matters over there. I should also mention that Dalia gives talks globally, she's also been a co-author of a book, inshallah tell which she'll us more about about soon, and it's called 'Who speaks for Islam' and it talks about interviewing and getting the opinion of a billion Muslims in the world, so Jazakallah kheir, Salaam Aleykum Dalia.

Dalia Mogahed (phone): Walaleykum Salaam Wa Rahmatullah Wa Barakatu.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Jazakallah for being with us today.

Dalia Mogahed (phone): It's my pleasure.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: I just wanted to ask you first actually. We often hear that the shari`ah, as discussed by the media, it raises issues especially in relation to women that are, that seem to symbolise oppression, injustice, gives them sort of second class citizenship, these are the things that come to mind. Why do you then feel that so many women in your survey, specifically, support shari`ah as the source of legislation for their countries in the Muslim world?

Dalia Mogahed (phone): I think that the reason that so many women support shari`ah is because they have a very different understanding of shari`ah than that of the common perception in western media that you just described. We asked Muslim women and men what they associate with shari`ah compliance. And we found that the majority of women around the world associate gender justice, or justice for women, with shari`ah compliance. Whereas only a small fraction associated oppression of women with with compliance with the shari`ah.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: SubhanAllah what do you think of that Nazreen presumably you would agree with that?

Nasreen Nawaz: Yeah, I think the first point I would like to make is that this survey that was made by Dalia is quite significant, because people talk about what Muslim women want but don't actually ask the women themselves in the Muslim world, the people on the ground. And really, as Dalia said and yourself said, that there's an overwhelming majority now who either support shari`ah, Islam, as the source, the only source of legislation, or a source of legislation. And the question of why? I think the reason why is that over the last 80 to 90 years women in the Muslim world have experienced almost every system under the sun. From Arab nationalism, to communism, to socialism, to theocracies, to secular democracies to military dictatorships. And each of these systems, regardless of what colour, and what shade, have failed to deliver in terms of protection of the rights of women and protection of their safety. If you look at the world

today many of these regimes have turned a blind eye to tribal customs, honour killings, forced marriages, to the massive poverty that women live in. To the massive rates of illiteracy in our countries. Bangladesh and Pakistan have less than a third of the women who can read or write. Issue of Afghanistan, you have women who are too scared to step out of their houses out of fear of being abducted and raped. Similarly in Iraq. In Bangladesh you have problems of acid burnings. You know the problems go on and on and on. In the Arab world we see Muslim women not being involved in the political process. So I think women are turning to shari`ah because they see it as a real alternative to the kind of dire situation that they face today not just in terms of women's rights, but also as a stable society economically, in terms of accountable governance and in terms of moral values, and a strong family structure within a society.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok. Well Dalia, I mean Nazreen says that but the poll also shows that Muslim women respect some of the rights that women have in the West, but they do not see themselves adopting western values, such as liberty, as a way forward. Why is that? How can they sort of give that message that we respect some of their rights. It's almost like a mixed message isn't it?

Dalia Mogahed (phone): Well it seems at first like a mixed message but when we do further analysis we are able to reconcile what it is they are saying. They say that they do admire many values that the west holds dear, but I I wouldn't actually say that they necessarily call those values western values. They are, they are considered really universal values that the West has simply adopted and done a good job of implementing. And in fact one of those values is liberty, and it is democracy that they say they value. It is gender equality that they tell us they value about the West. However, when — but they never call these values western values. They say that they admire them about the West, but never actually label them exclusively western values. At the same time they tell us that the thing that they least associate with their society is adoption of western values, will help their progress. So what we find is that they do admire things that they consider universal values, like these issues of justice and equality, but don't want to adopt everything that is western wholesale.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok, so when you talk about the things that they don't want to adopt, what kind of things did you find they didn't really want to adopt?

