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The Telegraph

Muslims don't need special praise for doing good. It's patronising

- [SIMON COTTEE](#)

23 JUNE 2017 • 12:52PM



Muslims are no different to everyone else: most are good, some are bad CREDIT: KEVIN COOMBS/REUTERS

Not all Muslims are terrorists. Indeed, many Muslims are good and decent. These two propositions are so monumentally obvious and incontestable that you'd think they barely need enunciating, let alone repeating. But you'd be wrong, because every time some band of jihadist losers goes on a suicide-murder rampage in a western city you can bet your house on encountering them in the news coverage that inevitably and feverishly follows.

With Muslim-targeted hate crimes on the increase, including terrorist attacks like the Finsbury Park mosque atrocity, it is more than understandable that Muslims and their allies would want to push back and disabuse some non-Muslims of their lazy stereotypes about Islam and its followers.

“Some news organizations are only too willing to act as newly minted cheerleaders for Muslims”

But the timing of these initiatives is disconcerting. In the immediate aftermath of a jihadist attack we should be condemning it and attempting to understand how and why it happened. But for Islam apologists it doesn't really matter who the victims were and how they suffered, it just matters that Islam has nothing to do with it.

More disconcertingly, some news organizations are only too willing to act as newly minted cheerleaders for Muslims, perhaps out of a bad conscience for the disproportionate coverage they previously devoted to jihadist terror attacks. For example, in the aftermath of the Manchester attack a small coterie of journalists felt it was newsworthy to report on the off-duty Muslim surgeon – named Dr. Iqbal - who “rushed into work” to help the victims of the attack.

In recent days, this narrative has resurfaced in the aftermath not of a terrorist atrocity, but of the terrible disaster of the Grenfell Tower fire. Apparently, Muslims who were preparing a pre-fast meal late at night alerted the authorities to the impending calamity and many more came to the rescue. For the media who reported on this aspect of the story, what was striking was not that these helpers were mostly young, but that they were Muslims.

“It is some kind of low-expectation prejudice”

The coded assumption here seems to be this: not all Muslims are terrorists. But of course not all Muslims are terrorists. And of course very many Muslims are morally good – and not in spite of, but *because* of, how they understand and practice their faith. Only bigots or the ignorant would disagree.

Doctors are supposed to go to work and carry out their professional duties. When people's lives are in grave danger, bystanders, if they're able to help, are morally obliged to do so. It is some kind of low-expectation prejudice to think that acts of civic responsibility on the part of Muslims, or Muslims just doing what they are supposed to do, is somehow newsworthy or worth pointing out.

Muslims are neither monsters nor angels, and it's a grave insult to them that they should be reduced to these two cartoonish, contrasting stereotypes.

Simon Cottee is a visiting senior fellow at the Freedom Project, Wellesley College and a contributing writer for The Atlantic. He is the author of “The Apostates: When Muslims Leave Islam.”

