



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on April 4, 2011

Violence Erupts in Afghanistan After Quran Burning in U.S.

Reports out of Afghanistan have placed the death toll at over 20 in violence supposedly stemming from the burning of copies of the Quran half a world away in Florida. Initially at least eleven people were killed on April 1, including several United Nations personnel, after protests erupted in response to the burning of copies of the Islamic holy book by Florida pastors Terry Jones and Wayne Sapp in Mid-March. ABC News reported that in a staged event at their church, Jones “supervised” while Sapp soaked a copy of the Koran in kerosene “and burned it after finding it ‘guilty’ in a mock trial.”



According to Afghan police, the protests over the book burning “started peacefully but took a violent turn after a radical leader told those gathered that multiple Korans had been burned,” reported ABC News. “In a fury, the people marched on the nearby UN compound despite police firing AK-47s into the air in hopes of subduing them.” Protesters eventually disarmed the police and used their guns to kill several UN guards as well as three foreign workers in the UN building. [CNSNews.com](#) reported that by Sunday, April 3, protests had spread to “at least five major Afghan centers, with violence in Mazar-e-Sharif in the north and Kandahar in the south killing at least 23 people....”

The [Christian Post](#) noted that the latest Quran-burning event was not the first publicity stunt for the Rev. Jones, “who last September drew sweeping condemnation over his plan to ignite a pile of Qurans on the anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks.” He did not carry out that burning, after media attention garnered criticism from evangelical leaders as well as condemnation from President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

But on March 20, Jones and Sapp moved ahead with what they had advertised as “a trial of the book in which the Quran was found ‘guilty’ and ‘executed,’” reported the *Christian Post*. “The book, which had been soaking for an hour in kerosene, was put in a metal tray in the center of the church, and Sapp started the fire with a barbecue lighter. The book burned for around 10 minutes while some onlookers posed for photos, according to media reports.”

While Jones insisted that he had tired “to give the Muslim world an opportunity to defend their book,” he apparently received no response and “said he felt that he couldn’t have a real trial without a real punishment,” the *Post* reported. “The event was open to the public, but fewer than 30 people attended.”

However, Jones’ event did prompt some response from Muslims, with the Organization of the Islamic Conference — a group of 56 Muslim nations — issuing a statement the next day warning of “unforeseen and volatile consequences of such outrageous and irresponsible acts that could hurt the deep seated religious sentiments of over 1.5 billion Muslims around the world.”

And in a March 22nd speech to his country’s parliament, Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari condemned



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the incident “in the strongest possible words,” with Pakistan’s foreign ministry calling it a “despicable act.”

Within the next two weeks Muslim religious groups throughout Pakistan mobilized protests, with one terrorist group, Lashkar-e-Toiba, weighing in with its announcement of a \$1.2 million reward for anyone who would kill Jones.

It wasn’t until April 1, however, that anger over the event was fanned into a full-blown riot in Afghanistan, apparently through claims by Islamic clergy that Jones had actually burned hundreds of copies of the Quran. As the injuries, deaths, and destruction mounted throughout the weekend, President Obama was prompted to respond, declaring that while Jones’ actions represented “extreme intolerance and bigotry,” the violent response was in itself “an affront to human decency and dignity.”

CNSNews.com reported that during a meeting with U.S. ambassador Karl Eikenberry and Gen. David Petraeus, Afghan President Hamid Karzai had called on the U.S. and the UN to put Jones on trial for inciting the violence. For his part, Jones issued a statement calling the violence “tragic and criminal” and calling on the U.S government and the UN to take immediate action. “We must hold these countries and people accountable for what they have done,” Jones declared, “as well as for any excuses they may use to promote their terrorist activities.”

Photo: Effigy of the American pastor, Terry Jones is seen burning during a demonstration in Shinwar, Nangarhar province, east of Kabul, Afghanistan on April 4, 2011: AP Images



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