

A David and His Slingshot

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The Corner

World



Suleiman Bakhit (1978–2019) (*Oslo Freedom Forum*)

In this blog in 2015, I wrote, “Though still young, Bakhit has led a highly interesting and eventful life.” I’m afraid that Suleiman Bakhit has now died. For a statement from the Human Rights Foundation (New York), go here. For an article in *The National* (UAE), go here.

Suleiman Bakhit was a Jordanian, born in 1978. His father, Marouf, would twice be prime minister of their country. Suleiman became an entrepreneur. Specifically, he started a line of comic books. Very successful. Why did he do it?

I’ll quote from something I wrote in 2014 — a journal from, and on, the Oslo Freedom Forum, where he had spoken:

Bakhit says that little kids in Jordan were admiring bin Laden, Zarqawi, and other terrorist monsters, because at least those monsters were strong and “honorable.” He wanted to give them other figures to admire: superheroes.

Have some more:

For his troubles, Bakhit was slashed in the face, by extremists. He shows a photo of himself, right after the attack. He is mended now, but the scars remain. The extremists were trying to put a mark of shame on him, he says. “They were transferring their own shame to me.”

Bakhit is superb on the link between shame and terrorism. He also talks about the Nazis, back in the 1930s: and their shame over the Versailles Treaty. He makes a comparison between the Nazis and ISIS that is utterly convincing, to me.

Shame plays a role in all crime, right? Or at least much crime . . .

And one dollop more, with some humor at the end:

The biggest problem in the Middle East, says Suleiman Bakhit, is “terrorism disguised as heroism.” We must have a David to slay this Goliath of a lie, he says. And “the comic book is our slingshot.”

I must say, I am moved, inspired, by Bakhit’s talk. He has hit on some deep truths, and he is acting on them. He is “making a difference,” as we used to say. (I guess we still do.) Also, he has the gift of charisma. There is a spark in him. And he’s very funny. Completely bald, he says, “I have a lot of hair, just bad distribution.”

The following year, 2015, I did a podcast with him, a Q&A, [here](#). An accompanying text said, “He is an interesting man who has led an interesting life who has interesting things to say — whether one agrees with them or not.” Yes.

He was one of the most exceptional people I have ever met. Instead of merely expressing dismay at Arab extremism — or denying or excusing it — he tried to do something about it. Something damn creative, too. And there was nobility in that face, that scarred face of his. His attackers tried to shame him, but the honor was all his.

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