



I. MANIFESTATIONS OF ISLAMOPHOBIA:

I.1. In the United States and Canada:

1. **US: No regrets for organizer of cartoon Contest**—The woman behind the Prophet Muhammad cartoon contest in Garland, Texas, that was the target of an attack by militants said she had no regrets. Pamela Geller told *The Associated Press* in an interview on 7 May. Geller's American Freedom Defense Initiative organized the contest to draw Islam's prophet. Geller's group was also behind controversial ads in the New York subway that read: "*In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man.*" In smaller letters, it added: "*Support Israel. Defeat Jihad.*" Geller also run an organization called Stop Islamization of America, which spearheaded the effort to prevent the construction of a Muslim community center near the site of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.



In: <http://www.ideastream.org/news/npr/405052650>, retrieved on 08.05.2015

2. **US: Megachurch Pastor Robert Jeffress: Satan 'Delivered' Islam to Muhammad, Following Islam Will 'Lead You to Hell'**—Dallas megachurch pastor Robert Jeffress said on 10 May during his 'Countdown to the Apocalypse,' sermon series that it was Satan who delivered the religion of Islam to the prophet Muhammad and further asserted that following that religion will 'lead you to hell.' In his six-week sermon series, Jeffress, who pastors Dallas' 11,000-member First Baptist Church, explained how Jesus told of the rise of radical Islam and that increased Christian persecution around the world would precede His return to this Earth. The 59-year-old attempted to debunk the claim that Muhammad was delivered Islam by an angel and stated that the angel Muhammad was really the devil disguised as an angel of light. Jeffress said: "*It was Satan himself who delivered those delusions to those people to lead people by the millions away from God....Islam is a false religion that will lead you to hell.*"

It is based on a false book that is based on a fraud. It was founded by a false prophet who was leading people away instead of to the one true God." Jeffress added that just as the Antichrist would seek to rid the world of Jews and Christians, religious minorities across the world were being killed and persecuted at an alarming rate by Islamic radicals who feel called by their faith to commit such acts.



In: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/megachurch-pastor-robert-jeffress-satan-delivered-islam-to-muhammad-following-islam-will-lead-you-to-hell-139026/>, retrieved on 13.05.2015

3. US: 'No Muslims' spray-painted on TTUHSC seal—Crews at the Texas Tech Health Sciences Center were busy 14 May cleaning graffiti off of the school seal on 4th Street. Someone spray-painted a message on the seal either the night before or early that morning. Workers had already cleaned most of the paint off by the time crews arrived, but those who saw it earlier said that it read 'No Muslims'. The Texas Tech Police Department said the incident was under investigation.



[ttuhsc-seal](#), retrieved on 15.05.2015

TTUHSC released the following statement on the same day read: *"It is a sad day at TTUHSC as we awake to our beloved seal defaced with intolerant language. Our diverse university family is made up of students, researchers, educators and health care providers who make a positive impact throughout our world. Such harmful and offensive words truly go against the grain of who we are, as we are here to serve and heal all people. We will not tolerate such acts, and we are working closely with law enforcement. After authorities investigated the scene, our crew swiftly removed the vandalism."*

In: [http://www.kcbd.com/story/29064408/no-muslims-spray-painted-on-](http://www.kcbd.com/story/29064408/no-muslims-spray-painted-on-ttuhsc-seal)

4. US: Maher: those shining the light on the oppression in Islam are the real liberals— On 15 May Friday's "Real Time" on HBO, host Bill Maher interviewed Ayaan Hirsi Ali about liberals and why they insisted upon defending Islam, particularly when some Islamic nations were overwhelmingly in favor of the oppression of women. Maher said: *"We know Sharia law is popular in many more countries than you even named. When I have liberals on this show one of the big arguments is well, you're painting with a broad brush...Of course Saudi Arabia is backwards but what about Indonesia and Turkey and Jordan? Well, I looked up Turkey and Indonesia and Jordan and here are some of the statistics here. Sharia law, 72 percent of Indonesians favor it. Jordan —71 percent. Stoning of adulterers in Indonesia — 48 percent popular, Jordan — 67 percent. Death for leaving Islam. Jordan, 82 percent. These are their bastions of freedom and democracy. How do we get liberals and some of them are people I really used to respect — how do we get them to understand that we're the liberals in this debate? The people that are facing, shining a light on oppression and demanding that it will end — how can that not be the liberal cause? What do you say to liberals?"*

In: <http://www.breitbart.com/video/2015/05/16/maher-those-shining-the-light-on-the-oppression-of-islam-are-the-real-liberals/>, retrieved on 17.05.2015

5. US: US Islamophobes plan new Prophet Muhammad cartoon event—On 28 May, a group of anti-Muslim activists in the U.S. State of Arizona organized a contest for cartoons depicting Prophet Muhammad in the city of Phoenix. The plan came just three weeks after two gunmen attacked a similar contest in Texas. The event was held in front of the Islamic Community Center of Phoenix, just after an anti-Islam rally.

In: <http://www.turkishweekly.net/2015/05/28/news/us-islamophobes-plan-new-prophet-muhammad-cartoon-event/>, retrieved on 30.05.2015

6. US: 'Snap Out of It': CNN Host Likens Drawing the Prophet Muhammad to Saying the N-Word— Activist Pamela Geller clashed with CNN's Chris Cuomo on 28 May morning, accusing him of "very shallow journalism" and pushing back against a comparison that he made between saying the N-word and drawing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. The heated segment started with Cuomo discussing the Garland shooting that unfolded earlier in May when "would-be jihadists" attacked the venue where Geller's Muhammad cartoon contest was held, before asking why she was now trying to publicly post the winning cartoon on Washington D.C. buses. The conversation heated up after Cuomo, who called the shooters 'crazy extremists' who 'bought into an ideology that is sick,' accused Geller of calculating her event in a way that would be provocative — a claim that she dismissed as nonsense. Cuomo said *"The N-word gets treated the same way that depictions of Muhammad does... We don't say it because it's offensive, not because legally I can't."*

Geller dismissed that comparison and called it a dishonest narrative, defending cartoons of Muhammad as political speech that was permissible under the First Amendment. While Cuomo didn't dispute that fact, he

continued to question the wisdom behind it. Geller accused the CNN host of making past negative statements about her, before continuing to lambaste the N-word comparison. She said: *"It's not analogous ... it's outrageous. It's a dishonest narrative and I am not going to debate intellectual dishonesty."* Geller also accused Cuomo of "very shallow journalism" after he asked why she opposed the controversial mosque that was planned near Ground Zero. While she said that she had no problem with mosques in general, she found the proposed house of worship problematic. Cuomo countered, *"And you don't see that as what you're doing with the Prophet Muhammad?"* Geller answered that the two were very different from one another, before challenging the host to reveal where he would draw the line when it came to free speech.

In: <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2015/05/28/snap-out-of-it-cnn-host-likens-drawing-the-prophet-muhammad-to-saying-the-n-word/>, retrieved on 30.05.2015

7. US: Islamophobia on rise in US, pro-Palestinians blacklisted—Hate group in the United States publicized the identities of pro-Palestinian student activists and professors in an effort to stigmatize them and dissuade employers from hiring them in the future. The group kept an online database of 54 people in a website called "canary mission" saying that *"It is your duty to ensure that today's radicals are not tomorrow's employees,"* in a video explanation. In the website, which had run since March, no names of editors were displayed.

