

The first week in May marked a momentous announcement from "the president of the free world": their number one nemesis had been killed.

Perhaps the spontaneity of some of the [celebrations](#) in Washington and other US cities took the administration by surprise. There is only one death that is so widely celebrated in the West. For the United States of America, this mission is most momentous.



A reveller (dressed as Captain America) celebrating the killing of Bin Laden courtesy of [Der Spiegel](#)

The first announcement by President Obama seemed sombre and reflective, projecting an impression of closure and an opportunity for conciliation, "[we will never be at war with Islam](#)" he said. Osama Bin Laden was "not an Islamic leader".

Picking on the hints of conciliation, Muslim leaders all over the world put the issue of the world's most wanted man aside and opted to welcome the opportunity for conciliation. There was not one word of praise for Bin Laden or grief over his death from any credible Muslim leader anywhere. We thought that this would mean the end of US occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, that Obama's next announcement would be "mission accomplished" and it is time to resume our friendship.

However, the first deflating comment I noted from our Prime Minister right here in Australia, gave the impression that she missed the conciliatory tone of president Obama, opting rather to maintain the fear-alert by her promise to stay the course in Afghanistan and alarming the population about increased risk of a terror attack.

Then the confused conflicting messages started to emerge, the Pakistani government was quick to deny any involvement or knowledge in the operation that led to the killing. They even denied any knowledge that Bin Laden might have been living in Pakistan. The US did not take long to corroborate the denial with an allegation that Pakistan is untrustworthy and if they had told them they might have [jeopardised](#) the operation. Not to be outdone, India also ignored the potential for conciliation, perhaps in pursuit of some US brownie points, [India's Home Minister](#) immediately charged Pakistan with being a haven for terrorists. In a co-incidence mired in irony, the day that the German [Der Spiegel](#) questioned the legality of the operation we received the announcement that the US was [suing](#) the Deutsche Bank over mortgage fraud.

Nothing in our world happens in a vacuum!

The comedy of errors continued with President Obama's chief counterterrorism advisor at first charging "Bin Laden" with trying to use his wife as a [human shield](#) only to be contradicted later by the statement that "Bin Laden" was [unarmed](#) but tried to resist and she was not his wife, but his aide's wife caught in the cross fire even though only the Navy Seals were firing and "Bin Laden" had no weapons! The [latest revision](#) of the story says that the room had several weapons and they shot at him as he tried to reach for one, or seemed to be reaching for one! It goes on, the son who was killed was not Hamza as first thought but Khaled! Hang on, let us make sure we get it right, it was Khalid not Hamza. Make sure that you get those details, they must add up to something?

Then that telling short video from the White House observation room, the President of the free world looks like he is biting his nails, Hilary Clinton holding a weight of worries on her brows and the rest of the talent in the room, visions that could provide the posters for the inevitable Hollywood production of these nail gripping events described by the president's chief counter terrorism advisor John [Brennan](#) as "probably the most anxiety-filled periods of times".

They say that they respected [Muslim tradition](#) by washing the body and seeking to bury it quickly only to then dump it into the sea. Oh what secrets lie beneath thine waves!

To try to make a little more sense of what is happening, one needs to go back in time a few weeks, in March of this year, [Reuters](#) reported US Attorney General Eric Holder telling a house panel that "Osama Bin Laden would never appear in a US court room". This led to speculation that either Bin Laden is already dead or would soon be. Various writers have speculated that Bin Laden has been dead for some time, for example, in his book "Messages to the World: the Statements of Osama Bin Laden", [Bruce Lawrence](#) presented a compelling argument that Bin Laden had been dead since 2004. Others have suspected that he had been dead or killed earlier, possibly in the 2001 attacks on Tora Bora. David Ray Griffin in his book "[Osama Bin Laden: Dead or Alive](#)" provides other compelling arguments that Bin Laden died of Kidney failure in December 01, just a few months after the September 11 attacks. If he was not already dead, Holder's statement meant they had discovered his whereabouts and made a decision to kill him and that they soon would. Though such certainty raises more questions.

For an empire that has suffered great moral and financial losses in Iraq and Afghanistan, the "death" of Bin Laden provided that pivotal point from which they can announce a face saving withdrawal of troops and divert the resources to much needed facilities and services at home.

For Muslims, torn between the conflicting stories about Bin Laden, all we wanted was for the enigma to be put to rest. To us, all the stories about Bin Laden painted a picture of our faith that was alien to anything that we knew and cherished. He has been presented as a leader who would stop at nothing to achieve his plans of domination. The enigma drew some to his cause. However, the trickle of individuals who heeded his call were being arrested and he was left with a very small following, perhaps tens of people, perhaps less. They were the remnants of those idealists who came to Afghanistan to help save its people from Soviet occupation, they were trained and equipped by the United States in its hope to tear down Soviet power and limit its influence.

