

Halal Certification Submission

The Muslim Community has certain dietary requirements that I understand and respect, but I don't agree with the certification schemes and how they are run.

The many things that I have read and heard about, would mean that these certifiers are guilty of multiple counts of extortion, and fraud. The things that I want to talk about are:

- The Intended Purpose for These Certification Schemes
- Rules for Halal
- Problems of Ritual Slaughter
- The Lack of Labelling and Transparency
- Where Does the Money go?
- Using Halal to Fight Radicalism

The Intended purpose for these certification schemes

Since the Muslim community has certain dietary requirements, meaning that there are certain things that they can't eat or consume, or at least try to avoid, the intended purpose of these certification schemes is to alleviate people concerns, ensuring that the product complies with Halal Rules, or that is what the general public is lead to believe. The first thing that makes me question the integrity of these Certifiers, and the Halal Industry in general here in Australia, is there there are about 20 or more certifying organisations in Australia, and they have varying and different standards and requirements, and a lot of these Certifiers are not even trusted by the Muslim community, that they don't make proper inspections, they just print out certificates for money, and these certificates only last one month, or quarterly, and a lot of companies pay thousands of dollars for each certificate.

Rules for Halal

Since there are multiple Certifiers in Australia, that have different standards and requirements, the key or essential rules for Halal compliant products is that; it does not contain Pork, it does not contain carnivorous animals, there is not blood in the animal/meat/product, and it does not contain alcohol. There is one other rule that the animal upon slaughter needs to killed in a ritualistic manner, it is preferred but not required, because the Koran says that it is okay for Muslims to accept meat from Non-Muslims, as long as they say "Bismallah" before eating, which is no different from saying "Grace" before eating a meal.

Most of these rules apply to Meat and Poultry, and that many things by nature are already considered Halal, such as; Water, Milk, Honey, Fruit, Vegetables, Nuts, and the rules only apply to Human consumption, not Animal consumption.

The Certifiers also demand that in order for a product to be considered Halal, every part of the process from growing, to manufacture, to selling from the shops, need to be certified. That also includes the transportation at every stage, needs to be paying for Halal Certification, if at any point someone is not certified, the chain is broken and it is no longer considered Halal. Most things are considered naturally Halal, you only need to be concerned if a product is contains animal products. Why do they have to demand that Fruit, Vegetables and even Animal Feed need to be certified? When the rules of Halal only apply to Human consumption, and most things that are grown are naturally Halal. Why do they demand that the transportation needs to be Halal certified, when the drivers don't directly handle the food, and when I say directly handle, they are not preparing, packaging, or even cooking the food, they are only transporting it, because most of the time products are in sealed packaging.

A well known story that we hear, is a chicken supplier was approached by an Imam to become Halal certified, so he could transport Halal Chicken to Halal Shops, he didn't need to change anything he only had to pay a monthly fee, when he refused, he gradually lost business because he wasn't paying

Halal Fees, but his Van didn't violate Halal Requirements, he just wasn't paying, he eventually gave in, then the Imam said that; the fees have increased, he needs to pay for the time that he wasn't certified, and he had to pay a fine for not being Certified. That is **Extortion**, he was buying Halal Chicken from Halal Abattoirs, he was transporting them to Halal Shops and Restaurants, the Chicken that he transported was not being contaminated by Pork or Alcohol, because he didn't transport any of that, I assume the Chicken was in sealed packaging, he wasn't considered Halal because he wasn't paying the monthly fee, it is no different to paying protection money to gangs or the Mafia, and if you don't pay you get threatened and intimidated. This is one story that we hear about a lot, one story that we've heard, but how many times has this happened to other people and businesses that we don't hear about, how many other people and businesses have these Certifiers threatened and extorted. I don't see why the the transporters need to be certified, if you aren't directly handling the food, as in cutting, preparing or cooking the meat or food, you should not require certification, also if products in general don't contain animal products, or alcohol, it should not require certification, all manufacturers have to do is say on the packaging, where applicable, that their product does not contain these things, because under Consumer Law, if a company deceives consumers, they are liable for prosecution.

