



The Light

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International Organ of the Centre for the worldwide

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my teaching, and who, therefore, can truly be said to inhabit my spiritual home.

To follow my teachings in the proper manner, it is essential that one should firmly believe that there is an All-Powerful, All-Sustaining Supreme Being, that Creator of everything, Changeless, Everlasting and Eternal. He does not beget, nor was He begotten. He is Holy, so that there is no need or occasion for Him to go to the Cross, nor suffer in any way, nor be subject to death. He is such that although He is far removed, He is still very near; and being very near, He is still very far. Although He is One, and absolutely unique, His manifestations are diverse and multifarious. Whenever there occurs in man a transformation, for the changed man He becomes a new God, Who deals with him on the basis of a fresh manifestation. In fact, the man witnesses a change in Allah in proportion to the change in himself — not that there occurs any change in Allah, He being Eternal, Changeless and most perfect in Himself — but with every change in man for the better, Allah also reveals Himself to him in a fresh and clearer manifestation. With every progressive effort on the part of man, Allah also shows Himself with a higher and more powerful manifestation. He displays an extraordinary manifestation of His power and glory only when man shows an extraordinary change in himself. This is the root and the essence of the marvels and miracles witnessed at the hands of all servants of Allah. Belief in this God with these powers is the most essential condition of our Movement. Inculcate this belief in your hearts and give to its implications and requirements the

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

The Call of the Messiah

by **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad**,

The Promised Messiah and *Mahdi*

Let this be absolutely clear: just saying the pledge has no value if it is not supported by a genuine and firm resolve to live up to it in every way. Thus, only he will enter that house of mine with reference to which Allah, Most High, has promised me that He shall protect all those who are in this house, who fully lives according to my teaching. However, it should not be understood that this Divine protection is, here, extended only to those living within the physical boundaries of my house. The pledge also includes those who fully follow

**just saying the pledge only has
no value ...**

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first and topmost priority over all considerations of self, over all comforts and relationships. By Means of actions in the field of your daily life and with unflinching courage, show steadfast loyalty in His way.

Others in this world do not give Him preference over material means and the support they hope to get from their friends and relations. But you must give Him the first place so that in heaven you should come to be reckoned as His people.

To show signs of grace is the eternal way of Allah. But you can partake of this blessing only when there remains no difference and no distance between Him and you: only when all your wishes, hopes and desires merge into His will; only when, at all times, in success or failure, in hope or disappointment, you remain in humble prostration at His door, so that He should do with you what He may choose.

If you act like this, in you will appear that God Who for a long time has kept His face con-



The Old Faithful geyser, boiling water exploding, Yellowstone Park, USA

cealed from the world. Who is there among you, then, who will act upon this teaching, seeking only His pleasure, without the slightest sense of dissatisfaction against the way His will works?

Even in distress you should put your best foot forward, for this is the secret of your success; and you should strive to the utmost limit of your power to spread the idea of His uniqueness and unity all over the earth.

(From *Noah's Ark*)

An Analysis of Prophet Muhammad's (s) Covenants with Christians – 6

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(Continued from the August 2016 issue)

[Editor's Note: Here the author ends his article by drawing conclusions from the letters and treaties the Holy Prophet Muhammad entered into with Christians to show what kind of state the Holy Prophet (s) wanted to establish in Madina]

3. Conclusions: The Muslim Nation as Pluralistic and Civic-Oriented

In an attempt to provide direction for improving relations between Muslim and Christians, this article drew upon Prophet Muhammad's Covenants as establishing freedom of religion and civic rights for Christians living within the *ummah*. The Covenants of the Prophet with the Christians of his time bring to the foreground the question of how Muslim leaders govern in relation to non-Muslim communities. The Covenants, as this article highlighted, were designed "*to protect and defend peaceful Christian communities, not attack them*" (emphasis original). For this reason alone, the Covenants can be used in policy-making circles concerning current tensions between Muslims and Christians. Ultimately, this article shows that contemporary Islamic states that mistreat and discriminate against Christians cannot be justified in light of Prophet Muhammad's Covenants. The "re-discovery" of these documents provides an opportunity to give new birth to Islam and regenerate the essence of Islamic teachings.

The Prophet's cordial relations with Christians were not due merely to political expediency or personal aspirations, (bolding is ours) but rather they resulted from his belief that Christians should be able to freely practice

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their own faith in accordance with their own will. The Qur'an (2:256) clearly supports this statement when it declares in no uncertain terms: *There shall be no compulsion in religion*. In tandem with the Qur'an, hadiths, and the Constitution of Medina, the Covenants assure Christians that they will have the freedom to choose their spiritual destiny as citizens of the *ummah*. His inclusive position on incorporating Christians reflects this verse of the Qur'an (3:64): *Say: O People of the Book, come to an equitable word between us and you*. Far from being a tyrant, as depicted in modern representations, Muhammad developed a democratic aptitude towards Christian communities. The Prophet's relationships with Christians can be characterized by more than mere tolerance, but rather by compassion and the fostering of peace.