Dalia Mogahed (phone): When we asked people what they admired least about the West, interestingly they, both men and women, told us that the lack of, the breakdown of traditional values, the, the, the promiscuity that they perceive in the West. One woman in Malaysia specifically said that she felt sorry for western women because they, they, she felt that they always felt that they needed to please men. Another woman told us it was the disrespect of

women by men that she admired least about the West. So interestingly they actually felt that while women enjoyed equal legal rights, that their social status was lacking.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok, JazakAllah Kheir. Nazreen I mean it's interesting what Dalia says because they do admire certain things although they look, they say we want shari`ah to be the source of legislation. But if shari`ah is the source of legislation, where does democracy come in? Because democracy gives power to the people, whereas shari`ah gives power to Allah subhana wa ta'Allah. So where do we go from here?

Nasreen Nawaz: I think if you look at the specifics of what Muslim women want when we talk about democracy, I think the elements are, for example, the ability to elect your ruler. The ability to account your ruler. Transparency in terms of governance. Lack of censorship in the media, where the media can openly criticise corruption within the government. I think these kind of elements, an independent judiciary, rule of law, these are the kind of things generally that Muslim women are talking about when they talk about the issue of democracy. But like you say, this issue of wholesale adoption of the democratic way of life, where parliament legislates, we can see this is at odds with the idea of wanting the shari`ah to legislate. We can see this idea contradicts itself. As to, in terms of what kind of values Muslim women do respect, other values, this idea of being able to vote, this idea of being able to be employed in society, have a certain amount of political rights. I think these are the things. What they see as being detrimental of adoption is I would say certain liberal values. Like the survey said that the thing that they least admired was the moral decay of society. Promiscuity, pornography and so on. I think living in the West we see some of the fruits of this idea of liberty and this idea of freedom, where people are free to have any relationship they want to. I believe that its caused a lot of problems in the social structure, you have adultery, you have problems of teenage pregnancies. Big problem. Forty per cent of children in the UK are born out of marriage today. You have problems in terms of STI's in the youth, all of these things. And also in terms of the cocktail between capitalism and freedom, I think is a lethal one, where even women's bodies have become, have been given a price tag today. I mean utilised in order to make money. And this is degrading to women. And it has had a knock on effect I think in terms of the way they are treated in society.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: But you can't deny, can you, that the West has, this goes out to both of you inshAllah, that the west has given women freedoms. It has advanced them in the work place. That democracy has given them a political voice. It has given them the right to vote. I mean we all know about the suffragette movement in the UK, these were very very committed strong women. And secularism did away with that that oppressed women in this country, certainly and in the West. Religion oppressed women.

Nasreen Nawaz: No doubt. Women have made a lot of progress in the West in terms of economic, political rights, education and so on. But I would reject the claim that these values of secularism, and liberal values, and even in terms of democracy have, that they can claim victory for this progress. Because if we remember history, women actually had to fight against these values in order to secure their rights, in terms of education, political rights, economic rights. And women even today have to fight in secular democracies against discrimination of these levels. I mean just this year Harriet Harman had to announce a new Equality Bill, after all the other equality acts that have happened in the UK because of discrimination women still have to face in terms of the gender pay gap, in terms of discrimination of jobs, in terms of the glass ceiling. So I would reject this claim, and I would actually say this is again one of the reasons why Muslim women are turning back to Shariah. Why? Because they see these rights, these basic rights of citizenship, enshrined within the Shariah, within the Islamic texts. Laws which can't be changed. And I think when they look at man-made laws, when they look at democracies and the parliamentary system they feel at the mercy of whoever is in government, especially if you look at our countries today.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok. Dalia, why is it do you think that when people think of shari`ah, people think of the Taliban state of Afghanistan where we know that girls had no access to education, no access to employment, no access to economic rights, no access to health in a lot of cases. Why is it that they have got this view?