In: <http://www.dailysabah.com/americas/2015/05/29/islamophobia-on-rise-in-us-pro-palestinians-blacklisted>, retrieved on 30.05.2015

8. US: Armed bikers in 'F*CK ISLAM!' shirts plan to mock Islam, incite violence at mosque—A group of Murican bikers had an entire evening of Islamophobic events in Arizona on 29 May, gathering for what they called a response to the recent attack in Texas where 2 armed terrorists with ties to ISIS attempted Jihad. The bikers, determined to further the cause of mocking Islam and inciting violence, decided to form a protest at a mosque the two terrorist attended, which located in Phoenix.

Such a glorious day of hate started at a Denny's restaurant in Phoenix, where yet another cartoon contest mocking Islam kicked off the festivities, followed by a patriotic ride to the mosque for a peaceful protest at a time when Muslims show up for evening prayers. The protest consisted of a bunch of trash wearing "F*CK ISLAM!" shirts, waving American flags and shouting obscenities and carrying spelled signs in an effort to incite violence.

Retrieved in: <http://www.addictinginfo.org/2015/05/28/armed-bikers-in-fck-islam-shirts-plan-to-mock-islam-ignite-violence-at-mosque/>, on 30.05.2015

I.II. In Europe:

1. UK: Hate crimes on rise in UK—An Islamic center in UK had condemned a spike in hate crimes across England and Wales since 2012. The Muslim Council of Britain and the Church of England said that the targets of hate crimes were predominantly Muslims. According to the council, racially or religiously aggravated harassment crimes – such as verbal or written racist abuse – increased from a total of 15,249 to 17,605 between 2012 and 2014. The figures, obtained from 41 of 43 police forces approached through Freedom of Information (Fol) requests, showed more than 47,000 hate crimes recorded over the past three years. A member of Muslim Public Affairs Committee in London, Raza Nadim told *Press TV* that the problem was a very Islamophobic ideology that had been constantly pumped out and propped up by millions of pounds and dollars across the world especially in the Western world to demonize the Muslim community. He slammed western media in covering crimes by different groups saying: *"When a Muslim commits a crime, we have many right-wing commentators who are quick to point the finger at the religion of the criminal and the ideology that drives them, and yet when the Muslims are the victims of hate crimes we don't see people actually linking the story."*

In: <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2015/05/16/411381/Hate-crimes-rise-UK-Wales-Muslims>, retrieved on 17.05.2015

2. France: French Mayor Calls for Banning Islam, Deporting Muslims—A French mayor had been suspended from his party after calling for the country to ban Islam. Robert Chardon, the UMP mayor of Venelles in southern France, tweeted: *"The Muslim religion must be banned in France"* and added that anyone practicing the religion must be *"immediately escorted to the border"*. He also claimed Islam would be banned

in France by 2027. The tweet was part of a discussion former president Nicolas Sarkozy began with the public, using the hashtag #NSDirect. Sarkozy, who is leader of the UMP party and was likely to run for president again in 2017, immediately distanced himself from the comments, writing: "I condemn this proposal even if secularism also means fixing limits. Rights and limits go together." UMP Vice-president Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet announced the party was suspending Mr Chardon pending a procedure to remove him from the UMP.

In: <http://pjmedia.com/tatler/2015/05/18/french-mayor-calls-for-banning-islam-deporting-muslims/>, retrieved on 19.05.2015

3. UK: Almost a third of UK school pupils believe 'Muslims are taking over our country', study claims—A survey of almost 6,000 children aged 10 to 16 across England found that negative attitudes towards migrants and Muslims were widespread among school pupils. The data, based on questionnaires sent to more than 60 schools across the UK by charity Show Racism the Red Card (SRTRC) between 2012 and 2014, also found that 60 per cent of children questioned believed "asylum seekers and immigrants are stealing our jobs". The survey's results come shortly after Labour MP Tristram Hunt's embarrassing encounter with a schoolchild, who told the shadow education minister that he would vote UKIP because he would like to get all the foreigners out of the country. Of the 5,945 children surveyed, 49 per cent agreed with the statement that migration was out of control or not being managed properly. Meanwhile, only 41 per cent of children did not think that Muslims were taking over England, and just under half (47 per cent) thought that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims were poor.

In: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/uk/Almost-a-third-of-UK-school-pupils-believe-Muslims-are-taking-over-our-country-study-claims/articleshow/47352575.cms>, retrieved on 21.05.2015

4. UK: Far-right group Britain First announce Luton march after staging mosque 'invasions'—A far right group which provoked anger after 'invading' two Bury Park mosques had announced on mid-May that they would hold a large scale demonstration through Luton. Britain First, formed four years ago by ex-BNP members, would stage a protest through the town on June 27 to "demonstrate that Luton is an English town not a mini caliphate". Britain First deputy leader Jayda Fransen told the Luton News: "At the moment the plans that have been made are for a march through the town, then speeches will be given... This is the first one that we have held one in Luton so we are expecting a good turnout."



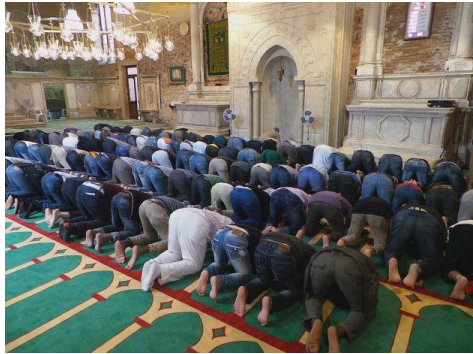
In: <http://www.lutontoday.co.uk/news/crime/far-right-group-britain-first-announce-luton-march-after-staging-mosque-invasions-1-6753462>, retrieved on 22.05.2015

5. UK: Football firms plan to stage anti-mosque protest in Dudley—Dudley would be bracing itself for another anti-mosque protest on June 13 - the third in the space of four months. A group called All Football Fans/Firms March Against Islamisation (AFFMAI) said they intended to march through the town centre to object to a replacement mosque being built on Hall Street.

Chief Inspector Phil Dolby broke the news to concerned residents, religious leaders and traders who attended a public debrief at Dudley Council House on 19 May, to provide feedback about policing of the Britain First march. Town traders said they felt persistent protesters were giving Dudley a bad name and remarked made during the Britain First protest on May 9, also weighed heavily on people's minds.



6. Italy: Venice officials shut down mosque-inside-church art exhibit — Authorities in Venice on 22 May closed a working mosque in an ex-church that was Iceland's contribution to the 56th Venice Biennale



contemporary art fair on the grounds that was used as a place of worship. Swiss-Icelandic artist Christoph Buechel's exhibit inside a former Roman Catholic Church creating the first mosque ever in the historic center of Venice sparked controversy from the outset. The chairman of the Icelandic Art Center, which commissioned the project, complained that Venetian authorities had tried to prevent its realization rather than assist in making it possible, under the claim that the Icelandic Pavilion was not art.

