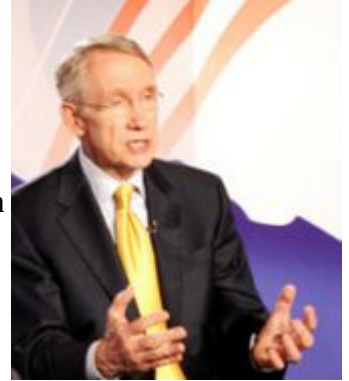


[Harry Reid's Anti-Islamic Agenda](#)

The moral bankruptcy of the Democratic Party could not be any more evident than in its continued support for Nevada Sen. Harry Reid as majority leader despite his decision to join the bigoted and Islamophobic campaign against the Park 51 Islamic Cultural Center in New York, arguing that it “should be built somewhere else.”



This was also an apparent effort to embarrass President Barack Obama – who, in a rare example of showing some spine in the face of right-wing attacks – defended the First Amendment rights of the Muslim group. According to the president, Muslim Americans have “the right to build a place of worship and a community center on private property in lower Manhattan in accordance with local laws and ordinances.” Despite the efforts of New York’s Republican mayor and the large number of 9/11 families and the city’s Christian and Jewish leaders who have defended the project, the senator representing a state nearly 3,000 miles away apparently believes he knows better.

One can only imagine the reaction by his Senate colleagues if Senator Reid he had called for a Jewish or Christian community center to be moved because some right-wing extremists were offended. The failure to call for Reid’s resignation or even denounce his statement underscores that many of his Democratic colleagues likely share his lack of tolerance toward those of the Islamic faith. As will be illustrated below, this is not the first example of Reid – or the Democrats – exposing their bigotry toward Muslims.

In many respects, Reid is emblematic of the Democratic Party’s tendency to not only refuse to ignore or resist extreme right-wing wing nuts, but to actively embrace their agenda. As a number of investigative reports have [observed](#), the Park 51 project was a nonissue until Pamela Geller, the notorious, far-right, conspiratorial Islamophobe made it an issue, supported by the right-wing tabloid *The New York Post*, owned by Rupert Murdoch, a major funder of right-wing Republicans. Indeed, calls for a US invasion of Iraq and other anti-Islamic efforts were once the exclusive domain of the far right until Reid and other Democrats decided to jump on board.

Reid claims he is not against Muslims building mosques or community centers elsewhere, just not so close to the former site of the World Trade Center (WTC). It doesn’t seem to matter to Reid that the organizers of the Park 51 Center, like the vast majority of Muslims elsewhere, condemned the 9/11 attacks. The al-Qaeda cultists are no more representative of Muslims than Timothy McVeigh and his associates in the “Christian Identity” movement were representative of Christians overall, yet Reid has never expressed concern about Christian churches near the site of the Oklahoma City bombing.

Nor does it appear relevant to Reid that the center would be on a side street one block up and a second block over from the northeast corner of the former WTC site, several blocks from the proposed memorial on the site of the former WTC, that it will not stand out amid the canyons of other buildings in downtown Manhattan and cannot even be seen from ground zero. To Reid and other anti-Muslim bigots, even that is too close.

It is noteworthy to examine the building that Reid finds so offensive: Comparable to a YMCA or a YMHA, the building would include a fitness center, swimming pool, basketball court, bookstore, performing arts center and food court. Though there would be a place for worship in the building, it is not a “mosque” as Reid has described it. Nor is it at ground zero.

According to Daisy Khan, executive director of the [American Society for Muslim Advancement](#), “It will have a real community feel, to celebrate the pluralism in the United States, as well as in the Islamic religion. It will also serve as a major platform for amplifying the silent voice of the majority of Muslims who have nothing to do with extremist ideologies. It will counter the extremist momentum.” Khan went on to note that that “Three hundred of the victims [of the 9/11 attacks] were Muslim. We are Americans, too. The 9/11 tragedy hurt everybody, including the Muslim community. We are all in this together, and together we have to fight against extremism and terrorism.”

Despite some desperate efforts by some on the extreme right to falsely portray the initiator of the project as some kind of extremist by taking some quotes of his out of context and fabricating others, Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf has spent his career trying to promote interfaith understanding. He and other leaders of the project are from the Sufi tradition, the mystical branch of Islam that could not be more different than the Salafi extremists of al-Qaeda. Indeed, Imam Rauf has been recruited by both President Bush and President Obama to appear on behalf of the United States at international forums to challenge Islamic extremists. Yet, to Reid, this doesn't matter. What matters, apparently, is that he is Muslim.