Dalia Mogahed (phone): Well I think the answer to that question is very complex and multi-factorial. The perception of shari`ah and the portrayal of shari`ah has been oversimplified in many cases, even amongst Muslims. It is usually associated with maximum criminal punishments, and laws that are hard for people to understand holistically around family law that that to many people seem unequal for women. So I think part of the reason that there is this perception of shari`ah is because shari`ah is not well understood and in fact Islam as a faith is not well understood. We find, in our research, that the majority of Americans in fact admit that they don't know very much about Islam.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: I think that is probably true globally, certainly in the West. Ok, inshAllah, let's look at some of the results of the survey actually, we are going to bring up some of them now, inshAllah. The first one, inshAllah is coming up, hopefully, hold my breath. Ok, I will read it out to you. According to the poll, conducted in 2005 that we've talked about, is a strong majority of Muslim women believe they should have the right to vote without influence, work outside the home and serve in the highest levels of government. In more than 8,000 face-to-face interviews conducted in eight predominately Muslim countries, the survey found that many people, many women in the Muslim world did not see sex issues as a priority because other issues were more pressing. Ok, the second one reads 'when asked what they resented most about their own societies, a majority of Muslim women polled said that a lack of unity among Muslim nations,

violent extremism, and political and economic corruption were their main concerns. The hijab, or head scarf, and burqa, the garment covering face and body, seen by some westerners as tools of oppression, were never mentioned in the women's answers to the open-ended questions, the poll analysts said. Concerning women's rights in general, most Muslim women polled associated sex equality with the West. Seventy-eight per cent of Moroccan women, 71 per cent of Lebanese women and 48 per cent of Saudi women polled linked legal equality with the West. Still, a majority of the respondents did not think adopting western values would help the Muslim world's political and economic progress. JazakAllah Kheir. Ok, as always we want to hear from you in the second half. But let me just bring this over to you Nazreen. How can in a nutshell, how is it that Shariah laws are compatible with women's rights? Because there is this view, and Dalia has already mentioned that sometimes their misinterpreted, misunderstood, misread, or taken completely out of context.

Nasreen Nawaz: We know that shari`ah pioneered rights for women. This idea that women had the same rights of citizenship to a man, this was unheard of in empires of the past, or civilisations of the past. And we know that Islam brought this. If we look at the issue of education. Even the wife of the Prophet (saw) often quoted (sic). Aisha (RA), people at the time use to praise her for her knowledge, not just of Islam, but of medicine, and of literature. In my research I came across a scholar from India, who was doing some research on female scholars in Islamic civilisations of the past, Islamic Caliphate. And he started off trying to write one volume, but he ended up writing 40 volumes because it had thousands upon thousands of examples of female scholars in Islamic history. Similarly in terms of economics, we know examples of the time of the Prophet (saw) how women would ask him about business contracts, his own wife Sauda used to be business women. So really these issues of education, employment, rights of citizenship, Islam pioneered this. I think what's important, and I think this is extremely important, that the issue today of a lack of access to education, I think many women today recognise that the Taliban template of Afghanistan is not really a template of the whole implementation of shari`ah. And I think many people actually recognise this.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: But that's what they said. They said that is shari`ah in play. I mean you're talking in in theory.

Nasreen Nawaz: Not really. I think the majority of Muslim women across the world recognise that the Taliban state did not represent a true Islamic system, Islamic state. In terms of the issue of access to education, the important point I wanted to say is that many people say that this is due to tribal, this is due to with like cultural issues of not letting girls into school. I would say yes, this is in part. But I think the problem is more than this. The problem is regimes in the Muslim world today that have, lack, political will, and the economic vision to see the priority of education for society in general and to invest in this. If you look at, for example, how much does Indonesia spend in terms of, from its GDP, in terms of education is 1.2, this is five times less

than the European countries. If you look at Bangladesh, they haven't spent more than 1.5 of its GMP since the year 2000 in terms of investment in education. This is horrific. Pakistan, one-third of the children do not go to school, do not attend school. I think this reflects governments who really lack the vision of how a society should be and the importance of educating society. One example, one last example of this, is the institute in Bangladesh on education did a survey as to why is it that girls fail to enter secondary school in Bangladesh. And four out of the five reasons were economic, due to tuition fees, uniform fees, transport and so on, rather than just in terms of cultural.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok well what good is education if a woman can't be in leadership? Because under shari`ah she is not permitted to hold a position of leadership in government. Even though these women that Dalia spoke to in certain cases or her or her institution spoke to have said we want more rights, we want to hold the highest levels of leadership in government.

