

Muslim clerics say Sandy is 'God's way of punishing America for anti-Muhammed film'

By Associated Press Reporter Mail On Line

Some anti-American Muslim clerics have cast the deadly Superstorm Sandy as divine punishment for 'Innocence of Muslims,' a film mocking the Prophet Muhammad or for other perceived ills of American society. The remarks by some on the fringe brought a backlash from other Muslims who said it was wrong to relish the suffering of others.

In Egypt, one radical cleric described the hurricane as revenge from God for the crude, anti-Islam film made in the U.S. that sparked waves of protests in the Muslim world in September.



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'Some people wonder about the hurricane in America and its causes,' Egyptian hardline cleric Wagdi Ghoneim tweeted twice this week in the aftermath of the storm.

'In my opinion, it is revenge from God for the beloved prophet,' he added, alluding to the film. Some praised the post, but others condemned it.

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- Student group declares war on 'racially insensitive' Halloween costumes (like Chris Brown's Taliban outfit)

'God, shake the earth under their feet,' read one comment, prompting the response: 'We have brothers and friends in America - I don't wish them any harm.'

Another Twitter response to Ghoneim compared Sandy to a divine wind sent to destroy a sinful nation and strike at the seat of the United Nations in New York.

'We ask God to destroy the U.N. building for its injustice, corruption, tyranny ... with Sandy.'



Wagdi Ghoneim said Hurricane Sandy, pictured here in a satellite image provided by NASA, was God's way of punishing the U.S.



God's retribution? Hurricane Sandy left 111 homes in Breezy Point, Queens, reduced to ash after an uncontrollable blaze spread across the neighbourhood



Human tragedy: Neighbours Linda Strong (left) and Lucille Dwyer (Right) console each other as they survey the wreckage of their homes which were burned down in the wake of the superstorm

But this was followed by a stream of outrage.

'This hashtag doesn't represent Muslims but represents a terrorist. We all ask God to help and save Americans,' read one post.

In Saudi Arabia, prominent cleric Salman al-Audah said the storm, which killed more than 140 people, was a wake-up call for Americans to convert to Islam.

Reactions to the hurricane in the kingdom prompted Grand Mufti Abdel Aziz Al Sheik to warn in an interview

that rejoicing over plight of the suffering runs contrary to Islam, adding that Muslims were among the victims. 'It is not legitimate and it is not proper,' he told pan-Arab Al-Hayat daily on Thursday.

In Iran, prominent clerics often avoid drawing parallels between natural disasters and divine intervention because their own country has faced devastating earthquakes, such as one in 2003 that killed 26,000 when it hit the ancient city of Bam.

On Wednesday, the Iranian Red Crescent said aid workers were ready to fly to New York to help with recovery efforts, the semiofficial Fars news agency reported.

Mahmud Mozaffar, head of Red Crescent's rescue operations, said the Iranian groups had 'ample experience' in dealing with natural catastrophes.