

# **BIN LADEN LASHES OUT AT POPE**

According to several news reports, al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden has released a statement accusing Pope Benedict XVI of triggering a “new Crusade” against Muslims. The accusation comes amidst the recent republishing of the Danish cartoons that inflamed Muslims in 2006; several Danish newspapers decided to rerun the cartoons in question.

Referring to the republishing of the cartoons, bin Laden said, “Your publications of these drawings—part of a new Crusade in which the pope of the Vatican had a significant role—is a confirmation from you that the war continues.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

“On February 4, 2006, the Vatican said of the Danish cartoon controversy, ‘The right to freedom of thought and expression cannot entail the right to offend the religious sentiment of believers.’ Five days later, I issued a news release saying, ‘The decision of most mainstream media outlets not to reprint or show the controversial cartoons is the right one: the Catholic League sides with the U.S., Britain and the Vatican in denouncing the inflammatory cartoons.’ I concluded by saying, ‘As for Muslims offended by the cartoons, they should learn what a civilized response entails.’”

“In other words, bin Laden’s latest salvo against the Vatican is wholly unwarranted. So why is he trying to drum up hatred against the pope? He knows this is Holy Week and he knows that the pope has recently embarked on a series of interfaith sessions with Muslims; he also knows that the Holy Father will be meeting with representatives of other religions—including Muslims—on April 17 in Washington D.C. As any student of terrorism will confirm, nothing scares terrorists more than the prospect of peace: If they sense that their side is prepared to engage in détente, they will seek to foment

enmity.

“The latest bullying by bin Laden, then, is a sign that his grip on Muslims is slipping. Looks like it’s time for him to crawl back into one of his lovely caves.”