

# Pennsylvania atheist threatens to desecrate Quran over state bill

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c. 2012 Religion News Service HARRISBURG, Pa. (RNS) The director of the Pennsylvania chapter of American Atheists says he will desecrate the Quran if the state House of Representatives doesn't drop a "Year of Religious Diversity" resolution.

Ernest Perce, of Harrisburg, Pa., said he plans to flog the Quran in the state Capitol Rotunda on Sept. 24 should the House not agree to nullify the resolution before it reconvenes from summer recess that day.

Like the "Year of the Bible" resolution adopted in January, the "Year of Religious Diversity" resolution illegally intertwines religion and state, Perce said.

"The Year of the Bible" resolution is being challenged in federal court by the Freedom From Religion Foundation.

Perce was also at the center of a recent court case after he said he was attacked during a Halloween parade while marching dressed as "Zombie Muhammad."

According to the religious diversity resolution, the Bible, and Quran and other sacred texts "impart great wisdom and beauty to believers and are appreciated and respected by nonbelievers as well."

"I am a nonbeliever and for (the House) to assume we respect these books is asinine," Perce said. "I will let other atheists come with me (to protest)."

Florida pastor Terry Jones originally decided against burning copies of the Quran in 2010 when his planned protest sparked international controversy and caused a myriad of safety concerns.

But Jones burned the Quran anyway in March 2011, after which a mob attacked a United Nations compound in Afghanistan and killed at least 12 people. Dozens more were injured in nationwide protests.

Perce, who was featured on Pat Robertson's Christian Broadcasting Network after the Zombie Muhammad incident, said he will not be phased by any threats made against him.