

Flag-burning is legal, Koran-burning is not? This doesn't make any sense.



by Lev Tsitrin

["Denmark Moves to Ban Quran Burnings After Muslim Outrage"](#) the *New York Times* informs us. "Those found guilty of mistreating an object with major religious significance could be fined or sentenced to up to two years in prison, according to a draft of a bill published by the Danish Justice Ministry."

This piece of news brought to mind what must be, on an emotional level, a close parallel to the burning of the Koran – [flag-burning](#). After all, according to Wikipedia, flag-burning "is often intended to make a political point against a country or its policies" – and burning of a Koran has the

exact same purpose of protesting Islamism's perceived aggressiveness and violence. Iranians routinely burn US and Israeli flags – it is, in fact, a routine part of their anti-Western rituals (treading on them is another one) – so why would Iranians, for instance, be outraged by the burning of a Koran? And yet, they are: “After a small group of Danish nationalists filmed themselves burning what they said was a Quran late last month, hundreds of Iraqi protesters tried to storm Denmark's embassy in Baghdad before security forces dispersed them. On Sunday, the Iranian authorities summoned Danish and Swedish diplomats to chastise them over another series of desecrations in both countries.”

The whole thing strikes me as completely illogical. In fact, in the contest between “sacredness” of a flag and of the Koran, the flag clearly wins over. That Koran is God's word cannot possibly be known by anyone; so whether it is a sacrilege burn it, is of necessity unclear. But the bonds that bind citizens of a country under its flag are a daily fact of our civic lives that is constantly in front of our eyes. As I [pointed out in the past](#), Islamism that animates ayatollahs, talibaners, and other jihadists of all stripes who are first get righteously (or rather, self-righteously) indignant over Koran-burning is, ultimately, mere idol-worship, that should be uncovered for all to see, and stamped out from civilized world. Not so with civics, which has a real – and not imaginary, as in the case of Islamism – presence in our lives. If anything, the symbolic value of a flag is infinitely greater than that of the Koran – for a simple reason that the flag represents what is tangible, while the value of the Koran as God's word (which makes it valuable to Islamists) is uncertain at best. So if we make it legal for a flag to be burned, burning of the Koran must of necessity be legal too – for a simple reason that the Koran represents a far lesser value than a flag.

Of course, the politics of the situation do have to be taken

into account. "Governments in many Muslim-majority countries have issued withering condemnations, and authorities in both countries have said that the risk of terrorist attacks has risen in recent months, posing a threat to national security. ... Sweden, which hopes to join NATO, fears that the controversy could delay its membership. Turkey's foreign minister said last month that Stockholm's inability to "prevent provocations" had raised questions about Sweden's credentials for membership. In mid-July, hundreds of people stormed the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad and set parts of it on fire over the Swedish government's decision to allow the desecrations. Iraq also expelled the Swedish ambassador and directed his Iraqi counterpart to withdraw from the Iraqi Embassy in Stockholm."

None of which means that the concessions should come from the Western countries, rather than from the protesting Islamists, After all, it is Islamists who get it wrong. They unjustifiably insist that Koran is God's word while theirs (or anyone's) ability to know this is non-existent. Instead of being on the apologetic defensive ("This has put Denmark in a difficult foreign-policy situation," Jakob Ellemann-Jensen, the country's deputy prime minister, said on Friday. "And the government cannot just sit and listen to that."), the West should go on an ideological offense against Islamists, and ask them, loud and clear, "how do you know that Koran is sacred? You can't – so chill out."

And what I find interesting on a legal level is, that no one in Denmark's ruling bureaucracy apparently thought of the obvious parallel between flag-burning and Koran-burning. If they did, there would have been no need to go through the mental twisting ("Justice Minister Peter Hummelgaard characterized the proposal as a "targeted invention" against Quran burnings that "damage the security of Danes both abroad and at home." He said the proposed law would not apply to clothing or satirical drawings, for example, and would not

constrain criticism of religion. “I think there are more civilized ways to express your opinions than by burning things down,” he said.”) He would have simply looked up Danish flag-burning laws on [Wikipedia](#) as I did, to learn that “In Denmark, it is legal to burn or desecrate the national flag, the Dannebrog. However it is illegal to publicly burn or desecrate the flags of foreign countries, the United Nations and Council of Europe according to § 110e of the Danish penal code because Parliament has decided that burning or desecrating these is a matter of foreign relations, as it could be construed as a threat. This law is rarely enforced; the last conviction was in 1936.” Equate Koran with a foreign flag instead of hoping for a parliamentary approval of the new law – and the job is done.

The political job is done, that is – the far more serious job of dismantling Islamist idolatrous ideology still lies ahead.

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