

They Call Them the 'Koran Riots'



by Bruce Bawer

It began on Easter weekend. In [response](#) to a rally in Örebro, Sweden, by Stram Kurs, a Danish party that opposes Islamic immigration and whose members threatened to burn copies of the Koran, mass violence broke out in Stockholm and several other Swedish cities, with scores of Muslims – mostly young men, both also women and children – throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at cops and setting cars, buses, dumpsters, and buildings on fire. Injuries resulting from these disturbances – widely dubbed the “Koran riots” – were in the mid two figures, with police officers the hardest hit. Further Stram Kurs events had been planned, but the party’s appropriately named leader, Rasmus Paludan, paladin of Denmark’s anti-Islamization movement, canceled them on the grounds that Swedish police had shown themselves to be “completely incapable of protecting themselves and me.” By the end of the month Swedish police had [forbidden](#) any further public

gatherings by Stram Kurs.

Of course, the tumult didn't spring from out of nowhere. Among young Muslims in Sweden, car-burning is old hat. But the scale of these events was new – and, to Swedes who still have their heads in the sand about this issue, alarming. Still, for many observers in Scandinavia, the real affront wasn't the physical brutality but the very notion of harming a Koran. Hanan Abdelrahman, a college teacher in Norway, wrote a teary [op-ed](#) on the topic in which she asserted that Paludan and his ilk made her “feel a bit scared and unsafe.” She asked: “How many camels is one really supposed to swallow? To what degree and for how long should a group of people have to tolerate feeling unsafe and unwanted?” Yes, the danger to human safety that weekend wasn't the savagery that sent people to the hospital – it was a peaceful rally. Abdelrahman charged that if Paludan and his friends had been “braver” and “smarter,” they'd have invited somebody like her to engage in a discussion of their differing views. A pretty weird proposal, given that if she'd actually *read* her beloved Koran, Abdelrahman would know that it tells her not to consort with infidels but to kill them – especially if they seek to talk her out of her beliefs.

In another [op-ed](#), Bilan Osman, who apparently makes a career of giving lectures about “Islamophobia” all over Sweden, sounded an alarm about how “anti-Muslims attitudes have gained ground” in that country. Views that were once marginal, he warned, are now mainstream; the curtain has been pulled back on “our anti-Muslim society,” where “even people close to me expres[s] the most disgusting ideas about Muslims.” Such as? Such as the absurd assertion that they're “a threat to the West,” that “they want to bring down liberal democracy,” that “Islam is fundamentally misogynistic, hostile to gays, and anti-Semitic,” that it's “hostile to everyone who isn't a Muslim,” and that Muslims seek “to ‘Islamize’ the Western world.” As someone who's just spent a lot of time absorbed in Robert Spencer's monumental new [edition](#) of the Koran, I'd call

this a top-notch summary of the Koran's main points. But Osman insisted that these are lies that must be resisted. "It can't keep going on like this," he contended. "How did we end up here? When did Sweden become so radicalized that flagrant, ideologically motivated Muslim-hate has been a totally ordinary point of view?" Interestingly put. What's "radical" to Osman aren't the murderous canons of Islam but the reaction thereto by civilized Westerners. As for "Muslim-hate": yes, many people in Sweden are indeed hostile (not necessarily to Muslims, but to Islam), and that hostility is indeed motivated by an ideology – namely, the ideology that's spelled out in the Koran and that, quite understandably, strikes fear into their hearts.

Another person who [wrote](#) an op-ed in the wake of the Easter-weekend fracas was Richard Jomshof of the Sweden Democrats, the party that for a long time was a marginalized voice of truth about Islam, and that has steadily gained power over the years. Observing that "Sweden has literally been on fire" and that the kind of conduct displayed by the Muslim rioters was not Swedish by nature but rooted in another culture, Jomshof submitted that it was high time that responsible Swedes began to talk about stripping such people – and their families – of their citizenship, taking them off the welfare rolls, and expelling them from the country. They're creating havoc, after all, not just in the lives of native Swedes but in the lives of other immigrants who also have backgrounds in the Muslim world – but who came to Sweden not to be warriors for Islam but to escape its tyranny.

