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Op-Ed: Is Islam senselessly targeting Muslims?

Islam's so-called senseless violence is supported by the Islamic Doctrine.

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I appreciated reading Rebecca Abrahamson's recent article titled: [A Muslim Counter Narrative](#).^[1] She started her article off with the words, "In the shadow of the terror attacks increasingly aimed at Muslims," and then proceeded to list three recent attacks in which Muslims were killed by "suicide" bombers:

The March 27th Easter Sunday attack in Lahore, Pakistan, targeting Christians; the March 26th attack on soccer fans in Iskandariya, Iraq; and the March 16th attack on a Nigerian mosque.

Abrahamson concluded this introductory section by writing:

But aren't Christians "People of the Book", and who says that soccer is haram (forbidden) and what objection was there to a mosque? No one is safe.

According to Abrahamson, there seems to be a senselessly violent version of Islam out there that is now consuming even Muslims.

But she notes that "some Muslims are speaking out," and the rest of her article focused on Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, "a Muslim theologian who, at personal self-sacrifice, is spreading the word that there can be a peaceful Islam."

Is there really a senselessly violent version of Islam? Aren't People of the Book supposed to be protected under Islam? Is soccer now *haram* and any mosque subject to attack? Is no one really safe? Can the ideas of Javed Ahmad Ghamidi help address this seemingly senseless violence that is apparently now directed against other Muslims? To answer those questions, let's look at each of these attacks in the order listed by Abrahamson.

As a framework for examining these attacks, we will rely on an insightful article about ISIS (the Islamic State) by Raymond Ibrahim: *But ISIS Kills More Muslims than Non-Muslims!*^[2] In this article, Ibrahim makes two observations that we will use as our framework:

Observation No. 1: ISIS does not consider its victims to be Muslim. ISIS is a Sunni Muslim organization and views all non-Sunni Muslims (e.g. Shias) as false Muslims.

Observation No. 2: If fellow Sunnis are accidentally killed by ISIS, those Sunni victims are considered martyrs, destined to enter Islam's paradise.

The Easter Sunday Attack, Lahore, Pakistan

As the *BBC News* explained, on March 27th

The area around Gulshan-i-Iqbal park was more crowded than usual, as members of Lahore's minority Christian community had gathered to



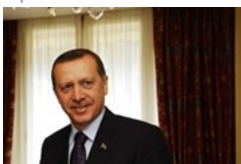
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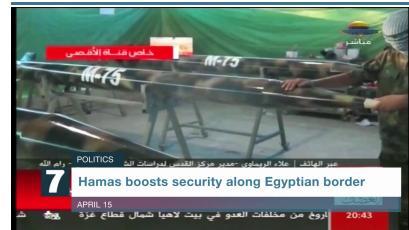
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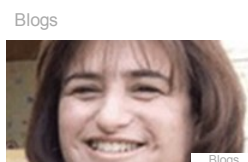
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celebrate Easter at a funfair there. [\[3\]](#)

During the festivity, a lone "suicide" bomber joined the crowd and blew himself up, killing over 70 people and injuring hundreds.

The Taliban-related group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JA) took credit for sending the lone "suicide" bomber, Salahuddin Khorasani, in amongst the crowd. A spokesman for JA later stated:

"Members of the Christian community who were celebrating Easter today were our prime target...We didn't want to kill women and children. Our targets were male members of the Christian community." [\[4\]](#)

It was also reported that a JA spokesman stated:

"We claim responsibility for the attack on Christians as they were celebrating Easter...It was part of our annual martyrdom attacks we have started this year." [\[5\]](#)

So the intended targets of this attack were Christians, not Muslims.

But Christians and Jews are the People of the Book mentioned in the Koran. Doesn't this automatically mean then that Muslims are supposed to respect and protect Christians? On the contrary, as I pointed out in a previous article:

Here is some of what the Koran has to say about the People of the Book: Many of the People of the Book have enmity and hatred toward Muslims (2:109); the People of the Book mix truth with falsehood and conceal the truth (3:71); the People of the Book know that Islam is the true faith but they reject it anyway and hinder those seeking to follow Islam (3:98-99); Allah commands the People of the Book to believe in Islam and Muhammad, or he will "efface faces and turn them hindwards" (4:47); Muslims are commanded to fight the People of the Book until those People pay the jizyah, "with willing submission and feel themselves subdued" (9:29); and, if the People of the Book don't believe in Islam, then they are among the worst of creatures and they will abide in the Fires of Hell (98:6). [\[6\]](#)

So we find no indication that the designation "People of the Book" guarantees any respect from, or protection by Muslims.

