

The Buffalo Interfaith Bluff

Posted By [Ilya Feoktistov](#) On February 8, 2010 @ 12:04 am In [FrontPage](#) | [8 Comments](#)



^[1] Rabbi Marc Schneier is a leading exponent of Jewish-Muslim dialogue. As founder of the Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, he recently described in Newsweek the successes of his second annual “Weekend of Twinning of Synagogues and Mosques.” This interfaith initiative brings together “100 synagogues and 100 mosques” for a weekend of interfaith programming. Unfortunately for the Rabbi, he used, as a local example of mosque-synagogue twinning the case in Buffalo , NY. – a case which shows just how easily Jews can be deceived by radical Muslims posing as “moderates.”

“...Coming just days after the horror of extremist violence at Fort Hood ,” wrote Rabbi Schneier, “the Weekend of Twinning was heartening evidence that most

Muslims are moderates, and that majorities in both the Muslim and Jewish communities seek better relations...”

It may well be true that most American Muslims are moderate, but the Jews in Buffalo seem to have got themselves snookered.

As the Research Director of an organization that investigates and scrutinizes radical Islamic groups, I was approached last fall by concerned members of the Buffalo Jewish community who asked us to help them understand the recent local efforts to forge Muslim-Jewish interfaith relationships. We were told that some of the groups and individuals behind this initiative are known for being sources of viciously anti-Israel activity and rhetoric. Together, we began a long effort to collect information on the Twinning. What we found was that the entities behind the Buffalo interfaith effort are anything but moderate.

As Rabbi Schneier describes in his Newsweek article, the event was conceived and coordinated by Robert Stall and Othman Shibly – a Jewish geriatrician and a Muslim dentist who worked to provide free health screenings to people in the community without health insurance. The doctors became close after jointly attending a medical conference in Damascus , Syria together. During a break in the conference, Dr. Shibly took Dr. Stall to a Damascus mosque and introduced him to a respected Syrian cleric, Sheikh Rajab Deeb. Sheikh Deeb had been the top disciple of Dr. Shibly’s own spiritual mentor, the recently deceased Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro.

In his efforts to convince Buffalo Jewish leaders to join the Twinning, Dr. Stall has characterized Dr. Shibly and his Syrian spiritual leaders as moderate and peace-loving men of faith. Writing to a concerned community member, Dr. Stall said that, “*Dr. Shibly’s efforts to improve the world by having different faiths work together, side by side, competing to outdo one another in good works, is to a large extent based in [sic] the teachings of Sheikh Ahmad Kufaro, a Syrian imam who was in many ways ahead of his time.*”

As proof of Kufaro’s progressiveness, Dr. Stall provided links to Kufaro’s English language articles with titles like “Spirituality in the 21st Century.” Jewish leaders who participated in the Twinning Weekend must have been convinced – Kufaro’s disciple, Rajab Deeb, was linked in via Skype to address the interfaith event participants through an interpreter.

It is unfortunate that Dr. Stall and the Jewish participants didn’t consult an interpreter, for while the Sheikhs’ English-language websites are full of new-age fluff about interfaith spirituality, the Arab-language sections contained something different.

A video recording of Kuftaro's August 18, 2003 sermon on "Islam and Terrorism" posted on his website began with a section on, "*The control of the Jewish lobby on world opinion,*" where he insisted that American claims of Syrian support for terrorism were, "*suggested to them by the Jewish lobby, who are the killers of prophets.*" Kuftaro has also said that "*Israel is a dagger in the heart of the Muslim nation*" and in a meeting with Hamas leaders insisted that "*all Muslims are obligated to do jihad upon the Zionists.*"

In a video taped on July 5, 2002, Kuftaro turned over his pulpit to Luis Farrakhan, who was visiting his mosque as an honored guest. On November 8, 2002, he gave the same honor to the neo-Nazi preacher William Baker. In online video of both events, Kuftaro looks on from the dais while both anti-Semites give lectures denouncing America and Israel in front of his congregation.

On the personal website of Sheikh Rajab Deeb, together with the audio of the sermon he gave at the Buffalo event, is a May 15, 2005 sermon titled, "Jerusalem is Ours." In the sermon, Deeb claimed that the Holy Land is undergoing a so-called, "*process of desecration through the delirious allegations of the presence there of the Jewish Temple.*" About Jews, he said: "*They want to remove and destroy every trace except for their footsteps and pollute every creed except their faith, and eradicate every race except their race, and they claim to be God's Chosen People...*"

In a position statement on Syria's army, Deeb said:

"You must set up sophisticated weapons, which are appropriate to the times. The saber and spear were good predecessor weapons, which then evolved into the catapult. This development is still ongoing to the present age, where the weapons became firearms, then artillery, missile and aircraft, and then, with increased development, came the atomic and hydrogen bombs... His eminence [Sheikh Deeb] encourages the development of the national weapons industry; when the State possesses the secrets of these weapons, no enemy can resist it."

Deeb's support for Syria's national weapons industry is not surprising – in fact both he and Kuftaro have served as top clerics in Bashar Assad's totalitarian government, known for spreading virulent Jew-hatred. Until Kuftaro's death in 2003, he was the Grand Mufti of Syria and Deeb is currently the Chief Scholar in the Syrian Ministry of Religion. Considering that Syria has expelled all its Jews, hosts the top leadership of Palestinian terror groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, and arms Hizbullah, the tenor of Deeb and Kuftaro's sermons about Jews is also not surprising.