Iceland chose the deconsecrated Church of Santa Maria della Misericordia for the exhibit titled 'The Mosque' in Venice, which for centuries served as a crossroads between East and West and was infused with Middle Eastern architectural influences. The project envisioned a working mosque for the seven months of the Biennale, which opened May 8 and comprises national pavilions as well as a curated main exhibit. After weeks of tensions, Venice city officials withdrew authorization for the installation citing violation of the terms, including a ban on using the pavilion as a place of worship as well as security concerns.

In: <http://www.timesunion.com/entertainment/article/Venice-officials-shut-down-mosque-inside-church-6281036.php>, retrieved on 24.05.2015

7. Netherlands: Dutch politician calls for Prophet Mohammed cartoon contest—The Dutch far-right politician sent a letter to the Dutch parliament on mid-May requesting that an exhibition of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad be shown in the Dutch parliament. Ejder Kose, a lawyer and deputy chairman of the Center for Public Debate told Anadolu Agency that he hoped the parliament would refuse the request for both legal and political reasons. He said: "*Geert Wilders initiative is certainly a provocation*". Kose also pointed out that Wilders' initiative could be considered a hate crime and that it would be important to define the limits of freedom of expression.

In: <http://www.albawaba.com/news/dutch-politician-calls-prophet-mohammed-cartoon-contest-700074>, retrieved on 29.05.2015

8. Belgium: Islamophobia on the rise globally— "*Anti-Muslim hostility was on the rise on a global scale*",



the European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion, a non-governmental body, said in its meeting at the European Parliament in Brussels on 26 May. The meeting was organized to discuss the increase in Islamophobic incidents amid anti-immigration attitudes across Europe. Prof. Bülent Şenay, vice president of the initiative, said: "*It's indisputable that there has been a rise in anti-Muslim hostility on a global scale.*" According to the initiative, anti-terrorism concern and an escalation in anti-immigration attitudes across Europe had converged on the stereotypical image of Islam as the primary security threat for

European societies.

In: <http://www.kxotnews.com/world/islamophobia-on-the-rise-globally-european-muslim-body-7052.html>, retrieved on 30.05.2015

I.III. Rest of the World:

1. New Zealand: Muslims most likely to be unemployed—Adherents of Islam more educated and qualified than Christians, study found, but having foreign sounding names and dressing differently made it tough to find a job. Not all religions and their followers were equal in New Zealand, a Herald investigation into the state of faith had found.

Adherents of some religions, such as Islam, were far less likely to be employed than followers of faiths such as Christianity or people with no religion. A University of Waikato Islamic studies reviewed on patterns and disparity of New Zealand Muslims found Muslims to be more educated and qualified than Christians. Jews and Hindus held the highest education level with almost a third holding tertiary qualifications. However, Muslims were three times more likely to be without a job than Christians or people not affiliated to any religion. The report author, Yaghoob Foroutan, said: "The results ... have shown that about one-fifth of New Zealand Muslims are highly educated, but they also hold the highest unemployment rate as compared to other religious groups in New Zealand....Muslims are less likely to be employed ... [and have] the lowest level of managerial and professional occupations than all other religious groups in New Zealand." Overall, the report said that Muslims were two times more likely to be unemployed than non-Muslims and the unemployment rate was relatively higher, at about 15 per cent, for Muslims born in Iraq, Iran and Malaysia.

In: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11448269, retrieved on 15.05.2015

2. India: No job for Muslim MBA? This should come as no surprise in Modi's India—There was shock, horror and outrage in liberal circles over a news report that a Mumbai-based company turned down a Muslim youth for a job because of his religion. The National Commission for Minorities had ordered an investigation, and the Maharashtra Government promised its own inquiry, while the National Human Rights Commission was urged to look into the issue. The social media meanwhile, was seething with anger.



Non-Muslims saw this xenophobic case as normal, for some said that they had seen such a thing coming. For instance, one of them was quoted saying: "It is a logical culmination of the anti-minorities tirade launched during the past one year...The environment in the country has become so poisonous that such things are bound to happen." After all, covert discrimination against Muslims in jobs and housing was so commonplace that it was now widely accepted as a fact of life. There was a well-known study by a left-wing researcher who sent identical CVs to several

companies, but under different assumed names--some Hindu and some Muslim. And he found that most of the applications which were turned down were the ones which had been sent under Muslim names.

In: <http://www.firstpost.com/india/no-job-muslim-mba-come-no-surprise-modis-india-2257594.html>, retrieved on 23.05.2015

3. Australia: Mismatched Muslims: school smart, job poor— Australian Muslims were facing institutionalized discrimination that was impeding their ability to convert relatively high education levels into matching employment outcomes. Researchers had found evidence of religious discrimination, and studies were pointing to a clear employment bias against foreign-sounding names in job applications, particular Middle Eastern names.

International Centre for Muslim and non-Muslim Understanding director, Riaz Hassan, said figures from the 2011 census revealed about 32 per cent of the Muslim population was employed compared with 46.8 per cent of the general population. The differences were even starker in the prime employment age groups. Among 25 to 44-year-olds, 54 per cent of the Muslim population was employed and 7.4 per cent unemployed. This compared with 78.4 per cent employment and 3.8 per cent unemployment for the general population in that age group. In contrast, Muslim males had a 45 per cent Year 12 completion rate compared with 37 per cent of the general population, and a 17.9 per cent university qualification rate against 13.9 per cent for all Australians. For Muslim women,

Education and employment indicators (%)

By religion 2011	University degree	Year 12 completion	Unemployment rate
ISLAM	23.9	25	12.1
CATHOLIC	17.9	18	4.7
ANGLICAN	14.3	14.6	4.5
BUDDHISM	27.2	24.1	8.6
HINDUISM	54.5	15.6	6.8

Employment call back rate based on origin of names (%)

	Anglo-Saxon	Middle Eastern	Chinese	Italian	Indigenous
Brisbane	42	28	27	33	30
Sydney	38	21	20	34	31
Melbourne	27	16	17	29	18

Sources: 2011 Census data cited in The People of Australia report, 2009 ANU study based on 4000 fake job applications

Year 12 retention was 42 per cent (compared with 40 per cent) and university qualifications were 15.3 per cent (against 16.5 per cent).

Professor Hassan highlighted that employment discrimination was common across many migrant groups but Muslim Australians tended to experience a marginally higher level of discrimination. He cited a study by Australian National University economists that involved sending out 4000 fake employment applications and gauging the call-back rate based on race. That study found people with Anglo-Saxon names had significantly higher call-back rates and people with Middle Eastern names the lowest. His centre was picking up the same trend in its monitoring of the employment situation. One well-qualified Muslim woman had applied for junior positions using her real name. When she reapplied using an anglicised name, she received a call back in 30 minutes.

