



## A BATTLE FOR MINDS

Since the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, by Muslim extremists, the world has seen an increase in such extreme acts of violence – and much of it supposedly in the name of God.

Outrage around the world peaked over the deliberate murderous attack by Muslim extremists who had taken over a thousand children and adults hostage at a school in Beslan, Russia. Within days of the deliberate, preplanned hostage taking and abuse of the children and adults at the school, over three hundred had died – more than half being children.

The Editorial in the **West Australian** newspaper of Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September stated:

**'One of the lessons of the Beslan school atrocity is that international terrorists acknowledge no limit on the level of depravity to which they will sink.**

**Once again, it was the innocents who were made to suffer by zealots unrestrained by any sense of decency or compassion...No matter what cause or historical grievance was behind the attack, it cannot in any way justify the calculated murders.**

**Russia is in mourning and the sympathy of the civilized world is with its citizens, especially the bereaved and the people whose lives have been shattered by injury and shock.'**

A few days before this editorial, Rick Renner, an American Pentecostal preacher with a teaching ministry in Russia, sent out the following email prayer request:

**'September 3, 2004**

**Dear Friend,**

**Today is a very sad day in Russia because of the many children who were wounded and killed in the terrorist attack on a public school in southern Russia.**

**In the past eight days, Russia has been under the attack of terrorists. To summarize these attacks of the past eight days:**

**A bomb was exploded at a bus station in Moscow, killing several people.**

**§ A bomb was exploded at the Riga Train Station, killing many and injuring large numbers of people.**

**§ Two airplanes were exploded by bombs, killing nearly 90 passengers.**

**§ And now.... this school in southern Russia has been attacked and as a result many children were killed and hundreds were injured.**

**These terrorist attacks in Russia are not new. Since 1999, Russia has experienced many attacks of this nature. Only this year, a bomb was detonated at a famous Moscow hotel; another bomb was detonated at a public concert; a large bomb was detonated on a subway car as it carried passengers, killing many people and creating horrible destruction; another bomb was detonated at a hospital. Unfortunately, the list you just read doesn't even begin to touch all the terrorist attacks that have occurred since 1999.'**

Renner requested his readers to join him in praying for an end to **'these mindless attacks'**.

Since the atrocities at the Beslan school in Russia, the violence and murder has continued.

To draw up a list of worldwide terrorist violence, murders and massacres since the September 11, 2001 horrors would require many more pages than available in our small magazine.

The Middle East, especially, continues to see mass murders killing innocent civilians while being euphemistically (almost 'romantically/heroically' by some people) referred to as 'suicide bombers'. The reality is that they are mass murders who are using their bodies as 'launching platforms' to carry out their mass murders or attempted mass murders. There is nothing sacrificial, heroic or praiseworthy in the atrocities they commit.

The fact that many of them do it in the name of their God and religion makes it all the more appalling.

The kidnapping and brutal beheadings of innocent civilians, often working to improve conditions for the general population in Iraq, does nothing to encourage a better understanding of Islam – especially when the throat-cutting murders give speeches of doing this in the name of Allah and then chant **'Allah'u aqbar'** (God is great) – whatever their claimed motivation or justification for such

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brutality.

South East Asia has also experienced the trauma of Islamist terrorists with the Bali bombings and more recent the bombing just outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia.

The month long day-light Muslim fast of Ramadan began on October 15. It did not bring peace. A number of places saw Muslim mobs go on violent rampages, claiming a variety of motivations and justifications – including religious ones - for their violence.

The response, or lack of response by many Muslims, has not helped the situation.

There have been Muslims, including in Australia, who claimed that the September 11, 2001 atrocities were committed by Israelis to falsely blame Muslims; there have been Muslims, including Islamic community leaders, who have declared that the atrocities at the Beslan school in Russia could not have been Muslims because Islam is a religion of peace! Many have remained silent.

How should countries and communities deal with Islamist terrorist activities?

Are such activities just 'mindless attacks' as Rick Renner suggested – or are they the result of mindful and deliberate actions based on disturbing ideologies?

Is the so-called Western 'war on terrorism' – with bombs and bullets, the best answer?

