

BIN LADEN LASHES OUT AT POPE

During Holy Week, several media outlets reported that al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden released a statement that accused Pope Benedict XVI of triggering a “new Crusade” against Muslims. This accusation came amidst the recent republishing of the Danish cartoons that inflamed Muslims in 2006; several Danish newspapers decided to rerun the Danish cartoons in question.

Commenting on 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.

On February 4, 2006, the Vatican commented on the Danish cartoon controversy saying, “The right to freedom of thought and expression cannot entail the right to offend the religious sentiment of believers.” Five days after the Vatican made it’s statement, we put out a news release that said, “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.” We concluded that news release 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 was wholly unwarranted. Our question was why was he trying to drum up hatred against the pope? Bin Laden knew that it was Holy Week and that the pope had recently embarked on a series of interfaith sessions with Muslims; he also knew that the Holy Father would be meeting with representatives of other religions—including Muslims—when he visited 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 provoke hostility.

Osama bin Laden's latest act of bullying is a sign that his grip on Muslims is slipping. It looks like it is time for him to crawl back into one of his lovely caves.

Hopefully, this time it's for good.