In addition, in the Koran Allah states that he curses Christians (9:30), that the only religion acceptable to him is Islam (3:85), and Islam is to be superior over all other religions (9:33 and 48:28).

But what about Javed Ahmad Ghamidi and his "peaceful" approach to Islam? Abrahamson pointed out that Ghamidi condemns "suicide" bombings and the intentional killing of civilians.

Modern day Israel, along with Christian holy sites such as Bethlehem, are located in "Canaan in Palestine," so according to Ghamidi, Jews and Christians have no right to be there.



But what Abrahamson did not point out was that Ghamidi stated that there were certain areas of the Middle East where the People of the Book should not be allowed. In a 2013 interview Ghamidi stated:

You must keep two things in mind, i.e. Allah has preserved two places, Canaan in Palestine and the land of the Arabs for the preaching of His Messengers since the time of Abraham (sws). Worshipping idols in these places is completely forbidden. No other religion except Islam can be propagated in these places. It is just the same as declaring the whole area as a mosque. It means that no one has the right to enter this territory. [\[7\]](#)

Modern day Israel, along with Christian holy sites such as Bethlehem, are located in "Canaan in Palestine," so according to Ghamidi, Jews and Christians have no right to be there. We can presume that JA feels the same way about Christians in Pakistan.

But perhaps Ghamidi has his own, more inclusive version of Islam that could include Jews and Christians? No. Ghamidi wrote that Islam, "the only true religion in God's sight," consisted of the following five things:

1. Bearing witness that there is no god besides Allah and Muhammad (sws) is His Messenger
2. Offering the prayer
3. Paying zakah
4. Keeping the fasts of Ramadan
5. Offering the hajj of the Baytullah [the Ka'bah in Mecca] [\[8\]](#)

You won't find many practicing Jews and Christians believing that Muhammad is the final prophet whose example must be followed and who spoke for Allah, or who feel it necessary to make hajj to Mecca at least



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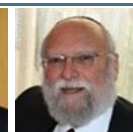
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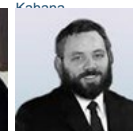
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once in their lifetime. So even though Ghamidi might condemn the Easter Day attack, he nevertheless stated that there were areas of the Middle East in which Jews and Christians should be prohibited. In this he is simply following the command of his prophet Muhammad:

It has been narrated by 'Umar b. Al-Khattab that he heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) saying: I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula and will not leave any but Muslims. [\[9\]](#)

So we can see that the Easter Day attack was not senseless violence, but rather supported by Islamic Doctrine. With regard to the Muslims killed during this attack, their death was incidental and they can be considered as martyrs (Observation No. 2). In terms of a solution coming from Ghamidi, he believes that Jews and Christians should not be in Canaan or the "land of the Arabs," while JA apparently believes that Christians should not be in Pakistan. In this respect, Ghamidi and JA differ only in terms of location.

Attack in an Iraqi Soccer Stadium

On March 26th a "suicide" bomber blew himself up inside a soccer stadium in Iskandariya, Iraq, killing at least 30 and wounding many more in the crowd, apparently all Muslim. Abrahamson asked if soccer was now *haram* (forbidden)?

In reality, this act of terrorism had nothing to do with the game of soccer; it was just that the playing of the game provided a venue in which a terrorist attack could take place.

ISIS claimed credit for this attack. By why would ISIS be intentionally killing fellow Muslims? The answer is, because ISIS did not consider them to be fellow Muslims. As an *Al Jazeera* news report pointed out: "Iskandariya is a Shia town." [\[10\]](#) And as we saw with Observation No. 1, ISIS does not consider Shias to be fellow Muslims. Rather ISIS literature is rife with statements that Shias are apostates and/or infidels and should be killed. And such an idea is supported by commands of Allah in the Koran which order Muslims to fight and kill infidels (e.g. 9:5 and 9:123).

Add in the fact that Iraqi military forces had been recapturing territory from ISIS and it was thus important for ISIS to strike back, and we have two adequate explanations for why ISIS attacked soccer fans in Iskandariya.