Jomshof's proposition was sheer common sense – and, consequently, had Swedish elites sputtering with outrage. Needless to say, what they should've been outraged over was the rampage itself, which had taken the expression of Swedish Muslim hubris to a new level and portended even greater aggression in the not-too-distant future. But for the Swedish establishment, to speak of denying Muslims anything at all,

for any reason whatsoever, is tantamount to tossing a crying infant into the street and letting it starve.

The weekend after Easter, it was Norway's turn. The scenario was strikingly similar. In the central square of the city of Sandefjord (pop. 45,000), members of the group Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN) threatened to burn a Koran. Muslims – including women and children – rioted. And in response, Progress Party leader Sylvi Listhaug [echoed](#) Jomshof's suggestion that such troublemakers be sent back to where they came from. Listhaug noted that a not inconsiderable percentage of Muslims in Norway – around seven percent – are willing to admit to pollsters their belief that “blasphemy should be punished with death,” in Europe as well as in the Muslim world. “If you don't appreciate the hospitality of the Norwegian society and respect our values,” wrote Listhaug on her Facebook page, “it's just a matter of moving back to your Muslim land of origin. In those countries, freedom of speech and of belief are foreign words, and the death penalty for blasphemy is widespread.”

“My city is destroyed. My country is in danger,” a tearful Sandefjord septuagenarian told Helge Lurås of the Resett website as they both coughed up tear gas. Lurås, who'd reported on earlier displays of rage by Norwegian Muslims, [declared](#) that this latest dustup in Sandefjord – at which participants shouted “Allahu akbar” while throwing rocks, shoes, and eggs at gas-masked cops with ballistic shields – outdid them all. This time around, moreover, the most aggressive participants weren't the gang-aged youths but older men, ranging in age from their mid-thirties to their mid-fifties, some of whom had brought along small children whom they encouraged to imitate their barbarity. “Also present,” added Lurås,

were a dozen ethnic Norwegians from the Red [Communist] Party...But in fact you could see in their eyes that they felt uneasy standing together with the aggressive Muslims. For

they were aggressive. There was no dignity at all, no attempt to stand still and turn their backs [on the members of SIAN]...And they had no respect for the police.

Then again, as is usual in Norway, the cops behaved in such a way – offering repeated assurances, for example, that they disagreed with SIAN – as to guarantee that they'd never earn the Muslims' respect. Perhaps, Lurås proposed, it was time for Norwegian police to start acting like police. As for SIAN, Lurås noted that he himself doesn't share their views, although the conduct of the Muslims in Sandefjord confirmed absolutely every ugly thing that the speakers from SIAN said about them.

This past Sunday, May Day, without forewarning, and in defiance of a police order, Paludan [burned](#) a Koran on a small square in Stockholm. He did it without hoopla, and with no crowd of supporters present. Before doing so, he made a statement in which he drew a distinction between his own action and Nazi-style book-burning: far from wanting to see all copies of the Koran destroyed, he emphasized, he wants everyone in Sweden to read it and discover for themselves how evil it is. Later in the day, planning to burn a Koran outside a mosque in Uppsala, he was [forced](#) to flee when a mob of Muslims chased him back to his car, where some of them climbed on it and tried to break his windshield and had to be dealt with by police with batons.

In Sweden and Norway, and for that matter pretty much everywhere else in the West, fewer and fewer ordinary citizens find themselves able to keep telling themselves comforting lies about the Religion of Peace. Yet the left's leading lights keep selling those lies. The other day, an [article](#) entitled "No, Burning Qurans in the Street Isn't 'Part of Our Democracy'" by one Ryan Switzer – identified as a Ph.D. candidate in sociology at Stockholm University – appeared at the socialist website Jacobin. In the left-wing

Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, Jotam Confino, a journalist for Denmark's TV2, [deplored](#) the fact that Scandinavia's "liberal values" were under assault and that it had just experienced violent riots – but in his view those values had been attacked, and those riots caused by, none other than Paludan. And the Norwegian newspaper *Bergensavisen* ran an opinion [piece](#) headlined "When Freedom of Speech Becomes a Tool of Fascism" – the point being that Paludan, not Islam, is fascist. All of which served as a handy reminder that we're not just up against Islam, but up against a left-wing establishment whose members are perversely committed to defending our most monstrous enemies and destroying our most valiant heroes.

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