

Mehdi Hasan on defeating extremism

Zaynab Gul, *Australasian Muslim Times*, 15 July 2017



The topic for both events was titled “Defeating extremism with Mehdi Hassan: The future of the West in the age of Trump and terror.”

The Sydney event attracted over 700 people and was held at the Western Sydney University, Parramatta Campus and also included a frank conversation between Mehdi Hasan and ABC presenter Stan Grant of Aboriginal ancestry from Wiradjuri.

Earlier on the same day Mehdi Hasan met the movers and shakers in the Muslim community at a reception, held at the Sydney City offices of the Crescent Institute, the organisers of his Australian tour.

This was Mehdi Hasan’s first appearance on Australian soil, where he tackled the issues of collective interdependence between Islamic extremists on one hand and right winged, anti-Islamic patriots on the other.

Before flying back out of Australia Mehdi Hasan was interviewed by a number of news media organisations and also appeared at ABC’s Q & A program on Monday 17 July.

According to Hasan, the ability of terror organisations to be successful and gain strength relies on the fear that is fed to the people mainly through the media. “Let’s stop acting as though the biggest threat to our collective survival, to our civilisation is a small group of be-headers and hand-choppers out in the desert of Iraq and Syria,” said Hasan.



Over 700 people attended the Sydney event in Western Sydney University. Photo by Photosphere.

“You’re much more likely as an Australian to be killed falling out of bed in the morning than by a terrorist later the day – that’s what the stats show.”

Hasan said that the overrepresentation of Muslim terror related events in the media creates an unequal treatment towards the minority group that is then translated into Islamophobia on the streets.

“The reality is that Muslims are covered by the media across the west in a way that other communities are not. They are held to standards that are communities are not. We don’t need special treatment, just equal standards,” he said.

The irony, Hasan argued, is that politicians such as Donald Trump and Pauline Hanson who publicly speak out against Islamic extremists by creating a blanket blame on all Muslims create more division that is then used in benefit by groups such as ISIS.

“Anti-Muslim bigots have become recruiting sergeants for a group they claim they hate and profess they want to destroy. They are “ISIS’ useful idiots. It helps ISIS’ narrative of the West versus Islam.”

In conversation with CNN journalist Indigenous Affairs Editor at the ABC, Stan Grant, Hasan said that governance in the Middle East is a correlation with political violence.



Stan

Grant speaks with Mehdi Hasan. Photo by Photosphere.

“ISIS was formed in countries like Iraq where there is no outlet for opposition or people’s voices to be heard.”

Hasan spoke out against the view that the Middle East is the greatest representation of Muslims and encouraged looking beyond these geopolitical barriers.

“It’s important that we develop our own leaders, our own models, our own governments without always having to turn back to our immigrant parent’s country of origin or towards the Middle East. “

Hasan praised the Australian political system as being the one of greatest potential as a leader to bring about international change because of the country’s overall stability.

“Don’t buy into the derogatory and defamatory words of the right winged. Don’t buy into their divisive and hateful campaigns. The truth is, in the international scene, multiculturalism has been largely successful in Australia.”

Throughout the event, Hasan emphasised the need for solidarity through the promotion of multiculturalism and diversity if extremism is to be defeated once and for all.

“We need to embrace other marginalised communities, be there for them when they are under fire. We have to focus on what unites us and not what makes us different.”



Talal Yassine OAM, Managing Director of Crescent Wealth greets the audience of over 700 in Sydney. Photo by Photosphere.

The events were successfully organised by the highly reputable pre-eminent professional networking and thought leadership organisation, Crescent Institute.