

El-Sisi Visits Church on Coptic Christmas Eve

Raymond Ibrahim writes at [Dr. Abdullah Badr](#) – an Egyptian Muslim scholar, graduate of Al Azhar and professor of Islamic exegesis, who spent ten years in prison under Mubarak and was released under Morsi – explains how “disgusted” he is by Christians, to the point that, if a Copt were to touch his cup, he would not drink from it:

I get grossed out. Get that? Disgust, I get grossed out man, I cannot stand their smell or ... I don't like them, it's my choice. And they gross me out; their smell, their look, everything. I feel disgusted, disgusted.

Of course, many will dismiss these imams and clerics as on the “fringe extremist” movement. What, then, of Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi – one of the most influential Islamic clerics in the world, author of over 100 books on Muslim doctrine, and head of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, members of which have had [meetings](#) in the White House? This man also condemns the act of congratulating Christians during Christmas (but supports the [death penalty for apostasy](#) and maintains that the prophet's injunctions must be obeyed at all times – [even if they require one to murder](#)).

Days before Christmas, the elderly Qaradawi appeared in a [video](#) condemning any Muslim who somehow participates in Christmas, which he called a “sin, shameful, and indecent,” as well as a product of “stupidity” and “ignorance of Islam's commandments”:

Did you see all the celebrations that are taking place in Doha's streets [Qatar] and commercial centers for the birth of Christ, or “Christmas,” as they call it?... How can we celebrate Christmas when we don't even celebrate our

Prophet's birthday? It is a sin, shameful and indecent. It also shows stupidity in the way we deal with others, and ignorance of Islam's commandments."

Meanwhile, Georgetown University professor [John Esposito](#) has [hailed Qaradawi](#) for engaging in a "reformist interpretation of Islam and its relationship to democracy, pluralism, and human rights."

If condemning Muslim participation in Christmas festivities is not limited to extremists and Islamists, it is also not limited to Egypt. It appears every year throughout the entire Islamic world, including in non-Arab nations.

Thus, in Turkey, as Burak Bekdil [reports](#), "The final week of the year featured the usual scenes in Turkey: A man dressed as a janissary [Ottoman warrior] chasing another dressed as Santa Claus in order to give him a good beating... Provincial education directors warning pupils against "Christmas and New Year celebrations..."

In Indonesia, the Islamic Defenders Front, according to [Temo](#), "asked President Joko Widodo not to wish the country's Christians a merry Christmas," as "the president would be deemed an apostate should he opt to do so," meaning he would deserve the death penalty.

The reason for all this resistance to greetings "infidels" is clear: Based on Koranic verses and *hadiths* [the sayings and acts of Muhammad), there is consensus among Islam's *ulema* [religious scholars] that Muslims are not to greet or congratulate non-Muslims on their holy days and celebrations, as doing so implies non-Muslim beliefs – which contradict Islam's – are valid (see [The Al Qaeda Reader](#), pgs. 89-91, for textual citations).

However the Indonesian president may have responded to Islamist threats, we know Egyptian President el-Sisi did the

unprecedented on Coptic Christmas Eve and congratulated Egypt's Christian minority in their cathedral – a small but courageous step on the long road of what el-Sisi calls Egypt's "[religious revolution](#)."