



Written by [James Heiser](#) on February 11, 2011

Hassan Convicted in Suspected Honor Killing Case

The details of the crime for which Hassan has now been convicted are horrific; Hassan's defense was that his actions were justified on account of spousal abuse, but the jury was obviously unconvinced. According to [a report at TodayOnline.com](#):

But prosecutors cited police reports filed by his wife and her medical records to prove that she was the battered spouse. Prosecutor Colleen Curtin Gable said Hassan bought two hunting knives less than an hour before the attack on Feb. 12, 2009.



During a 37-second frenzy, he stabbed her more than 40 times in the face, back and chest and decapitated her as their children waited outside in the car.

Hassan's murder of his wife is both tragic and ironic. The couple started the Bridges TV network in 2004 because they believed that Americans had an unfair view of Islam. In the [words of the network's website](#): "Bridges TV is the first channel of its kind that offers a broad range of lifestyle oriented programming that aims to foster a greater understanding between the West and MESA (Middle Eastern/South Asian) religions, its cultures, and diverse populations." Bridges TV was apparently intended to provide proof that Islam, per se, was not to blame for the violence that is often perpetrated in its name.

In the aftermath of Hassan being charged with the murder of his wife, the circumstances of the crime led to speculations that it was a case of "honor killing." In the assessment of some, Hassan's plea — that he was a victim of spousal abuse — complicates the issue of whether the murder of his wife was an "honor killing," because he did not, therefore, claim a religious motivation for actions. Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, explaining that he "worked together" with Hassan for several years on a show he created and hosted for Bridges TV, [offers the following assessment](#) of the role of Islam in Hassan's motivations for murdering his wife:

Simply saying this has nothing to do with Islam and/or religion, as too many religious leaders have done, is not acceptable. In fact, such an approach creates the very space utilized by those who use their religion in despicable ways. Defining a problem out of existence does not make it go away. It is only when practitioners take responsibility for the religious elements or underpinnings of those actions they abhor that they can help keep such abuses from happening.

Hirschfield observes, "According to United Nations studies, 5,000 women are murdered each year in the name of protecting the honor of their family and faith." If this number is accurate, such honor killings make up a small percentage of the murders which occur every year. For example, [according to the World Health Organization](#), an estimated 520,000 people were murdered worldwide in 2000.

Hassan is scheduled for sentencing on March 9.

Photo of Muzzammil Hassan: AP Images



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