The Shibly family has promoted a similar pro-terror ideology in Buffalo. Dr. Shibly's son Hassan Shibly is a prolific blogger who has written that Hizbullah should not be considered a terrorist organization. In a high-profile incident at the Rainbow Bridge in 2004, Hassan and Dr. Shibly's wife Sawsan Tabbaa, were detained at the border after returning from the controversial "Reviving the Islamic Spirit" annual conference in Toronto. Responding to a discrimination lawsuit filed by the Shiblys against it, the Department of Homeland Security said that: "*In this instance, we had credible intelligence that conferences similar to the one from which these individuals were leaving were being used by terrorist organizations to fundraise and to hide the travel of terrorists themselves.*" In 2007, the courts rejected the Shibly family's claims of discrimination and judged that the terror threat associated with the conference justified their detention.

What's stunning here is that finding this information was not that hard. How is it possible that the Jews taking part in Buffalo interfaith efforts were so easily bamboozled? Surely, no one involved in this "twinning" business would have signed a contract to renovate his bathroom without such minimal due diligence. The answer is the deep obsession with politically correct ideology that pervades many liberal Jewish communities: "It just can't be true that Islamic radicals would try to take advantage of our good will. If anyone even thinks of this as a possibility, he must be a "racist!"

And why would Islamic radicals pretend to be moderate in order to establish interfaith relationships with Jewish community? I believe that this and many other similar "Twinning Initiatives" around the country have an ulterior purpose. Already, the interfaith relationship as it currently exists in Buffalo is being exploited to intimidate local Jewish groups into forfeiting their freedom to vigorously advocate for Jews everywhere, including Israel. Shortly

after the twinning, Dr. Shibly denounced a lecture by Israeli General Effie Eitam at the University of Buffalo . Writing to the event organizers, Dr. Shibly said: “*It is so sad as we are trying to bring our communities together and make a historical step to join the national efforts of twinning mosques and Synagogues projects for common good, we get a slap in our face.*” Likewise, when the Jewish community wanted to screen “Farewell Israel ,” a thoroughly-researched film about the dangers Israel faces, Shibly again invoked the interfaith threat: “*This movie and other programs presented before were misleading and promote islamophobia. They destroy all the bridges and dialogues that we are building to promote peace, love and understanding.*”

This type of disingenuous interfaith dialogue with Jewish leaders is also a strategic force-multiplier for extremists. The rest of American society tends to look to Jews on the topic of extremist bigotry and intolerance as the proverbial canary in the coal mine. By embracing radical Islamists in an official interfaith relationship, Jewish leaders give them a ticket into American institutions.

Interfaith dialogue between Jews and Muslims can be valuable. Yet dialogue is only productive when it occurs with partners who are honest about their true intentions. This doesn't seem to be the case with Dr. Shibly and his Syrian government clerics. Instead of promoting peace and tolerance, legitimizing such entities through interfaith partnerships will only promote the hatred they preach when they think the Jews aren't paying attention. Rabbi Marc Schneier and Dr. Richard Stall should be apologizing to the Buffalo Jewish community instead of congratulating themselves on a job well done.

Ilya Feoktistov is Research Director of Americans for Peace and Tolerance.

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Comments (7)

William Smart · [9 hours ago](#)

The real text of this article is to say "Any Jews who attempt to cooperate with any Muslims are traitors and fools". The fact that some of them may be idiots (one born every minute, in every community) doesn't reduce the importance of the effort. Who would seek to stop Muslims and Jews in Buffalo or anywhere else from working together and understanding each other, other than the anti-semitic and the Islamophobic?

lothianburn1200 · [7 hours ago](#)

well put. i couldn't agree more.

poetcomic1 · [7 hours ago](#)

Islam calls for explicitly the extermination of Jews. Go dialogue Kapo.

Stephen D. · [5 hours ago](#)

You are right Mr. Smart. Any Jew that cooperates with Islam is a fool and a (potential) traitor. Time for them all to open their eyes. Take Islamists at their word when they say they are determined to wipe Israel off the map! What's left to talk about? What is there to cooperate with? As it is, Muslims living in Israel have more rights than those

living in any Islamist State. Not good enough? When the Jews (and Christians for that matter) living in those countries have equal rights then it may be time to look for further cooperation.

[Adheeb](#) 56p · [5 hours ago](#)

When men are willing to cooperate with evil, they are also willing to betray truth and their neighbor's well-being for self interest and personal safety.

interact · [2 hours ago](#)

Contrary to media bias - Israel (the only true democracy in the middle east) has been trying to cooperate with their islamic neighbors for decades to no avail - those Jews who are cognizant enough to see past the deception - are simply labeled as impediments to peace - when in reality they are the one's who have learned from the history of the Holocaust and are saying to the world - NEVER AGAIN.

interact · [2 hours ago](#)

The Jews in America are so looking for validation they will believe anything - proof is how Jewish organizations couldn't take the time to do due diligence when they got screwed by Bernie Madoff - if it seems to good to be true.....