Mitä on pyhä?

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Olen pahoillani että en minä voi puhua tämän suomeksi: Tämä on liian vaikea asia minulle :-(

So, this event is essentially in response the infamous cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed published by the *Jyllands-Posten*—explicitly (or perhaps rather ostensibly) with the idea of promoting discussion about freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The Danish government's response is 'It's not our fault—we don't control the press'. But elements (or perhaps representatives) of the Islamic world say 'Yes you do! European governments (including Denmark's) exercise all sorts of controls over what their citizens say—not least in order to protect Christianity and Judaism'. And they have a point. Burning down embassies may not be the best way to make it, but they have a point.

But what interests me about this debate, and the point I want to pick up on here, is that it's framed in terms of *states*. How far can the *state* intervene in the media to limit freedom of expression? This misses the point—and it misses the point in a way that's very convenient for the *status quo* of the world's media.

I'm interested in the fact that the culture editor of *Jyllands-Posten* has been sent on 'indefinite leave'. I haven't seen a storm of protest from the world's press about this. In fact it's perfectly normal: editors sack journalists if they don't write how the editor wants them to write; owners sack editors when they don't produce the papers they want them to produce. Everyone knows that Rupert Murdoch routinely shapes the activities of his media empire to suit his political and business interests. The *Times* newspaper only reviews books published by other companies owned by Rupert Murdoch; another of his companies, the Fox News Channel, is infamous for its biased news reporting. This hasn't provoked front-page defences of press freedom. When the European Court of Justice ruled that the investigative journalist Han-Martin Tillack could be forced to reveal his personal notes, and so possibly his sources, I didn't see any Italian ministers wearing t-shirts defending his journalistic freedom. Let's take one more example from my list... Let's have the *New York Times*. When they found out that George Bush had been wiretapping American citizens—listening to their phonecalls, possibly illegally—they sat on the story for a *year*. Publishing this was clearly in the public interest, but they didn't. Why not?

So what's *pyhä*? What's *pyhä* in the world today? Certainly not Mohammed, as we have recently discovered. Certainly not editorial freedom—owners can hire and fire their editors as they choose. Certainly not freedom of speech.

What's *pyhä* is a *status quo* of market-driven media with cosy ties to political elites. I'm not saying I have the answer to this. What I am saying is that *this* is the debate we need to be having, and it's not the debate I'm hearing, here, or in the media. Cheers.