


# Pope's critics unload

On September 12, Pope Benedict XVI lectured at the University of Regensburg in Germany. During this lecture, he quoted a 14th century Byzantine emperor who said, "Show me just what  Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Although the subject of the pope's address was the necessity of recognizing the centrality of faith and reason in the modern world, for many the point was lost.

Benedict's critics did not hold back in their statements. The following are the worst of the worst:

- September 14, Ali Bardakoglu, head of Turkey's Directorate General for Religious Affairs, told NTV (Turkey): "The remarks reflect the hatred in his heart. It is a statement full of enmity and grudge. It is a prejudiced and biased approach."
- September 14, Aiman Mazyek, president of Germany's Central Council of Muslims, quoted in *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany): "After the bloodstained conversions in South America, the crusades in the Muslim world, the coercion of the Church by Hitler's regime, and even the coining of the phrase 'holy war' by Pope Urban II, I do not think the Church should point a finger at extremist activities in other religions."
- September 15, Kamal Habib, Islamic researcher, quoted in the *New York Post*: "It looks as if the Vatican is providing the religious justification for the wars waged in Iraq and Afghanistan."
- September 15, Iranian cleric Ahmad Khatami in a sermon broadcast on Iranian state radio: "Definitely, Muslims around the world have reacted and will react properly to

these weak-minded remarks.”

- September 16, Jaish al-Mujahedeen (the Mujahedeen’s Army) statement quoted by Agence France-Presse: “We swear that we will destroy their cross in the heart of Rome ... and that their Vatican will be hit and wept over by the pope.” The statement lashed out at “Zionised Christians and loathsome crusaders” and featured six films showing attacks against U.S. military targets in Iraq and which it said were “dedicated to the dog of the crusaders [an apparent reference to the pope] in retaliation for his remarks. We will not rest until your thrones and your crosses have been destroyed on your own territory.”
- September 16, Professor Hans Kung in *The Times* (London): “He can of course quote what he wants, but he did this without saying the emperor was incorrect. This shows the limits of the theologian Joseph Ratzinger. He never studied the religions thoroughly and obviously has a unilateral view of Islam and the other religions.”
- September 16, Imam Kadhim Mohamad, quoted in the *Daily News* (New York): “He is declaring war by his words. He should either apologize or at least prove to the people that what he says is true. Otherwise, he should say nothing.”
- September 16, Bash Pharoan, president of the Baltimore chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, quoted in *The Baltimore Sun*: “By him spreading misinformation, it really is a green light for other people to discriminate or commit acts of hatred against Muslims.”
- September 16, a statement from imprisoned Islamist leaders in Britain, quoted by Agence France-Presse: “... now the tyrant of Rome reveals his charlatanism and his calumny. Oh Muslims, rejoice in your victory. Your enemy

has no more excuses against their destruction and ruin.”

- September 17, Yasir Abu-Hilalah in *Al-Dustur* (Jordan): “Rather than preoccupying himself with differences with Muslims, the Pope should preoccupy himself with his community in the West, especially in Germany where his statements were made. The Nazis were Catholics, and those responsible for the holocaust, which became the only sacred and untouchable issue in the West, were not Muslims. Those who killed millions of people in two world wars were not Muslims. The sentiments of Nazism are growing in the West and there is nothing more ethical to deter it than religion.”
- September 17, *Al-Dustur* editorial: “The Islamic rage is justified, and we support all invitations that call on the Pope to apologize immediately and unconditionally to erase the blazing Islamic anger and to protect the relationship of mutual respect between the Islamic and Christian religions, within the framework of dialogue and understanding among religions.”
- September 17, Asaeb al-Iraq al-Jihadiya (League of Jihadists in Iraq), quoted by Agence France-Presse: “Know that the soldiers of Muhammed will come sooner or later to shake your throne and the foundations of your state.”
- September 17, John Cornwell in the *Sunday Times* (London): “The church and the papacy in particular have long had problems with the existence of other religions, let alone tolerance of them. It started with the crusades in the early Middle Ages, continued with the Reformation (the memory dies hard that the Guy Fawkes plot was a Catholic conspiracy to destroy the establishment of Protestant England). Through the 19th century the popes set their faces against the notion of religious freedom and separation of church and state. A

succession of pontiffs, notably Pope Pius IX (1846-1878), declared that respect for other religions was a form of 'insanity.'"

- September 17, Iranian cleric Ahmed Khatami, quoted in the *Turkish Daily News*: "The pope should fall on his knees before a senior Muslim cleric and try to understand Islam.... Muslim outcries will continue until he fully regrets his remarks."
- September 18, militant group Ansar al-Sunnah (Partisans of the Precepts of the Prophet), quoted in Agence France-Presse: A statement from the group called the pope "Satan's hellhound in the Vatican.... The day is coming when the armies of Islam will destroy the ramparts of Rome."
- September 18, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, quoted by the Associated Press: "Those who take benefit from [the] pope's comment and drive their own arrogant policies should be targeted [sic] of attack and protest."
- September 18, Christopher Hitchens on Slate.com: "... where Muslims believe that Mohammed went into a trance and took dictation from an archangel, Ratzinger accepts as true the equally preposterous legend that St. Paul was commanded to evangelize for Christ during the course of a vision experienced in a dream."
- September 19, Imam Hassan Qazwini of the Islamic Center of America on CNN's "Newsroom": "Well, no doubt that there are fringe groups in the Muslim world who are fanatic and who are violent. I don't deny that. As there are Christian groups. Hitler was Catholic, also."
- September 19, Huda Guidance Army Organization in a statement quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*: "We will target all Crusaders in the Gaza Strip until the pope issues an

official apology. All centers belonging to Crusaders, including churches and institutions, will from now on be targeted. We will even attack the Crusaders as they sit intoxicated in their homes." The group said preparations had been completed "to strike at every Crusader and infidel on the purified land of Palestine."

