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In the Absence of Peace

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In the Absence of Peace

Abstract

Today, the [Monday after the attack](#), all of the flags were at half mast. Everything continued as normal, as if nothing had happened. Yet there was an intensity in the air. I didn't notice the increased police, but it was easy to feel the increased security. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, Center for Public Service, Terrorism, Denmark, religion, atheism

Disciplines

Islamic Studies | New Religious Movements | Politics and Social Change | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Religion | Social Control, Law, Crime, and Deviance | Social Psychology and Interaction | Sociology of Culture | Sociology of Religion

Comments

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](#) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

IN THE ABSENCE OF PEACE

February 23, 2015



Today, the [Monday after the attack](#), all of the flags were at half mast. Everything continued as normal, as if nothing had happened. Yet there was an intensity in the air. I didn't notice the increased police, but it was easy to feel the increased security.

I've often gone to Norrebro to meet a friend. I've traveled by Krystalgade to reach the Studentarhuset, probably passing the synagogue several times. I've used the Norreport Station a few times to get to school. On the day of the shooting, I went by some of those locations only hours before the shootings. Chances are I passed that coffee shop that day. Me and a hundred other people.

And yet, I am not as moved as I feel I should be. I see my host family watching the television, shocked by what happened. For two days the news has been about the terrorist attack. My host family talks about how strange it is to see a dead body on the news or to see policemen armed with machine guns. To me, it feels like the [new normal](#). Only days before I learned of a shooting at a mall in Pennsylvania, and a day before I learned that three young Muslims had been shot in South Carolina.

Today, I was in Copenhagen again. I was nervous, but not any more than usual. If anything, it unnerved me that I was barely more nervous than before. I saw Arabs and I feared for them. What if they were attacked in retaliation?

My worry was not new. Two weeks ago, I sent a message to a good friend asking if she had noticed xenophobia while in Europe. I asked because it was something I could sense more than I could see. What frightened me the most was when I caught myself being suspicious of Arabic people I happened to see, even knowing I had no reason. It grieved me to realize that I was learning to distrust Islam in spite of

my studies and my friendships. It frightened me to think that there was a culture that was anti-Islamic enough to foster such a reaction. If I was reacting in such a way, I knew I was not the only one.

For now, many communities are resisting the pressure to hate. Today and yesterday, Muslims posted “I am Denmark” on their Facebook pages, and on the news a Muslim man played a beautiful, heart-wrenching song [at a vigil](#). People of all races and religions came together in the middle of Copenhagen without anger. For now, both sorrow and love prevail.

Still, I worry about the people who will use the shootings to talk about Islam as a violent religion and the atheists who will declare all religion evil while failing to discuss that [an atheist](#) killed three Muslims a day before. In class, my European Politics professor predicted that measures would be passed to restrict immigration despite the fact that [the shooter was Danish](#), born and raised in Denmark. If I could pray for anything, it would be for this tragedy to end where it is now, with three deaths and no anger, rather than being used to kindle a greater hatred between peoples.

When I started writing this, a woman had just finished singing “Imagine” by John Lennon, a song that only three weeks earlier I played on my ukelele to entertain my friends and express a little of myself. But now I wonder, do we still believe that without religion we would live life in peace?

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