

In Gaza, Hamas Is The Grinch Who Stole Christmas

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Muslims are taught that they are the “best of people” and non-Muslims “the most vile of created beings.” They are commanded by several Qur’anic verses – 3:28, 4:14, 5:51 –not to take Christians and Jews as friends, “for they are friends only with each other.” Furthermore, they are instructed to fight, to kill, to smite at the necks of, to strike terror in the hearts of, non-Muslims (see, e.g., 2:191-193, 4:89, 8:12, 8:60, 9:5, 9:29, 47:4). And they must never recognize nor participate in the slightest way, in the religious observances of non-Muslims. That means, when it comes to Christmas, that there should be no participation by Muslims in the holiday, no matter how devoid of religious content that participation might be. No Christmas trees, no Christmas carols, no toy Santas, no reindeer or elves, no Christmas cards, no mistletoe, no Christmas presents, no Christmas lights, and of course, no wishing Christians a “Merry Christmas.” Needless to

say, there are Muslims who despite these prohibitions still get into the spirit of the holiday, which because of television and the Internet manages to penetrate the borders of Muslim states and enter the consciousness of individual Muslims –who learn about, and see, those Christmas trees, Santa Clauses, cards and carols, television Christmas specials, and festive decorations seen festooning the dwellings of Christians in the West. All this is anathema to the most observant Muslims.

Recently an internal Hamas document surfaced in Gaza, which showed Hamas's determination to prevent Gaza Muslims from taking part in anything to do with Christmas. The story was broken internationally at Jihad Watch [Israel Hayom](#) five days later: "Leaked Hamas Christmas memo causes Christian dismay in Gaza," December 24, 2020:

A leaked Hamas memo showing Gaza's ruling Islamist group wanted to curb Christmas celebrations among Gaza's Muslim majority has upset the enclave's tiny Christian community in the run-up to the holiday.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs document, dated Dec. 15, called for "activities by the directorate of preaching and spiritual guidance to limit interaction with Christmas."

The leak went public last weekend, upsetting Palestinian Christians.

"We set an example for the world in not having any sectarian problems, therefore, we were very upset," said Samer Tarazi, a Christian journalist in Gaza. He said Christians just wanted life to continue "as normal."

Jerusalem's Greek Orthodox Archbishop, Atallah Hanna, called the memo "inflammatory," but said it "will not harm our unity and good relations."

Hamas said the reaction was exaggerated and that it only

wanted to ensure Muslims marked Christian holidays in accordance with Islamic law.

And “in accordance with Islamic law” there is to be no observance by Muslims, no matter how disconnected from religion, of Christmas or other Christian holidays. That means no Santa Claus or Christmas trees, cards, or carols: these are all seen by the Grinch of Gaza, the terror group Hamas, as a violation of Islamic law.

“There was never any intention to offend Christians or limit their ability to celebrate and perform their religious rituals,” said Bassem Naim, a Hamas official.

No, of course not. Why would Christians take offense if Hamas wants to make sure that Muslims, the “best of peoples,” do not participate in any way, no matter how disconnected from religion that participation may be, in the celebration in Gaza of Christmas by those same Christians?

The ministry, which is tasked with running Gaza’s mosques and looking after Muslim and Christian affairs in the coastal strip, quickly released a statement saying Christians “have the right to hold their religious celebrations and they can’t be offended or be restricted.”

The statement added: “Just as Muslims are commanded to avoid violations of (Islamic law) on Muslim holidays, it is all the more reason for them to avoid (such violations) during the holidays of others.”...

Which means, in plain English, Muslims are supposed to avoid doing anything that would suggest they were recognizing, or taking part in, a Christian holiday. Even wishing “Merry Christmas” in reply to a Christian’s holiday greeting is strictly forbidden. Indeed, it is not only the religious holidays of the Unbelievers that Muslims are supposed to

avoid. They are not to observe any secular holidays, either, of the Unbelievers. In America that means for Muslims no Halloween, no Thanksgiving, no New Year's Day, no Valentine's Day, no President's Day, no Memorial Day, no Labor Day. These have nothing to do with Islam, and therefore should be shunned by all devout Muslims.

The world is so suffused with celebrations of Christmas that it is hard to keep non-Christians from wanting to take part. In predominantly Hindu India, in Buddhist and Shinto Japan, and in Communist China, Christmas trees and Santa Clauses are found in major cities; these are no longer limited to the small Christian populations, but have been adopted by many others as well. Presents are exchanged by many non-Christians on Christmas Day. These are part of a worldwide celebration of Christmas, devoid of its religious element, and open to all. Muslims are the only ones who are sternly disciplined by their own leaders and clerics for such infractions.

But despite running a risk of punishment, Muslims are not immune to the attractions of these secularized observances of Christmas; their interest in the holiday appears in recent years only to have increased. It is this which alarms the grinchers of Hamas. In several of the Gulf Arab states, especially the U.A.E., there are Santa Clauses in stores holding court for entranced children; there are window displays of Christmas trees gaily bedecked with ornaments; trees, too, are also to be found for sale. All of this would have been unthinkable just a few years ago; now these items – Santa Claus dolls, Christmas trees and ornaments, Christmas cards – all of which were unobtainable just a few years ago,, can now be found in both the U.A.E. and Saudi Arabia. This is exactly what Hamas fears may be happening: Christmas slowly suffusing the brains of Muslims, as its non-religious seductions – the cards and carols, the present-giving, the smiling Santas for the children lisping their wish list to him in stores, the sights and smells of a distant northern clime

brought into Middle Eastern homes by a well-trimmed Christmas tree—can lead trusting Muslims astray, possibly even causing some of them to look into the religion of those whose holiday, Christmas, in its secular celebration has captivated many Muslims.

What could be more terrible than that? Hence the understandable horror of Hamas apparatchiks in Gaza, determined to stamp out any Muslim fraternizing with the Christian enemy when guards are down during Christmas-time, and preventing Muslim participation, no matter how minor, in any of the secular observances associated with Christmas, including such aspects of the holiday as Santa Claus, workshop elves at the North Pole, Christmas trees, and the exchange of gifts. Who knows what that could lead to? Baptisms? Rosaries? The Eucharist? It's a slippery slope.

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