Another thing that some of the Certifiers demand is that only Muslims can handle the food, the only time I can see this rule applying is at the point of slaughter, other than that there shouldn't be a problem, if they have to demand that the transportation needs to be certified, the drivers the butchers, the cooks, the waitresses must be Muslim in order to be Halal, that is racism toward non-Muslims, how does the food or product get contaminated, if there is no Pork or Alcohol in the kitchen, Food Safety standards are very strict and ensure that food is to be handled hygienically, and if a vendor complies with Halal rules and requirements, should the persons choice of religion make a difference, because the Koran says that it is okay for Muslims to accept food that is served and prepared by non-Muslims. Another story that I heard was about a truck company whose clients were bought out by competitors, and those competitors demanded that the transportation company obtain Halal Certification, when they tried, they failed and lost the contracts, and closed down, leading to truck drivers and vehicle mechanics without work. The reason they failed to obtain certification is because the company didn't employ Muslim drivers or mechanics, I'm not saying that the company would refuse to employ Muslims, but since they were not currently employing any, they didn't receive certification, therefore a company closed down, and people were out of work for racist reasons.

One other thing that these certifiers demand, that businesses need to pay monthly fees, in order to be certified, and they vary between certifiers, but some of them charge thousands of dollars each month. What other organisation charges that much? I'm certain that the 'Australian Certified Organic', 'Australian Heart Foundation', 'Kosher' systems, at the most charge an annual fee, and it doesn't add up to tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, Halal certification sounds like a big cash grab to me. Then our export markets get hijacked, because they demand that the companies products are Halal certified or they would buy them. A few months ago Malaysia or Indonesia demanded that our abattoirs pay \$27,000 a month in certification fees, and their official reason was "That competition is not good, otherwise it will weaken the Halal Market", this is another case of extortion, on the international scale.

Problems of Ritual Slaughter

Halal meat is, is when the animal has been ritually slaughtered, meaning that the animal was killed while the abattoir recites a ritual in the name of Allah, but there are a few problems with this process. The first problem is that the animal is still concious when they get their throat cut, some cases they claim that they use the "reverse stun" method, but it has been scientifically proven that the animal regains conciousness after 20 seconds, meaning that the animal is awake and in pain while it bleeds out. This violates animal welfare laws, but when people have reported this to the RSPCA, their response was that they make exceptions for religious purposes, but I guess the big donation from the Halal certifiers had nothing to do with that though.

The second problem is that people of other religions such as Christians, Buddhists, and Jewish people can't eat it, because of the ritual slaughter, it says so in the Bible, that Christians should not eat meat that has been killed in the name of other Gods, and should try to avoid it. Though since most abattoirs produce Halal meat (ritually slaughtered meat), and the supermarkets and restaurants sell it, they are selling meat that discriminates towards most of the population. Since most people are oblivious to this fact, there hasn't been much uproar over this, but with more and more people talking about this, it is only a matter of time.

Again the ritual slaughter of meat is not required to be Halal, it is preferred, but not required, they can pray over their meal before they eat and that would be sufficient.

The Lack of Labelling and Transparency

What is interesting is that a lot of products, shops, restaurants, venues, are Halal certified but they don't display the sign or symbol, but when it comes to the Heart Foundation, Australian Certified Organic, Vegan, and Kosher, they proudly display the symbol on the product, although from all of the current controversy over the Halal Industry, a lot of companies have removed the Halal symbol from their products but are still paying certification fees.

Some of the worst offenders of this is Coles and Woolworths, because they buy ritually slaughtered discriminatory meat, fails to clearly display signs to it, then orders and pressures their employees to play dumb if customers ask about it. They will argue that once they open the product and it comes into contact with non-Halal products, it is no longer Halal, but that is irrelevant, the fact that they try avoid telling consumers that they are selling ritually slaughtered meat is what is unethical, and the ritual slaughter is the discrimination part, a lot of the fast food outlets are guilty of this as well. It's also interesting how Coles and Woolworths write their responses, when consumers make inquiries, they claim that they don't Halal certify their 'Home Brand' products, but the companies that they outsource the manufacture of these products, they verbally pressured them to obtain Halal certification, otherwise they would replace them.

I find the lack of signage and transparency unethical, businesses and companies should do the right thing by the consumer and clearly display the symbol on their product, properly inform the customer, so they can an informed decision about what they choose to buy and not buy.

Where does the Money go?

