**A Report by SNOPES fact-checker, Bethania Palma**

**Are Indiana Muslims Appalled**

**By an 'Accurate' List of Muhammad's Deeds?**

**A billboard displaying hate speech is nowhere near accurate.**

***CLAIM***

***Indiana Muslims are appalled by a billboard displaying a list of deeds by the Prophet Muhammad even though it is accurate.***

***RATING - MOSTLY FALSE***

***WHAT'S TRUE***

***The Muslim Prophet Muhammad had multiple wives.***

***WHAT'S FALSE***

***There are no historical accounts of the Prophet committing rape or torturing people; he was known for freeing slaves, not "dealing" them.***

***WHAT'S UNDETERMINED***

***The age of his youngest wife, Aisha, at the time of marriage is contested; the male members of a Jewish tribe in Medina were executed for treason during a battle, but the number is also contested.***

***ORIGIN***

***The billboard bears the title “The Perfect Man.” It lays out six accusations which include; “Married 6 year old”; “slave owner and dealer”; “rapist”; “beheaded 600 Jews in one day”; “13 wives, 11 at one time”; and “tortured and killed unbelievers.”***

***We spoke to academics who study early Islam to get more information and context. Ayesha S. Chaudhry, Associate Professor of Islamic Studies and Gender Studies at the University of British Columbia, told us that everything about the billboard is wrong.***

***Chaudhry told us that all accounts of the Prophet’s life, which occurred 1,400 years ago in 7th-century Arabia, were written at least 200 years after his death, and their reliability for accuracy is shaky:***

**Bethania, you just admitted that your own expert confessed that *all accounts* are shaky and unreliable. By admitting that, won't any attack launched against the claims on the billboard also be shaky and unreliable for that same reason?**

***Chaudhry said "The billboard is not accurate because it doesn’t represent Muslim faith."***

**Bethania, as a journalist shouldn't you have reminded Chaudhry that the billboard wasn't designed to represent Muslim faith but designed to disseminate information about what Muslims believe?**

***Chaudhry said "If we were to say now that Jews and Christians believe in stoning [because it’s allowed in the Old Testament], that would not be true."***

**Bethania, a good investigative journalist might have then asked her why Islamic Iran legally stones people to death to this day (Google: "The Stoning Of Soraya M" - but make sure you watch it on an empty stomach).**

**Why didn't you ask her that question? Were you not aware that stoning continues to this day in parts of the Muslim world? Are you unaware of polls that gives the percentage of Muslims who still believe that stoning is an appropriate punishment?**

***Chaudhry said "These statements on the billboard, aren't even in the Koran."***

**Bethania, the billboard does not claim that its statements are all from the Koran.**

***The age of the wife in question, Aisha Bint Abu Bakr, is contested — many believe she was actually in her late teens when she married Muhammad.***

**Bethania, the belief that she was teenager at marriage doesn't come from ancient records (which support an age of 9 or 10 at consummation) but from recent scholars who based her age on the ages of others (such as her older sister).**

**That sounds like classic apologetic tactics; just like we see from Christian apologists all the time. As an investigative reporter, on what grounds do you reject the many sources written close to the time of Aisha, while accepting the revised ages based on modern apologetic arguments; arguments which certainly do not reflect the common beliefs of most Muslims and Muslim scholars?**

***Accounts contradict each other; while Aisha is quoted by one source saying she was six when she was married and nine when the marriage was consummated,***

**Bethania, so according to your investigative research:**

**"Many" believe she was in her late teens, but you only have one source that says she was married at age six?**

**Very interesting. My research yielded significantly different results.**

***Chaudhry also told us she doesn’t know of any accounts of nonbelievers being tortured and killed,***

**Bethania, she may not know of any accounts ...**

**but the Koran does: Sura 5:33**

***"The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off ...."***

**Bethania, I would venture to say that cutting off someone's hands and feet definitely qualifies as torture ... as does crucifixion.**

***although Muhammad was engaged in warfare during his lifetime.***

**Bethania, "engaged in warfare" is a convenient euphemism.**

**Like many euphemisms, it is designed to hide an ugly truth.**

**Let's examine why you chose to use that euphemism.**

**Mohammed was not defending his land. When you invade the land of other tribes with a large group of murderous thugs and kill the people who live there, it should be obvious that you are doing a little more than "engaging in warfare."**

**Using your logic, the invading hordes of Europeans who murdered tens of millions of overmatched American Indians when they tried to defend themselves and their lands, were just good ole boys ... "engaging in warfare" - right?**