- September 19, Mohammad Qaddafi, son of Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi, quoted by Agence France-Presse: "If this person were really someone reasonable, he would not agree to remain at his post one minute but would convert to Islam immediately."
- September 20, Arnaud de Borchgrave in the *Washington Times*: "The pope was not defining a doctrine about faith and morals where infallibility reigns. But it was more than off the cuff and less than a papal bull. Benedict was also a little wide of the mark. Any foreign policy adviser could have informed the pope that what he planned to say would be seen by Muslims as a force multiplier for extremists..."
- September 21, About 1,000 Muslim clerics and religious scholars in Pakistan, in a statement quoted by the Associated Press: The group said Benedict "should be removed from his position immediately for encouraging war and fanning hostility between various faiths" and "making insulting remarks" against Islam. The group added that the "pope, and all infidels, should know that no Muslim, under circumstances, can tolerate an insult to the Prophet (Muhammad). ... If the west does not change its stance regarding Islam, it will face severe consequences."
- September 22, Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, a senior Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal leader, quoted by the Associated Press: "If I get hold of the pope, I will hang him."
- September 22, Sheik Abu Sager, leader of Gaza's Jihadia

Salafiya Islamic outreach movement, quoted by WorldNetDaily: "The day will soon come when the green flag of La Illah Illah Allah (There is no god but Allah) and Muhammad Rasul Allah (Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah) will be raised upon the Vatican and all around the world and on the fortresses of those who want to destroy Islam, because they know that this religion obliges them to face the truth that Islam is Allah's favorite religion. And until they join Islam, hell is their last station."

- September 23, Mujahedeen Army, in an online statement addressed to "you dog in Rome," quoted in the Los Angeles Daily News: "We swear to God to send you people who adore death as much as you adore life."
- September 25, James Carroll in the *Boston Globe*: "Pope Benedict XVI celebrated the fifth anniversary of 9/11 by citing, on the next day, a 14th-century slur that Mohammed brought 'things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.' The patently false characterization of Mohammed's teaching, displaying an ignorance of the Koran, of the magnificence of Islamic devotion, and of history was offered almost as an aside in the pope's otherwise esoteric lecture about reason and faith."
- September 26, Alberty Yelda, Iraqi Ambassador to the Holy See, quoted by Agence France-Presse: "Many Muslims around the world were offended. They expressed their feelings and they were right to do so. They demonstrated anger."
- September 27, Sheik Abu Sager, quoted by WorldNetDaily: "The call for so-called dialogue by this little racist pope is a Trojan horse with the main goal of reaching a new system in which the ideals [of Christianity] are a new ideology that will rule relations between nations

and people. The dialogue he wants is dangerous.”

- September 30, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaida’s second in command, in a video statement quoted by the Associated Press: “If Benedict attacked us, we will respond to his insults with good things. We will call upon him and all of the Christians to become Muslims who do not recognize the Trinity or the crucifixion.”
- September 30, Imam Seyyed Hasan Ameli, in a sermon quoted by Iranian Labor News Agency: “Their insolence has reached such a level that they are turning Mosques into Churches or even to sheds for keeping ritually unclean animals in order to defy Muslims.”



(photo credit: Associated Press)

While many used harsh words to criticize Pope Benedict XVI’s remarks at Regensburg, others went a step further, and took to the streets.

On September 15, about 2,000 Palestinians protested in Gaza City. In Cairo, 100 demonstrators stood outside a mosque and shouted, “OH CRUSADERS, OH COWARDS! DOWN WITH THE POPE!”

On September 16, five churches in the West Bank and Gaza were attacked. At least five firebombs hit an Anglican church in Nablus, and its door was set on fire. A Greek Orthodox church was also firebombed. Later that day, four masked gunmen attacked the city’s Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic churches. The gunmen set the front doors of both buildings on fire and struck both churches with bullets. In Gaza City, militants shot at a Greek Orthodox church. A day earlier, explosive devices were set off at the church, causing minor damage.

On September 17, churches were again vandalized. A 170-year-

old church in the West Bank town of Tul Karem was torched, and a smaller church in another town was partly burned.

That same day, several hundred theology students were given the day off to protest in Qum, Iran's center for religious study.

Also on September 17, outside the Catholic Westminster Cathedral, protesters held placards reading, "POPE GO TO HELL." The protesters displayed other slogans aimed at Christians in general, including "JESUS IS THE SLAVE OF ALLAH."

One of the worst incidents also occurred on September 17, when a 65-year-old nun who worked at a pediatrics hospital in Somalia was shot and killed while leaving the hospital.

On September 18, more than 100 people rallied in front of a Vatican Embassy in Jakarta, waving banners that said, "THE POPE IS BUILDING RELIGION ON HATRED."

In Islamabad on September 22, protesters held up placards, reading "TERRORIST, EXTREMIST POPE BE HANGED!" and "DOWN WITH MUSLIMS' ENEMIES!" Addressing the gathering, a leader of a coalition of six Islamic parties said, "If I get a hold of the pope, I will hang him."

On October 9, an Orthodox priest's body was found beheaded in Mosul, Iraq. Relatives of the priest said the group demanded, in addition to a ransom, that the priest's church condemn Pope Benedict's remarks.

*Protesters couldn't get their hands on the pope, so they did what they thought was the next best thing. As pictured below, they burned effigies of the pontiff*

---

***The Catholic League and Jews Against Anti-Christian Defamation placed the following ad in the Washington Times on September***



**25, 2006.**

