

Nahed Hattar's "Crime"... and Punishment. Shot Dead in Jordan for Having "Mocked the ISIS"

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He was a Jordanian Journalist, a Leftist, a self-proclaimed "anti-Imperialist". He was a pro-Syria activist and a fierce supporter of Syrian President Bashar Al Assad's Government against the West's war of aggression for regime change in that country. And now he is the victim of Jordan's first ever political assassination.

Nahed Hattar, a secular Jordanian author and writer, was shot dead on September 25th, at the steps leading to the High Court Of Justice in Amman, the very court he was about to be tried in for "offending the Islamic religion" after sharing a "caricature" drawing mocking ISIS's skewed version of Islam on his personal Facebook page.

Let that mental image sink in for a second: a man shared a controversial image on an online platform (something millions around the world do on a daily basis), and now he is dead with three (maybe four) bullets to the head.

Hattar, a father of two, was an ardent advocate of the Syrian government, Hizbollah's Resistance movement, and a relentless opponent of the Muslim Brotherhood and Takfiri groups in his journalistic writings, TV appearances... and on his personal Facebook page, which evidently got him killed.

It all began on August 3rd, 2016, when Hattar shared a cartoon drawing portraying Heaven and God from the perspective of Islamic extremists (i.e. depicting a bearded man in bed, surrounded by virgins and alcohol); a maelstrom of public anger and backlash bordering on organized mob madness ensued, prompting Hattar to swiftly delete the post and apologize for unintentionally offending Muslims, lambasting at the same time those who took his post out of its strictly political context and distorted his intentions.

But it was too late; the anti-Nahed Hattar screed had already intensified and caught frenzied traction on a public level, especially among conservatives and religious groups which permeate Jordanian society. An avalanche of blind recriminations and accusations of offending Islam and Muslims coupled with numerous death threats and personalized insults were unleashed against Hattar in what now appears to have been an organized effort to take aim at the 56 year-old writer and settle scores with him due to his political stance, especially with regards to the Syrian conflict.

Many called for the man's execution, and Facebook groups calling for "avenging Islam" and "killing" Hattar popped up everywhere with hundreds of supporters and enthusiasts applauding the witch hunt, culminating in the eventual arrest of Hattar by Jordanian authorities for offending Islam and religious agitation. The "Islamic Action Front" (Jordan's

branch of the Muslim Brotherhood group) joined in the incitement orgy by calling the Jordanian Government to give Hattar “the severest of punishments” for his deed.

And what was his “deed” exactly?

Sharing a satire sketch (one that he did not draw by the way!) on his personal Facebook Page, to hammer home his viewpoints as a secularist on what is currently happening in a region marred only by sectarianism and religious bloodletting.

It wasn’t an anti-Islam rant or a sectarian post; it was a political one, driven primarily by Hattar’s well-known positions on the Syrian War, and his avowed political enmity towards the Muslim Brotherhood, ISIS, Takfiri movements and Islamic extremism, Hattar himself even titled the post with the tag: “ISIS’s God”.

Hattar was assassinated by a radical Islamic preacher (a lone wolf?) who decided to take matters into his own hands and “avenge Islam” on behalf of the many who called for exactly that.

I find myself wondering what thoughts were going through Nahed Hattar’s mind in that split second (or what, more than a month later, turned out to be a fateful moment) when he clicked on the “share” button of a silly caricature mocking the mentality and the sexually-driven ideology of ISIS.

Maybe Hattar was thinking of Syria; and the systematic destruction wrought upon that country, which he loved and passionately defended, courtesy of the various incarnations of western funded Islamist extremists. Maybe he was thinking of all those graphic videos of beheadings, guttings, suicide bombings, and sectarian lynchings of civilians in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. Maybe he was getting sick of the sectarianism that has engulfed the Arab World ever since the so-called Arab spring laid dreadful waste to the entirety of the Middle East region.

Or maybe he wasn’t thinking anything at all really, just another harmless post on a personal Facebook page; I mean how many of us give two thoughts before publishing anything, let alone a silly cartoon, on our own social media web pages. How many of us contemplate the ramifications of an impulsive comment, “like” or share of a Facebook post before “braving through” with it.

One thing is for sure, Nahed Hattar did not foresee that sharing an anti-ISIS satire drawing, an act that he later came to apologize for, would lead to a ghastly death at the hands of a living, breathing, walking incarnation of the very caricature he had shared on his page.

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