

Oppression

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Oppression is felt differently in different places and at different times. There are degrees to the level of one's feeling of oppression. I know what I'm talking about: I've experienced it numerous times in my life. Let me explain.

When I lived and worked in Kuwait in the late 1990s, I already felt somewhat caged. I always like telling the story of how in pre-Amazon days I would visit Kuwait's bookstores and marvel at the censorship imposed by the Kuwaiti (likely religious) authorities. There was little to no variety in the books I could buy, and many of those that made it onto the bookshelves were hopelessly outdated. For a committed bookworm, this was an oppressive feeling.

Oppression in Kuwait manifested itself not only in the lack of knowledge in the form of books, but also in the prohibition of alcohol and pork. Freedom to me means the freedom to live, eat, read, think, and speak as I wish. In Kuwait I was unable to eat, drink or read what I chose. I want to make my own choices, just as I do not choose to eat dog or roaches but should be free to do so.

So, when I boarded a plane to Dubai or Oman I always breathed a sigh of relief. Mind you, freedom is always relative. Compared to the United States, Dubai is still a repressive society, but the contrast with Kuwait's situation is staggering: parties, booze, pork, and other "vices," as long as you as non-Muslim follow certain rules. If not, and you are caught, you'd better have your passport and a fast airplane at-hand or you'll wind up in jail. Just check your local sob stories in the papers.

Fast-forward a few years to Tripoli, Libya. Seldom have I felt more caged, more jailed than in Tripoli at the beginning of the century. There was no way to spend money or free time, both of which were at hand in some abundance: no shopping centers like in Kuwait or Dubai to spend one's hard-earned shekels - pardon, dinars; no movie theaters, even if censored; no decent restaurants; no beach clubs. Just a lot of socialism, Islam and sand.

So, driving those three hours from Tripoli across the border to Tunisia was a relief: freedom - to a degree, of course. Not the kind that I was looking for, but

at least I was able to breathe freely, buy some beer and enjoy a beach club on the island of Djerba.

And so, it was when I finally left the Arab world that I thought I had left Islamic-style oppression behind me. I settled in Vienna, my hometown, hoping to regain the freedom to move about, to eat what I wished, to read as much as I could (thank you, in this case, to the Internet and Amazon), to dress as I wished, to speak my mind, in short, to live my life in freedom. You see, one only realizes what freedom means when it has been taken away. In our circles, this statement is considered a platitude. It's not really, however. And this is what I felt during my recent travels to the United States.

Living in today's Europe, I never fully realized just how constricted my freedom has become in recent years. Of course, I KNOW that my freedom is reduced on a daily basis by the European Union's useless and annoying data protection regulations, which were tightened to the extreme this year, but I never really felt it as strongly, as overpoweringly, as I did at the end of this year. I actually found myself breathing a deep sigh of relief upon entering the United States, knowing that what I would be telling Americans would be protected by the United States Constitution and its First Amendment. One really does speak a different language if one doesn't have to self-censor all the time.



And that is what we do in Europe; we just don't realize it. Even I don't. But I recognized the stark difference as I viewed my European self from an American perspective. Believe me when I tell you that I am still in shock, even if I am at the forefront of my fight for the restoration of freedom of speech in Europe. But never have I felt this level of despair at the loss of my personal freedom as well as a profound fear of the future for my daughter.

As the year draws to a close what can we do, what can you do?

Well, it depends on where you reside.

For those who live in Europe - and I am one - there is currently little hope. I really don't know what else to tell Europeans. How do you explain the loss of a fundamental right to someone who never realized he had that right to begin with, who never knew he even needed this right? Who needs free speech to buy the latest model iPhone? Or the latest plasma TV? So, what's the use of free speech, then?

And why would you care about the impact of the European Court of Human Rights' verdict against me, but also against every European's right to express his views on a religion? And finally, knowing what could happen to you, seeing what happened to me, or to Tommy Robinson, or to Michael Sturzenberger, or to all the other nameless victims of a repressive speech regime, would you really want to become active? No, I do not fault you for remaining silent and idle. But I do ask you to donate. A few euros here, and couple of dollars there will make all the difference to those on the front lines.

And now to readers in the United States: Hear our pleas for help. Remember your guaranteed freedoms, protect them, fight for them, and don't forget your brothers and sisters in Europe. You've saved Europe before and I guarantee you'll have to do it again.

Listen carefully to what I recently discussed in the United States. I've been warning for a decade now, and I will continue my warning. Come see me and talk to me. Watch my videos. Read Gates of Vienna. Support GoV and Vlad Tepes financially. At the end of the day, we can't fight for your freedoms without your dollars. It's as simple as that.

My Christmas wish is that one day I can travel to the US and talk to my audience about the restoration of freedom of speech in Europe. I want to be able to breathe the above-mentioned sigh of relief upon entering my beloved Austria and thank God for the ability to live in a country that recognizes my right to express my views without being hauled before a judge.

If you want to contribute to my legal defense fund, you may do so here:

- For those in Europe: www.safefreespeech.org
- For those in the United States: www.friendsoffreespeech.org (tax deductible)