Is the silence and denial of many Muslims around the world – the best way to deal with the problem?

Not all who are concerned about Islam and its extremes are Christians. There are now a number of secular organizations where non-Muslims, from Islamic countries and communities are coming together for support and to express themselves – especially over the Internet.

One such group is known as Faith Freedom International.

It states that it exists to: '**Fight Islamic militancy, militarily and its ideology, ideologically. These are the two fronts of this war.**'

Its purpose statement reads: '**Faith Freedom International echoes the voice of Muslim dissidents that strive for freedom of faith and freedom from Faith in Islamic countries. We are against Hate, not Faith. We revere human rights not human beliefs. We endeavour to be factually correct, not politically correct. The only way to confront Islamic terrorism is to eradicate the ideology behind it. As long as this reality is overlooked more lives will be lost and the world will not know peace. We will not achieve peace by upholding lies.**'

Amber Pawlik, a contributor of articles shared through Faith Freedom International, commented just after the seizure of the Beslan school on September 1: 'I have yet to see any in the media point out the most important aspect of these terrorists, except as an aside: they are Muslim.'

Seeing as it was *Muslim* terrorists who flew airplanes into the World Trade Centre; *Muslim* terrorists who bombed a train in Spain; and *Muslim* terrorists who have beheaded innocent civilians, *Muslim* terrorists who blew bombs in Bali, Turkey and Riyadh, this information about is obviously relevant – to put it lightly.

Can someone answer me why the fact that these terrorists are Muslims is always muddled in the media? We (and when I say "we," I mean the entire civilized part of the world) are not at war with a country. We are at war with an ideology, Islamic terrorism, which is akin to NAZISM or communism. The people who want to see us dead are not "Chechens." They are Muslims.'

In case any readers are NOT reading things clearly, in making the above statements or sharing the above quotes, we are **NOT** saying that all Muslims are terrorists.

The vast majority of Muslims are peaceable people who wish to live their lives quietly and with freedom to follow their faith.

But let us quote some Muslims not content to remain part of the silent majority.

The **Asharq Al-Awsat** newspaper, meaning 'International Newspaper of the Arabs', is a Saudi Arabian owned and published major newspaper. Its English edition is published from London and transmitted by satellite for simultaneous printing 'on four continents in 12 cities, Asharq Al-Awsat is the preferred Arab-language daily, especially among educated decision-makers who have affluent lifestyles and sophisticated tastes.'

Abdulrahman al-Rashed, is the general manager of Dubai-based **al-Arabiya** television, who publishes a daily column in the Asharq Al-Awsat newspaper.

Following the Beslan school murders, Abdulrahman al-Rashed wrote an article headlined: 'The Painful Truth: All the World Terrorists are Muslims!' He went on to state: 'Our terrorist sons are an end-

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**product of our corrupted culture.'** After listing attacks by Islamist extremists in Russia, Iraq, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, he added: **'Most perpetrators of suicide operations in buses, schools and residential buildings around the world for the past 10 years have been Muslims... The picture is humiliating, painful and harsh for all of us.'** Al-Rashed rejected Muslim silence, denials or rationalisations, and claimed that the stained image of Muslims could not be cleansed unless **'we admit the scandalous facts.'**

Egyptian Muslim and columnist for the pro-Egyptian government newspaper, **Al-Ahram**, Ahmed Bahgat, was also scathing in his comments. He stated of the terrorists who seized the Beslan school, that the media images: **'showed Muslims as monsters who are fed by the blood of children and the pain of their families. If all the enemies of Islam united together and decided to harm it ... they wouldn't have ruined and harmed its image as much as the sons of Islam have done by their stupidity, miscalculations, and misunderstanding of the nature of this age.'**

In spite of such denunciations, others praised the terrorists or made ridiculous comments such as those of a Bahraini ultra-conservative Muslim religious scholar, Ali Abdullah. He declared the hostage taking of children was 'un-Islamic', but explained, **'I have no doubt in my mind that this is the work of the Israelis who want to tarnish the image of Muslims and are working alongside Russians who have their own agenda against the Muslims in Chechnya.'** Comments like these from supposed Islamic scholars do nothing positive for the world's perception of Islamic scholarship.