The Covenants and their common message of dignity and equality help to minimize the scope and scale of current polarization between Muslims and Christians in the Middle East and beyond. By striking harmony with Prophet Muhammad's Covenants and vision for the *ummah*, Muslims will draw upon the best principles of their Islamic tradition. The value of the Covenants lies in its moral authenticity and its virtue. The Covenants do not simply provide theoretical possibilities of Muslim and Christian co-existence; they are, on the other hand, historical realities that provide a framework on which future prospects can be envisaged for Muslim and Christian understanding. The Covenants, therefore, should be referred to and used in current inter-religious and political conflicts, especially those involving the persecution of Christians in so-called "Islamic states".

According to Prophet Muhammad, **a nation consisting predominantly of Muslims does not necessarily mean that the nation is "Islamic": it can become truly "Islamic" only by virtue of consciously turning to religious pluralism and civic rights as the pillars of the *ummah*** (Bolding is ours — *The Light*). This is part of the vision imparted to Muslims and Christians by his example.

(concluded)

Thomas the Apostle Is Murdered in India – 2

by David B. Green

(Continued from our August issue)

Priests of Kali

A late tradition sees Thomas as having carried the gospel of Jesus to the Indian subcontinent, first to the north-western kingdom of Gondoporus. Then, according to the third-century Acts of Thomas, in the year 52, the apostle sailed, in the company of a Jewish traveller named Abbanes, to the southern tip of India, to the port of Muziris, present-day Pattanam, in Kerala state.

Kerala was home, even at that time, to a Jewish community. A 17th-century work called *Thomma Parvam* (Songs of Thomas) says that he converted 40 Jews upon his arrival, along with 3,000 Hindus of Brahmin origin.

Modern historians believe that Christianity actually arrived in India several centuries after the era of the historical Thomas, with the arrival of Christians from Syria and from Persia.

The martyrdom of Thomas, however, took place not on western coast of India, but on the other side of the subcontinent, in the south eastern city of Mylapore, near latter-day Chennai. There, Thomas came into conflict with the Hindu priests of Kali, who killed him for insulting their deity – or simply for converting many of their followers. (Marco Polo, in the 13th century, heard that Thomas had died, more than a millennium earlier, when an archer out hunting peacocks had accidentally shot him.)

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His bones were then brought into the city of Mylapore and buried inside a church he had already built there, where in the 16th century, Portuguese explorers built the San Thome Basilica, which was rebuilt by the British in 1893.

Today, December 21 is still observed as the feast day of St. Thomas in some Protestant churches, and among traditionalist Catholics. In the Roman Catholic Church, however, the feast day was moved, in 1960, to July 3, so as not to interfere with the days leading up to Christmas, on December 25.

Read more: http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/features/1.692829?utm_content=72+CE%253A+Thomas+the+Apostle+is+murdered+in+India&utm_medium=%24segment&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=newsletter

Did Jesus Predict Muhammad? A Biblical Portal Between Christianity and Islam

***Ian Mevorach, Theologian, minister,
ethicist, and activist; co-founder of
Common Street Spiritual Center
(www.commonstreet.org)***

The time has come for Christians and Muslims to make peace between our communities. Christians and Muslims already make up more than half of the global population, and these numbers are expected to grow in the coming decades; according to the Pew Research Center, by 2050, two thirds of humanity, some 5.7 billion people, will be either Christian or Muslim.

Our planet simply cannot afford another century of misunderstanding and violence between these two communities. The challenges we face as a global human family are profound: ongoing warfare and nuclear proliferation, global poverty and economic inequality, climate change and ecological degradation. How will humanity handle these crises and others if our two largest religious communities are embroiled in constant conflict, if misunderstanding defines our relationship? As contemporary theologian Hans Kung has argued for decades,



Coral reef is alive and it is being killed by human pollution.

there will be no peace between our nations without peace between our religions. Now is the time to transform the way Christians and Muslims see and relate to each other.

In an earlier blog on the Huffington Post about the problem of Christian Islamophobia, I argue that Christians have the opportunity to transform the way we see Islam and Muslims by accepting Muhammad as “Spirit of Truth.”

