Excerpts: His Highness the Aga Khan on the offensive caricatures (cartoons) of the Holy Prophet (pbuh)

by NANO WISDOMS ARCHIVE OF IMAMAT SPEECHES, INTERVIEWS AND WRITINGS,

"I should also mention here the headlines of this past week -- which chart the widening gulf between Islamic and Western societies. Here the culprit has not been military action or diplomatic failure but the power of media images -- deeply offensive caricatures -- which have profoundly offended one billion four hundred million Muslims around the world, including myself.

"The question I ask, as I read all these headlines, is this: Why are political and civil leaders, in rich and poor nations alike, unable to develop the vision and harness the will to confront such challenges more effectively? What makes this sense of impasse especially disturbing is that it so often represents a failure of democracy. For many centuries, it was the conviction of enlightened people that societies would truly come to grips with their problems once they became democratic....

"I must believe that it is ignorance which explains the publishing of those caricatures which have brought such pain to Islamic peoples. I note that the Danish journal where the controversy originated acknowledged, in a recent letter of apology, that it had never realised the sensitivities involved.

"In this light, perhaps, the controversy can be described less as a clash of civilisations and more as a clash of ignorance. The alternative explanation would be that the offence was intended -- in which case we would be confronted with evil of a different sort."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2006 Address to the Evora University Symposium (Evora,
Stefan Aust / Erich Follath: The German government just organised a conference with many different Muslim groups and personalities who live in Germany. Do you consider such a forum useful or is it just window dressing?

Aga Khan: We can avoid misunderstandings by having such a forum where people from different faiths consult each other so they understand what really affects them. Once you have committed an offense all you can do is to try and reverse it. Anyone who knows the faith of Islam, for example, would have known that the caricatures of the Prophet were profoundly offensive to all Muslims.

Stefan Aust / Erich Follath: Again, this whole affair was misused by radical Islamists. They added caricatures much more offensive than the original ones to incite the masses.

Aga Khan: But I am told that there was an internal debate between the editors of that publication and they actually knew what they were doing. They took a risk and somebody should have said to them, why get into that situation? Now we are talking about civility, which is a completely different concept. If we are talking about civility in a pluralist society, then how do you develop that notion of civility, particularly where there is ignorance? And that's the thing that's worrying. And that's why I get frustrated when I see these situations that go on and on and on. Because I'm not willing to believe that they are all inspired by evil intent.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2006 Spiegel Online Interview (2nd), Stefan Aust and Erich Follath, 'Islam Is a Faith of Reason' (Berlin, Germany)

http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/7900/

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