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Troops on the largest U.S. base in Afghanistan have unintentionally burned Korans and other religious materials, triggering angry protests and fears of even larger demonstrations as news of the burning spreads.

The books were mistakenly thrown out with the trash at Bagram Air Field north of Kabul and were on a burn pile Monday night before Afghan laborers intervened around 11 p.m., according to NATO and Afghan officials.

By the morning, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside of Bagram Air Field and on the suburbs of Kabul. Some shot into the air, some threw rocks at the Bagram gate, and many others yelled, "Die, die foreigners."

Gen. John Allen, the commander of all foreign forces in Afghanistan, released a statement, then a video statement, then gave an interview to NATO television. In his and in all NATO officials' communication today, each emphasized that the burning was unintentional.

"Those materials were inadvertently given to troops for disposition and that disposition was to burn the materials. It was not a decision that was made because they were religious materials," Allen told NATO TV.

"It was not a decision that was made with respect to the faith of Islam. It was a mistake, it was an error. The moment we found out about it we immediately stopped and we intervened," Allen

added.

Gen. John Allen launched an investigation and promised to take steps to make sure that the same incident would not be repeated.

The Koranic text can actually be used in such situations to control the Afghan anger and prevent its spread. In fact, the religiosity of people in these parts of the world makes the use of religious text more effective in controlling people's anger than using formal apologetic approaches.

For example, the Koran states clearly that the Lord forgives unintentional mistakes and only considers an action as a sin if it was intentional — Koran Al-Ahzab 33:5, "But there is no blame on you if ye make a mistake therein: [what counts is] the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful."

The point to be used with Afghans in this situation is that how could they know that the intentions of those who burnt the Koran was to insult it. They must bring evidence that the intention of the NATO personnel was to insult the Koran — as the Koran itself describes those who accuse others without having evidence as "dishonest" people (Koran Al-Naml 27:64 "Or, Say, 'Bring forth your evidence [proof], if ye are telling the truth!").

The third Islamic Caliph, Uthman Ibn Affan (who is considered to be one of the greatest disciples of prophet Muhammed), burnt the Koran and his actions were not considered as a sin — by either him or by the disciples of the prophet — since the act of burning was not associated with intention to insult it.

Similarly, the Afghans must not react with anger against the burning of the Koran, as they do not have a proof that it was associated with an intention to insult it.

In addition, even if the action of the two personnel who burnt the Koran was intentional, it is forbidden in the Koran to react against others. For example, the Koran forbids any angry reaction against the NATO soldiers who actually did not commit the burning and are likely to be

against it.

The Koran states clearly in four different positions that no one should be punished for the mistake of another person [Koran: Al-Isra 17:15; Al-An'am 6:164; Fatir 35:18; Az-Zumar 39:7 ["Nor can a bearer of burdens bear another's burdens."]]

In brief, because of the nature of the Afghan culture and the importance of religion in their life, the use of Islamic jargon and the text of the Koran can aid in controlling the anger of the population in response to the burning of the Koran.

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Some twenty-five years ago, Dr. Hamid recognized the threat of Radical Islam and the need for a reformation based upon modern peaceful interpretations of classical Islamic core texts. He provided a fresh and theologically valid interpretation for the *Qur'an* to counterbalance the radical teaching. As the *Daily Express* (UK) mentioned "Dr. Hamid has predicted the attacks on the twin towers, Madrid and London." After September 11, Dr. Hamid boldly decided to speak out through western broadcast and print media. He has appeared on shows spanning the spectrum from CNN to Fox News, and his articles and op-ed pieces have appeared in publications such as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Daily News*, and the *Jerusalem Post*.

Some of Dr. Hamid's Op-Eds were also published at *Real Clear Politics*. He has been a guest speaker both within the U.S. and internationally, before audiences such as the U.S. Congress,

Director of National Intelligence, the Pentagon, the National Prayer breakfast, and the European Parliament. He is the author of the author of *Inside Jihad: Understanding and Confronting Radical Islam* (2008), which is available from Amazon Books

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