



Atheist Smokes Pages from Bible and Koran

In the aftermath of the furor over one Florida church's plans to burn copies of the Koran on the ninth anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks, a new case of book-burning is drawing attention. Australian lawyer Alex Stewart, a self-proclaimed atheist, was not content merely to burn the Koran, but chose to burn the Bible as well.



However, what is drawing attention to Stewart's incendiary stunt is the novel approach to burning the holy books of approximately 3.6 billion people: using pages from the Bible and the Koran to roll marijuana "joints."

[According to an article in the Daily Mail:](#)

An Australian lawyer has inflamed the row over a U.S. pastor's plan to burn the Koran by allegedly smoking holy books and posting the videos on YouTube.

Brisbane-based lawyer Alex Stewart, a self-professed atheist, is seen smoking what appear to be marijuana joints made up of pages from the Koran and the Bible.... But the controversy has flared up again with Stewart, who works for the Queensland University of Technology, lighting up his religious 'joints' under the YouTube title: Bible or Koran — Which Burns Best? He gave the Bible a seven out of 10 for its burning qualities, and said it was better than the Koran which left him feeling sick.

Stewart says burning religious books is no big deal and that people need to "get over it."

Of course, when Gen. Petraeus was engaged in public handwringing over the "threat" to American troops in Afghanistan posed by the possibility of a small church in Florida burning copies of the Koran, no one in the media was telling him to "get over it." But Stewart may discover that atheist jabs at Islam are not received with the same calmness with which Christians cope with such sacrilege. Members of the Islamic community in Australia are already having to discourage fellow Muslims from reacting to Stewart with the anger and violence that have been the response to proposed Koran burning. Again, in the words of the *Daily Mail*,

The president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils, Ikebal Patel, said: "I think it's highly offensive that he has done this to two of the holiest books in the world."

"It does not in any way add value to trying to promote world peace and the consideration of different views, especially when there are heightened tensions around the anniversary of September 11 and the Eid el Fitr (end of Ramadan) celebrations."

Sheik Muhammad Wahid, president of the Islamic Association of Australia, said Mr Stewart's motives were deeply hurtful to Muslims. "We condemn the video and our feelings have been hurt by this man's actions," he said.



Written by [James Heiser](#) on September 16, 2010

Concerned that there might be reprisals, Mr Wahid urged his “fellow Muslims” to abide by the laws of Australia and not take any action which broke the law. He even suggested that Stewart might not have been “of sound mind at the time.”

According to press reports, Stewart has now fled his home — and not, it would seem, because of any threat of retaliation from the Christian community. There is no place for violence in the response to the expression of religious sentiment — no matter how utterly tasteless such expression might be. However, Stewart (and others) are now learning that not all religions and cultures are prepared to adhere to the notion of freedom of expression, which is so often taken for granted in the West.



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