

Terry Jones Burns Quran to Protest Nadarkhani Imprisonment

Terry Jones, minister of a 25-member congregation in Gainesville, Fla., publicly burned a copy of the Quran on Friday—as he had warned he would do—an act strenuously condemned by the 600-member World Evangelical Alliance (WEA).

“The burning of a sacred text is wrong and unwarranted. The burning of the Quran is especially grievous to Muslims and does not reflect the **biblical values** nor the spirit of the Lord Jesus whom we serve,” says Geoff Tunnicliffe, secretary general of the WEA. “We appeal to Islamic leaders worldwide to understand that this self-proclaimed antagonist does not represent Christians. Indeed he violates the call of Jesus to love people everywhere. Such violence does harm to us all.”

Jones’ public burning followed a personal meeting and intense conversation just one day earlier with representatives of the WEA, including Tunnicliffe.

Tunnicliffe personally challenged Jones to listen to fellow Christian leaders from North America—and if not them at least hear concerns of a Christian pastor from an Islamic country. The Rev. Daniel Ho of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, was at the meeting to request that Jones halt this course of action. **Joel Hunter**, pastor of Northland Church in Orlando, Fla., and Brian Stiller, Global Ambassador for the WEA, were also part of the discussions. The group met with Jones for about 90 minutes.

Jones first came to public attention in September 2010 when he threatened to burn a Quran. He eventually withdrew his threat, but staged an online mock trial on Islam and burned a copy of the Quran in April 2011. Within days, 22 United Nations workers and nine protesters were killed in Afghanistan, two

were dead in Pakistan. And churches were attacked and Bibles were burned in Hyderabad.

Jones' current campaign is directed at the Iranian government around the issue of imprisoned pastor **Youcef Nadarkhani**, who has been tried and convicted of apostasy and attempting to evangelize Muslims. Nadarkhani is under sentence of death, a matter strenuously objected to by the U.S. State Department, the Canadian government and other countries.

However, the WEA reports that Jones admitted during the meeting that the case of the Iranian pastor was simply a current opportunity to object.

In meeting with Tunnicliffe and associates, WEA reports, Jones said that after spending 30 years in Cologne, Germany, he returned to find his beloved America awash in moral corruption, weakened by a failing church, diminished by a "gutless" government and overrun by Islamic clerics and their threat of Shariah law. Jones said: "God spoke to me" about defacing Islam in desecrating its Quran and doing what he could to "wake up America."

Operating under Stand Up America Now, an organization whose purpose, according to its website, is "is to encourage Americans and the church to stand up," Jones conceded to the WEA that this had nothing to do with Christian love or evangelism, but are "acts of resistance or revolution."

Because love and evangelism were weak, "unable to make a dent," Jones believes it is time to cause a stir. He told members of the WEA meeting that he had no idea of the public interest in the public burning of Islam's holy book: "I didn't realize it would create such a stir."

But he took that very stir as a sign: "God wanted me to get involved."

The Friday meeting was a tough, no-holds-barred conversation,

according to the WEA, and the dialogue was respectful, direct and civil. The WEA group focused on biblical values, living as Jesus would have us live, caring for consequences of Christians in other lands and reviewing Jones' logic that he was the courageous one.

The WEA reports that Jones' confusion over love for America—as he thinks it was and should be—and the gospel was obvious. While reminding the delegation that he followed Christ, he no longer believes loving others is a fair and workable strategy.

“Would you be willing to come to Malaysia and look into the faces of my family and tell them why you burned the Quran, if your action caused my death?” asked Malaysian Pastor Ho. Jones reportedly had no answer.

Asked if he had ever met a Christian leader from a Muslim-dominated country, Jones laughed. When asked if he ever had concerns over what his actions and words did to Christians in such countries, he told members of the WEA meeting, “I bear no responsibility.”

Pressed to line up his actions with biblical values and the call of Jesus, he referred to Abraham and Moses, examples of “biblical characters that have done crazy things.”

“God told me to do it,” is his central mantra.

The WEA group pressed him with his own logic: If his end game was to get the attention of the American government, why not do some outrageous act that would really get them to listen? And if he wanted to point out the errors of Islam, why not go to an Islamic country and burn a Quran there?

He laughed: “They'd kill me.”

Members of the WEA group reminded Jones that by standing behind the defenses of **free speech laws** in the United States—aware that what he is doing may very well get others

killed—was an alarming demonstration of cowardice. If he really wanted to show courage, one member noted, then he should go to where his actions will get him killed. Then he would be courageous.

His response? “Yes, but I’d be killed.”

Tunncliffe closed the meeting with the story of William Wilberforce, an English Member of Parliament who chose to give his life to end slavery.

In the movie *Amazing Grace*, a government minister rose in the British parliament after the passing of the anti-slavery legislation and said in effect: “When we think about heroes our minds go to people like Napoleon. Yet when his head lay on a pillow at night, he dreamt about death and violence. Mr. Wilberforce when your head lies on the pillow tonight, you will think about those you had part in freeing across the world.”

At the meeting, Tunncliffe asked, “Pastor Jones when you put your head on the pillow what kind of images do you want to see?”

Tunncliffe noted: “As I travel the world, I recognize the tensions between Muslims and Christians. However, it is critical that we find respectful way of dealing with our differences. Not only is it important that we learn how to live with respect and in peace. For us as Christians, it is our calling Jesus’ to follow in his ways and in the spirit of his love.”