

French subtitled in English of Mohamed El Bachiri's talk about 'A Jihad For Love'
in his 10 min TEDTalk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OW28KPPOiok>.
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The English subtitles can be downloaded from the website. The download comes in short phrases punctuated with the time when they occur in the talk. Ross Lantzke has taken these phrases and organised them into paragraphs using the original words and order.

I am Mohamed El Bachiri, a Belgian-Moroccan Muslim and resident of Molenbeek.

With this name, these religious convictions and the reputation of the town where I live, I am considered, by part of the population and the world, a potential terrorist. And that has quite an impact on me.

I am also the spouse of Loubna Lafquiri, the love of my life, my friend, the mother of my children, who passed away during the attacks in Brussels on March 22, 2016. Loubna, a woman of incomparable beauty and infinite goodness. Her eyes on me, her smile, her presence made me the most handsome, the luckiest and the happiest of all men.

Today, my sadness is unquantifiable, and love is the only thing that keeps me going. The love I have for my wife, my children, for life and for humanity. A love that inspired me to call for 'jihad' one evening, in a church where Muslims, Christians, and others had shared a meal as brothers.

Yes, I called for 'jihad'. Mind you, not just any 'jihad'. I refer to the jihad that knows no hatred as hate is a heavy burden that blackens our hearts. I am talking about the true, the noblest, most beautiful battle for Muslims who oppose terror.

This jihad encourages us to go to the other, our brother who is different, to smile at him, understand him and show him our empathy.

This jihad loves in order to exist, seeks to embrace in order to snuff the flames of resentment and does not impose its truth as it is said in the Quran: *La ikraha fi dine*. No constraints in religion.

This jihad, my jihad, cries out its love for the West, this part of the world where I was born and which has given me so much. I am a child of the universe, your brother in humanity.

This jihad should be the answer Muslims give to those who seek to divide us and to propagate violence and terrorism. As if they were on a battle field, the agonising cries of the defeated were a symphony to the glory of a victorious God. Cursed be the war, cursed be terrorism.

I return to the essence, love, this cornerstone which should support all ideas all beliefs, all humans. It should be a universal force and the basis of all communication between us human beings. In this relationship based on love nothing has the pretence of holding the real truth, much less the will to impose it. This quest for truth is inside every one of us. It is one of the characteristics of 'the rational creature' that we are.

The journey I chose is Islam. But this road I chose with the objective of reaching what the Greeks called 'ataraxia', the state of having a tranquil soul. I wish that for every one of us.

The journey I chose is Islam, but I chose this road, because I am above all a human being. So, it is only logical to put my humanity above my Muslim identity. My humanity, with all its humanistic values that come with it: the sanctity of life, free will and the brotherhood of man.

Being a Muslim humanist means accepting, savouring and considering it a privilege to live in diversity. It is also the capacity to put into perspective certain texts of the Quran more

specifically the passages on war, and to consider them as historical accounts typical of the 7th century which shouldn't, by any means, be used to hurt or kill other people.

Being a Muslim humanist means taking an interest in our common history, the history of humanity with all the great men who made the world advance. These men of Ancient Greece, of Mesopotamia of Rome, of China, of the East and the West.

It means stopping for a moment to look at the heavens, to turn to our neighbour, to smile at him and to understand him. And even if my neighbour is the antithesis of my thoughts, my beliefs, this is all right. As Heraclitus said: there is truth in everything and its opposite. I, myself, am a contradiction, divided between reason and mysticism, conviction and scepticism. But always, and until my last breath, carried by love.

In these difficult and uncertain times, I call for dialogue and exchange, and rather than lingering on the madness and the hatred of some, let us turn toward the genius and the goodness of humanity. Those are and will remain the true sources of inspiration and hope for those who will inherit the Earth: our children.

I would also highlight the importance of culture, as it opens our minds. When I see Averroes, a Muslim philosopher who translated, who ensured the translation of numerous Greek texts and provided commentaries on them, who ensured the transfer of a great deal of Aristotelian thought to the West, which contributed to the Renaissance... When I see him immortalised at the Vatican Palace in a fresco painted by Raphael, I can only be overpowered by emotion and conclude that we, Muslims, can and have already contributed to the grandeur of the West and humanity. And that, in the end, there is no 'clash of civilisations' but rather, magnificent encounters.

I would like to conclude with a text I wrote shortly after losing my wife, as a response to those who have destroyed my life. It is titled 'Allahoakbar'. I believe it is the Allahoakbar of most Muslims.

Allahoakbar soft murmur from the heart that can't be heard, but is so much more true than the one used to destroy.

Allahoakbar for the love I have and for the Cherifian kingdom.

Allahoakbar for beauty, for art, for this oeuvre that releases such a strong emotion that it would make the coldest of hearts melt into tears.

Allahoakbar for all this diversity, these people with whom we discuss, exchange and accept that, in the end, each one of us has his truth in a spirit of brotherhood.

Allahoakbar when we disapprove of violence and we work toward peace and friendship between peoples.

Allahoakbar when I smile the atheist or the Christian.

Allahoakbar for those who have understood that God is love and the salvation of men will only come through this universal force expressed for our neighbour.

Allahoakbar, sweet thought and prayer for you, Loubna, my love and for all victims who will forever live in our hearts and our memories.

Thank you.

(Applause)