Historically, most Christian theologians — including John of Damascus, Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Nicholas of Cusa, and Martin Luther — have seen Muhammad not as a “Spirit of Truth” but as a “Spirit of Error,” a false prophet or heretic. There are many Christians today who respect the Islamic tradition and would never make such an offensive statement about Muhammad.

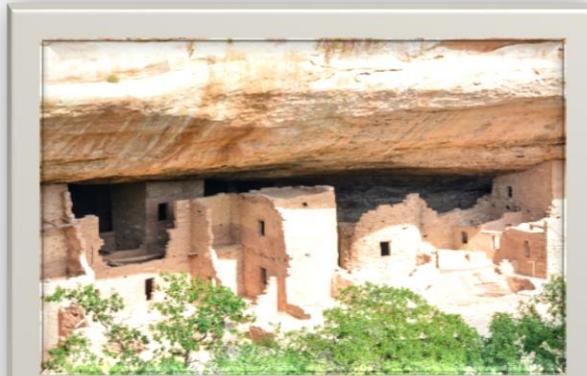
However, the majority of Christians still maintain a fundamentally Islamophobic position on Muhammad. So I believe that the time has come for peace making Christians to contradict this position directly. Changing our view of Muhammad — so that we recognize him as a true prophet rather than discredit him as a false prophet — would effectively inoculate Christians against Islamophobia and would help to establish a new paradigm of cooperative Christian-Muslim relations.

In Jesus’ farewell discourse in the Gospel of John (chapters 14 to 16), Jesus speaks about the coming of the “Spirit of Truth” or “Advocate” (in Greek, *parakletos*). For centuries Muslim interpreters have seen Muhammad as this “Advocate,” based on Qur’an 61:6, a verse in which Jesus predicts the coming of a future prophet

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named Ahmad: *O Children of Israel! Truly I am the Messenger of God unto you, confirming that which came before me in the Torah and bearing glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me whose name is Ahmad* (61:6, The Study Quran). Ahmad, which is another name for Muhammad, is very close etymologically to the Greek word, *parakletos*, so it is likely that the Qur'an is claiming that Jesus' farewell discourse in the Gospel of John predicts Muhammad. The major objection to applying these predictions to Muhammad or any other prophet is that Christians normally read them as part and parcel of Jesus' promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus's promise of the Holy Spirit is an essential part of the Christian faith and my interpretation of Muhammad as Spirit of Truth affirms this. John 14:16-17 and 14:26 are clearly about the promise of the Holy Spirit: in John 14:16-17, the Advocate or Spirit of Truth is spoken of as an everlasting, invisible,



Puebloans, an ancient people of the US, lived in these houses carved into rock in Mesa Verde National Park, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad (s) was born in Makkah.

abiding, inner presence; in most manuscripts, this Advocate is even directly called "the Holy Spirit" in John 14:26. But as Jesus' farewell discourse proceeds these titles become multivalent and, in John 15:26-27 and 16:7-15, they begin to refer more to a future prophet than to the Holy Spirit. Some Muslim interpreters who identify Muhammad with the Advocate argue that this title does not refer to the Holy Spirit at all — and that the text of John has been corrupted so as to obfuscate its direct link to Muhammad. But I believe that the titles Spirit of Truth and Advocate are used in the Gospel of John, first of all, to speak about the promise of the Holy Spirit — and I do not believe that the text has been changed to hide anything. This interpretation of John opens us up to Muhammad as Spirit of Truth in a way that affirms the integrity of the Christian tradition. But before I explain the fine details of my exegesis I want to

speak briefly to the big picture of why the Gospel of John, in particular, tells us that Jesus predicts a future prophet.

The Gospel of John is the latest canonical version of the Gospel — it was written at least a generation after the synoptic gospels and probably two generations or more after Paul's letters. The author of the Gospel of John, often called the beloved disciple, claims to be the last living witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In a passage at the end of the Gospel he tells a story about an encounter with the risen Jesus that made him and others believe that he would live to see Jesus' second coming.

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; he was the one who had reclined next to Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?" When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!" So

the rumour spread in the community that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them, and we know that his testimony is true. (John 21:20-24, NRSV)

This passage shows us that the author of the Gospel of John is in a different paradigm than earlier New Testament authors insofar as he no longer expects Jesus' imminent second coming. Paul, for example, who wrote in the decades immediately following Jesus' death and resurrection, believed that Jesus would return while most of the people he was preaching to were still alive. The author of the Gospel of John looks for new meaning in Jesus' promise of the Spirit of Truth or Advocate because he realizes he will die before Jesus returns. When his Gospel was

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published he was likely already dead and his community was looking forward into a longer and more complicated future than originally expected.

