

Does the Bin Laden Decapitated Snake Still Have Life?
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Was the killing of Osama Bin Laden \223justice,\224 as President Obama has said, or was it
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\223vengeance,\224 as both critics and admirers claim? Justice, technically, could have been served by putting that monster on trial\227or a succession of trials everywhere he had ordered mass murders (Kenya, Yemen, Bali, Mumbai, London, Spain, and the United States). Taking him out, the way we did, where he was confined to the house just like his women, could be said to be vengeance, but I don\222t think it was. Justice is not just a trial of one\222s peers; it is also seeing to it that a criminal does not get away with it. We want to live in a fair, just world, not an endless cycle of vengeance.

If we want to remember what a vengeance world is like, just take a look at tribal life\227particularly Muslim tribal life around the world\227where the key value is \223honor,\224 the preservation of which demands blood settlement. In our own past, even Western civilization has gone through phases of \223honor\224 and revenge for \223insult.\224 Gentlemen used to duel when offended by a remark or action, taking the duel to the death of one of the duelers. This ended in the 19th century.

But it is interesting to see where in our own civilization deadly honor codes and vengeance were most valued: Spain and Sicily, both of which were long under Muslim rule. They picked up this value from Arab vengeance codes\227not only demanding the death of offending men, but also of women who \223dishonored\224 their menfolk by real or imagined sexual infidelity.

We all take vicarious pleasure in movies and plays in which \223getting even\224 delights us\227but we really do not have such a society. The removal of Osama Bin Laden had more to do with justice than vengeance. It also had practical value. The symbolism of his survival for so many years after his criminal acts was an affront to us\227and to those modern states that try to operate by rule of law.

What is Bin Laden\222s legacy? He created a mafia based on an extremely primitive interpretation of Islam, an interpretation that demanded dictatorial control over all Muslims. As his movement and franchises rampaged throughout the world, they left a trail of violence, blood, and indifference to a body count that included far more Muslims than non-Muslims. When suicide bombers detonated themselves in markets filled with women and children, their handlers considered it justified because women should be at home, not out shopping. When weddings and funerals were targeted by bombers, that\222s fine because they were not praying at the mosque. When mosques were blown up, that was fine because they belonged to Muslim sects other than Al Qaeda\222s. This has not sat well with Muslims around the world, who are finally ready to condemn this movement.

Osama Bin Laden is dead, his body in the Indian Ocean, and there will never be a shrine to his burial place for fools to attend. He is gone. But Militant Islam is still alive, and for all the talk about the \223Arab Spring\224 and all the wonderful young people who want \223freedom and dignity,\224 it is not going to happen.

How can Egypt have \223freedom and dignity\224 when in the midst of their demonstrations, a mob of men savagely targeted, raped, and beat an American woman journalist from 60 Minutes, Lara Logan, attempting to tear her limb from limb, because they thought she was a Jew (Zionist spy)? What kind of \223Power to the People\224 can Egypt have when a vast majority polled believe that there should be death for blasphemy (\223insulting\224 the Prophet or Islam)?

Until the ignorance, religious bigotry, and vengeance codes become unacceptable to Egyptians, they will not have a modern, thriving country, nor will any other Muslim state in the Arab world. Bin Laden is dead, but the poisonous culture that created him is still alive for some time to come. But this too will come to an end.

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Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of \223How Do You Know That?\224 You may contact her at Lfarhat102@aol.com or www.globalthink.net.