Nasreen Nawaz: Sure, I mean lets me clear first of all, politics, Islam doesn't say just say that the woman has the right to be involved in politics, Islam actually says the woman should be involved in politics, you know all the evidences about commanding the good forbidding the munkar, addressing the corruption of society are addressed to men and women alike. The hadith that says that you must command the good, forbid the munkar and hold fast the hand of the tyrant ruler, this is addressed to men and women alike so really women should be involved in politics and the mechanisms of an Islamic system, the Islamic state or what we are working for as Hizb ut-Tahrir the Islamic khilafah state has the mechanisms to hold the ruler to account and get women and encourage women to be involved in that political process of electing the ruler, accounting the ruler, making sure the corruption of the society is addressed, the mechanisms are there. In terms of leadership I think this is not understood correctly, Islam allows the woman to have leadership for example to be a director of a company, to even be an ambassador to a country or a spokeswomen for a country, leadership positions such as this Islam permits but like you say there is an evidence from Islam that says that the Muslim woman cannot be a ruler of a state, yeah. So this is from from the Islamic text in terms of is this wrong, the reality is we have had countries today in the Muslim, world Banazeir Butto in Pakistan, in Indonesia you've had women leaders who have brought very little in terms of the lives and the standards of living of women in those countries.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok inshallah we're fast approaching the first, the end of the part inshallah we'll come back to Dalia and ask her about the Islamic dress and how it was perceived in relation to the women who are, were, who took part in the survey inshallah, please don't forget to call us in the second half, we'll be right back after this.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Assalamu Alakim wa rahmatullah wa barakatuh, welcome back to the second half of Muslimah Dilemma, yes it's the second half, you've missed the first half, you've missed a very interesting discussion. We've been talking about what is it that Muslim want, Muslim women want in the Muslim world subhanallah and specifically we've been talking about the Gallup survey in 2005 that was conducted by Gallup themselves and they interviewed 8000 women and predominantly women were talking about shari'a as the source of legislation, one of the sources of legislation or the only source of legislation for them in their Muslim, in the Muslim countries. I've got Dalia Mujahid on the line who is the Executive Director and Senior Analyst for the Center for Muslim studies in Gallup itself, she was one of the people that conducted or spearheaded this very survey mashallah and I've also got on the couch in the studio, and we talked to her from the United States of America, and I've also got Nasreen Nawaz who is the women's media representative for Hizb it Tahrir. Ok inshallah we've been talking about various issues but I just want to come to Dalia inshallah, ok we've lost Dalia just for a minute there, but ok we were just talking about women and leadership but I just want to talk about now the laws or the shari'a relating to interaction between men and women which is very very strict and some people say it makes it absolutely impossible for men and women to conduct their business if it is as strictly applied as as shari'a would stipulate.

Nasreen Nawaz: I would say actually it's the total opposite, I think when you don't set limits in terms of regulating the relationship between men and women, and especially when you sexualize a society I think that causes a big obstacle in terms of how men and women interact in terms of the healthy cooperation that should exist between men and women to produce a productive and progressive society and Islam makes no apology for having strict regulations in terms of social laws. We know what happened in terms of the economy by having a free for all, by having very little regulation, we also know the knock on effect of having very few regulations on the social structure and the family structures of society, so Islam yes it has very strict laws when it come to the issue of interaction between men and women, men and women cannot socialize they cannot be alone together they you know there's issues of in terms of lowering the gaze, all of these things, the dress code, they're all there to insure that there's a healthy cooperation so that men and women can focus at the job at hand whether it's their education, whether it's their work, whether it's being involved in the political process rather than being diverted to other issues, I think this is important to understand.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: I've got Dalia back on line now — Dalia we just bought up one of the findings of your survey which said that women didn't even mention the fact that — of the hijab — even though they were given open-ended questions. But the West — or some people in the West — would perceive the hijab as taking away a freedom of choice in relation to what they wear and inhibits them or restricts them in some way. Whats your view — what was the view — of Muslim

