

Extremist Anti-Abortion Group

Introduction

Gandhi is reported to have said, “there are many causes that I would die for yet there is not a single cause that I would kill for”. Gandhi's words have the ring of a distant past when the ideals of social and political activism maintained a common sense. Today, terrorists around the world are willing to kill and die for causes that seem unclear and often contradictory. This new method of violence reflects the politics of the anti-abortionist movement that is willing to kill to save lives or willing to die to become enshrined as a martyr. Terrorism is defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as "...a violent act or an act dangerous to human life, in violation of the criminal laws of the United States, or of any state, to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives" ("Terrorism 2000/2001"). The violent faction of the anti-abortion movement certainly fits this description. It is a form of war that is being waged against the domestic social structure with wide ranging implications. The violent anti-abortion groups are a contradiction of values and the extremist motivations behind them make it a dangerous and terrorizing movement.

Literature Review

Understanding the motivation behind the anti-abortion terrorism is an important step in curtailing the violence. The movement is an oxymoron where killing takes place to save lives. The anti-abortion movement is a shadowy group

with no central leadership, which makes it difficult for law enforcement to track (Stern 150). In addition, the movement has begun to spill across our borders of bias during the last decade (Scheinberg). Human Life International (HLI), founded by Father Paul Marx in 1981 has extended the violence to include racial and religious bigotry. According to Scheinberg, "Fr. Marx has the nasty habit of blaming the Jews for what he calls (out of ignorance or insensitivity) the "holocaust" against the unborn. He singles out Jewish doctors, Jewish feminists and Jews in the media as being responsible for the slaughter". This is further evidenced by the aspect that the movement is largely made up of white males who may be using violence to maintain their power and express their anti-minority and anti-feminist views (Freilich and Pridemore 324). In addition, their modes of attack varies from bombings, shootings, and includes the threat bio-terrorism (Robinson). These loose knit motivations and shadowy ideologies have made this form of terrorism particularly problematic for law enforcement.

The anti-abortion movement has not benefited from their close association with violence. Nicki Saporta of the National Abortion Federation says, "We've always maintained that the extremist anti-abortion movement practices domestic terrorism on abortion providers" (qtd in Otis). In fact, the extremist faction has splintered the anti abortion movement. Paul Hill was a former Presbyterian minister and openly admits that God had told him to shoot Dr. John Britton and his body guard as they arrived at the Pensacola abortion clinic in 1994 (Long). Hill was

executed for his role in an anti-abortion murder and Long contends that Hill was part of, "...the antiabortion movement that sanctioned the use of 'justifiable homicide' to stop abortion doctors. Most mainstream anti-abortion organizations distanced themselves from him". The idiosyncratic character of the movement is evidenced by having its roots in Christianity and profess a deep belief in God, yet profess, "Our Most Dread Sovereign Lord God requires that whosoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed" (Martin 185). The movement away from their core Christian values has made the movement take the philosophical stand that the end justifies the means.

Discussion

Anti-abortion extremism permeates American society as an insidious result of our culture. It springs from religion, yet discards the Christian values that it is rooted in. Some extremist anti-abortionists feel that while they are taking one life, they are saving 15-20 lives a day from pre-meditated murder by killing an abortion doctor. This contradictory philosophy makes the movement especially difficult to define. It becomes even more of a puzzle as we see the bigotry and lack of religious tolerance that characterizes the movement (Scheinberg). There is a dangerous mix of ideology based in God that is used to reinforce the bigotry and hatred that is the underpinning of the violence. Denial on the part of the terrorists can justify the killing in the belief that there is a higher calling. Still, mainstream Christianity disavows the terrorists

even though they abhor the practice of abortion. The sympathy felt for the movement as socially acceptable allows the public to overlook or minimize the violence.

The anti-abortion terrorism is counter to what we profess as a nation. America is a nation of laws not men and we are taught from birth that it is unacceptable to take the law into your own hands. Here again, the motivations run headlong into a contradiction. America also has a long tradition of civil disobedience and protest. That extremely emotionally charged issues would incite violence should be of no surprise. Though misguided, the extremists see the pro-choice movement as the enemy and can justify their actions as an act of war. However, the war is not just against the abortion clinics, it is a war against the core values of our constitutional system of law and our belief in an orderly society. A terrorist attack can take many forms, but always leaves the values of society as its victim.

The anti-abortion violence is especially difficult for law enforcement. It has almost no formal structure to look at. The modes of attack are so varied and individual they are impossible to predict and the perpetrators difficult to track. The fact that they may be racially or ethnically based make profiling almost impossible. The practice of profiling has fallen into the arena of being politically incorrect. Law enforcement is discouraged from using race and ethnicity in the practice. That anti-abortion extremists are predominately white males could be a basis for labeling their identification as targeted profiling. In fact, the extremists feel that they are a group that is being persecuted on racial and religious grounds, though they do not fit the

historical perception of minority persecution (Mason 105). These competing forces seem to self justify their actions by using a circular logic that does not hold up to examination. Law enforcement is faced with the task of enforcing civil rights while being expected to anticipate multiple types of attacks that are individualized and non-specific.

Conclusion

To adequately deal with anti-abortion extremism the public will have to take a firmer stand against the practice of violence. As long as the law permits women to do with their bodies as they please, the aims of the anti-abortion terrorists will continue to flourish. Rooted in extremist religious ideology, the movement has become infused with racism and religious bigotry. The contradiction of motivations and variety of attack methods make it a daunting task for law enforcement to prevent the violence. The American public needs to view the violence not as social activism, but the criminal and terrorist act that it is. The myth of racial profiling of a persecuted group does not apply to the white male abortion terrorist. The rule of law is where we derive our orderly society and that is what we must do to maintain our civilized life.

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