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The Problem

The readers of The Risale-i Nur ,a faith based Quranic commentary by Bediuzzaman Said Nursi a late Ottoman-Turkish Muslim scholar , are subject to judicial allegations for being suspected of extremism.The books by Nursi were banned and confiscated in the Russian Federation and some central asian countries.Here we would like to present to the attention of OSCE delegation the true Picture of Nursi and his writings in order to clarify the misunderstanding.

By studying the life of Nursi ,his writings and his worldwide readers (his writings were translated into over 50 languages) will be very easy to see that neither his writings nor his life and readers do not have any elements of extremism .Contrary his writings are good examples of tolerance and training materials to help improving awareness of responsibility.

Who is Bediuzzaman Said Nursi ?

In order to understand the essence of Nursi's writings the following information will be helpful.

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1876-1960) lived his life in a very dynamic part of the history in a land where multi religious and multi cultural life exercised with no problem. Nursi at the turn of 20 th century played active role in the socio-religious life and had his educational project submitted to the ruler of the time,Sultan Abdulhamit II based on the concept that the biggest enemy for humanity is ignorance,powerty and conflict.

Later on during the 1 st WW he was wounded and taken as prisoner of war,exiled to Costroma a city in the central Siberia ,500 km north of Moscow.After two years of exile he escaped and arrived in Istanbul,1918.But just after establishment of modern Turkish Republic he was then again exiled by the republican leaders,in 1926 .This then became his life long exile till he died in 1960 on exile.

With his tireless efforts and works he wrote the 6000 pages Magnum Opus Quranic commentary called The Risale-i Nur, Epistles of Light. His writing is not a Word by Word commentary on Quran but a kind of thematic faith based exegesis. To day in Turkey a large number of faithful reads his writings as source of strengthening their faith. This is called the Nur Community. A peaceful and respectful to multi-religious faithful community.

His life and writings, in many ways, is very rich with examples to take in many different levels for multi-cultural and multi-religious societies. By studying exemplary cases from his life we will see how a faithful becomes center of diffusion of forgiveness and peace by sacrificing his feelings.

When Nursi and his writings are concerned a number of points strike our mind but the two of them constitutes his major thoughts:

- His depth in faith matter, teaching us how to live a God centric life
- His serious concern of world peace and forgiveness

What is the Risale-i Nur ?

As he describes at several occasions in his writings the Risale-i Nur that the awesome disease of this time is the spiritual sicknesses that emerges from atheistic materialism. In his writings he has employed very strong reasonings to prove the basics of the faith;

- the realities and the truth of the unity and the existence of God,
- the proof of life after death,
- the truth of prophethood,
- the truth of the spirit and the angel,
- The role of moral values in human endeavour for a just society

His approach of proving the truth of faith is based on the names and the attributes of God manifested in the universe. Thus he ingeniously transforms the universe into a vast book helping us to see and to understand God. Then the universe becomes a book of creation to help us to read the revealed heavenly books .

I do sincerely believe and it is the testimony of international scholarship that his approach and the examples that he employed in discussing and proving the truth of faith and religion can be very useful and instrumental for the followers of other traditions.

Nursi on Peace and Compassion

I would like to quote exemplary passages from his writings first then the discussion will follow later on.

Case 1

During the 1st WW he saved the life of several hundred Armenian women and children even in the worst case of 1st WW conditions. (-Commitment to Peace)

Ref: The Intellectual Biography, S Vahide (Page:), SUNY PRESS

Case 2

A letter from Nursi to his students during the years of 2nd WW. In this letter it is easily seen an exceptional exemplary human behavior. Nursi wrote this letter when he was in the Denizli prison. In this letter he is expressing his pity for those innocent people who die or get wounded during the 2nd WW. (Kastamonu Lahikası)

There were a number of reasons for a person like Nursi not to write this letter as one should expect :

-Nursi is a Muslim scholar and the Russia and the rest of Europe involved in the 2nd WW are Christian in majority, orthodoxy.

-Historically there is a long-deep hostility between Europe-Russia and Ottoman – later Modern Turkey

-Germany has been a friend of Turkey for long, specially in the 1st WW

-Nursi was taken as prisoner of war between 1916-1918 with a broken leg and for more than two years in central Siberia, Costroma 500 km North of Moscow, in loneliness and very severe hardship conditions.

In this case Nursi's approach is not due to a simple humanitarian thinking, it is due to a rather deep concern related to creation of the universe and human.

One would expect hatred and enmity but no clue for that and expressed his utmost compassion.

Case 3

In his writings in several different places he states that Muslims and pious followers of the Book should unite their forces to resist against the atheistic materialism in order to save the coming generation .(Flashes ,20 th Flash)

In another place he urges his students and the Christian Missionaries to leave aside the differences that exist and unite their forces against the atheistic materialism ,to save sacret and gain high moral values ,to find solutions for existing social injustices. (Emirdağ 102)(Commitment to multi-religious and multi-cultural coexistence)

Case 4

Once he was looking out of the window of Afyon prison in 1948 there were a number of children playing in the garden and he asked whose are those children .When he heard that one of them is the child of the Afyon Court prosecutor then he said I was going to curse him and now because of this child I forgive him. (Commitment to forgiveness)

Case 5

He visited Archpatriach Athanagoras of Eastern Orthodox Church in Istanbul and asked to cooperate in order to unite forces in saving the generations from atheistic materialism ,1953

Case 6

He sent a book of him along with a letter to the Pope in Vatican asking possiblity of cooperation and uniting forces in order to create a better society ,a peaceful world ,1950, and he receievd a letter of thanks from the Vatikan Feb 1951.(he is comitted to religious pluralism)

There are several this kind of examples in his life and writings.

With a careful observations of Nursi's life and his writings , the Risale-i Nur , one can gather the following points for the bases of his thought and action:

-The Qur'anic principle of *No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another*ⁱ (Quran :164;İsra:15;fatır :18;Zümer:7)

He did not act in line with his senses ,emotions and feelings but he acted according to Qur'an and he put Qur'an at center of his life as guideline for all his human transactions for the betterment of humanity at large.

This verse is repeated 4 times in Qur'an but Nursi cited over 40 times in Risale-i Nur.

At that time due to his far sight he understood that in the globalised world the most violated verse of Qur'an will be this verse i.e. terror, violence etc

-The Four Guiding Principles :

These are main major principles that he wrote as major guiding lessons .

Impotence, Poverty, Compassion and Reflective Thought

- The Concept of this world being a guest house and life being an examination
- Being compassionate not only to human but to all Creatures and His Commitment to live a God centric life, his life long struggle is to bring God to the center of his life

He sees all creatures as his relatives due to being created by the same God .Eight years after the 1 st WW when he returns from exile to Van by seeing the destruction had happened during and after the war .On his return he weeps on the occasion of losing all his relatives and memories. but when he sees a flower ,a fruit at the top of a tree then he starts speaking with it then he returns from transient World to eternal one .
(Abstract from 26 th Flashes)

- Positive action-No attack, but defense(In Damascus Cermon in 1911 he said that the time of physical war in the name of Islam ended ,now and onward the time of JIHAD I MANEVI i.e spiritual struggle will be in action,**IT IS NOT TIME OF JIHAD BY SWORD BUT IT IS TIME OF JIHAD BY WORDS** he says)

In short neither his writings nor his life let us make the statement that his writings have the nature of extremism and people who read his writings may have tendency towards violence.