In: <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/community-under-siege/mismatched-muslims-school-smart-job-poor/story-fnubfp6c-1227370520083>, retrieved on 27.05.2015

4. Australia: Far right racists organizing more protests— Hundreds of neo-Nazis, rabid ultra-nationalists, Christian fundamentalists and other racist bigots gathered together on the streets under the banner of “Reclaim Australia” on April. Now in May, they were planning more mobilizations to build support for their



violent racist agenda. A key organizer of the Reclaim Australia protests, Shermom Burgess, known as the great Aussie patriot, whose regular YouTube videos illustrated his frothing hatred of Muslims and the ‘communist menace’. Burgess was previously a member of the Australian Defence League, an organisation that made headlines in September 2014 when one of its leaders, Ralph Cermina, released a video threatening another Cronulla-style riot. He promised that ‘mosques and prayer rooms are going to burn’. The UPF group had called a protest in Melbourne on 31 May

outside the Richmond Town Hall to take on “Islam in Australia and the aresholes who protect them”.

In: <https://redflag.org.au/article/far-right-racists-organising-more-protests>, retrieved on 27.05.2015

5. Australia: Protesters clash at anti-Islam rally in Australia—Violence broke out between anti-Islam groups and campaigners against racism in the Australian state of Victoria on 31 May, with some protesters brawling on the steps of a Melbourne town hall. *The Age* reported that scuffles began when members of far-right group United Patriots Front (UPF) attempted to storm the building but their efforts were thwarted by hundreds of counter-protesters. UPF was a splinter group of Reclaim Australia - a right-wing faction that cites the wearing of the burqa, ‘Islamic extremism’ and ‘fear that sharia law is on the rise’ as issues of concern. Earlier on that day, the far right groups had launched into speeches railing ‘left-wing traitors’, ‘halal certification’ and what they called ‘the Islamic terror threat.



In: <http://www.albawaba.com/news/protesters-clash-anti-islam-rally-australia-701722>, retrieved on 01.06.2015

II. POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS:

II.I. In the United States and Canada:

1. **US: Bill O'Reilly: 'Jesus would not have sponsored' a 'Draw the Prophet' contest**—Bill O'Reilly said on 7 May that the 'Draw the Prophet' event that was attacked few days before in Garland, Texas, was wrong in part because *"Jesus would not have sponsored that event."* The O'Reilly Factor host had repeatedly criticized the event, which was targeted by Elton Simpson, 31, and Nadir Soofi, 34. Both men died in a shootout with police on May 3. Mr. O'Reilly added: *"The goal of every decent person in the world should be to defeat the jihad. And in order to do that you have to rally the world to the side of good — our side. The emotional displays, like insulting the Prophet Muhammad, make it more difficult to rally law-abiding Muslims."*
In: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/may/8/bill-oreilly-jesus-would-not-have-sponsored-pamela/>, retrieved on 09.05.2015

2. **US: Van Susteren: Geller was 'mocking an entire religion of Muslims'**—On 10 May at 'ABC's This Week With George Stephanopoulos,' Fox News' Greta Van Susteren discussed the terror attack in Texas the week before at Pam Geller's "Draw Mohammed" art contest and said Geller was *"mocking an entire religion of Muslims."* Van Susteren said, *"Here's the problem. There's no one I know who denies that she had a First Amendment right and all of them do. They had a First Amendment right to do that, but with every right comes some sort of judgment. You have a First Amendment right. The Nazis did to march in Skokie when 20% of the population in Skokie was Holocaust victims in the 1977. Sometimes you use good judgment. What she was doing was mocking an entire religion of Muslims."*
In: <http://www.breitbart.com/video/2015/05/10/van-susteren-geller-was-mocking-an-entire-religion-of-muslims/>, retrieved on 11.05.2015

3. **US: City of Edmond allows mosque to expand facilities** — In a unanimous vote on the second week of May, the Edmond city council approved an expansion plan for the mosque on University Drive. Leaders at the mosque said there had been an increase in worshippers since the place was built in 1992. Adam Soltani, CAIR Oklahoma said: *"We have our student population that comes from the university, but we have a lot of families that have moved into Edmond and need a larger place to worship."* In previous Edmond city council meetings, they were met with opposition from some metro church leaders, and just a month before their front door was vandalized with bacon. Since then they had increased security and tried to meet the opposition with education, and it apparently paid off. The city said mosque leaders could knockdown two buildings to make way for parking and add another fellowship hall, taking the mosque from about 700 square feet to more than 4,000 square feet.
In: <http://www.news9.com/story/29095720/city-of-edmond-allows-mosque-to-expand-facilities>, retrieved on 19.05.2015

4. **US: The Quran is meant for everyone, even Hollywood stars like Lindsay Lohan**— Lohan had undergone a few turbulent years with interventions for her reform. During her most recent community service in Brooklyn, Lindsay was carrying a copy of the Holy Quran translation by Ahmadi Muslim Scholar Maulawi Sher Ali. The photo went viral and there was conjecture as to whether or not Lindsay, who was raised Catholic, was converting to Islam. While much speculation was given on the matter, the answer is no. Ms. Lohan defined herself as spiritual and in the past had tried many different concepts of different religions. She currently had embarked on an 'emotional detox from alcohol and dating' and perhaps the Quran was helping her with this process. While the Quran was the central holy book of Islam, its scripture was not limited to Muslims alone. Based on the recognition Lindsay received from holding the Quran further understanding was needed as to why a non-Muslim would consider the Quran for spiritual guidance. Lindsay recently posted two prayers from the Quran regarding knowledge on her Instagram account stating *"O My Lord increase me in my knowledge"* and *"O Allah I ask you of knowledge that is of benefit."* She cited these verses correctly and while no alterations in



the Quran's original Arabic scripture had transpired in its 1500 years of existence, translations at times could be misinterpreted.

In: <http://www.worldreligionnews.com/issues/the-quran-is-meant-for-everyone-even-hollywood-stars-like-lindsay-lohan>, retrieved on 19.05.2015

5. US: Texas judge disciplined for remarks about Jews, Muslims—A Texas judge was admonished publicly for referring to a district attorney as a 'New York Jew' and insulting another prosecutor's beard, saying it made him look 'like a Muslim.' In a ruling released on 18 May, the state's Commission on Judicial Conduct admonished Tinsley Schildknecht of the 106th District Court in Lamesa. The commission required Schildknecht to obtain four hours of instruction on recognizing and eliminating explicit and implicit bias and/or prejudice, Texas Lawyer reported. The admonition, which also criticized Schildknecht for holding marathon court sessions that lasted until 4 AM, said the judge last July referred to District Attorney Michael Munk as a 'New York Jew' in a private conversation with the DA's secretary and later told Munk and another attorney, "*When I tell people why you [Munk] are different and have different thoughts, I explain [it is] because you are from New York and because you are Jewish.*" The admonition said that last September, Schildknecht told an assistant district attorney, "*You look like a Muslim and I wouldn't hire you.*"

In: <http://www.timesofisrael.com/texas-judge-disciplined-for-remarks-about-jews-muslims/>, retrieved on 20.05.2015

6. US: Tennessee man pleads guilty to plotting attack on Muslims— A man who ran for Congress in 2014 in East Tennessee had pleaded guilty to plotting an attack on a small Muslim enclave in New York. Federal agents began investigating Robert Doggart of Signal Mountain following a Facebook posting in which he claimed a community outside of Hancock, New York, was planning a terrorist attack and must be utterly destroyed, according to the plea agreement entered in April. This area was known as 'Islamberg,' a self-named community consisting primarily of Muslims. Via cellphone, Doggart also told unnamed people cooperating with the FBI that his plan involved killing residents and burning at least three buildings. He met with at least one source in Nashville. During the same call, Doggart told the person on the phone that pistols couldn't be carried from Tennessee to New York because the city doesn't have carry permit reciprocity, but that "AR-15s, M-4s or M-16s" could be brought. Doggart said he planned to bring his M-4 rifle with four magazines, according to the court document. He pleaded guilty to a charge of interstate communication of threats. Doggart faced up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. His attorney told The Associated Press on 19 May that a judge was still reviewing the plea agreement.

