

Real threats to religious freedom

Maureen Fiedler | Aug. 7, 2012 NCR Today

Not long ago, the Catholic bishops were complaining that the mandate in the new health care law that requires employers to provide contraceptive coverage to their employees was a severe violation of "religious freedom" (in spite of exemptions and compromises made by the Obama administration). They even staged a "Fortnight for Freedom" to emphasize the point.

This weekend, we saw real violations of religious freedom "acts of terrorism on U.S. soil.

During Sunday services Aug. 5, a [gunman killed six people and wounded three at a Sikh gurdwara](#) [1] in Oak Creek, Wis. The shooter, identified by law enforcement as Wade Michael Page, was killed at the scene, bringing the death toll to seven. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Page had ties to the white supremacist movement.

But that's not all. A day later in Joplin, Mo., [a mosque was destroyed by fire](#) [2] in the early morning hours during this holy month of Ramadan. The Islamic Society of Joplin was previously a target of arson.

The [Anti-Defamation League said it well](#) [3]: "The destruction of the Joplin mosque, and the cold-blooded murder of American Sikhs at their house of worship, should be a wake-up call for all Americans. If the religious freedom of any American is under threat, then everyone's religious liberty is at risk."

What the Catholic bishops call a violation of "religious freedom" is really a policy difference with the Obama administration that will surely be negotiated over time.

What the Sikhs and Muslims are experiencing are threats to their lives and right to worship in this country.

That's a problem of religious freedom.

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Links:

[1] <http://abcnews.go.com/US/sikh-temple-shooting-oak-creek-wisconsin-domestic-terrorism/story?id=16933779#.UCE7XPZIQ18>

[2] <http://www.kansas.com/2012/08/06/2438224/joplin-mosque-razed-in-fire-2nd.html>

[3] http://www.adl.org/PresRele/DiRaB_41/6360_41.htm