

Islam: Should we challenge their blasphemy laws?

by Gary Fouse



This past week in Europe, there have been two events that have brought the topic of insulting Islam front and center. First, in Malmö, Sweden, a hot spot of Islamic unrest, Danish activists crossed over into the country and staged an exhibition that featured kicking a Koran around as if it were a soccer ball, and burning it. This sparked a [riot](#) in the Muslim no-go zone of Rosengård, in which chants calling for the death of Jews (who had nothing to do with the earlier exhibition) were heard and documented. As we speak, the leader of the Danish activists, Rasmus Paludan, is promising to hold a similar event in the no-go zone of Rinkeby in Stockholm.

Also, this week in Paris, as the trial of remaining defendants in the 2015 Charlie Hebdo massacre and subsequent massacre at a Jewish supermarket began on Wednesday, Charlie Hebdo chose to republish one of their [controversial cartoons](#) of the

Prophet Mohammad, which had sparked the retaliatory massacre of 2015. This was done as a reaffirmation of the right of expression.

In these explosive times, the two events have raised the question of whether it is advisable to provoke Muslims by mocking their religion and their Prophet Mohammad. It's a fair question and merits an open discussion.

First of all, I believe in free speech. I didn't like it when some "artist" designed a jar of urine with a crucifix submerged inside. I didn't like it when certain art museums decided to display it as a "work of art". But I never advocated that anybody be arrested or killed over it.

In this modern day and age, Christians don't pass laws prosecuting insults to their religion. They also don't tend to kill anyone over perceived insults. Just about every religion I know of is the same.

Not so with Islam. Under Sharia law, things like apostasy and blasphemy are not tolerated. Many Muslim-majority countries actively enforce apostasy and blasphemy laws with the death penalty to this day. Personally, I think that is wrong, but who am I to tell Saudi Arabia how to handle their laws?

It's different when it comes to Western countries, which are supposedly free, but which are experiencing mass Muslim migration into their lands and often demands that Muslim traditions be respected even though they may conflict with our freedoms. It would be one thing to consider if all Muslims were respecting our laws of freedom and living peacefully and lawfully in our countries. Unfortunately, some -many even- are not.

I am in agreement with Robert Spencer, who says we should read the Koran, not burn it. A full reading of the Koran, coupled with an understanding of the historical order of the chapters (suras), the life of Mohammad, and the meaning of the hadith-

the reported acts and statements of Mohammad as recorded by those who were with him, will tell you all you need to know about Islam. It is not a religion of peace and tolerance.

As far as Charlie Hebdo is concerned, while their cartoons seemingly insulted all Muslims, which I think is unwise, they should have had the absolute legal freedom to do so. If you can submerge Christ in a jar of urine, you can publish Mohammad cartoons in a free society. Muslims can rightfully complain in the public arena of ideas, but killing is unacceptable.

Likewise the exhibition in Malmö this week Participants were, indeed, arrested. However, European laws of expression are not like the US. Hate speech-or what is perceived as hate speech-can be prosecuted. My American sensibilities tell me that kicking or burning a religious book should be met with disapproval, but not jail or death.

In January 2016, I attended a [seminar](#) at UC Irvine, where I was teaching at the time. The topic was freedom of expression in the age of Charlie Hebdo. Without going into everything that was discussed, one local cartoonist from Los Angeles dismissed the victims of the Paris massacre as "A-holes".

Perhaps, but that was no excuse for the slaughter that ensued, which also involved the murder of a French cop who responded to the scene. Think what you want about producing insulting cartoons of Islam's Prophet, they did not deserve to die. That French cop did not deserve to die.

This leads to a final thought: If the jihad continues, and Western governments and leaders continue to bow to Islamic demands, when does it reach a point that it is time for the people to take over? What I mean is this: At what point is it justified for the average person to stand up and scream insults at an ideology that seeks to conquer us and is committing acts of unspeakable violence against us? At this

point in time, I think that an honest, open and scholarly discussion of Islam is in order-no matter whose feelings are hurt. I still cling to Robert Spencer's position on this. But I reserve the right to change my mind. We look to our leaders to protect us while still maintaining peaceful relations with the Islamic world. If they don't, at some point, the rules of engagement have to change. Someday, we may all have to join Rasmus Paludan.