

## INTERFAITH INSIGHT

# Religious violence: Why don't religious leaders condemn it?

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A persistent question raised is: Why don't Muslims condemn the violence that is carried out in the name of Islam? The more pertinent question might be: Why don't we hear about the numerous condemnations that are frequently made?

Following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, there were over 20 Arab and Muslim countries that condemned the violence, and clearly identified that it was not justified by the Qur'an or Muslim teaching.

Since then, following every act of terrorism, there have been frequent condemnations by Muslim religious and political leaders.

It is not hard to find hundreds — if not thousands — of such condemnations of extremism by doing a search on the Internet.

But will you read about them in the newspaper or see them on the evening news?



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Probably not. It is violence that is news, not condemnation of violence. You probably will never read about a plane landing safely at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport, but let there be a mishap or even a threat of violence and it is sure to be news.

There is another disturbing aspect of news coverage that is actually playing into the hands of groups like ISIS.

News agencies around the globe love to display their atrocities against Christians and Westerners. Beheadings are

what they want the world to see, but they don't want us to see the thousands of Muslims that are being killed.

They want their actions to be seen as a battle between their version of Islam and the West.

And that is exactly what is emphasized in the media.

We don't hear as much about Muslims, both Sunni and Shi'a, that are being killed by the terrorists. Over 17,000 were killed in just one year according to a recent UN report.

Am I blaming the media? Not entirely; they print and broadcast what the public wants to know. The sad fact is there is not that much interest in the violence all over the world that doesn't somehow have a direct connection to who we are and how we live.

Another important fact rarely publicized is there are numer-

ous examples of leaders from all religions coming together to work for peace and take a stand against violence in the name of religion.

A recent example was the meeting last month in Amman, Jordan, sponsored by Prince Charles from Great Britain and King Abdullah II of Jordan.

A key figure in this event was the cousin of King Abdullah, Prince Ghazi, who is the chief adviser to the king for Religious and Cultural Affairs. Another key figure was Sarah Snyder from the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme, who was asked to chair this meeting of international religious leaders, including those from the Middle East.

Snyder and the Anglican Bishop of Carlisle in England have been guests of the Kaufman Interfaith Institute this past

week. They have been meeting with area interfaith clergy, including rabbis, imams and pastors at a luncheon sponsored by Fr. John Geaney, Rector of the Cathedral of St. Andrew, and Catholic Bishop David Walkowiak.

Other meetings have occurred with our many partners in the Year of Interfaith Service.

It is inspiring to know that our local efforts at interfaith understanding and service are a part of a much larger international effort: to bring religions together to stand for peace, as well as to stand against the immoral and misguided abuse of religion by terrorist extremists.

It is vital that all who seek peace work together and support those from other religious traditions that share the same vision.

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