

Gestures of Appeasement Fuel Islamist Violence in the West



by Khadija Khan

The brutal stabbing of Salman Rushdie in New York earlier this month was one of a long string of recent attacks perpetrated by Islamists as part of a campaign to force the inhabitants of Western democracies to submit to Islamist rules regarding public life. Such attacks have taken place all over the world – Europe especially – even as intellectuals and government officials try to mollify Islamist sensibilities with condemnations of hate speech and other gestures of appeasement.

For example, an Islamist [killed](#) two and injured 21 others in two separate shootings, one at a gay bar and the other at a pub in Oslo, Norway on June 25, 2022. The 42-year-old suspect is a Norwegian national of Iranian-Kurdish origin. He had been

on the radar of security officials who were concerned about his membership “in an Islamist extremist network” since 2015. The shooting generated significant alarm in Norway, where Islamists [recruited](#) young Muslims to [join](#) ISIS in the last decade.

Ironically enough, the attack came despite substantial efforts on the part of the Norwegian government to make Muslims feel at home in the country. In 2019, officials allowed Muslims in Skien and Stavanger to convert two Christian churches into mosques and [gave](#) them \$110,000 to cover the expenses as part of a larger campaign of mosque construction in the country. And in 2020, the Norwegian government [issued](#) a three-year plan to counter anti-Muslim bigotry in the country. The plan includes enlisting the Ministry of Culture in the war against anti-Muslim “hate speech.”

The recent [unrest](#) in Norrköping, Sweden, is further demonstration that curtailing criticism of Muslim fundamentalists does not prevent Islamists from rioting. Sweden, which has strict “hate speech” laws, once [convicting](#) and fining a 91-year old man for ugly postings on Facebook, was rocked by riots after Danish-Swedish politician Rasmus Paludan said he planned to hold a rally there to burn a copy of the Qur’an, though he never appeared in any such rally.

During the riots in Sweden, a school was [set](#) alight with 20 police vehicles either damaged or destroyed. Three people were wounded by gunfire and police in Norrköping and around 40 people including 26 police officers were hurt around the country. Arrests were made in Norrköping, Linköping, Landskrona, Örebro, Malmö, and the capital Stockholm.

Attempts to mollify the rioters in Sweden proliferated after the unrest began with numerous commentators condemning Paludan’s views on Muslims and immigration and for threatening to burn Qur’ans, even as such burnings were acknowledged to be protected speech. But when it came to condemning mob violence

against police in the streets of Norway – perpetrated by Islamists who said they are defending the honor of their religion – there was relative silence with rioters euphemistically [described](#) as “demonstrators.”

Zara Kay, a Tanzanian born, Australian Human rights activist, and the founder of [Faithless Hijabi](#), a charity dedicated to promoting the rights of Muslim women, has little use for Paludan’s politics, but has even less use for efforts to criminalize his protests. Kay, who is currently based in Sweden and has been covering the riots in her [podcast](#), was furious with the failure to stop the violence, declaring, “I was caught off guard seeing the recent events where the police were inadequate, to say the least when it came to protecting the civilians from such vile reaction to the demonstration of the Quran burning.”

“Curtailling free speech in response to some vile political tactics is uncalled for,” she said. “To label burning the Quran as a hate crime doesn’t only provide one group special protection from the offence, it demonstrates the regression of values freethinkers and humanists have long fought for to establish a free society.”

Efforts to mollify Islamist mobs harken back to the Rushdie Affair of the late 1980s, during which Iran and its supporters in the West incited riots and called for Rushdie’s death for having written *The Satanic Verses*. In response, some Western intellectuals and government officials condemned Rushdie for writing the book. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, [called](#) Rushdie’s book an “insult” to Muslims who waited for “a thoughtful and constructive response to their concerns.” Carter went so far as to chide writers and public officials in Western nations for becoming “almost exclusively preoccupied with the author’s rights.”

Some religious leaders in the West followed Carter’s example. In his book about the Rushdie Affair, Daniel Pipes reports

that Cardinal John J. O'Connor "encouraged Catholics 'not to dignify the publication of this work,' which was generally understood that they should not read the book." Pipes also reported that the semi-official mouthpiece of the Vatican *L'Osservatore Romano*, "criticized Rushdie more specifically and at greater length" than Iran's Ayatollah Khoemenei who called for the author's death.

Thirty-three years later, Rushdie was almost murdered by a 24-year-old Muslim who had been radicalized by Hezbollah propaganda. The attack should come as no surprise. A recent [BBC documentary](#) on the "Rushdie affair" demonstrated that Islamists still had it in for Rushdie. In the documentary, BBC journalist and filmmaker Mobeen Azhar was subjected to abuse while he was trying to converse with British Muslims about the book. A passerby aggressively attacked and then snatched the book from Mobeen's hand and tore it while insulting him and his crew.

The verdict is in. Appeasing religious zealots is a bottomless pit. Efforts to "calm" the waters through appeasement only emboldens Islamist zealotry and violence.

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