

FEAR GUIDES MEDIA RESPONSE TO CARTOONS

The controversy over the Danish cartoons that lampooned Muhammad continues to swirl. Here is what we told the media:

“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. Regrettably, the decision by the media not to offend Muslims is motivated by fear, not ethics. Worse than this by far is the violent reaction, and calls for violence, that have sprung up all over the Muslim world. This is pure barbarism.

“Whenever the Catholic League criticizes a work of art, cartoon, movie or TV show, we are told that (a) we’re the intolerant ones (b) what is offensive is in the eye of the beholder (c) art is supposed to make people uncomfortable (d) no one can criticize anything until they have seen it (e) protests have a ‘chilling effect’ on free speech (f) it’s not real anyway, and (g) get over it. So why have Muslims been spared this lecture? Because the extremists in their ranks—and they are not a tiny minority—have shown they may respond with beheadings.

“Why, according to the *Washington Post*, did European newspapers reprint the cartoons? It was ‘not their love of freedom but their insensitivity—or hostility—to the growing diversity of their own societies.’ The *Los Angeles Times* says it won’t reprint ‘these insensitive images.’ The *Miami Herald* boasts that it ‘must take great care not to offend.’ The *New York Times* says it is wrong to publish ‘gratuitous assaults on religious symbols.’ The *San Francisco Chronicle* says ‘insulting or hurting certain groups’ is wrong. Both CBS and NBC say it isn’t necessary to show the cartoons

in order to report on them. CNN even went so far as to say that it 'has chosen not to show the cartoons out of respect for Islam.' Now if Catholicism were treated with such sensitivity and respect, we would have to shut down the Catholic League.

"Ethics, not fear, should guide the media. As for Muslims offended by the cartoons, they should learn what a civilized response entails."