



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Riotings, and Killings, and Slayings, and Such!

Religion

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Riotings, and Killings, and Slayings, and Such!

Mayhem, and bedlam, revolts, revolution.
Just so it results in the infidel's execution.

--- anon

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Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Demonstrating that turning the other cheek exposes one's throat, the Central African Republic (CAR) is experiencing a religious ethnic cleansing. (See Figure 1.)¹ What's new? Nothing, it is tradition in this part of the world.

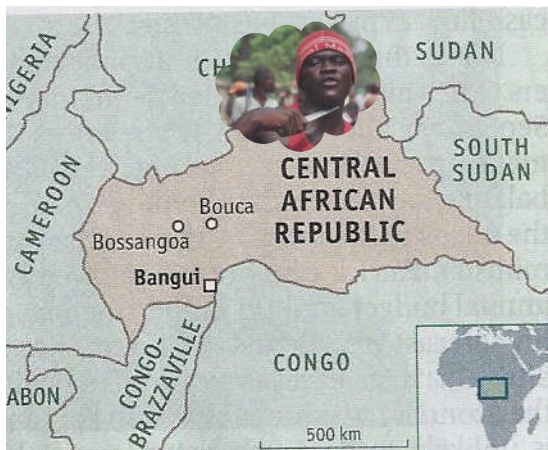


Figure 1. Central African Republic.

The people doing the cleansing adhere to an African saying, "To go back to tradition is the first step forward."² They are so caught-up in their tradition they have little time to move forward. They consider progress as the eradication of anyone who is not of their tradition.

Their leisure time is spent in assaulting those who do not practice their religion. In the short run, they may benefit: taking over the victims' possessions, for example. In the long run, while keeping their cheeks intact, they are cutting their own throats.

For the readers who do not follow foreign affairs, take a deep breath. Think about your surroundings. Look about you while you take in your tranquil and secure life. While doing so, consider the situation in CAR:

- Christian militias, taking over from Muslim rebels and a Muslim minority, are performing summary executions of Muslims. Torture and looting have become common.
- Uniformed military officers are reported to have lynched a Muslim rebel.
- Muslim traders and cattle-herders are leaving the country, making meat rare and expensive. The other parts of the economy are grounded.
- In the meantime, some of the Muslims are regrouping in the northern part of the country to take revenge. The tables will likely be turned. And turned. And turned again. More revenge. More killings.

¹ "Sectarian Savagery," *The Economist*, February 15, 2014, 42-42.

² Leonard Roy Frank, *Quotationary* (New York: Random House, 2001), 873.

Here is another gem of religious tolerance. In 2001, Aceh, a province in Indonesia, adapted Islamic sharia law (See Figure 2.)³ The central government took this approach to avoid a separatist war with the province's religious malcontents. Consider the situation in Aceh:



It is against the law to drink, gamble, or to be alone with a member of the opposite sex (Unless with an approved chaperone. Also, special dispensation is granted to married couples.)

“Vice and virtue” patrols round up women who have not covered their heads. They also round up women who are wearing their trousers “too tight.” (One wonders how these patrols determine which trousers cross the virtue threshold into the depths of vice.)

As of 2005, religious recalcitrants are subject to caning. (Unlike some other caning societies, they are allowed to stay clothed, offering some protection from the flogging.)

Adulterers are subject to be stoned to death. And most notable: *All residents of Aceh must now follow sharia*, regardless of their religions or non-religions.

In America, the concept of sharia law is contrary to the Constitution. The practice of killing off the religious opposition is contrary to the bedrock of America's mores. So, what do we do to accommodate our belief in religious freedom when some religions, if practiced as discussed above, are designed to change the concept of the separation of church and state; to have religion supreme over the state?

Those who question my question above would tell me I am creating a straw dog. They point to Turkey to make their point. Turkey is an Islamic nation but a democratic, constitutional republic. True, but the trend in Turkey for the past few years has been toward conservative Islam and a blurring of the separation of church and state. Even if Turkey evolves to become a Jeffersonian model, the fact remains that most Islamic countries do not separate church and state. Even more, the Islamic religion is considered supreme to the state.

It is a quandary for a nation who practices freedom of religion. If a religion's basic tenets undermine the Constitution are they, by their very existence, committing sedition? Are they practicing treasonous acts? If the religion is allowed to practice its credos, which in America, it is, is there a line to be drawn in which the practice is curtailed because of its dangers?

Americans can be thankful that America is sufficiently secular and strong enough that the questions raised above remain suffused. Let's hope we remain so.

Now let out your breath. Thank your luck for living in a country where Methodists can utter Methodist beliefs without fear of retribution from nearby Presbyterians. Where Jews do not slash

³ “Laying Down God's Law,” *The Economist*, February 15, 2014, 34-35.

the throats of Catholics who have turned their other cheek. Where we spend our religious times in building the society, instead of tearing it down. Where the actions taking place in the Central African Republic and Aceh are far removed from our beliefs of how we treat fellow humans.