That plan worked too well. The resulting hubris may have been a key factor in developing the false perception that it can invade, occupy and dominate the resources of countries such as Afghanistan and Iraq. They forgot one important element, the Afghan Mujahideen and their foreign friends were fighting a war of liberation whereas the US campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan were campaigns of occupation. They forgot the lessons from history that no people, no society would ever acquiesce or completely capitulate to foreign occupation. As the great Pakistani cricketer turned politician [Imran Khan](#), said: "now that they have achieved their goal, they should pack up and leave".

Muslims are relieved that the West no longer has to beat the drums of war after a "Muslim" bogeyman. We have four views with respect to Bin Laden, all these views pour into the same end result.

1 - He was a crusader for his own worldview and died with the [Arab spring revolution](#), long before the Navy Seals killed the actual person. Those who sympathised with him would view him as a martyr dying at the hands of his enemies and those who didn't would be rather indifferent. For those who view him as a martyr, from the Islamic perspective, they view martyrdom for a cause as a noble aspiration which had been achieved by its seeker, they would not begrudge him that fate, rather, they would celebrate it and draw comfort from the verse that says: ... nay, they are alive, with their Lord, well provided for.

2 - He never stopped working for the CIA who trained and equipped him to help defeat the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and that the US wanted to put an end to the enigma and they have given him a new identity and killed off his character, like producers do for a television series. In which case, we are all being manipulated as is the strategy of governments.

3 - He died a while ago and the US only saw fit to make a "convincing" announcement this week because there are no longer any strategic gains from keeping his myth alive.

4 - He is still in hiding, the US didn't kill him, we will hear of Bin Laden "sightings" in the future. However, as the publicity around his death has been so profuse, no one is going to believe that he lives, he will not want to come out because he knows that they will go after him so his character is killed off just like in point 2.

Under all four scenarios, we need to all view this very difficult period in our lives as over. For those brothers and sisters who were antagonistic or indifferent to Osama Bin Laden or those who believed that he was genuine, maybe we can put our different opinions aside and see if we can bring some semblance of unity into our community. Our mission as peacemakers, do-gooders and disseminators of goodwill compels us to look for opportunities and signals to do just that.

The baggage that had been associated with the Bin Laden persona which we have been forced to carry has been delivered, let us move on, our work is just beginning.

There is a golden opportunity for the US and the Western world, seeing the conciliatory reaction from the Muslim world to their operation against Bin Laden, the US must receive those Muslims' hands that have been stretched in the spirit of conciliation and seek a future of cooperation and collaboration on

the premise of mutual respect. The estimated 1.6 to 2 billion Muslims around the world are showing signs of goodwill, will the Western world reciprocate?

On another note: A number of countries in the Muslim world have witnessed peaceful and not so peaceful revolutions. Whilst these revolutions were taking place, supporters rallied the world over to give them moral support and lobby on their behalf. I thank all those who have supported the oppressed in their march towards freedom. At the same time, I appeal to them to research their audience and select slogans that make sense, slogans that get the message across to the people who witness their demonstrations. In a secular society, chanting that a certain despot should be ousted because he is an enemy of God or religion is really counter-productive and neither conveys the intended message nor wins people over. This is especially so when the chant is in a foreign language. What does it mean when an Australian says: we will give our blood and soul for a foreign country (even if it is the country of his parents)? These become meaningless or negative slogans chanted because we have not applied our minds to develop the message that we need to develop for our audiences. Such chants give the impression that we were not thinking, that we focussed on the activity but not on the message, that we started on a journey but lost ourselves on the way choosing a detour that would not deliver us to our destination. Please my dear brothers and sisters, instead of shouting down down whatever, or so and so is an enemy of God, or our blood and soul for such and such a country or some other counterproductive slogans that were only selected for rhyme rather than reason, we should put a little more effort and select slogans that convey to those who hear them exactly what we want to convey in a manner that they will understand.

Finally, as we hear that the International Criminal Court is about to issue [warrants](#) for senior leaders in Libya, very disturbing news is coming out of Egypt that possibly as many as [50,000](#) individuals have faced military trials without due process. This is a terrible outcome when the Egyptian people showed so much confidence in and gave so much praise for their military. Whatever counter revolutionary forces are influencing these show trials (and the alleged associated tortures), the Egyptian military must as a matter of absolute urgency hand over these cases to the civilian judiciary and the people be presumed innocent until proven otherwise.

Keysar Trad

Islamic Friendship Association of Australia Inc.

First published on the ABC's "[the Drum](#)"