



## Freedom of Speech and Islam

By Erich Kolig

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### Freedom of Speech and Islam By Erich Kolig

Freedom of speech and expression is considered in the West a high public good and an important social value, underpinned by legislative and ethical norms. Its importance is not shared to the same extent by conservative and devout Muslims, who read Islamic doctrines in ways seemingly incompatible with Western notions of freedom of speech. Since the Salman Rushdie affair in the 1980s there has been growing recognition in the West that its cherished value of free speech and associated freedoms relating to arts, the press and media, literature, academia, critical satire etc. episodically clash with conservative Islamic values that limit this freedom for the sake of holding religious issues sacrosanct. Recent controversies - such as the Danish cartoons, the Charlie Hebdo affair, Quran burnings, and the internet film 'The Innocence of Muslims' which have stirred violent reactions in the Muslim world - have made the West aware of the fact that Muslims' religious sensitivities have to be taken into account in exercising traditional Western freedoms of speech. Featuring experts across a spectrum of fields within Islamic studies, Freedom of Speech and Islam considers Islamic concepts of blasphemy, apostasy and heresy and their applicability in the modern world.

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### **About the Author**

Erich Kolig is a former Senior Lecturer (Reader) in Social Anthropology at Otago University and Visiting Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Vienna University. He was also a Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia and a government anthropologist in Western Australia. Erich has done fieldwork in Afghanistan, Australia, Austria, Indonesia, New Zealand and Vanuatu. He has published several books (authored and edited) and many articles on Australian Aboriginal culture and religion, on indigenous politics in New Zealand, Vanuatu and Australia, on the historical exploration in New Zealand, and in more recent years on Muslims and Islam in New Zealand, radical Islam in Indonesia, Islamic law in Western liberal democracy and several other topics.

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