Reid is, no doubt, aware of all this, as he is of the recent Pew Research Centre report which determined that most Muslim Americans were “largely assimilated, happy with their lives ... and decidedly American in their outlook, values and attitudes.”

This, however, may be what Reid objects to. As a strong supporter of US-led wars against Muslim nations in the name of fighting terrorism, perhaps he fears that allowing the moderate majority of American Muslims to have such a public face would make it difficult to support his militaristic agenda. As has been widely reported in [The New York Times](#) and elsewhere, the resistance to this decidedly moderate Islamic group establishing their cultural center is being widely circulated in predominately Muslim countries, feeding the extremists' argument that the United States does not just oppose terrorism, but opposes Islam as a whole. The more that Muslims believe this, the ranks of extremist groups will grow and the greater the perceived threat to American interests will become, thereby allowing Reid and other hawks to use the “Islamic threat” as an excuse to invade Muslim countries, many of which contain oil and other coveted natural resources.

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Invading Muslim Countries

Indeed, Reid's Islamophobia and bigotry toward Muslims has been evident for years. For example, he was a leader among the right-wing minority of Congressional Democrats who supported President George W. Bush's contention that the United States somehow has the right to invade Muslim countries rich in hydrocarbon resources on the far side of the world, even if they pose no threat to us. In order to convince the public to support such an illegal war, Reid teamed up with the Bush administration, prominent neo-conservatives, Fox News, and some dubious Iraqi exiles in making a series of false allegations regarding Iraq's military capability.

Despite evidence that Iraq no longer had “weapons of mass destruction,” (WMD) programs, or offensive delivery systems, and – as Obama and others recognized at the time – Iraq was not a threat to its neighbors, much less the United States, Reid voted in October 2002 to authorize a US invasion of Iraq because of what he claimed was “the threat posed by Saddam Hussein.” The Reid-backed resolution falsely accused Iraq of “continuing to possess and develop a significant chemical and biological weapons capability ... [and] actively seeking a nuclear weapons capability, thereby continuing to threaten the national security interests of the United States.” Absolutely none of this was true. But to the Mormon senator from Nevada, telling the truth apparently is of little concern when convincing the country of the need to go to war against Islam. (To this day, his office

insists that Reid was not lying, but was misled by “faulty intelligence.” However, they have refused to provide me or any other independent strategic analysts with any of this supposed “intelligence” he supposedly saw that supposedly said Iraq had these supposed weapons and weapons systems.)

When Sen. Joseph Biden, chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, tried to alter the wording of the war resolution so as not to give President Bush the blank check he was seeking and to put some limitations on his war-making authority, Reid, as assistant majority leader of the Senate, helped circumvent Biden’s efforts by signing on to the White House’s version. As the Democratic whip, Reid then persuaded a majority of Democratic senators to vote down a resolution offered by Democratic Sen. Carl Levin that would authorize force only if the UN Security Council voted to give the US that authority and to instead support the White House resolution giving Bush the right to invade even without such legal authorization. (By contrast, a sizable majority of Democrats in the House of Representatives – under the leadership of then-whip Nancy Pelosi – voted against the Republican resolution.)

It is highly unlikely that Reid would have supported such an invasion were the country in question not predominately Muslim. For example, he has not called for an invasion of North Korea, India, Israel, China, and other non-Muslim countries which really do have such weapons and weapons systems.

Weapons were never really the issue, however. Indeed, Reid continued to support the invasion of Iraq in early 2003 even after Iraq allowed United Nations inspectors to return and it was becoming apparent, as many arms control experts had been arguing all along, that there were no WMD to be found. Reid rushed to support Bush’s claims of his right to invade that Muslim country anyway, claiming that – despite its clear violation of the United Nations Charter – the invasion was “lawful” and that he “commends and supports the efforts and leadership of the President.”

Recognizing that such explicit anti-Muslim bigotry would be unacceptable, Reid felt obliged to lie to justify his support of the US invasion of Iraq by echoing the administration’s claims that “this nation would be justified in making war to enforce the terms we imposed on Iraq in 1991” since Iraq promised “the world it would not engage in further aggression and it would destroy its weapons of mass destruction. It has refused to take those steps. That refusal constitutes a breach of the armistice which renders it void and justifies resumption of the armed conflict.”

