

Are Islamists the Nazis of the 21st Century?

Headlines about the radical Islamic jihadi terrorist attack on the French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* may be dwindling, but the matter still strikes at the very heartbeat of Western Civilization, namely freedoms of speech, expression, conscience and religion.

Dr. Richard Land, President of Southern Evangelical Seminary, recently wrote about the fresh influence of terrorism on the entire world. As thousands still hold “Je Suis (I am) Charlie” placards around the globe, they are, in a way, defending their freedoms—freedoms that may be violently attacked but never stripped from the heart and mind.

“These freedoms are essential and priceless values of Western Civilization,” Land wrote. “In fact, the belief that freedom of speech is cherished as a universal right was enshrined in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19 of which declares, ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression.’ ... As the now murdered French cartoonist said in the face of previous jihadi threats, ‘I would rather die on my feet than live on my knees.’”

Land went on to say that in 1988, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld in *Hustler Magazine v. Falwell* the protection of the most vile and crude parodies of religious and other public figures. Justice William Rehnquist, writing for the majority in this notorious case said, “at the heart of the First Amendment is the recognition of the fundamental importance of the free flow of ideas and opinions on matters of public interest and concern” and that “the freedom to speak one’s mind is not only an aspect of individual liberty—and thus a good unto itself—but also is essential to the common quest for truth and the vitality of society as a whole.”

Land added, "We must exercise our rights or we will lose them to these barbarians who are seeking to impose a hegemony of barbarism on the world through hijacking and perverting a religion. The radical Islamic jihadis want to seize and suppress our God-given freedoms of conscience, expression and speech at the point of a sword, the barrel of a gun or the explosion of a bomb.

"These new Nazis must be confronted and defeated, not appeased," he continued. "Without American courage, principles and leadership, such confrontation and defeat will not happen, just as the Nazis would not have been defeated without American leadership in World War II. However, America cannot do it alone. And at long last it looks as if real, powerful, potential and critical help is on the way—and it's from within the Muslim world."

Land wrote that a recent seismic shift in the Muslim and Arab world concerning the issue of radical Islamic jihad has begun. As evidence, on Jan. 1, Egyptian President Abdul Fattah el Sisi delivered a speech at Al-Azhar University in Cairo that may later be looked upon as a definitive historical event, much like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, John F. Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech and Ronald Reagan's "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" speech.

President el Sisi delivered his speech directly to the Islamic clerics and scholars assembled at the university, calling upon them to lead a revolution within Islam, stating:

"We must take a long, hard look at the current situation ... it is inconceivable that the ideology that we sanctify should make our entire nation a source of concern, danger, killing and destruction all over the world...

"I am referring not to 'religion' but to 'ideology'—the body of ideas and texts that we have sanctified in the course of centuries...

"It has reached the point that this (ideology) is hostile to the entire world. ... I say these things here at Al-Azhar before religious clerics and scholars. May Allah bear witness on Judgment Day to the truth of your intentions, regarding what I say to you today. You cannot see things clearly when you are locked (in this theology). You must emerge from it and look from outside, in order to get closer to a truly enlightened theology let me say it again; we need to revolutionize our religion. ... Honorable Imam (the Grand Sheik), you bear responsibility before Allah. The world in its entirety awaits your words, because the Islamic nation is being torn apart, destroyed and is heading to perdition. We are ourselves bringing it to perdition."

And the President's words were followed by actions. On Jan. 6, el Sisi attended a Coptic Christian mass—a first for any Egyptian president—and spoke of his deep affection for Egyptian Christians.

"Whatever one thinks of President el Sisi's politics," Land said, "these were bold and courageous actions, which could easily get him assassinated, as was his predecessor President Sadat a generation ago. It can also be the first sign of the beginning of a 'reformation' within Islam which could be as significant historically as the one led by Martin Luther five centuries earlier."