A lot of these certifiers claim that the money raised is used for the benefit of the Muslim community, such as building Mosques and funding Islamic schools. Though the CEO of A.F.I.C. (Australian Federation of Islamic Councils), has openly admitted to becoming a Millionaire, by selling these certificates, and uses his earnings to buy his Wife shoes.

A lot of people are concerned that these certifiers are sending money to Terrorist organisations, Australian Intelligence Agencies aren't confirming this claim, but their exact words are "We can find no evidence or links to support this claim", therefore they are not denying this claim either. Many Foreign Intelligence Agencies, as well as Foreign News Agencies say that the Halal Industry does provide funds to Terrorists, and numerous Islamic Charities have been found guilty of providing funds to Terrorists organisations such as "Hamas" and the "Muslim Brotherhood". When you set up a complex web of financial transactions both electronic and physical, across borders and through Countries that governments have no authority, jurisdiction, or access to, it gets hard to trace where the money comes from and where it goes, this is how money laundering works.

The A.F.I.C. Provides funds to Islamic schools in Australia, but some of these schools have been found guilty of funnelling tax payers funds back to the A.F.I.C. What bothers me is that the A.F.I.C. collects money from selling Halal Certificates, donates to Schools, writes those donations off as a Tax deduction (a Tax avoidance strategy), and when the Australian Government gives public funds to those same schools, those schools then gives the Tax payers money that they received from the Government back to the A.F.I.C. Those schools were forced to pay the money back to the Government, but the A.F.I.C. tried to play the system, and where does the money come from, both from public funds and peoples everyday shopping.

Using Halal to Fight Radicalism

Members of the Muslim Council as well as the larger Halal Certification Groups have suggested that they use funds to set up de-radicalisation programs, for Muslim Youths. This is in response to the public outcry over these Halal Certification Schemes, as well as the rising fear of home grown terrorists in Australia. I don't believe this for a second, firstly because these certifiers fund and run the Mosques, and they are known to have radical gatherings and meetings, especially in Lakemba, Channel 7 recorded some of these meetings, where they declare that they are setting up a caliphate to overthrow our government, and they have young children waving ISIS flags. Secondly, when Independent Senator Jacqui Lambi spoke out against the Halal Industry, not long after the Marin Place Siege, She received death threats, demanding that she stop opposing the Halal Industry, instead promote it, otherwise they would go to her office and cut her head off as well as members of her staff.

This idea of de-radicalisation programs has only been suggested by the Muslim community, in response to members of the public voicing their concerns, about people actually planning and attempting to commit acts of violence and bloodshed, and only after it is becoming a problem. I believe they are only suggesting the idea now, so that we will let our guard down, and ignore the problem, thinking that the Muslim community will fix it, but ignoring a problem doesn't solve or deal with it, it only allows it to fester and grow. I don't think they will put money into these de-radicalisation programs or even set them up, because they are running radical gatherings in Mosques, Universities, and now there are school children radically preaching in the playground. Last of all, there is no guarantee that these programs will even work if they are implemented, if someone gets spoon fed the idea that they will go to Heaven and get 70 Virgins, if they kill Infidels in the name of a God, and they are hell-bent on believing that, then you are going to have a hard time convincing them otherwise. Since there is no guarantee that these programs will even work if they are implemented, it's foolish to throw money at something that has little chance of success, and realistically it is more practical to exile the radicals, even if they become reformed they can be reformed in another country, because more than likely they will pretend to be reformed, and will only stab us in the back later.

Conclusion

As I said in the beginning, that I understand and respect the dietary requirements of the Muslim community, but I don't agree with the Halal Industry, it appears to be a money making scam disguised as a charity organisation, that places unnecessary costs on businesses that get passed on to the consumer. The practices and standards of the Halal Industry are questionable, compared to other health organisations. The fact that they demand things that are naturally permissible to consume to be certified, as well as things other than human food is being certified, such as pet food and livestock feed, utensils, packaging, plastic containers, real estate, finance, the list goes on. Honestly it is redundant because, all a company has to do is say on their product that it does not contain animal products or alcohol nor was it used as part of the manufacture of the product. When I walk through the shops, I see a lot of products have 'Vegan Friendly' symbols on it, meaning the product doesn't contain animal products.

Companies should be made to properly label their products, and not hide it, so consumers can make an informed choice, on what they choose to buy and support. The Halal Certifiers need to have government regulations thrown upon them to stop their unethical practices.