In: <http://www.timesnews.net/article/9087750/tennessee-man-pleads-guilty-to-plotting-attack-on-muslims>, retrieved on 20.05.2015

7. US: York County pastors call on Christians to love Muslims, 'fear not' — Two dozen Christian pastors in York County joined together to publicly call on members of their faith to embrace Muslims as their brothers and sisters. The Rev. Sam McGregor, pastor at Allison Creek Presbyterian Church near Lake Wylie, said he had jump-started the local effort because of recent threats against Muslims in the United States that came to light during the trial of Robert Doggart, a failed congressional candidate from Tennessee who pleaded guilty for plotting to kill Muslims who live in a religious community in New York—The FBI uncovered and stopped Doggart's plan.

A similar community, called Holy Islamville, had existed in York County for nearly 30 years. Members of the local community said they were fearful for their own safety after hearing of Doggart's violent plans in New York and learning that he tried to recruit people from South Carolina to help him. McGregor said: "*We have got to take a stand.*" He and 23 other York County religious leaders submitted a letter to The Herald stating they were "*opposed to any acts of violence or threats of violence against anyone due to their religious affiliation.*" The letter also stated: "*Any Christian who uses their faith as a basis for bringing harm upon another has completely misunderstood what it means to lift up the Lordship of Jesus Christ.*"

In: <http://www.heraldo-nline.com/news/local/article21978831.html>, retrieved on 24.05.2015



8. US: No images of Prophet Muhammad — or any issue ads — will run on D.C. transit— The Washington D.C. transit system on 28 May suspended all “issue-oriented” advertising after being asked to run a subway ad featuring a cartoon depiction of the Prophet Mohammad. The ban, approved unanimously by the board of directors of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, prohibits political, religious and advocacy ads through the end of the year, a spokesman said. The transit system had been asked by the American Freedom Defense Initiative to display the cartoon that won first prize at an event in Texas this month at which two gunmen opened fire near the venue and wounded a security guard before they were shot and killed by police. The ad, which called for Americans to support free speech, features a bearded, turban-wearing Muhammad waving a sword and shouting: “You can’t draw me!” In reply, a cartoon bubble portrays an artist grasping a pencil and saying: “That’s why I draw you.”

In: <http://www.religionnews.com/2015/05/29/no-images-of-prophet-muhammad-or-any-other-issue-ads-will-run-on-d-c-transit/>, retrieved on 30.05.2015

II.II. In Europe:

1. UK: School teacher told his pupils at girls school 'Muslims worship the devil'—A teacher who told pupils at a Grantham school that he was ‘allergic to Mohammedans’ had been banned from the classroom indefinitely. Reverend Robert West, who stood for the British National Party in the Boston and Skegness Parliamentary elections, was teaching at Walton Girls' High School and Sixth Form in Grantham when the incidents took place. A National College for Teaching and Leadership panel found that in November 2013, Reverend West told pupils he was ‘allergic to Mohammedans’ and said there was a problem with people being Muslim because we are fighting them. It was also found that Reverend West told his class that "any Non-Christian God is demonic" and that "Muslims worship the devil".



In: <http://www.lincolnshireecho.co.uk/School-teacher-told-pupils-girls-school-Muslims/story-26485884-detail/story.html>, retrieved on 13.05.2015

2. Albania: Construction of largest mosque in Balkans—The Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs planned to finance the building of the Balkan’s largest mosque in the Albanian capital Tirana. Mazhar Bilgin, deputy chairman of the trustee committee of Turkey’s Diyanet Foundation, told *Anadolu Agency* on 12 May that the complex would be 10,000 meters square. The mosque would be built near the Albanian parliament’s building in Tirana. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Albanian President Bujar Nishani, Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, Turkey’s top cleric Mehmet Gormez and Albanian Muslim community leader Skender Brucaj would inaugurate the construction work of the mosque Wednesday. Bilgin told *Anadolu Agency* that the mosque was able to accommodate 4,500 people.

In: <http://www.worldbulletin.net/news/159114/albania-construction-of-largest-mosque-in-balkans>, retrieved on 14.05.2015

3. Russia: Portable mosque roams Moscow streets to facilitate prayers – A mobile mosque would roam the streets of Moscow to facilitate Muslims living in the Russian capital to perform their five daily prayers, project sponsor Airat Kasimov said on 14 May. The mobile mosque started operating by the third week of May, providing a free service requested by the faithful by an order submitted online or by phone, Kasimov told Russian news agency Interfax. The initiative, supported by crowdfunding, aimed to address the lack of mosques in the Russian capital. Currently there were only four mosques in Moscow where nearly two million Muslims live, about one-fifth of the population. The mosque was essentially a bus with two separate areas: one for ablutions and one for prayers, with space for up to seven people. Kasimov clarified that if the project was well received, a fleet of mobile mosques would be launched, some of which could service the streets and others stationed outside shopping malls. The number of Muslims living in the whole of Russia was estimated at around 20 million, although there were no official statistics to confirm the number.

In: <http://www.mid-day.com/articles/portable-mosque-roams-moscow-streets-to-facilitate-prayers/16211172>, retrieved on 16.05.2015

4. UK: Muslim group to consult on plans for Britain's first women's mosque—A group of Muslims intending to build Britain's first female-led mosque were to consult with Islamic scholars and locals over a prayer space primarily for women. The idea behind the separate prayer space was the belief of the Muslim Women's Council (MWC) that when it came to places of worship, the space dedicated to women in mosques was quite insignificant. In the initial process, the organization was likely to discuss the various options for the women's mosque and the idea that it was to be managed by women only.

In: <http://tribune.com.pk/story/885635/muslim-group-to-consult-on-plans-for-britains-first-womens-mosque/>, retrieved on 14.05.2015

II.III. Rest of the World:

1. India: EC expresses displeasure over Sena MP Sanjay Raut's remarks on Muslims— The Election Commission on 20 May expressed strong displeasure over Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Raut's remark that Muslims should be stripped of voting rights and advised him to be more circumspect in future in his public utterance. In its order issued on the same day, the Commission, while rejecting his explanation, said that by making such remarks he had violated the provisions of the election code.

