

A Rutgers Professor's Muslim View: The Coronavirus Is Allah's Retribution

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The appearance and spread of the coronavirus has been much in the news, in the Western world, where scientists discuss questions of epidemiology and of how rapidly a vaccine might be available. We see photographs, too, of empty Chinese cities, where everyone is in lockdown at home, factories are silent, and the occasional surgical-masked Chinese policeman can be discerned riding his bike on a ghostly street with skyscrapers in the background.

The world of Islam, however, offers quite a different take on the coronavirus. As one might expect, rational science is not part of the Muslim discussion. Instead, we enter quite a different world – of conspiracies for some,, and of divine retribution for others.

In a sermon during Friday Prayers on February 7, Mohammad Abbasi, a faculty member at Rutgers University, delivered his verdict on the current epidemic in China. He told the members of the mosque that “Coronavirus Is Divine Retribution for China’s Treatment of Uyghur Muslims; It Is the Least the Chinese Should Suffer, May Allah Punish Them Further.”

The full story is [here](#).

Mohammad Abbasi, whose Facebook page says he is an adjunct professor at Rutgers University’s Newark campus, said in a Friday, February 7, 2020 sermon at the Darul Islah Mosque in Teaneck, New Jersey that the coronavirus is divine retribution for China’s incarceration of Uyghur Muslims in concentration camps and for the fact that the Chinese eat animals while they are still alive. He said that while boycotting Chinese products is a small step, Allah has taken a bigger step against the Chinese by bringing the coronavirus upon them, and he stated that the coronavirus is “the least they should suffer.”

Abbasi added: “May Allah punish them for what they did to our Muslim brothers even more.” According to his Facebook page, Abbasi is from East Jerusalem. Rutgers University’s website lists him as an adjunct faculty member and doctoral student at the School of Public Affairs and Administration at the Newark campus. Abbasi’s sermon was posted on Darul Islah’s YouTube channel.

Previously, Abbasi spoke at the November 28-30, 2019 American Muslims for Palestine conference at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. Speakers at the conference included American-Palestinian activist Linda Sarsour (see MEMRI TV clips 6808, 6935, and 6111); Temple University professor and former CNN contributor Marc Lamont Hill, with whom CNN severed ties following his controversial comments about Israel (see MEMRI TV clip 6877); American Muslims for Palestine national policy director Osama Abu Irshaid (see MEMRI TV clips 5487 and

5558), and Hatem Bazian, of the Near Eastern Studies faculty of the University of California, Berkeley.

Here is the text of Abbasi's February 7 sermon:

The past few months, we have been talking about another hardship, another situation – the situation of our brothers and sisters, the Uyghurs in China, who correctly, by the way, should be called the East Turkestan brothers.

[...]

Those people are in concentrations camps. And we raised our hands and said: 'Oh Allah!' And they raised their hands and said: 'Oh, Allah, give us some relief.' Some of us went around, saying: 'Boycott all these filthy Chinese products. Stop buying this garbage made in China.' Sometimes it's hard. I wanted to buy my father a toaster. I went through 15 toasters at Walmart – couldn't find one that's not made in China. One has no power except that which comes from Allah. I needed to buy it, I had to. But I was obligated. But then you go buy socks and there are 20 made [in] China, and there is one in Vietnam, Cambodia, Egypt, or Turkey. Buy that one, even if you have to pay double. We were saying that. And people were saying: 'You mean to tell me that you are going to make a dent in the Chinese economy by boycotting their garbage products?' I said: 'I may not make a dent, but the Lord will and he did.' Their losses from the coronavirus – that is caused by them eating bats, dogs, snakes, rats, and mice – it is all on YouTube... They eat them while they are alive, they don't even wait for them to die. Brothers, they are sitting there, chopping meat from living animals and eating them. The coronavirus is the least they should suffer.

[...]

It is not up to us to decide whether boycotting a two-dollar item on Amazon, made in China, will work or not. Allah will

make sure it works. We see an example right in front of us, brothers. China went from a predator and oppressive nation that has incarcerated three million of its inhabitants for no reason except that they say: 'Our Lord is Allah'...

[...]

And Allah accepted their supplication. And now we see China struggling and suffering and we don't see the end of it. Two thousand cases a day are being diagnosed. Two thousand a day. The whole world now is closing its borders on China. Now, instead of them imprisoning three million brothers, the three million brothers – through the act of Allah – are imprisoning the two billion Chinese. May Allah punish them for what they did to our Muslim brothers even more.

There are not three million Uighurs now in re-education camps in Xinjiang, but one million. There are not two billion Chinese, but 1.5 billion. But these inaccuracies in Abbasi's sermon are not what most disturb. What disturbs the most is the unbridled glee with which Mohammed Abbasi relays the news about the increase in Chinese victims of the coronavirus. While the civilized world looks on with sympathy and horror at the reports of new cases of coronavirus and of more deaths, too, from the illness, Mohammad Abbasi knows that his audience at the New Jersey mosque, and no doubt tens or hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world, will share his joy at the deaths of so many Chinese.

It was not the ordinary Chinese, but a ruthless government in Beijing, intent on stamping out any separatist movement among the Muslim Uighurs, that assigned them – a million at any one time – to re-education camps. Abbasi doesn't make that distinction between the Communist regime and the Chinese people. He delights in the fact that the Chinese are dying in ever-increasing numbers from the coronavirus. He's glad that they cannot travel freely inside their country, and that

foreigners who had been living in China have now fled. He likes the idea that the Chinese have had to quarantine themselves within their own country, cities, even dwellings.

In a previous post we saw that some Muslims have a different, though equally bizarre, take on the coronavirus. They don't see it as divine retribution by Allah but, rather, as a plot by America and Israel to spread the virus in China and thereby, for America's sake, to weaken that country economically, and for Israel to profit from the epidemic by selling the Chinese "medicines and treatments" that do not yet exist, but that those clever Israelis, as even Muslims tellingly assume, are bound to produce sooner than anyone else.

Let's hope that Mohammed Abbasi's expression of murderous hatred for the Chinese gets wide coverage throughout the non-Muslim world, and especially, of course, throughout China and among the Overseas Chinese. That would solidify the hostility between Muslims and Chinese, an enmity from which we, who could certainly use another 1.5 billion allies against the forces of Islam, can only profit.

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