

## IN THE NAME OF JUSTICE AND THE RIGHT TO SPEAK

We at *The Undercurrent* are writing in defense of the freedom of speech. The violent response to the *Jyllands-Posten* Muhammad cartoons has placed that freedom under attack. The American media has surrendered to the pressure. We will not.

On this special edition flyer, we have printed a rendition of one of the cartoons that Muslims demand to see censored. We are including it in protest and defiance of that demand. If you are offended, we implore you to set your emotions aside and to consider the issue at stake: do individuals have the right to publish material that others find offensive, without fear of violence?

We ourselves do not consider this cartoon to be offensive. We consider it to be an accurate view of the religion of Islam, whose followers make the news every day, all over the world, for mindlessly obeying Islam's orders to murder heretics. It was originally intended to expose a widespread fear of criticizing the Islamic religion in Denmark. It has done its job.

Free speech has come under attack not just in Denmark, but worldwide. Tens of thousands of Muslims across Europe, Africa, and the Middle East have responded to the cartoons with violence: they have thrown rocks, set fire to flags and embassies, chanted death threats and declared Fatwa. They have driven into hiding those responsible for creating and publishing the cartoons. Their avowed purpose is to prevent, through censorship, the expression of opinions they deem offensive.

As American citizens and as human beings, we know that free speech includes the right to offend. Our right to speak is not erased the moment someone wants us silenced.

We have that right always, undyingly, and in principle. If, at the very moment we are called to defend that right, we instead limit it, downplay it, and appease those who attack us for exercising it, then it won't be long before its exercise will no longer be possible.

The media should respond by expressing solidarity with the persecuted editors: they should re-print



the cartoons. There are too many American editors to kill. It's easier to intimidate a few people than an entire nation.

Newspapers, most of all, ought to rise in defense of speech—their business, objectively reporting the news, depends on that right. If newspapers do not defend free speech, there will be no one to defend the newspapers when the call comes, as it certainly will, for *them* to be silenced.

Instead, though the danger in America is much less than in Europe, the media has surrendered. Few papers have printed the cartoons, or even unapologetically defended their right to

do so. In the context of the Muslim attack, the media response is a betrayal of free speech. It is not merely an editorial preference, but self-imposed censorship. It is fear—fear of offending those self-righteously intent on being offended.

Let us be clear: it is not to “open a dialogue” that papers should publish. No rational dialogue is possible with those who have abandoned reason in favor of force; there can be no debate with an opponent who wants to shoot you dead. Even with those who have not responded violently, but nonetheless respond religiously, there can be no debate: what argument can one give for or against a dogma of faith? Papers should publish the cartoons not to discuss, but to *assert* their rights in the face of explicit attack.

The bravest of the American media have been the young editors of campus papers, who broke the silence of the national news. Two editors of the *Daily Illini* at the University of Illinois refused to apologize for publishing all twelve cartoons, though they were fired for doing so. Since their courageous act, student papers across the Midwest have published the cartoons, as has a Harvard paper. Meanwhile, the national media remains conspicuously silent.

If support for free speech will not come from our elders, then let it come from students. We at *The Undercurrent* implore student papers to publish the cartoons, support those who have already published, refuse intimidation, and stand on a principle that is the cornerstone of free society: the right to speak.

Most sincerely,  
*The Undercurrent* Staff

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# The Twilight of Freedom of Speech

**The West's current failure to staunchly defend our freedom to speak and criticize is explained by the injunction to love our enemies.**

*by Onkar Ghate*

To fathom our government's contemptible treatment of a handful of unbowed journalists, you must see the roots of that treatment in the moral ideal Christianity bequeathed the West.

In the face of the intimidation and murder of European authors, film makers and politicians by Islamic militants, a few European newspapers have the courage to defend their freedom of speech: they publish twelve cartoons to test whether it's still possible to criticize Islam. They discover it isn't. Muslims riot, burn embassies, and demand the censorship and death of infidels. The Danish cartoonists go into hiding; if they weren't afraid to speak before, they are now.

How do our leaders respond? Do they declare that an individual's freedom of speech is inviolable, no matter who screams offense at his ideas? No. Do they defend our right to life and pledge to hunt down anyone, anywhere, who abets the murder of a Westerner for having had the effrontery to speak? No—as they did not when the fatwa against Rushdie was issued or his translators were attacked and murdered.

Instead, the U.S. government announces that although free speech is important, the

government shares “the offense that Muslims have taken at these images,” and even hints that it is disrespectful to publish them.

Why does a Muslim have a moral right to his dogmas, but we don't to our rational principles? Why, when journalists uphold free speech and Muslims respond with death threats, does the State Department single out the journalists for moral censure? Why the vicious double standard? Why admonish the good to mollify evil?

The answer lies in the West's conception of morality.

Morality, we are told incessantly, by secularists and religionists, the left and the right, means sacrifice; give up your values in selfless service to others. “Serve in a cause larger than your wants, larger than yourself,” Bush proclaims to a believing nation.

But when you surrender your values, are you to give them up for men you admire, for those you think have earned and deserve them? Obviously not—otherwise yours would be an act of trade, of justice, of self-assertiveness, not self-sacrifice.

You must give to that which you *don't* admire, to that which you judge to be unworthy, undeserving, irrational. An employee, for instance, must give up his job for a competitor he deems inferior; a businessman must contribute to ideological causes he opposes; a taxpayer must fund modern, unemployed “artists” whose feces-covered works he loathes; the United States must finance the UN, which it

knows to be a pack of America-hating dictatorships.

To uphold your rational convictions is the most selfish of acts. To renounce them, to surrender the world to that which you judge to be irrational and evil, is the epitome of sacrifice. When Jesus, the great preacher of self-sacrifice, commanded “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you,” he knew whereof he spoke.

In the left's adaptation of this perverse ideal, selfless surrender to evil translates into a foreign policy of self-loathing and “sensitivity,” of spitting in America and the West's face while showing respect for the barbarisms of every gang.

Bill Clinton, for instance, certainly no radical leftist, jumped into the recent fray to castigate *us*: “None of us are totally free of stereotypes about people of different races, different ethnic groups, and different religions . . . there was this appalling example in . . . Denmark . . . these totally outrageous cartoons against Islam.”

In the right's version, selfless surrender to evil translates into a foreign policy of self-effacing service.

Our duty, Bush declares, is to bring the vote to Iraqis and Palestinians, but we dare not tell them what constitution to adopt, or ban the killers they want to vote for. We have no right to assert our principles, because they are rational and good. But the Iraqis and Pal-

estinians have a right to enact their tribal and terrorist beliefs at our expense, because their beliefs are irrational and evil. In the present crisis, the State Department will not defend free speech, because this principle is rationally defensible; to unequivocally assert this value would be selfish. But the Department will suggest that we respectfully refrain from publishing cartoons that upset the mental lethargy of self-made slaves to authority; Muslims have a right to their mystical taboos, precisely because the beliefs are mystical.

Tonight, when you turn on the news and see hatred-seething hordes burning the West's flags and torching its embassies, remember that this is the enemy your morality commands you to love and serve—and remember the lonely Danes hiding in fear for their lives.

And then, in the ultimate act of self-assertiveness, pledge to renounce the morality of sacrifice and learn its opposite: the morality of rational self-interest.

Though the West's twilight has begun, the darkness of suicide has not yet engulfed us. We still have a chance.

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