women about their headscarf in your mind, in your understanding.

Dalia Mogahed (phone): Well we actually asked women if they chose to wear hijab publicly or not and then, whether they said yes or no, we asked them why — why they wore the hijab and why they didn't wear the hijab. What we found was that women who wear the hijab tell us most frequently that they wear it because they believe it is a religious tenet — that it is a requirement of their faith — and so women are wearing the hijab as a part of what they believe is a required religious practice. And so taking away the ability to practice one's faith is of course a violation of religious freedom.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok inshaallah. I've got mashallah a live caller already who wants to ask you a question. I've got sister Sami on the line. Salaam Aleykum Sister Sami and thank you for being with us on Muslimah Dilemma.

Sami (phone): Walaleykum. I have a quick question for Dalia. Obviously those guests were saying there is a growing desire for Muslims to live under shari'a law. My question is how can Dalia use her role to make people in America accept that not everybody wants to live their way and accept the law in the Muslim land.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: OK inshaallah that's a really good question, why didn't I think of that! Dalia?

Dalia Mogahed (phone): Well I think what my role is, is very clear to me to convey to the advisory council and through the advisory council to the President, to other public officials, what it is Muslims want. I am not here to advocate for one point of view or another. I am simply a researcher who is able to convey accurately and in a representative way the actual views of Muslims so that they are speaking for themselves rather than having others speak for them. It will — it's going to have to be up to other people who are advocates who do have a specific point of view to push a specific policy forward or another but my role is not one of a lobbyist, it is one of a researcher.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Can I ask you — who do you think those specific people are who you mentioned should be that bring over their particular view or try and push particular ideas?

Dalia Mogahed (phone): Well you know it would be difficult for me to name specific groups or specific people, but I'm sure there are people out there — and in fact they are not all Muslim — who believe that this is something that the United States and Britain and other countries should be open too — the concept of integrating shari`ah into laws in Muslim-majority societies. And of course, most Muslim-majority societies do have shari`ah as a part of their laws already.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: OK JazakAllah Kheir. Before we move onto our next question, I just want to show you the other three statistics that we that were polled and found quite interesting results of that. And I'm just going to read you the fourth of those which is the most frequent response to the question 'what do you admire least about the West'. Was the general perception, or moral decay, promiscuity, pornography, that pollsters called the Hollywood image that is regarded as degrading to women? An overwhelming majority of the women polled in each country cited 'attachment to moral and spiritual values' as the best aspect of their own society. Similarly in 59 per cent of the women surveyed cited 'love of their religion' as the best aspect. At 97 per cent had the highest percentage of women who said they believe they should be able to make their own voting decisions, followed by Egypt in at 95 per cent (???). That's quite high sabhanallah. Ok, inshallah just moving onto the fifth one which is over 8000 interviews were conducted with women in 8 predominantly Muslim countries including Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Morocco. Among the women surveyed in this poll, Egyptian women are most likely to believe shari`ah should be the primary source of legislation. Sixty two per cent say it should be the only source of law and 28 per cent say it should be a source, but not the only source. In nearly every country surveyed a majority of women say Islamic law should either be the primary source of legislation or a source. Iranian women were asked the shari`ah question. Sixty-six per cent said Islamic law should be a source — which is maybe very surprising — and 14 per cent said the sole source of legislation, especially in Iran. OK, just the last statistic of tonight. Seventy eight per cent of Moroccan women, 71 per cent of Lebanese women and 48 per cent of Saudi women linked legal equality with the West. Still, a majority of the respondents did not think adopting Western values would help the Muslim world's political and economic progress. Ok inshaallah. Really hope you recorded that because that was a lot to read when it was all up on screen so you can have a look at it later in more detail or watch the repeat on Thursday at 10am. Ok inshaallah, Nusreen, oh mashAllah I understand the phone-lines are full I'm coming to you hold on sisters and brothers. We have major huge problems in our own countries: illiteracy, forced marriages, poverty, honour killings, mutilations, rape, poverty. Endless problems—endless — and the list goes on. While they live in these Muslims states [video cuts out] going on and some people say that shari`ah is being implemented in part, so they are saying that shari`ah is to blame effectively.