The Gospel of John plays a similar role for the New Testament as Deuteronomy does for the Torah. Deuteronomy is the latest text of the Torah — it reiterates the Law of Moses as told in the four earlier books — and like the Gospel of John it predicts a future prophet:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. (Deut 18:18-19, NRSV)

Both Deuteronomy and the Gospel of John are reflections on specific revelations — the Torah and Gospel — and both indicate that there is more revelation to come. The Gospel of John's language for the Spirit of Truth or Advocate is strikingly similar to Deuteronomy's: "he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come" (John 16:13, NRSV).

Like Deuteronomy, the Gospel of John opens up an expectation for future revelation. John's prophecy is not so specific that it must apply to Muhammad and only Muhammad. But insofar as the Qur'an makes the claim that Muhammad is the Spirit of Truth or Advocate that Jesus foretold, a strong interpretive option emerges for Christians to receive Muhammad as a prophet that Jesus predicts when he says:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:12-15, NRSV)

In this passage, the description of the Advocate or Spirit of Truth is qualitatively different than earlier mentions. Here we see the Spirit of Truth speaking not through the disciples but to them. Earlier, in John 14:17, Jesus says that this Spirit of Truth will abide with his followers and

be in them; throughout the Gospel of John the Holy Spirit is spoken of as an abiding, inner presence. Again, in 14:26, Jesus says that the Advocate will "remind you of all that I have said to you." In these passages, Jesus is talking about the Holy Spirit who helps his followers understand what he has said. Essentially, this would have been the experience of the beloved disciple, the author of the Gospel of John, who was guided by the presence of the Spirit in remembering and interpreting Jesus' words and deeds (which he does spiritually rather than literally). However, in John 16:12-15, Jesus is talking about a Spirit of Truth who will bring forth new revelations, who will say the "many things" that Jesus does not say because his followers "cannot bear them now."

The clear distinction is that the Spirit of Truth in John 16 is predicted to declare new revelations not merely remind Jesus' disciples of what he already said, as in John 14. The idea that he will "declare to you the things that are to come" is especially important because it acknowledges the uncertainty about the future that Jesus' followers faced, given the fact that he had not returned as soon as expected. Jesus asserts that this future prophet will glorify him by declaring a new revelation that will come from the same source as his message: God. This discourse is designed to open the minds of Christians to receive a future revelation not as something that competes with or diminishes the Gospel, but rather as something that glorifies Jesus. Unfortunately, these words in the Gospel of John have been totally missed by Christians who reject and belittle the Qur'an; we have for the most part completely ignored the unity of the Gospel and the Qur'an in terms of their common revelatory source. However, if we take Jesus' words seriously, we have the opportunity to receive the Word of God in the Qur'an in accordance with Jesus' promise that the Spirit of Truth "will take what is mine and declare it to you." We can accept the Qur'an as a revelation, not in opposition to the Gospel, but in unity with the Gospel and the will of Jesus.

In the First Letter of John, which was written after the Gospel of John and is very similar to it, we find a continuation of the Gospel of John's multivalent way of speaking about the Spirit as applying to the Holy Spirit as well as to

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prophets inspired by the Spirit. In 1 John 3:24 and 1 John 4:13, the author speaks about the gift of the Holy Spirit and how it abides in Jesus' followers. But in 1 John 4:1-6, in between these mentions of the Holy Spirit, the author speaks at length about testing the spirits. In these verses the word "Spirit" is used to talk about prophets and how to tell whether they are true or false:

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. (1 John 4:2, NRSV)

The author contrasts "the Spirit of God" with the "Spirit of Anti-Christ," those who are "from God" with those who are "from the world," and "the Spirit of Truth" with "the Spirit of Error." This discourse, again, is strikingly similar to the discourse in Deuteronomy about future prophets that I quoted above.

In Deuteronomy 18:20-22, after the promise of a future prophet in 18:18 and the commandment to listen to that prophet in 18:19, criteria are laid out to distinguish a true from a false prophet. Deuteronomy threatens that a prophet who speaks for another god or who falsely speaks on God's behalf "shall die" (18:20). It also advises the Israelites to ignore prophets who prophecy falsely:

If a prophet speaks in the name of the Eternal but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the Eternal has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it. (18:22, NRSV)

In the same way, but using different criteria, the author of 1 John defines true prophets and false prophets relative to their allegiance to Jesus, God, and the early followers of Jesus. Part of the dynamic of the early community of Jesus' followers was that many claimed the inspiration of the Spirit and prophesied. The author of 1 John is especially worried about Docetic versions of Christianity that had developed denying that Jesus "came in the flesh"; in these versions of Christianity Jesus was not an actual human being but rather an angelic being that only appeared to be human. Such a version of Christianity, obviously, would have been quite disconnected from the actual teachings and values

of Jesus of Nazareth and his earliest followers, who knew him as a real human being. It is worth noting that Muhammad meets these criteria insofar as the Qur'an affirms that Jesus is the Messiah and that he "came in the flesh."

