

# “On Psywar against the Innocent”

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Theme: [History](#), [Religion](#)

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When freedom of expression is used to incite the public to hatred of a national, religious, racial or ethnic group it becomes a crime. According to Article 20 of the U.N.'s "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights" :

1. Any propaganda for war shall be prohibited by law.
2. Any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law.

This doesn't contradict rights of freedom of expression. It attempts to constrain agendas of hatred. It is possible that any program of military propaganda or psywar against groups or nations is fundamentally illegal. Attempts to defend extreme hate crimes as within our rights of free speech encourages censorship, which encourages repression.

A video of U.S. origin, "Innocence of Muslims," the trailer to a film defaming and sexually deriding the Prophet Mohammed, has of course resulted in protest by Muslims worldwide. Why isn't everyone protesting ? The trailer is intensively offensive to human values, lacks redeeming artistic merit, and is recognizably propaganda. In California a judge refused to ban "Innocence of Muslims" from youtube, on the grounds that suppression would violate U.S. guarantees of free speech.

In France Charlie Hebdo has published on its cover a cartoon caricature depicting Islam's Prophet naked in a distorted sexual posture. The effect is despicable and intended. The original issue sold out and despite the anxiety of the country's 4 million Muslims, Charlie Hebdo ran the cartoon again. While France is sensitive to religious laws (abortions don't appear in French literature), it hasn't charged the editors of Charlie Hebdo with a hate crime, and instead closed French embassies and schools in twenty countries. Domestically any protests against the Charlie Hebdo cartoon, or against the American video/film, are banned. In Germany there are debates about whether the film should be allowed at cinemas or not.

To step back in history: in 2005 a cartoon of the Prophet by a Dutch cartoonist caused global protest by Muslims. The effect of his cartoon was compounded by selection of Islamic countries as NATO's preferred military targets as well as the occupation of Iraq. Internationally the humour of blasphemous cartoons is lost on people who live by their religions, particularly when their co-religionists are slaughtered for profit.

Europe can't be considered unwitting in the uses of cartoons as weaponry. Starting in about 1934 a campaign of cartoons attacking Judaism became a singularly Nazi tool in propaganda programs which became extermination programs. A similarity compounds in that both the U.S. video and the French cartoon are semi-pornographic in deriding their target sexually.

Sexual derision as propaganda was introduced to the world by Julius Streicher, editor of *Der Stürmer*, the Nazi organ which published cartoons of Jews defined to caricature. A note from *The Black Book*, originally compiled by the Soviet Union's Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee starting in 1942:

*For the first time in history, pornography was made an instrument of national education when Julius Streicher became editor of Der Stürmer and head of the publishing house Stürmer Verlag. Streicher, governor of Franconia, publicly honored by Hitler, was charged with the task of turning men in swine. Sadism and morbid sexual suggestions were the means. No under-the-counter sales were made of his perversely sensational literature, but rather by advertising and even by edict was it disseminated throughout Germany....Der Stürmer claims that the Jewish religion by its laws imposes sexual crimes on its believers."*

The video trailer of "Innocence of Muslims" strums these chords. In every country of the world, Muslims have the courage to protest the ugliness. Aside from being a blasphemy within Islam, the singular derision of the Prophet extends to the entire religious group. It isn't only propaganda but hate propaganda, and the occasional violence of the response a measure of the propaganda's damage and effectiveness.

"Innocence of Muslims" has its predecessor in the film *Fitna* made by Netherlands MP Geert Wilders, who rose to a seat in Dutch Parliament by increasing Islamophobia and gathering its support. In February 2009 Wilders showed the film to members of the U.S. Congress. In Canada as the Conservative government contributed to the illegal bombing of Libya, Mr. Wilders shared his opinion of Mohammed on May 9th, 2011 in Toronto, then on May 10 from Ottawa's National Arts Center. Although Wilders was acquitted of hate speech in the Netherlands, moments of his warnings against Islamization are provocative deep insults. Canada's laws against hate speech were not applied and he was given police protection. When the banner of freedom of speech yields a serious hate crime, repeatedly without prosecution, the campaign is sanctioned by the State.

Citizens of Western nations where 'sticks and stones can break my bones but words can never hurt me,' are slow to realize the sensitivity of Islam to symbolism, if not somewhat numb to religion in general. In the 1980's Islamic fundamentalist threats against Salman Rushdie may have seemed a ridiculous response to his manner of questioning authority. After strong warnings, his "Satanic Verses" was used in a worldwide marketing campaign with predictable results. Some indication of an agitprop campaign was there in the effective marshalling of England's and North American literary communities to Rushdie's defense, in a "which side are you on" equation useful to warriors, less so to intellectuals. The rise of Islamophobia interfaces neatly with U.S. and Coalition bombing of Iraq in 1990-91, and the subsequent military policies against Islamic nations. The defense of Rushdie's literary merit and rights, was followed by the demonization of Saddam Hussein and five Hiroshimas worth of ordinance dropped on a Muslim culture in 1990 and 91, initial steps in the destruction of Iraq's national group, museums, culture, people.

Because in 2012, the U.S. and France refuse to assert domestic laws against hate crimes in response to ongoing violations of Muslims' civil, religious and political rights, the propaganda continues with State sanction. In France, the government's responses to *Hebdo* and the anti-Islamic film contribute to isolating Muslims from their national fabric. It has the same effect as adopting anti-burqa legislation. In North America the ongoing extreme abuses of Islamic culture, both through crimes of foreign policy, but more immediately in the

military's and legal system's treatment of individual Muslims, are normalized. The appearance of widely publicized hate crimes, masquerading as the flux of free expression, warns one as a prelude to another step in another illegal war targeting hundreds of thousand of innocent civilians.

*When we speak of Hitler's "War against the Jews," we are using a figure of speech. It was a war against unarmed men, against women and children, carried on by an army of many millions of highly expert soldiers using all the destructive techniques of modern military science...* - The Black Book

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