

An Open Letter from a Former Muslim: Enough is Enough

My name is Majed El Shafie. I was arrested, tortured and sentenced to die in Egypt after converting from Islam to Christianity. I managed to escape and with the help of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), I eventually settled in Canada from where I now fight for those **persecuted** around the world.

We have seen the news reports in recent days of Muslims protesting throughout the world, killing the American ambassador and three other Americans in Libya, over a film they claim insults their prophet. The filmmaker is in hiding, flags have been burned and trampled, and though it may not have been reported on the major news networks, Bibles are being burned and vulnerable Christians are being attacked in countries half a world away.

Many here in the West have been perplexed or alarmed by these events, especially after our soldiers risked their lives last year to support the people of Libya against Colonel Qaddafi's forces. The irony is thick in that Ambassador Stevens in particular was keen to help the Libyan people rebuild and he took an active role in supporting their efforts. As a result, I feel compelled to speak out.

These protests are not spontaneous reactions to a film. These protests were planned by extremists far in advance to mark the anniversary of September 11th and the film is a convenient and cynical excuse to manipulate ordinary, uneducated Muslims to participate in these appalling expressions of hatred. Yet even if the protests were truly a response to the film, they would be just as inexcusable. Nothing justifies such barbarianism.

Numerous movies, books and "works of art" are produced every

day that are deeply offensive to Christians and Jews, making fun of our sacred symbols or even directly attacking our beliefs or us as people of faith. Yet we do not respond by killing diplomats or inciting bloody mass riots. We value every person's right to express points of view that differ from ours, views that may even be offensive, because we understand how important doing so is as a guarantor of our own rights and freedoms. As a result, we debate, write letters, issue press releases, argue, and even protest peacefully against such affronts, often agreeing to disagree but always knowing that the light of truth will triumph in the end over the dark shadows of ignorance and bigotry.

I do not agree with every religion. But I have respect for all religions, their symbols, and their leading figures. I wish that the filmmakers had taken a more respectful tone if they wished to inspire serious debate about the issues around Islam—but I stand firmly by their right to make any film they choose without death threats and murderous “protests” breaking out halfway around the world.

Muslims and many world leaders would like us to believe that Islam is a religion of peace. Yet every time Muslim extremists raise their hands with impunity to lynch someone over claims of “blasphemy,” every time they begin murderous riots because someone has “insulted” their prophet or religion by speaking the truth, they show the true face of Islam and prove the very claims they try to silence. The goal of the **Muslim extremists** is to frighten and intimidate us because they know that by taking away our freedom of expression they can control us. They use these tactics because, like the schoolyard bully, they can see that they work.

What, then, are we to do when we see these events taking place? We must continue to speak the truth and never allow ourselves to be silenced. Freedom of expression is intimately linked with freedom of religion. Limiting freedom of expression is to limit **freedom of religion**. We must not allow

these fundamental rights to be eroded in the misguided belief that somehow limiting our freedom of expression is to show respect to another religion. Respect is not forced—it is earned. And in this the Muslim extremists have a lot of work to do.

Enough is enough!

Majed El Shafie
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Majed El Shafie *regularly testifies before the U.S. Congress and the Canadian Parliament and Senate, and he's a regular guest on Sun News, BBC, CBN, ACLJ's Jordan Sekulow Show and more. In July, he was awarded the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal.*