Raut had made the remarks in an editorial published in Shiv Sena's mouthpiece 'Saamna', when model code of conduct was in force then for the bypoll in Vandre East and Tasgaon Kavathe Mahankali assembly constituencies of Maharashtra. The EC had earlier issued him a show cause notice based on a complaint filed against him. According to EC, his remark suggesting that Muslims should be disenfranchised violated sub para (1) of Para 1 of the poll code, which restrains party leaders and candidates from making communal appeals and statements that can create mutual hatred, and sub-para 4 of Para 1, which debars "corrupt practices" and offences under electoral laws. The Commission also reminded him of a Supreme Court observation which said that "the duty at the top echelons of leadership at the state and national level of all political parties is to set the trend for giving the needed information to the electorate by adopting desirable standards so that it percolates to the lower levels and provides a congenial desirable standards for a free and fair poll."



In: <http://www.firstpost.com/politics/ec-expresses-displeasure-sena-mp-sanjay-rauts-remarks-muslims-2254962.html>, retrieved on 21.05.2015

2. Australia: Aussie Punched for Defending Muslim Women—A man in Australia had been assaulted and punched in the face after standing up for three Muslim women who were the target of racial and bigoted attack on a train in Melbourne. Jason Cias told The Age on 26 May: "One of them made reference to her headscarf, saying 'You shouldn't be wearing that shit in Australia'." The hateful comment was directed at three Muslim women who were vilified by two tradesmen for wearing a headscarf. Suffering bruising and swelling, Cias said he would not regret his interference to protect the helpless women.



In: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/asia-pacific/486541-aussie-punched-for-defending-muslim-women.html>, retrieved on 27.05.2015

3. Australia: Christian leaders urge Britain First to cancel plans for march through Luton— On 20 May, a group of church ministers and community workers had urged a far-right group to reconsider its plans to march through Luton planned on 27 June. In an open letter to the group leader, church leaders from across Luton challenged the group's self-proclaimed Christian stance and asked for its plans to be shelved. It reads: "Britain First regularly claim to be defending Christian Britain... however the atmosphere on your marches, and

those like them, and the way you operate does not represent Christianity nor the church in Luton. As Christians we are committed to share our faith, but we're also called to love our neighbour, and live at peace with them."

It adds: "There are problems between members of our communities, but we are committed to dealing with them positively together, and have people and structures we can call on for help in resolution of things that could divide us. Marches like this do not deal with extremism, they simply have the potential to stir up more trouble as the Luton community feels threatened by the march, and many from all communities are angered by your intended presence."

In: <http://www.lutontoday.co.uk/news/christian-leaders-urge-britain-first-to-cancel-plans-for-march-through-luton-1-6757775>, retrieved on 22.05.2015

4. India: Dalai Lama urges Aung San Suu Kyi to help Rohingya Muslims— The Dalai Lama had urged Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's pro-democracy icon and a fellow Nobel Peace Prize laureate, to speak out to protect her country's persecuted Rohingya Muslims amid a human trafficking crisis. The spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists, told The Australian newspaper that the world cannot ignore the plight of the more than 3,000 desperate migrants who had landed on the shores of Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in recent weeks, often abandoned by human traffickers or freed after their families paid ransoms.

Suu Kyi became an international hero during her years of house arrest for speaking out against the generals who long ruled Myanmar. She entered politics after her 2010 release, when the junta handed over power to a nominally civilian government. In a predominantly Buddhist country where there was much animosity toward the Rohingya Muslims, she had remained silent about their persecution. She now said she never sought to be a human rights champion. Critics said that defending the Rohingya could cost her support if she run for president.

In: <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/dalai-lama-urges-aung-san-suu-kyi-rohingya-31357457>, retrieved on 30.05.2015

5. Australia: Aussies Launch Website to Fight Bigotry—Joining efforts to combat growing Islamophobia



in Australia, two Victorian women had launched an online initiative to show support for victims of anti-Muslim attacks in the south-eastern state. Susie Latham told *Herald Sun* on 31 May: "I don't think people realize how it impacts on individuals...If you don't agree with what's being said there's nowhere to say 'hey, if you're saying stuff about Muslims you're not saying it on my behalf.'"

Disturbed by the surge of Islamophobic attacks across the country, Latham along with her friend and human rights academic Linda Briskman launched a website that aims to fight bigotry. The website, voicesagainstbigotry.org, urged Australians to add their name to a list of people denouncing discrimination against Muslims. Launched since April, the anti-hate website drew more than 400 names in just over a week. Besides fighting rising anti-Muslim sentiments, the initiative was also prompted by reports about the launch of an anti-Muslim political party by the end of 2015.

In: <http://www.onislam.net/english/news/asia-pacific/486667-aussies-launch-website-to-fight-bigotry.html>, retrieved on 31.05.2015

III. SITUATION OF MUSLIMS

III.I. In the United States and Canada:

1. US: Groundbreaking ceremony held for planned Omaha mosque — A groundbreaking ceremony was held on the last week of May for a planned mosque that would become part of Omaha interfaith campus, including Christians, Jews and Muslims. More than a dozen local Muslim children grabbed shovels and dug into the ground on 21 May to mark the forthcoming construction of the mosque, expected to open in late 2016 or early 2017.

Plans for a Christian presence took shape last April when members of Countryside Community Church voted to relocate there. The church's pastor said they already had more than \$16 million in financial commitments toward construction, which was at least a year away. The first piece of the interfaith campus came when Temple Israel moved into its new synagogue there in 2013. The mosque would serve as an institute for Muslim prayer, learning and fellowship, and nearly all funding has been raised to build it. The mosque project was estimated to be around \$6.2 million to \$6.5 million. A fourth building planned for the site would serve as a shared center and provide, social, educational and conference space.

In: http://www.theindependent.com/news/state/groundbreaking-ceremony-held-for-planned-omaha-mosque/article_b99a9891-90aa-5a7c-8497-e18d467605e2.html, retrieved on 23.05.2015

2. US: American Muslims work to dispel myths about Islam —When Malika MacDonald watched from afar the devastation caused by unrest in Baltimore's long-struggling neighborhoods, the Boston-based worker with Muslim charity ICNA Relief USA felt compelled to help. Staff and volunteers with the group, which helps disaster victims, came to the city in May and distributed food and hygiene goods to elderly residents living on riot-torn blocks. On 23 May, MacDonald returned to the city, this time for the annual convention of the Islamic Circle of North America, (ICNA) as an attendee and speaker, but also to continue the charity's work in the city. The annual convention's theme this year — to dispel growing misperceptions about Islam and the Prophet Muhammad — dovetailed with her own work with one of the nation's largest domestic charities. Volunteers from the 20,000-attendee convention handed out about 400 'blessing bags' with dental kits, juice, oranges, water, cereal bars, soup, and food donated by Whole Foods around Madison Street and the Fallsway. The convention run through 25 May.



In: <http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-muslim-conference-20150524-story.html>, retrieved on 25.05.2015

III.II. In Europe:

Germany: German scholars who are shedding light on a sacred book— The Corpus Coranicum project was created in 2007 by Koranic scholar Angelika Neuwirth and two of her students, one of whom is Mr Marx. It came about in an environment, following the attacks of September 11 2001, that made many in the west want to learn more about the Koran. Mr Marx said: *"There's a certain desire, a curiosity in the German academia and the larger public. Some people have questions: what does it say, where is it from, what is the context, and how to understand the text in the context"*.