What has become clear in these situations is that there is a battle going on behind the outward Islamist terrorism. It is a battle for minds. There is a growing number of commentators, writers, journalists and others who are identifying that, in order to win the so-called war against terrorism, we need to understand and attack the ideology that is foundational to Islamist violence and terrorism. Such a battle can't be won with bullets or bombs. Violence in response to violence generally leads to more violence.

The Apostle Paul expressed a relevant truth centuries ago:

**'By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am "timid" when face to face with you, but "bold" when away! I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.'** (2 Corinthians 10:1-5)

At the school in Beslan, Russia (a predominantly Christian community), two Christian pastors, who were both brothers and neighbours, both lost children in the school murders.

Taymuraz and Ria Totiev had four of their children killed by the terrorists: Larissa, 14, Luba, 12, Albina, 11, and Boris, who was 8 years old. Their oldest daughter, Magina, was hospitalised and then released – the only surviving one of their five children.

Sergey and Bela Totiev had two of their three children attending the school killed by the terrorists: Dzerassa, 15, and 9 year old Anna. Their 12-year-old son, Azamat, ended up with a severe eye injury and overseas surgery was sought to help him overcome the injury.

With such a family tragedy the two families held a service out the front of their homes, and did their best to help neighbours and others with their losses, grief, injuries and family traumas. The Totiev brothers, and their families, have fought against understandable anger and bitterness and done their best to share Christian love, forgiveness and hope in the midst of enormous personal and community tragedy and pain.

With help from the USA-based Russian Ministries they are trying to find help and resources to establish a Christian Comfort and Reconciliation Centre. Through this centre they will try to: provide needed medical aid for those still recovering from injuries; provide food and clothing to poor and needy families, especially where a wage-earning parent had been killed at the school; provide Christian counselling for the many who are struggling with confusion and depression as a result of the September atrocities.

They are doing what they can, in practical love and care, to win a battle for minds that could easily have been lost to anger, bitterness and destructive revenge.

We believe that openness and availability of information and education is always better than

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brainwashing, mind manipulation, coercion, aggressive or violent opposition – in dealing with religious differences and extremes. We also believe that it is important for people to think things through thoroughly for themselves – and not for them to allow others to do the thinking for them.

This particularly applies to the growing need for awareness of what Islam is all about. What is it that Muslims believe (and collectively agree on), and how does this impact their lives, AND how do their beliefs and practices impact on their non-Muslim neighbours and community members?

Ignorance and half-truths can be dangerous and damaging – especially to relationships, dialogue and religious harmony.

This especially applies to the faith of Muslims who are generally more defensive than members of other faiths and world religions. There are serious risks in questioning the teachings of Islam, of questioning the Prophet Muhammed – such questioning for some have cost them their lives. To ridicule or make satirical comments about Islam or Muhammed is even worse, it will generally lead to fatwahs and death threats.

The Institute for the Secularisation of Islamic Society declares in its Mission statement: **'We believe that Islamic society has been held back by an unwillingness to subject its beliefs, laws and practices to critical examination, by a lack of respect for the rights of the individual, and by an unwillingness to tolerate alternative viewpoints or to engage in constructive dialogue.'**

**The Institute for the Secularisation of Islamic Society (ISIS) has been formed to promote the ideas of rationalism, secularism, democracy and human rights within Islamic society.**

**ISIS promotes freedom of expression, freedom of thought and belief, freedom of intellectual and scientific inquiry, freedom of conscience and religion – including the freedom to change one's religion or belief - and freedom from religion: the freedom not to believe in any deity.'**

Some, supposedly open-minded and 'informed' people like to point out, often through newspaper letters to the Editor, that Christianity has also dealt harshly with critics and has killed innocents in the name of religion – what those people seem to ignore is: those things were often not condoned by 'rank and file' believers in Jesus Christ; those things may have happened in the Middle Ages and earlier – long ago; those things were opposed and gradually came to an end long ago; much of the time those things occurred – not because of the teachings of Jesus Christ, but in spite of them – often because those in power did not take those teachings seriously.