In the history of Christianity, all of the negative terms in 1 John 4:1-6 have been used against Muhammad. He has been identified with "the Spirit of Anti-Christ" and the "Spirit of Error." However, the time has come for Christians to recognize how wrong we have been in these assessments and to correct the record by affirmatively identifying Muhammad with "the Spirit of Truth."

When we look at Islam as a world religion, and see that 1.6 billion people and growing are following in the way of Muhammad, the time has surely come to recognize him as a prophet. If Muhammad is not a prophet, who is? It is understandable, really, that so many Christians have been defensive and have reacted negatively to Islam. That kind of group-ego, fear-based response is part of human nature. However, it is absurd for us to continue to see Muhammad as a heretical Christian or false prophet given that Islam has lasted for nearly 1,400 years, has supported monumental cultural, spiritual, artistic, political, moral, and intellectual achievements, and has a tremendous and vibrant global following.

There is no better candidate than Muhammad, no one in fact that comes even close, in terms of fulfilling Jesus's promise of the Spirit of Truth who would bring forth a new revelation from God. I do not have space in this article to explore the many Qur'anic verses directly addressed to Christians, but if we were to receive them our religion would be transformed for the better and would come into balance with Judaism and Islam.

Jesus knew it would be difficult for us to accept his guidance from another source. But he did not want our fear of the apparent otherness of the Prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an to separate us from the Way, the Truth, and the Life; that is, the Word of God. This is why he spoke to the disciples reassuringly about the Spirit of Truth, saying, "he will glorify me"; and, for the same reason, he emphasized the unity of his teaching with the revelations to come, twice

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repeating the promise, “he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:14-15, NRSV). Based on the promises of Jesus, Christians can encounter the Qur’an without fear, knowing that it is a revelation which glorifies Jesus and, in a spiritual sense, is from him.

What we have in the Gospel of John is a biblical portal between Christianity and Islam. If we choose to walk through it in faith we will discover that our religions issue from the same divine source; we will discover that we are siblings in faith, meant to bear witness to the truth side by side (John 15:26-27) and collaborate in manifesting God’s will on Earth as it is in Heaven. I invite Christians everywhere to look carefully at our scriptures, search our souls, consider our history, and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in answering this question: “Has the time come for Christians to see Muhammad as Spirit of Truth?”

A Reckoning

Shahid Aziz

The first chapter of the Holy Quran called the *Fatiha*, or the Opening, is regarded as a summary of its teachings. It consists of seven short verses. It starts by giving the qualities of the Divine Being — one being “*Master of the Day of Reckoning*”. This means that Allah shall hold us accountable for our actions on what is called the Day of Judgment.

However, He has not left it to that Day to make clear to us the consequence of our actions. The reckoning starts here on this earth and continues into the Hereafter. That is why Allah says that He revealed the Holy Quran so that people may be judged by a Divine Law rather than man-made laws.

We see this in everyday life. Students attend school and the consequence of their actions is made clear by the results they achieve in their examinations. If they have followed the course

and their teacher’s instructions and worked hard, then they will achieve a good result; otherwise not.

Another example is our health. Those who smoke may not suffer its consequences on the first day or year but eventually they fall prey to many illnesses, some of which are life threatening.

Environment is another example. London used to drown in darkness in the middle of the last century because the smoke pumped into the atmosphere by coal-burning factories and homes would settle upon it in winter. Old people were advised to stay at home otherwise they may ‘suffocate’ to death. The British government did not wait for the Day of Judgement to deal with the consequences of this behaviour. It passed a clean air act which banned burning of coal and gradually London recovered and there is no longer thick fog enveloping it every winter.

The important lesson is that human actions had evil consequences but that human reaction to these evil consequences corrected them. Without government’s action matters would have worsened. We have another evil consequence of a human action which is that the Mr Tony Blair, a previous Prime Minister of the UK, misinformed the House of Commons to get it to vote in favour of attacking Iraq. He said that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq which could be launched within 45 minutes to destroy London.

This was proven to be untrue and there is now a motion of contempt of Parliament before the UK Parliament. We strongly urge the British public to write to their M.P. to support this motion and hold Mr Blair accountable for what he did. Better still, a movement to amend the charter of International Criminal Court should be launched so that it can put such people on trial for genocide. **We implore our Muslim brothers and sisters to take action to prevent future murder of innocent people by powers who think they own the world.**

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