

### Can a Muslim be loyal to a non-Muslim state or express an identity related to that state, e.g. be British or French?

The universal values of Islam mean that Muslims, wherever they are, in whichever time should be able to uphold its dignified ethos and at the same time respect the culture and traditions of the region in which they live. Islam does not have a rigid notion of culture or identity, the values act as a backdrop to enable an original Islamic culture to flourish for every place and time. Hence if one looks at the world from Morocco to Malaysia very different expressions of Islam can be seen, albeit all connected by the common bonds of faith values and brotherhood. As such, the Muslims of Europe should see themselves as Europeans and take pride in their European heritage, culture and identity. Within the broad definition of 'European' there is, of course, the more actualised and precise notion of a national identity - being French, Italian or British, for example. Just as there is no contradiction in being a Christian and French, or Jewish and European - there is no contradiction in being Muslim and British, or Muslim and European.

There is no such thing as a one dimensional identity. The reality of personal identity is that there are always different layers involved. A person can be a daughter, a sister, a mother, a Christian, a member of a liberal political party, a teacher, a

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proud Dutch citizen, and an environmentalist all at the same time. Rather than create a tension of loyalty, such an array of complex facets, and more, come together to make us who we are. Identities are also always in a state of change and flux and are not frozen in time - being Swedish today is not the same as being Swedish 200 years ago. And naturally, self-identity always involves a degree of negotiation - all of us, living in any society, are confronted by things we like and things we don't like, values we agree with and values we don't agree with. The responsibility of the Muslim is to work together with others to uphold the common good and promote it and prevent what is bad. Muslim identity is thus locally contextualised, active and outward looking, but above all deeply spiritual.



**Can a Muslim express loyalty through state symbols e.g. singing the national anthem, waving a flag, etc.**

According to Shaykh Faisal Mawlawi of the European Council for Fatwa and Research:

“Muslims living in non-Muslim countries are to respect the symbols of those countries such as the national anthem, national flag, etc. This is part of what citizenship dictates as per modern customs... Thus, standing up for the national anthem is not a form of prohibited loyalty. If a Muslim is to change a wrong action in a majority non-Muslim country, let



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him do that through dialogue, wisdom and fair exhortation. At the same time, he should not obey any rules that involve disobedience to God”. (Date of opinion: October 2002).

### How can Muslim youth be better Citizens ?

By being confident, upright individuals, good family members, fully engaged in society and by living their religious and spiritual values to the full, so that they are an example to others.

Islam is not a religion of isolation and Muslims would see if they view their teachings seriously and comprehensively that its basic ethos is to create justice and peace between people. The private values that people possess must influence their public behaviour and social justice is a paramount concern. Muslim youth need to consider carefully that they are the role models for the future generations of Muslims, which means they have to try their best to excel in all matters, whether that is education, work, leisure, or personal conduct. Muslims also need to look beyond their own needs and rights, which are important, to realise their true role is to be of service (*khidmah*) to all the people around them.

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