

NO BIGOTRY DON'T HATE MUSLIMS

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LAST WEEK in Huntington, a 16-year-old high school student of Arabic descent was attacked twice, by a classmate and an adult neighbor wanting to take revenge on any Muslim for the Sept. 11 horror.

This kind of cruel, irrational bigotry is absolutely the worst thing America could suffer in the aftermath of the tragic terrorism attack. Just because the suicide bombers presumably were crazed Islamic extremists is no reason to blame gentle, law-abiding adherents of that faith.

As we've said before, the vast majority of the world's 1 billion Muslims are as kind and brotherly as Christians, Jews, Hindus or any other major religious group. They aren't responsible for the actions of a crackpot fringe. To blame them would be as illogical as accusing all Christians of shooting doctors at abortion clinics, just because a few nuts do - or accusing all Catholics of planting bombs, just because Ulster's killers do.

An Afghan-American columnist in San Francisco, Tamim Ansary, wrote a superb response to loudmouth radio talk about "bombing Afghanistan back to the Stone Age." Ansary, who emigrated from Afghanistan 35 years ago, wrote:

"I speak as one who hates the Taliban and Osama bin Laden. There is no doubt in my mind that these people were responsible for the atrocity in New York. I agree that something must be done about those monsters.

"But the Taliban and bin Laden are not Afghanistan. They're not even the government of Afghanistan. The Taliban are a cult of ignorant psychotics who took over Afghanistan in 1997. Bin Laden is a political criminal with a plan."

The starving people of Afghanistan - ravaged by 22 years of holy wars - are victims of these armed rulers, and had nothing to do with the Sept. 11 horror, he wrote. "They would exult if someone would come in there, take out the Taliban and clear out the rats' nest of international thugs holed up in their country."

"A few years ago, the United Nations estimated that there are 500,000 disabled orphans in Afghanistan - a country with no economy, no food. There are millions of widows. And the Taliban has been burying these widows alive in mass graves. The soil is littered with land mines, the farms were all destroyed. ..."

Tragic Afghanistan already has been driven back to the Stone Age, Ansary said. If revenge-seeking America looses more cruise missiles on the pathetic nation, it will do little except "stir the rubble of earlier bombs" - and kill defenseless villagers who have no place to hide. The armed militias, who already have grabbed most of the food, probably would hole up safe in mountain caves.

The only real way to conquer the militias would be to send U.S. regiments in for a long guerrilla war - but Russia's Red Army failed in such a conflict with the concealed "holy warriors."

We can't guess how the current showdown with Afghanistan will turn out - but it's both stupid and cruel to blame American Muslims for a tragedy with which they had absolutely no connection.