

Je Suis Charlie. By Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *The Australian*, 10 January 2015.

Charlie Hedbo: the West must stop appeasing Islamic purveyors of hatred.

AFTER the horrific massacre this week at the French weekly satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, perhaps the West will finally put away its legion of useless tropes trying to deny the relationship between violence and radical Islam.

This was not an attack by a mentally deranged, lone-wolf gunman. This was not an “un-Islamic” attack by a bunch of thugs — the perpetrators could be heard shouting that they were avenging the prophet Mohammed. Nor was it spontaneous. It was planned to inflict maximum damage, during a staff meeting, with automatic weapons and a getaway plan. It was designed to sow terror, and in that it has worked.

The West is duly terrified. But it should not be surprised.

If there is a lesson to be drawn from such a grisly episode, it is that what we believe about Islam truly doesn't matter. This type of violence, jihad, is what they, the Islamists, believe.

There are numerous calls to violent jihad in the Koran. But the Koran is hardly alone. In too much of Islam, jihad is a thoroughly modern concept. The 20th-century jihad bible, and an animating work for many Islamist groups today, is *The Quranic Concept of War*, a book written in the mid-1970s by Pakistani general SK Malik. He argues that because Allah himself authored every word of the Koran, the rules of war contained in the Koran are of a higher calibre than the rules developed by mere mortals.

In Malik's analysis of Koranic strategy, the human soul — and not any physical battlefield — is the centre of conflict. The key to victory, taught by Allah through the military campaigns of the prophet Mohammed, is to strike at the soul of your enemy. And the best way to strike at your enemy's soul is through terror. Terror, Malik writes, is “the point where the means and the end meet”. Terror, he adds, “is not a means of imposing a decision upon the enemy; it is the decision we wish to impose”.

Those responsible for the slaughter in Paris, just like the man who killed the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004, are seeking to impose terror. And every time we give in to their vision of justified religious violence, we are giving them exactly what they want.

In Islam, it is a grave sin to depict visually or in any way slander Mohammed. Muslims are free to believe this, but why should such a prohibition be forced on non-believers?

In the US, Mormons didn't seek to impose the death penalty on those who wrote and produced *The Book of Mormon*, a satirical Broadway send-up of their faith. Islam, with 1400 years of history and about 1.6 billion adherents, should be able to withstand a few cartoons by a French satirical magazine. But, of course, deadly responses to cartoons depicting Mohammed are nothing new in the age of jihad.

Moreover, despite what the Koran may teach, not all sins can be considered equal. The West must insist that Muslims, particularly members of the Muslim diaspora, answer this question: What is more offensive to a believer — the murder, torture, enslavement and acts of war and terrorism being committed today in the name of Mohammed, or the production of drawings

and films and books designed to mock the extremists and their vision of what Mohammed represents?

To answer the late general Malik, our soul in the West lies in our belief in freedom of conscience and freedom of expression. The freedom to express our concerns, the freedom to worship who we want, or not to worship at all — such freedoms are the soul of our civilisation.

And that is precisely where the Islamists have attacked us. Again.

How we respond to this attack is of great consequence. If we take the position that we are dealing with a handful of murderous thugs with no connection to what they so vocally claim, then we are not answering them.

We have to acknowledge that today's Islamists are driven by a political ideology, an ideology embedded in the foundational texts of Islam.

We can no longer pretend that it is possible to divorce actions from the ideals that inspire them.

This would be a departure for the West, which too often has responded to jihadist violence with appeasement.

We appease the Muslim heads of government who lobby us to censor our press, our universities, our history books, our school curriculums. They appeal and we oblige.

We appease leaders of Muslim organisations in our societies. They ask us not to link acts of violence to the religion of Islam because they tell us that theirs is a religion of peace, and we oblige.

What do we get in return? Kalashnikovs in the heart of Paris.

The more we oblige, the more we self-censor, the more we appease, the bolder the enemy gets. There can only be one answer to this hideous act of jihad against the staff of *Charlie Hebdo*.

It is the obligation of the Western media and Western leaders, religious and lay, to protect the most basic rights of freedom of expression, whether in satire on any other form.

The West must not appease, it must not be silenced. We must send a united message to the terrorists: Your violence cannot destroy our soul.

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