

# ISLAMIC BUTCHERY?

Milton James<sup>i</sup>

*This paper raises concerns about certain Australian authorities submitting to the demands of a small group of misguided religious extremists to slaughter livestock without prior stunning.*

It is illegal for abattoirs in Australia to slaughter animals without stunning. Islamic leaders in Australia accept the practice of pre-slaughter stunning, which means, from an animal welfare perspective, halal slaughter need not be any different than non-halal slaughter—nor cruel. But it has come to my attention that there are 15 or more small abattoirs in Australia that have been granted exemption from the law to meet the demands of a small group of people for the meat of animals that have had their throat cut and left to bleed to death without any form of pre-slaughter sedation.<sup>1</sup>

When I was a student of Roseworthy Agricultural College, a practice component of our sheep husbandry course was to learn how to slaughter sheep correctly in accordance with the established procedure set down by the Department of Agriculture. Thereafter, when it came to slaughtering sheep for home consumption, I preferred to do it myself to ensure the animal did not suffer unduly. Even with the greatest of pre-slaughtering kindness, the sharpest of knives, and carrying out the task with the correct force, speed and accuracy, without stunning, the animal will experience considerable pain—there is no denying it. For this reason, it's an unpleasant job—a job that unsettles the soul. I have yet to meet a man on the land that says otherwise. With or without stunning, this is the price we and the animals pay for putting meat on our table.

I read on the internet that the Irish Department of Halal Certification says, *The fact is that there is little or no pain in the religious slaughter* (that is, cutting the animal's throat and letting it bleed to death without stunning).<sup>2</sup> Who are these people trying to kid? (We heard the same sort of nonsense from Yassmin Abdel-Magied when she told us on ABC Q&A that, *Islam is the most feminist of all religions*—who is she trying to kid?) This is not one of those backward situations where people put their faith before reason. No, this is something far more obscene. What we have here is people trying to fool their audience—people trying to turning black into white.

But it gets worse. Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani<sup>3</sup> goes on to claim that slaughtering without stunning is more humane than slaughtering animals that are stunned. He claims (with no supporting evidence) that stunning, *in some instances harms the animal and pains it more than the actual slaughtering*. How he knows this is anyone's guess. He goes on to say that, *Stunning with the*

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.aussieabattoirs.com/facts/halal-kosher>

<sup>2</sup> Department of Halal Certification - *Why stunning Animals Prior to Slaughter cannot be accepted by Muslims?* 177 Hazelbury Park, Clonee, Dublin 15, Ireland.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad Taqi Usmani served as a judge on the Federal Shariat Court of Pakistan from 1981 to 1982 and the Shariat Appellate Bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan between 1982 and 2002. He is reported to be an expert in the fields of Islamic jurisprudence, Tasawwuf and hadith. He also held a number of positions on the Shariah Boards of prestigious Islamic institutions.

*gun violently strikes the animal's forehead, so it is not unlikely at all that it would die from severe brain damage, in which case it would fall under the category of 'what has been beaten to death'.<sup>4</sup>*

Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani is aware of electric stunning. But he appears to be unaware of the fact that there is no recorded case of an instant death of a sheep as a result of electric stunning. Even in an incidence of immediate decapitation, the brain still sends signals for a short time, and the heart still beats for a moment or two—time enough to evoke the name of Allâh and for the animal to bleed out.

What Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani does not understand is that the rhythmic beating of the heart occurs independently of the brain. The brain has the role of regulating the rate and strength of the heartbeat. Removal of the brain's influence, as occurs in head stunning, does not stop the functioning of the heart. Moreover, satisfactory bleeding out can occur even after the animal has had a cardiac arrest while the animal is unconscious.<sup>5</sup>

In a comprehensive review of literature, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) determined that, without stunning, the delay between cutting through the major blood vessels of the neck and insensibility, as deduced from behaviour and brain response, was up to 20 seconds in sheep, whereas stunning is virtually immediate.<sup>6</sup> With regards to the intensity of the stun and the duration of insensibility, Cook found that at 1.0 amp, stun durations of 2 seconds result in a seizure-like state lasting for 25 seconds in sheep.<sup>7</sup> Stun durations as long as 7 seconds still only resulted in a seizure-like state lasting for 32 seconds.<sup>8</sup>

Returning to Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, he goes on to say, *There is no doubt that if these stunning methods cause death, or if it is feared that they cause death, then it is not permissible to use them, nor is any animal slaughtered after being stunned in such a manner lawful. As long as these methods are doubtful, the safest course of action is to avoid them completely. It is known that the Jews do not accept any form of stunning done to their animals. It behooves Muslims even more to stand clear of doubtful situations. And Allâh Most High knows best.*<sup>9</sup> It is on this basis that the relevant authorities in Australia have granted some abattoirs exemption from the law. See: Section 20 of the ACT *Animal Welfare Act*; Section 24 of the NSW *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act*; Section 45 of the Qld *Animal Care and Protection Act*; Schedule 2 of the SA *Animal Welfare Act*.

Do the relevant authorities in Australia really believe that the man shown below is experiencing little or no pain? Do the relevant authorities really believe that this man is being killed more humanly than being rendered unconscious first?

---

<sup>4</sup> Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (2006), *The Islamic Laws of Animal Slaughter*, White Thread Press: California, p.84.

<sup>5</sup> Adams, D.B. & Sheridan, A.D. (2008), *Specifying the Risks to Animal Welfare Associated with Livestock Slaughter without Induced Insensibility*, prepared as a contribution for the Animal Welfare Branch, Product Integrity Animal and Plant Health Division, Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry for the Animal Welfare Working Group of the Animal Health Committee, Primary Industries Standing Committee of Australia, para.425.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* para.1045.