Nasreen Nawaz: Again, what I would say is that if you talk to the majority of Muslims in Britain and globally when they look at these states like Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh — the list goes on — Indonesia, the Arab world — many Muslims understand that these states do not represent the comprehensive implementation of the shari`ah laws. They represent selective implementation and even that selective implementation is a distorted implementation in many

many cases. These regimes are monarchies...

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Give me an example...

Nasreen Nawaz: For example, we have Saudi Arabia that is a monarchy — a kingship — where the king is above the law. He can, he can choose whether he abides by the law he changes the law. This is not the case in the Islamic system, because in the Islamic system you have an elected ruler who has to be by the law, who has to live by the law, who is not above the law. You have examples of theocracies, examples of secular dictatorships — these structures of ruling have no association with the Islamic texts at all. Those people who have studied the Islamic texts can see that clearly. Like I said, there is selective implementation rather than comprehensive implementation. I think this is why many people—including the organization that I am working with, HT — are calling for a real alternative, and that alternative we are calling for Islamic Khilafah state (the West call it a Caliphate state) this is a state that is based upon specific principles and has a historic precedence of working — 13 000 years — of working and at those times when Islamic governance was intertwined with state, those were the golden years of Islam. We know that in terms of progress of medicine and of technology and in terms of economics and so on.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: But people will say to you this is a changing world — we live in a modern world nowadays — and that whilst a lot of academics, Muslim and non-Muslim, will point to the golden age of Islam, people will say look you're dreaming. It's not going-- it can't apply now.

Nasreen Nawaz: No, no Islam came to solve human problems. And people still have the same problems. They want to trade, they want to have property, they want to get married, they want to have relationships, they want to feel safe, they have a system of governance. These problems will never change and Islam came to address these kind of issues. And so I think it is important when people talk about a Khilafah state, it is not a theocracy; it is not a state where religious rulers make the laws. It is a state where the authority is in the hands of the people, where the people elect their ruler and hold him accountable. There are mechanisms of the state...

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: What kind of mechanisms?

Nasreen Nawaz: For example, you have political parties underneath an Islamic Khilafah state. This is all defined by the Islamic state—this is all defined by the Islamic texts. You have political parties where women again are encouraged to be a part of. You have a mechanism called the

majlis al-ummah, which is the consultative body that holds the ruler to account and advises the ruler. You have the Qadi Muthalim, the court of unjust acts, where a woman can directly account the rulers of her society. These are some examples of the issue of governance and the principles of governance in Islam. In terms of...

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: I just want to bring in Dalia at this point. Dalia, you accept that our situation in the Muslim world is pretty dire. What do you think the solution for our problems are? Having heard — also if you want to comment on what Nusreen has said.