***There are no known accounts of the Prophet committing rape***

**Bethania, when a 53-year-old man has sex with a 9 or 10-year-old girl ... that is rape. That is something that you should not have to be told.**

**I would be willing to bet my mother's heart pills that if those facts were given to you in any context other than Islam - you would have no problem seeing the truth. But when blinded by ideology, you are willing to betray your moral principles.**

**And if you can't control your prejudices, you have no business writing for an organization like SNOPES, whom many of us count on for objective reporting.**

***Chaudhry said "There were several battles that happen during his life and they’re complicated."***

**Bethania, those battles didn't just "happen" during his life - he led murderous thugs into other people's lands and killed them. That is only "complicated" for those trying to whitewash his atrocities.**

***Denise Spellberg, history professor at the University of Texas at Austin said "Most early accounts state Aisha was 6 or 7 at betrothal and 9 or 10 when the marriage was consummated."***

**Bethania, those were the accounts that were written closest in time to the life of Aisha.**

***Denise Spellberg said "One later source in Arabic from the 13th century suggests 9 at the age of betrothal, and 12 at consummation."***

**Bethania, so 600 years later "a source suggests," and you think that is more relevant and reliable? Why?**

***Denise Spellberg said "What is not usually noted in reference to Muhammad is that he resisted the early marriage to Aisha. This was her father’s idea. Only when her father, probably for political reasons, forced the issue, did the Prophet agree.***

**Bethania, so we are supposed to believe that God's personal prophet and mighty conquering warrior was "forced" by some old guy to marry a child?**

**My, we certainly are desperate to believe whatever can be even remotely used to justify child rape, aren't we?**

**I'm just wondering if you would pursue this defense with as much vigor, if the perpetrator were a 53-year-old priest and the victim were a 10-year-old choir girl?**

**(I'm going to go with "No" on that one)**

***The rest of his marriages were to previously married women. Marriage at that time was often about forming political alliances — and Muhammad was one among many prophets in the Abrahamic faiths who had more than one wife.***

**Bethania, that did not refute the billboard. All you did was to try to provide an excuse to justify his polygamy.**

***But tradition holds he purchased slaves for the purpose of liberating them.***

**Bethania, think about how desperate you have to be to believe that one. Here is a powerful warlord, commanding a large army, and you want us to believe that he purchased the slaves so he could free them? Why would he have to buy them? All he had to do was say "You're Free" and who would challenge him?**

**That doesn't make any sense at all.**

***Well-known British-American orientalist Bernard Lewis addressed the issue in a 1994 book, in which he noted that slavery was a widespread reality that wasn’t by any means exclusive to nascent Muslim society but a feature of a wide swath of human civilization since Biblical times:***

**Bethania, now look how low you've stooped. You are actually trying to defend slavery and excuse those who profited from it.**

**"Well - everybody else did it!"**

**Think about it Sports Fans: Bethania is defending and making excuses for slavery, genocide, and child rape. How are people supposed to trust SNOPES after seeing a horror like this?**

***Spellberg said:***

***"The Qur’an, like the Old and the New Testaments, assumes the existence of slavery. It regulates the practice of the institution and thus implicitly accepts it. The Prophet Muhammad and those of his Companions who could afford it themselves owned slaves;"***

**Bethania, I'm surprised you left that inconvenient contradiction in this report. I bet you wished you had proofread this a lot more closely now, huh?**

***Suleiman told us that the bullet point that claims Muhammad “beheaded 600 Jews” may well be an attempt to paint the prophet as an anti-Semite"***

**Bethania, that can't be true. We all know how much they loved the Jews ... and still do. These two groups are the Middle East version of the Hatfields and the McCoys.**

***The billboard not only appears to be an inaccurate representation of Islam, it’s also hate speech.***

**Bethania, all you have to do, is to prove that any of the points on the billboard are false. So far, you have failed miserably.**

[**http://www.snopes.com/indiana-muslims-muhammads-deeds/**](http://www.snopes.com/indiana-muslims-muhammads-deeds/)

**Bethania, in this era of "Fake News" and "Alternative Facts" an organization like SNOPES takes on an incredibly important role in fighting back, by separating fact from fiction. If we can't count on it, and its fact-checkers, to remain objective, then it becomes worthless as a trustworthy reference.**

**Being infiltrated by someone like you, who will sacrifice objectivity to promote personal prejudices, is unacceptable and greatly diminishes the mission and credibility of SNOPES.**