

Jihadists At Home



by Theodore Dalrymple

Criticized for doing nothing about Muslim extremists chanting “Jihad! Jihad!” in the streets of London, the Metropolitan Police, Islamic scholars all, defended themselves by saying that jihad had several meanings—as if, in the context of a huge pro-Palestinian rally, it might mean the inner struggle to be pious and virtuous.

Whether the chant, since it referred to a situation 2,000 miles away, constituted incitement to violence in the legal sense might be a matter of dispute. No doubt the law is ambiguous, but it did not prevent the Metropolitan Police from ordering vans to turn off their screens showing pictures of Israeli children held hostage by Hamas. For the Metropolitan Police, such pictures were evidently more provocative than calls for holy war.

Official cowardice in the face of Islamic extremism has a long history in Britain, dating back to the Salman Rushdie affair of 1988, when Muslims were permitted with impunity to march in

public calling for the death of the author of *The Satanic Verses*. The lesson that this seminal episode taught, not only in Britain but also in much of the world, was that intimidation in free societies works: for, after all, the prime minister at the time was the supposedly Iron Lady, Margaret Thatcher, and all subsequent prime ministers have been marshmallows compared with her. If *she* were weak on this issue, everyone ever after her would be impotent, and so it proved.

Things have only deteriorated since, as they usually do whenever intimidation works. Now an [estimated 100,000 people](#) marched through the streets of London, again with impunity, more or less calling for genocide. After all, Hamas had just demonstrated what a “Palestine from river to sea,” which many of the demonstrators called for, would mean for the Israelis, and it is highly probable that many in the crowd all but salivated at the prospect. Genocide was [fun](#) in Rwanda; so it would be in Israel.

Nor could the British public reassure itself that the demonstration was of concern to a faraway country of which we know nothing, to employ a phrase of less than happy memory. The crowd was chanting for a “free” Palestine, which meant, in the circumstances, a Palestine ruled by a hardline Islamist movement—a government that would be to freedom in any recognizable sense what fire is to libraries.

Either the crowd was unaware of the absurdity of calling for a free Palestine under the control of Hamas, or it actually desired such a Palestine. In the second case, since the Islamist doctrine is universalist, they were calling for the destruction, in due course, of British freedom and democracy as well; and since the younger generation’s attachment to British freedom and democracy is definitely on the wane (as the younger generation’s is to freedom and democracy in America), the large and determined Islamist element that we have permitted to develop in our midst is very dangerous.

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