Dalia Mogahed (phone): I think that, I mean I think the solutions are many and quite complicated. Certain societies the issue is around the lack of money and other societies resources are plentiful. What Muslims around the world tell us that they believe is a key to progress is attachment to their spiritual and moral values. They really do see, many of them, that Islam offers a solution for their problems and that they see Islam as their society's greatest asset. When we asked people what they admire most about the Muslim world, what they tell us is their attachment to Islam, Islamic values, even the the value of hospitality, the value of family. So I think that whereas people around the world do feel that the problems are diverse, many many of them do mention Islam as a as a part of that solution. When we asked people what Muslims can do to help themselves, one of the most frequent responses is for them to unify and another is for them to follow Islam and and make it a greater more authentic part of their lives.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok well, not too far from what you were saying but you are getting into the nitty gritty of it.

Nasreen Nawaz: I think this the issue of what is the most pressing issue for Muslim women in the Muslim world. And I think the survey said the lack of unity between the Muslim countries — that they need to be more unified — the issue of political corruption -- it talks about violent extremism — political corruption, economic corruption. These are the real issues, not the fact that a woman cannot be a ruler or the difference of certain Islamic laws between men and women. These issues are not in the minds of women in terms of the hijab, the dress code. The real issue is the corruption, the lack of economic stability in our countries, violence, lack of safety, lack of security. These are the real things that Muslim women are concerned about. And I think the backwardness in our societies in terms of technology, and medicine and infrastructure. These are the things that Muslim women wake up and...

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: But people will blame the Muslims for that. They will say “you know what, it's

down to you”.

Nasreen Nawaz: I think you need to look at the actual regimes in our countries and how important they see the investment in industry and the investment in technology and the investment in terms of education and building the society. You can see that our leaders and our regimes are totally intellectually bankrupt when it comes to ideas of how to develop their country and the systems they implement are also simultaneously bankrupt. We can see that. And I think people this is why people are looking for a real alternative driven by Islam. If you look again how Islam pushes the Muslims to be leaders in things that they do, and also leaders in terms of governance and society. So the issue of attachment to spiritual values—this is not a personal thing-- Muslims are calling for a change I think of governance-- this is the thing-- of governance, of government, of structures of government, which they've been lacking for decades now. And they are looking for a system that is independent, that doesn't rely on the West for money, for ideas, that can organize itself, that can lead the world in technology, in medicine. This is the kind of system that it is looking for and I think the Khilafah state makes these things a priority, not something which is second.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok inshaallah. JazakAllah Kheir. Waiting on the phone, I am going to take sister Shadaan who has been very patiently waiting. Salaam Aleykum sister.

Shadaan (phone): Wa Aleykum Salaam. I am basically give you a comments and some questions...

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Can you make it fast, sorry we are running out of time. JazakAllah Kheir I know it is really difficult on the phone, I know what it is like.

Shadaan (phone): I mean I was just wondering you talk about shari`ah law and implementing Islam and I know most of the woman would love to implement Islam and shari`ah law but I always think do we really know what is shari`ah law. You've just touched on that you've said that many Islamic countries claim to be implementing shari`ah law and you don't know what exactly is shari`ah law. I mean Iran claims it is implementing shari`ah law, so's Saudi Arabia, so's Taliban in Afghanistan. So you know there are different pictures of shari`ah law and shari`ah state...

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok inshaallah we've understood what you are saying sister JazakAllah Kheir I've got Umm Mohammed on the phone, Salaam Aleykum Umm Mohammed.

Umm Mohammed (phone): Wa Aleykum Salaam. I just have two quick points. The first one is that as women we all want a strong identity and sense of self, yeah, but we are pushed to represent something that is not the truth and yet we are fed a lie that if we follow ideas like democracy which predates Islam that somehow we are modern and somehow we are looking forward. And the other point I wanted to make is there is a lot of discussion from both parties about opinions, choice and interpretation. But don't both parties — sister Nazreen and sister Dalia — feel that with such a discussion that the truth tends to get lost because that's not what's focussed if you have this whole issue of choice and interpretation. Jazakallah kheir

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Jazakallah kheir, Umm Mohammed. Brother Shawkut, a very brave brother ringing up. Salaam Aleykum, brother.