In reality, Iraq had not engaged in further acts of aggression, and it had already destroyed its WMD, demonstrating Reid’s willingness to defend the Bush administration’s lies in order to justify a US takeover of that oil-rich country.

Secondly, even if Iraq had been guilty as charged, the armistice agreement to which Reid referred – UN Security Council resolution 687 – had no military enforcement mechanisms. Furthermore, resolution 678, which originally authorized the use of force against Iraq, had become null and void once Iraqi troops withdrew from Kuwait. An additional resolution specifically authorizing the use of force would have been required in order for the United States to legally engage in any further military action against the Baghdad regime.

Historically, opposition leaders in the Senate have taken seriously Congress’ role under the US Constitution to place a check on presidential powers, including such illegal activities as wars of aggression. It appears, however, that since the targeted country was Muslim, Reid felt no duty to uphold his constitutional authority. Reid twice granted the fraudulently-elected Bush unprecedented war-making authority, justifying this betrayal of his constitutional responsibility by insisting that Bush was only invading Iraq out of necessity, insisting – despite evidence to the contrary – that “no President of the United States of whatever political philosophy will take this nation to war as a first resort alternative rather than as a last resort.”

The last senator from the inland west to lead the Democrats was Mike Mansfield of Montana, who served as Senate majority leader for most of the 1960s and 1970s. He courageously spoke out against the Vietnam War, not only when the Republican Richard Nixon was president, but also when Democrat Lyndon Johnson was president. Unlike Mansfield, however, who was willing to challenge the foreign policy of his own party's administration, Reid refused to speak out even when the administration was from the opposing political party, apparently because – unlike Vietnam – the victims of the more recent US war were Muslims.

Contempt for Other Muslim Nations

Iraq is not the only area where Reid is willing to support mass violence against Muslim peoples. Reid co-sponsored a Senate resolution defending Israel's massive onslaught on the predominantly Muslim Gaza Strip in 2008-2009 and of an earlier resolution defending the 2006 Israeli attack against predominantly Muslim southern Lebanon, wars which resulted in the deaths of more than 1,500 Muslim civilians. Reid directly contradicted findings by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and various UN agencies in insisting that Israel's attacks against civilian population centers was legal. But when it comes to killing Muslim civilians, the facts don't matter to Reid. Just as the facts about the Park 51 Islamic Cultural Center don't matter to Reid. Just as having a bigot as their leader doesn't seem to matter to Senate Democrats.

Reid's contempt for international legal standards was also evident in his co-sponsorship of a resolution – which fortunately never received majority support – condemning the International Court of Justice for its July 2004 decision, which held that governments engaged in belligerent occupation are required to uphold relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and related standards of international humanitarian law. The case was in regard to the predominantly Muslim-populated Palestinian West Bank subjected to illegal colonization and other violations of international law by its Israeli occupiers.

Furthermore, despite a series of UN Security Council resolutions declaring Israel's occupation, colonization and annexation of predominately Muslim East Jerusalem illegal, Reid sponsored the Jerusalem Embassy Act that insists that "Jerusalem remain an undivided city" under Israeli control. In addition, Reid has supported Israel's colonization of the occupied West Bank in contravention of a series of UN Security Council resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from these illegal settlements.

Reid also was an initiator of a letter to President Obama defending Israel's attack this past spring on an international humanitarian aid flotilla in international waters attempting to deliver foods and medicines to the besieged Gaza Strip, which resulted in the killings of nine participants, including a 19-year-old US citizen, who was shot at close range in the back of the head. He also insisted that the International Committee of the Red Cross and other authorities on international humanitarian law were wrong in asserting that the siege went well beyond Israel's legitimate security concerns and was, therefore, illegal. Reid presumably would have not defended attacks against similar efforts to bring food and medicines to besieged Christian populations, as in the case of West Berlin during the cold war.

That the Democratic Party would choose an anti-Islamic extremist like Reid to represent them in the US Senate is yet another indication of just how far to the right the Democratic Party has become. Indeed, it is but one example of why so many Democrats will be staying home this November rather than supporting their morally bankrupt leadership.