Islamist terrorists are active today. We are not discussing issues of past distant history, but of 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004!

In order to understand Islamic extremists and their ideology, we must understand the basics of Islam.

To understand why the majority of Muslims are NOT Islamist terrorist, we must understand the basics of Islam.

To understand the reluctance of many Muslims to actively, vocally, vigorously, come out in active opposition to Islamist extremes we must understand the basics of Islam.

As a service to our readers we list the following Internet websites on Islam, from varying perspectives, for reading and research to increase knowledge and understanding. By providing this variety of Internet links, we are not necessarily endorsing the content of any or all of these websites. We believe readers have the right to exposure to a variety of viewpoints and interpretations so that they can make up their own minds as they weigh up and evaluate the information available.

For readers who don't have computers and/or Internet access, CCG Ministries has numerous resources on Islam, both for purchase and reading/research at our Nollamara Centre.

## WEBSITES ON ISLAM

Sites are listed alphabetically – not in any order of significance. Check articles, statements, and links given on websites for the broadest exposure of information and viewpoints.

### **Islam from Secular & other Non-Christian Perspectives**

(including former Muslims, people from Islamic countries and communities)

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/talks/8.30/re/rpt/stories/s1095657.htm>

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<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2004/s1061302.htm>  
[http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/islam\\_in\\_australia.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/facts/islam_in_australia.html)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramadan>  
<http://freeworldnow.com/News.htm>  
<http://iabolish.com/mt/>  
<http://jihadwatch.org/>  
<http://jihadwatch.org/dhimmiwatch/>  
<http://knowislam.info/drupal/support>  
<http://middleeastinfo.org/>  
<http://unicorn.phoenixrising-web.net//jihad.htm>  
<http://www.angelfire.com/stars/dorina/islamdp.html>  
<http://www.anti-cair-net.org/>  
<http://www.danielpipes.org/>  
<http://www.faithfreedom.org/>  
<http://www.geocities.com/muslimfreethinkers/Content.htm>  
<http://www.knowislam.info/drupal/>  
<http://www.religioustolerance.org/islam.htm>  
<http://www.secularislam.org/Default.htm>

### **Islamic apologists and information:**

<http://islam.ii.net/>  
<http://www.afic.com.au/apislam.htm>  
<http://www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/Islamwomen.html>  
<http://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~waleed/isoc/local.html>  
<http://www.icv.org.au/abouticv.shtml>  
<http://www.islam101.com/>  
<http://www.islamonline.net/english/aboutus.shtml>  
<http://www.isoc-unsw.org.au/>  
<http://www.jannah.org/>  
<http://www.uga.edu/islam/>  
<http://www.unn.ac.uk/societies/islamic/index.htm>  
<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/clubintro/>

### **Progressive Islamic Perspective**

[http://www.altmuslim.com/am\\_about.php](http://www.altmuslim.com/am_about.php)  
<http://www.people.virginia.edu/~aas/islam.htm>  
<http://www.submission.org/>

### **Christian responses:**

<http://debate.domini.org/newton/>  
<http://www.answering-islam.org/>  
<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/i07.html>  
<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/i18.html>  
<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/i19.html>  
<http://www.arabicbible.com/christian/islam.htm>  
<http://www.barnabasfund.org/>  
<http://www.carm.org/islam.htm>  
<http://www.goodseed.com/theprophetsenglish.html>

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<http://www.gospelcom.net/awm/site/display3.php?article=41>

[http://www.isic-centre.org/isic\\_briefing.htm](http://www.isic-centre.org/isic_briefing.htm)

<http://www.islamonline.net/English/index.shtml>

<http://www.muhammadanism.org/>

<http://www.rim.org/muslim/islam.htm>

<http://www.safeplace.net/members/mer/index.htm#indexindex>

[http://www.safeplace.net/members/mer/MER\\_Papers.html](http://www.safeplace.net/members/mer/MER_Papers.html)

<http://www.studytoanswer.net/islam/islamindex.html>

**(An even more extensive listing of sites from a variety of alternative viewpoints [including most of the above], giving background perspectives of websites, can be seen at: <http://www.listislam.cjb.net/>)**