Mr Marx and his colleagues were still far from providing the answers; for now they had been collecting fragments of Koranic manuscripts, carbon-dating parchments and studying variant readings. Corpus Coranicum builds on a tradition of Koranic scholarship in the German language that was halted by the Third Reich. It revived a pre-second world war project that was based on a treasure trove of copies of ancient manuscripts of the Koran. The scholar running the project at the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities back then, Anton Spitaler, had claimed the archive was destroyed in the British bombing, but Spitaler had been hiding it all along. Ms Neuwirth was one of Spitaler's pupils. Corpus Coranicum takes no position on the Muslim belief that the Koran was transmitted to the prophet.

In: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/31656446-0456-11e5-95ad-00144feabdc0.html>, retrieved on 28.05.2015

III.III. Rest of the World:

Myanmar: 500 Muslims Persecuted by Buddhists Flee, Wash Ashore on Two Boats in Indonesia—Boats carrying around 500 members of Myanmar's long-persecuted Rohingya Muslim community washed to shore in western Indonesia on 10 May. Steve Hamilton, deputy chief of mission at the International Organization for Migration in Jakarta, said teams were racing to Mantang Puntong, in Aceh province. He added that the

men, women and children arrived on two separate boats, one carrying around 430 people and the other 70.

In: <http://www.theblaze.com/stories/2015/05/10/500-muslims-persecuted-by-buddhists-flee-wash-ashore-on-two-boats-in-indonesia/>, retrieved on 11.05.2015

IV. ON BURQAH AND VEIL RELATED ISSUES:

1. **Sweden: Sweden mayor compares burqa with slavery**—Bo Frank, the conservative mayor of the city of Växjö in southern Sweden, on 8 May suggested that women should be banned from wearing full-faced veils. He wrote on his blog: *“It ought to be banned!! It (the burqa) doesn’t belong in Sweden. Europe, the world,”* adding the incident *“pi**d me off”*. He went on to describe the woman as the men’s “slave” in saying: *“Yes, I interpreted it almost as a form of slavery. It doesn’t feel right considering we host a Pride week in Växjö.”*

In: <http://www.thelocal.se/20150509/mayor-compares-burqa-with-slavery>, retrieved on 10.05.2015

2. **Congo: Congo bans full-face veil in public as Muslims flood the country**—The violence in the Central African Republic left Muslims seeking shelter in Congo since few past months, prompting the Congo government to ban women from wearing full-face veils in public. Officials explained the ban was to counter extremism. It signified that Congo joined France as the only countries to ban veils and burqas in the public. The law also banned Muslims from other countries from sleeping at mosques.

In: <http://www.breitbart.com/national-security/2015/05/03/congo-bans-full-face-veil-in-public-as-muslims-flood-the-country/>, retrieved on 04.05.2015

3. **UK: 'Burqa not conducive to western liberal society': We should follow ban says UKIP**—*“The wearing of the full face veil in public should be banned in Britain”*, said UKIP's acting leader Paul Nuttall on 23 May. His comments followed an announcement of a new law by the Government in the Netherlands, approved by the cabinet sitting in The Hague, which would ban the wearing of all face coverings including ski-masks and helmets in certain public places. Mr Nuttall, the party's deputy leader, was in temporary charge of UKIP while Nigel Farage took a break. He added: *“Belgium and France and now the Netherlands have argued that the burqa is not conducive to western liberal society, and that people’s faces need to be exposed so they can communicate and integrate.”*

In: <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/579622/Ukip-Paul-Nuttall-Netherlands-new-law-face-coverings-ban-discrimination-religious-freedom>, retrieved on 25.05.2015

Related: Dutch Government to ban Burqa in certain public areas—The Dutch government approved on 22 May, a proposal partially banning face-covering veils in public areas like schools, hospitals and on public transportation, but not in the streets. Violating the law could result in fines of US\$450. The government mentioned in a statement: *“Face-covering clothing will in future not be accepted in education and healthcare institutions, government buildings and on public transport.”* Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte explained: *“The bill does not have any religious background...The government tried to find a balance between people’s freedom to wear the clothes they want and the importance of mutual and recognizable communication.”* A bill proposed by Rutte's previous government, implementing the full prohibition of such veils in public spaces, including in the streets was now withdrawn.

In: <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/news/Dutch-Government-to-Ban-Burqa-in-Certain-Public-Areas-20150523-0032.html>, retrieved on 24.05.2015

5. **France: French Muslims Say Veil Bans Give Cover to Bias**— More than 10 years after France passed its first anti-veil law restricting young girls from wearing veils in public schools, the head coverings of observant Muslim women, from colorful silk scarves to black chadors, had become one of the most potent flash points in the nation’s tense relations with its vibrant and growing Muslim population. Mainstream politicians continued to push for new measures to deny veiled women access to jobs, educational institutions

and community life. They often say they were doing so for the benefit of public order or in the name of laïcité, the French term for the separation of church and state. But critics said these efforts, rather than promoting a sense of secular inclusion, had encouraged rampant discrimination against Muslims in general and veiled women in particular. The result had been to fuel a sense among many Muslims that was engaging in a form of state racism.

In: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/27/world/europe/muslim-frenchwomen-struggle-with-discrimination-as-bans-on-veils-expand.html>, retrieved on 27.05.2015

V. ON DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS:

1. US: Local Muslims host faiths to stand for peace—More than 100 Muslims, Christians, Jews and Sikhs came to a local mosque 3 May to form a symbolic, interfaith ring they said was necessary in the wake of local Islamic controversy and international violence. Officials behind this "interfaith peace ring" event at West



Chester Township's Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati said they were inspired in part by a February incident in Scandinavia, when dozens of Muslims and others in Oslo, Norway, formed a symbolic, protective ring around a synagogue in the wake of a deadly attack on a synagogue in Denmark. They were also prompted by the local uproar in April over a student that invited girls at the Warren County high school to wear the Muslim hijab or head scarf to experience a small part of the Islamic religion. Mason school officials canceled the event in response to parents and public complaints that it was an inappropriate injection of religion into the school. More than 100 participants then joined hands and held

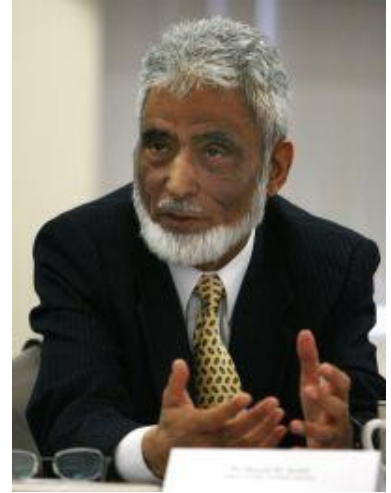
a moment of silence for religious unity.