Brother Shawkut (phone): Salaam Aleykum.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Salaam Aleykum wa Rahm T'ullah

Shawkut: As far as I'm concerned, only women can understand women's issues and then isn't it just quite natural that we should have women Muslim leaders to represent women's issues? And another thing I'd like to say which really annoys me - when you have concerning things like hijab and women's issues, why do we need — when we've got thousands of educated women — why should there be men spokesmen, why don't we have women spokesmen for these issues? Thank you, Salaam Aleykum.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Jazakallah kheir, brother Shawkat. I've got sister Yasmin.

Sister Yasmin (phone): Salaam Aleykum

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail - Wa Aleykum Salaam.

Sister Yasmin (phone) - Yeah. My question was similar to the first sisters's — along those lines. Basically I wanted to ask if any of the sisters knew that there is a perception, certainly among non-Muslims, that the Taliban represent shari`ah. And, as a Muslim, I want to know where the Taliban get their shari`ah laws from. For example, they're not that keen on sending girls into school. You know, is there a valid opinion or where do they get it from because a lot of Muslims are confused about this issue. You know, they claim that they follow shari`ah so who is anybody else to say 'no, actually shari`ah is something else'.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok, um, Jazakallah kheir. Dahlia, did you get a feeling from the discussions that you had with the women you interviewed, or indeed the men, that people had an understanding of shari`ah that is consistent?

Dalia Mogahed: I think, I mean it's difficult to tell what people are thinking about when they say they want shari`ah as the source of legislation or the only source. What we know what people associate with shari`ah which is justice for women, scientific progress, good governance and so forth. We also know that, from some of our research, that people don't associate shari`ah compliance with the Taliban. For example, in one country, the number of people who said they wanted a Taliban-type government was less than one percent but the majority wanted shari`ah as a source of legislation but the two are not synonymous in the minds of the people.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok. Jazakallah kheir, sister Dalia. Nasreen — the callers are saying, 'do people really understand what shari`ah is?' and having heard what Dalia had to say...

Nasreen Nawaz: I think this is, mashallah, where many Muslims are returning to their roots and returning to understanding the shari`ah laws for exactly what they are and, like Dahlia said, that many people understand the Taliban template does not represent the true intent and implementation of shari`ah. In terms of what kind of standard people used to measure these governments by, I think one simple example is just look at the system of ruling in these countries. Iran as an example that claims to be an Islamic state and yet is a republican state, is a theocracy where religious leaders actually legislate and can change the laws. No scholar can change the laws when Islam has made the laws, you know, Allah subhanullah wa t'allah is the one who makes the laws, the caliph or the ruler is simply there to implement the rules and there are mechanisms to keep him to account to make sure he does that so I think this is a simple measure to see whether a country actually rules by Islam or not – to just even look at the system of ruling and then obviously look at other structures; the economic system, the social system, other laws as well, I think this is helpful. In terms of the woman as well, the rights of the woman, in terms of to access education, is very clear.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok. Inshallah. Dalia, we've come to the end of the second half, can you please give our viewers your take-home message if you have one?

Dalia Mogahed: I think the most important thing that I would say is the importance of listening directly to ordinary people on the ground and not allowing anyone to speak for them. One tool to do that is survey research and so I think that more and more policy-makers should make use of this tool so that they are getting an accurate picture of what people really think.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok. Have you got another survey coming up that you might want to tell us about?

Dalia Mogahed: Yes. We are going to be releasing a survey in November on the views of the American public on Islam and Muslim and later, next year, we will be doing a much larger survey on Muslim opinion around the world, just so that we understand better.

Ibtihal Bsis Ismail: Ok. Inshallah. I think we'd love to have you on personally to discuss the findings of those surveys once they come out. I want to say Jazakallah kheir to my guest Dahlia Mogahed from the United States of America and Jazakallah kheir to Nasreen Nawaz, women's media representative for Hizb ut-Tahrir.

[Ismail then talks briefly about forthcoming programmes]

ENDS