But what does Ghamidi have to say about Shias? His views were described in a 2012 article titled "Javed Ahmed Ghamidi's views about Shias and Sufi Sunnis":

[Ghamidi] does not treat Shias or Sufis as infidels. He treats them as deviant sects of Islam who can be treated as Kafir (infidel) only when a State (Pakistan or Saudi Arabia) formally apostates them (just as the State of Pakistan did in the case of Ahmadis). What is unmistakable in his ideology is the fact that he remains inspired by a Salafist-Deobandi ideology which is borderline Nasibi. Nasibi is a term used for those people who despise the Ahl-e-Bait (family) and Aal (progeny) of the Prophet Muhammad...Ghamidi has a subtle anti-Shia and anti-Sufi tone to his talks. [\[11\]](#)

Iskandariya is a Shia town, and Ghamidi considers Shias to be a "deviant sect" which can be declared as apostates by a "State." ISIS, the Islamic State, has declared the new Caliphate, an Islamic state, so would Ghamidi join ISIS in declaring Shias to be infidels and apostates?

So this was not a senseless attack on Muslims because soccer was being played. Rather it was an attack on apostates/infidels (Observation No. 1) supported by Islamic Doctrine; any Sunnis accidentally killed would be considered martyrs (Observation No. 2). In terms of a solution from Ghamidi, there appears to be nothing of significance: he believes the Shias belong to a deviant sect of Islam that can be declared an apostasy.

Attack on a Nigerian mosque

On March 16th, during early morning prayers, two female "suicide" bombers blew themselves up at a mosque in Umarari, Nigeria. One bomber went inside before blowing herself up, while the second bomber waited outside for people rushing out after the first bomb blast. At least 24 Muslims were killed and 18 wounded. It was the second attack on this same mosque in five months; in October 2015 two "suicide" bombers struck that mosque, killing six people. With regard to this March incident, Abrahamson had asked, "What objection was there to a mosque."

In March 2015 the terrorist group Boko Haram had pledged its allegiance to ISIS. Boko Haram was later linked to the October 2015 attack, [\[12\]](#) and to the March 16th attack. [\[13\]](#) What was Boko Haram's "objection" to the mosque?

There are two interesting facts that explain Boko Haram's "objection." The first involves the immediate condemnation of the March attack by the Iranian government:

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari on Thursday strongly denounced Wednesday's terrorist attack on a mosque in Nigeria's Maiduguri, which killed more than 20 innocent people. [\[14\]](#)

This Iranian condemnation is a good indication that the Umarari mosque was Shia. Boko Haram's specific attitude toward Shias is found in a November 2015 statement from Boko Haram after it had attacked a Shia procession:

By the permission of Allah, these attacks of ours against Shi'a polytheists will continue until we cleanse the earth of their filth. [\[15\]](#)

As with the attack in the soccer stadium, this was an attack on apostates/infidels (Observation No. 1), and it was supported by Islamic Doctrine.

There was also a strategic element to this attack on the mosque: it was reported to be a command center in the Nigerian army's battle against Boko Haram:

According to the coordinator of the local civilian self-defense Vigilante Group, Abba Aji, the mosque in Umarari served as a military command center in the Nigerian army's war against the Boko Haram terrorist group. [\[16\]](#)

So we can see that this attack on the mosque was not a senseless act of violence, and, as indicated in the previous section, Ghamidi would contribute nothing of significance in terms of addressing it.

The "Support" Ghamidi has in the Muslim World

According to Abrahamson, one could get an idea of the kind of support Ghamidi has in the Muslim world by looking at his 2015 Australian tour, which was "a great success." In that tour he spoke in seven venues "with audiences ranging from one hundred to four hundred participants."

In the first place, since Muslims make up only about 2.2% of the Australian population of about 23,783,500, it is hard to consider Australia as part of the Muslim world. Let's then look at the attendance figures. To keep the math simple, let's assume there were 400 participants at each event. This means there were 2,800 total participants. The Muslim population of Australia is about 523,237. So assuming that each of these participants was Muslim, that means that only .005 percent of Australia's Muslims attended. In reality, we know the overall attendance figures were not even this high, and from reading about Ghamidi's presentations, we find that the audiences were not even exclusively Muslims.

Since Abrahamson wrote that this Australian tour was an indication of the support Ghamidi has in the Muslim world, it would appear that Ghamidi has little support in the Muslim world.

Conclusion

Rebecca Abrahamson started her recent article with examples of what she considered to be a senselessly violent version of Islam that was now consuming even Muslims. The antidote for this was to be found in Muslims like Javed Ahmad Ghamidi who advocate for a "peaceful Islam."

However, we have seen that this supposed senseless violence is actually supported by Islamic Doctrine. And we have seen that there are aspects of Ghamidi's "peaceful Islam" that, although perhaps not directly supporting this violence, do not necessarily rule it out completely. On the other hand, this view of a "peaceful Islam" might be irrelevant because, based on Abrahamson's standard for judging support, Ghamidi appears to have little support for his opinions even in the Muslim world.

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