<sup>7</sup> C.J. Cook, et al (1995), The effect of electrical head-only stun duration on electroencephalographic-measured seizure and brain amino acid neurotransmitter release. *Meat Science*, 40, pp.137-147.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani (2006), *The Islamic Laws of Animal Slaughter*, White Thread Press: California, pp.84-85.



Members of the Islamic State slaughter their human captives like they slaughter sheep—which according to the UK Department of Halal Certification, causes “little or no pain”.

## **What does the Koran actually say about the slaughter of animals for food?**

### **Surah 5. Al-Mâidah 3**

Forbidden to you (for food) are: *Al-Maitah* (the dead animals — cattle — beast not slaughtered), blood, the flesh of swine, and that on which Allâh’s Name has not been mentioned while slaughtering, (that which has been slaughtered as a sacrifice for others than Allâh, or has been slaughtered for idols) and that which has been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by the goring of horns — and that which has been (partly) eaten by a wild animal — unless you are able to slaughter it (before its death) – and that which is sacrificed (slaughtered) on *An-Nusub* (stone-altars). (Forbidden) also is to use arrows seeking luck or decision; (all) that is *Fisqun* (disobedience of Allâh and sin). .... But as for him who is forced by severe hunger, with no inclination to sin (such can eat these above mentioned meats), then surely Allâh is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

### **Sûrah 5. Al-Mâidah 5**

Made lawful to you this day are *At-Tayyibât* [all kinds of *Halâl* (lawful) foods, which Allâh has made lawful (meat of slaughtered eatable animals, milk products, fats, vegetables and fruits). The food (slaughtered cattle, eatable animals) of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) is lawful to you and yours in lawful to them. ....

## Sûrah 6. Al-An'âm 121

Eat not (O believers) of that (meat) on which Allâh's Name has not been pronounced (at the time of the slaughtering of the animal), for sure it is *Fisq* (a sin and disobedience of Allâh). And certainly, the *Shayâtin* (devils) do inspire their friends (from mankind) to dispute with you, and if you obey them [by making *Al-Maitah* (a dead animal) legal by eating it], then you would indeed be *Mushrikân* (polytheists); [because they (devils and their friends) made lawful to you to eat that which Allâh has made unlawful to eat and you obey them by considering it lawful to eat, and by doing so you worshipped them; and to worship others besides Allâh is polytheism].

As you can see, there is nothing in these verses of the Koran that speaks of slaughtering animals without prior stunning.

Hadith number 17, on the other hand, states:

On the authority of Abu Ya'la Shaddad bin Aws that the Messenger of Allah said: Verily Allah has prescribed *ihsan* (proficiency, perfection) in all things. So if you kill then kill well; and if you slaughter, then slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters. It was related by Sahih Muslim.<sup>10</sup>

Here, Mohammad has been reported to have said, *spare suffering to the animal he slaughters*. To slaughter without stunning is a clear increase of the animal's suffering and therefore a clear violation of what Muhammad has prescribed.

So have the relevant Australian authorities been misled? Certainly the demand for unstunned halal meat has been invoked by people like Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani and the Irish Department of Halal Certification, but not by the Prophet Himself.

Moreover, because nearly all the meat sold in supermarkets these days is slaughtered by Muslim slaughterman, the following narration by Sahih al-Bukhari is most fitting:

A group of people once said to the Prophet, "Some people have come to us with meat, and we do not know whether the name of Allâh has been mentioned over it or not". He replied, "You yourselves mention the name of Allâh over it and eat".<sup>11</sup>

Lamb sold by Coles and Woolworths supermarkets are slaughtered by Muslim slaughterman at Gundagai Meat Processors and Junee Abattoirs. If certain Muslim consumers still have doubts about their lamb being halal then these Muslims should mention the name of Allâh over it and eat.

---

<sup>10</sup> *Hadiths* are based on the spoken word in circulation throughout the Muslim world after the death of Muhammad. Hadith are second only to the Quran in developing Islamic jurisprudence. Hadith books hold varying degrees of authority. Books by Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim generally have the highest status.

<sup>11</sup> *Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* is one of the *Kutub al-Sittah* (six major hadith collections) of Sunni Islam. These prophetic traditions, or hadith, were collected by the Persian Muslim scholar Muhammad al-Bukhari, after being transmitted orally for generations. Sunni Muslims view Şaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī as one of the two most trusted collections of hadith.

## Sûrah 6. Al-An'âm 115

And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. None can change His Words.

## Sûrah 6. Al-An'âm 119

And why should you not eat of that (meat) on which Allâh's Name has been pronounced (at the time of slaughtering the animal), while He has explained to you in detail what is forbidden to you, except under compulsion of necessity? And surely many do lead (mankind) astray by their own desires through lack of knowledge. Certainly your Lord knows best the transgressors.

These latter two verses of the Koran make it clear enough. It is forbidden to change what is written, whilst warning that there may be some who seek to exploit the ignorance and fears of Muslim consumers for profit.



Stun Free Certification launched in London - 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016.

---

<sup>i</sup> Milton James is a professional Australian Social Worker and founder of the not-for-profit organisation called *Boys from the Bush Projects*. His organisation helps disadvantaged Indigenous youths living in remote communities obtain and maintain employment in the meat processing industry. Back in 1979 when Milton was in Iran, he was provided with the opportunity to study the Koran under the tutelage of a Mullah appointed by the new Iran Government. He has kept up with his studies ever since.

Boys from the Bush Projects

[www.fromthebush.org](http://www.fromthebush.org)

[mjames@boysfromthebush.org.au](mailto:mjames@boysfromthebush.org.au)

Mob: 0429 644 645

7 March 2017