In: <http://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2015/05/03/interfaith-muslims-west-chester/26841019/>, retrieved on: 04.05.2015

2. India: Bihar's Muslims donate land for world's largest Hindu temple— Muslims in Bihar, in a stellar demonstration of communal harmony, had donated land to help build the world's largest Hindu temple which would have the capacity to seat a staggering 20,000 people. Kunal, a former Indian Police Service officer, said that Muslims had come forward to ensure that the temple comes up soon. The construction of the temple would commence in June at Janki Nagar near Kesaria in East Champaran district, about 150 km from here. He added that Mahavir Mandir Trust has obtained 200 acres of land. Earlier, some Muslims had helped build a Hindu temple dedicated to Goddess Durga in Gaya district, another temple was dedicated to God Shiva in Begusarai district and in Sitamarhi district.

In: http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-05-19/news/62368745_1_largest-hindu-temple-temple-complex-shiv-temple, retrieved on 20.05.2015

3. US: U.S. Islamic leader praises Vatican II tome on religious dialogue—Catholic Church leaders and scholars were not the only ones praising the 50-year-old church document ‘*Nostra Aetate*’ (In Our Time), the Second Vatican Council’s declaration on relations with non-Christian religions. During the first part of a 19-21 May, it also received appreciation from a U.S. Muslim leader who said ‘*Nostra Aetate*’ helps different faiths recognize common roots and build a new sense of direction. Sayyid Syeed, national director of the Islamic Society of North America’s Office for Interfaith and Community Alliances, said the church document links Catholics, Muslims and Jews by urging them to promote the values in their sacred texts. Syeed also noted the time frame when the document was being put together, saying it occurred at the height of the civil rights movement in the United States and when there was a concentrated effort to start Islamic centers and Islamic student groups on university campuses in the U.S. Syeed added: “*The Catholic Church acted as a big brother in its understanding of a religious minority.*”



In: <http://catholicphilly.com/2015/05/news/national-news/muslim-leader-praises-50-year-old-church-document-on-religious-dialogue/>, retrieved on 22.05.2015

4. UK: Meet Catholic Archbishop who teaches people about the Quran—A retired Catholic Archbishop had made it his life’s mission to teach students about the Quran. Michael Fitzgerald who was a former head of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue at the Vatican and a former papal nuncio to Egypt, believed the Quran could inspire Christians in many ways and help to deepen their faith. *Christian Today* reports that Archbishop Fitzgerald, from Walsall in the West Midlands in the UK, had also been using his retirement to lead Christian retreats on the different names used for God in Islam. He compared them with the many names for God in the Bible.

In a recent lecture at Notre Dame University in the US, Archbishop Fitzgerald emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue and understanding. He said: “*Religion, relayed by inter-religious dialogue, can provide the right atmosphere in which conflicts can be involved. Efforts can be made towards greater respect for all individuals, and the goal of harmony and peace be brought nearer....Christian-Muslim dialogue should lead to a common search for understanding, to a shared sympathy for those who were suffering and in need. A thirst for justice for all, forgiveness from wrong done, together with a readiness to recognize one’s own wrongdoing... There is a constant need to educate people, conveying the true image of Islam, as many Muslims advocate, but also revealing the true image of Christianity.*”

In: <http://pulse.ng/religion/inter-religious-dialogue-meet-catholic-archbishop-who-teaches-people-about-the-quran-id3782241.html>, retrieval on 23.05.2015

5. France: Cardinal Tauran: Catholics and Muslims do not know each other—French Cardinal Jean-Louis



Tauran, president of the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue, He said: “*Catholics and Muslims do not know each other well enough, despite 50 years of Nostra Aetate.*” He made his remarks in a keynote address in May at the conference *Nostra Aetate: ‘Celebrating Fifty Years of the Catholic Church’s Dialogue With Jews and Muslims’*, held at The Catholic University of America, Washington, and co-sponsored by the university’s School of Theology and Religious Studies and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops’

Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs. He added: “*For Christians entering into dialogue with Muslims, they need to understand that Islam is at the same time a religion, a political system and a civilisation.*”

In: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2015/05/25/cardinal-tauran-catholics-and-muslims-do-not-know-each-other/>, retrieved on 26.05.2015

VI. GENERAL ISSUES:

Free Speech Is a Stupid Reason to Draw the Prophet Muhammad (Media opinion excerpted from Dale Hansen, Detroit News)

Bill Maher continued his one man crusade to convince liberals that belittling and disrespecting Muslims and their faith is somehow a progressive position. This week he was joined in his proselytization by The Blaze analyst Will Cain. The conversation focused on two separate Islamic-based news stories that the media covered recently. The first was opposition to an award being given by the PEN organization to the satirical French Magazine Charlie Hebdo for their "courage" in depicting the Prophet Muhammad. The second was a contest held in Texas where participants had to draw Prophet Muhammad.

For his part Maher stated: "This is America. Do we not have the right to draw whatever we want?", which Cain followed up with: "You don't just have a right to free speech -- when someone's position is 'if you offend me, I will kill you' it becomes virtuous for you to offend that person." It should be noted that these comments both really miss the point of the opposition. No one is saying you can't draw a picture of the Prophet Muhammad -- we agree that is your first amendment right. What they are saying is, just because you can do something does that mean you should? It also begs the question; is intentionally offending someone because they have different beliefs than you really a sign of courage?

In schools this sort of premeditated provocation is called bullying and has caused numerous young adults to take their own lives. Who is to blame for their death? The kids doing the bullying or the kid who would rather die than be tortured another day? Cain apparently blames the bullied kid. Of course, some of those who are bullied end up killing the bullies instead. According to Cain, this means the media would be virtuous in relentlessly antagonizing this child since his bully was just practicing free speech.

If killing individuals based on religious beliefs deserves a full frontal assault on that religion, why has Cain never written or commented on the hundreds of LGBT killed every year in majority Christian countries? Shouldn't the media - Cain included - condemn all Christians for the acts of these few who can't control their temper? Isn't that the courageous and righteous thing to do? One imagines Cain and those who agree with his position would be less inclined to support a contest for drawing Jesus as a homosexual or a museum exhibition of aborted fetuses held by a pro-choice organization. Yet you can bet a couple rednecks with guns would eventually show up to voice their displeasure.

It would also be considered free speech to use the N-word anywhere you want, yet the use of the word may likely cost you your life. Given this reality, shouldn't Will Cain drop the N-bomb every chance he gets? Wouldn't it be virtuous of him to hold an N-word blackface parade until those who would kill him change their mind? When you continually and overtly belittle people for being who they are, eventually some of the people in these groups will respond violently. Is the answer to their violence really to be more offensive? Is unrelenting abuse really the best way to get someone to do a thorough self-examination, or does it just make you look like a jerk and further solidify the belief that those outside the group are the real problem?

No one is defending ISIS or other extremist Muslims groups, but realize that it's not just the extremist that you tick off with your blanket Islamic insults. By insisting on drawing the Prophet Muhammad to offend the murders, you are also offending those who would otherwise be your allies. The vast majority of U.S. citizens agree with the goal of ending religious extremism. We just disagree with how you get there, and it has absolutely nothing to do with your first amendment rights to be a total d-bag.

In: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dale-hansen/free-speech-is-a-stupid-r_b_7274460.html, retrieved on 14.05.2015

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