



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on September 17, 2010

Better Not Draw Mohammed

If Anwar al-Awlaki gets his way, the last sound cartoonist Molly Norris will hear is the swish of a scimitar. Or, more likely, a bomb blast.

Paraphrasing [Pat Buchanan's](#) column about the [Ayatollah Khomeini's fatwa](#) on novelist [Salman Rushdie](#) for writing "[The Satanic Verses](#)" does the best justice to what young Norris now faces: a life in hiding. It would be comical if it weren't so serious. The FBI has told the young woman [she must disappear](#).

Norris inspired the "[Everybody Draw Mohammed Day](#)" when she drew a cartoon protesting the decision by the creators of "South Park" to alter an episode that lampooned the Mohammed. Norris' cartoon contained the words, "Everybody Draw Mohammed."



Norris landed in hot water after she distributed the cartoon and a fan created a Facebook "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" page. That's when the idea took off, with 11,000 Facebook members and some 500 renderings of Mohammed. Having started the protest "because it's a cartoonist's job to be non-PC," however, Norris backed down, complaining that she didn't back a day to blaspheme the prophet.

"I did NOT 'declare' May 20 to be 'Everybody Draw Muhammed Day,'" she said, adding that her idea was satire that was "taken seriously, hijacked and made viral."

"I apologize to people of Muslim faith and ask that this 'day' be called off," she said.

Awlaki, as the New York *Daily News* reported in July, was not amused. He called for the cartoonist's killing:

A charismatic terror leader linked to the botched Times Square car bomb has placed the Seattle cartoonist who launched "Everybody Draw Muhammed Day" on an execution hit list.

Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki — the radical who has also been cited as inspiring the Fort Hood, Tex., massacre and the plot by two New Jersey men to kill U.S. soldiers — singled out artist Molly Norris as a "prime target," saying her "proper abode is hellfire."

FBI officials have notified Norris and warned her they consider it a "very serious threat."

For those who don't know Awlaki, "the bin Laden of the Internet," he was the spiritual advisor to two of the hijackers who attacked America on September 11, 2001. As well, Maj. Nidal Hasan contacted Awlaki 10-20 times before he [coldly murdered](#) 13 Americans at Fort Hood in November, 2009. At his blog, Awlaki wrote that "Nidal Hasan did the right thing." He was also the inspiration for jihadist Faisal Shahzad, the "Muslim soldier" who attempted to detonate a car bomb in New York City's Times Square in May.



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Thus did the FBI advise Norris to erase her identity and disappear to escape the possibility of an Islamic hit.

Reports [Seattle Weekly](#), which published Norris' work:

You may have noticed that Molly Norris' comic is not in the paper this week. That's because there is no more Molly.

The gifted artist is alive and well, thankfully. But on the insistence of top security specialists at the FBI, she is, as they put it, "going ghost": moving, changing her name, and essentially wiping away her identity. She will no longer be publishing cartoons in our paper or in *City Arts* magazine, where she has been a regular contributor. She is, in effect, being put into a witness-protection program — except, as she notes, without the government picking up the tab. It's all because of the appalling fatwa issued against her this summer, following her infamous "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" cartoon.

Norris is worried, but appears to be taking the involuntary reorientation of her life in stride, the weekly paper reports:

When FBI agents, on a recent visit, instructed her to always keep watch for anyone following her, she responded, "Well, at least it'll keep me from being so self-involved!" It was, she says, the first time the agents managed a smile. She likens the situation to cancer — it might basically be nothing, it might be urgent and serious, it might go away and never return, or it might pop up again when she least expects it.

But of course this death sentence isn't cancer. It's a contract for a hit.

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