

Charlie Hebdo Reprints Muhammad Cartoons, Pakistan Goes Crazy

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Charlie Hebdo, yet again, is heroically standing up for free speech. The French satirical weekly's cartoonists – surely among the bravest people in the world – have chosen to reprint the cartoons of Muhammad that led to the murder of ten of their predecessors on January 7, 2015, by the Muslim Kouachi brothers, petty criminals and drug traffickers who, possibly to make amends, became fanatical in their faith. The story of the reprinted cartoons, and the reaction in Pakistan, is [here](#).

Tens of thousands of people protested across Pakistan on Sept. 3 against French magazine Charlie Hebdo's reprinting of cartoons mocking the Prophet Mohammad, chanting "Death to France" and calling for boycotts of French products.

Listen to their cries. They shout, these frenzied mobs of maddened Muslims, not just "shut down Charlie Hebdo," but "death." Not "death" only to the magazine, or to the cartoonists, but "death to France." The entire country of France must be punished, put to death. And if you can't reach France, any French people who happen to be visiting Pakistan might just do. One more reason for Infidels not to visit Pakistan.

"Decapitation is the punishment of blasphemers," read one of the placards carried by protesters.

The cartoons sending up the Prophet Mohammad triggered outrage and unrest among Muslims around the world in 2005

when they were first published by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten.

Earlier this week, Charlie Hebdo – a satirical weekly – revived the cartoons to mark the start of the trial of suspected accomplices in an Islamist militant attack on its Paris office in January 2015.

The Islamist gunmen who stormed into Charlie Hebdo, killing 12 people [10 of them cartoonists], sought to avenge the Prophet Mohammad, a French court heard on September 2, on the first day of the trial. Publication of the cartoons was cited as the reason for the attack.

Friday's protests were organized by the hardline Islamist Tehreek-e-Laibak Pakistan (TLP) party with rallies held in Karachi, the country's largest city, as well as in Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Lahore and Dera Ismail Khan.

Protesters paralyzed traffic in Karachi, Pakistan's financial and business capital.

"It (re-printing of cartoons) amounts to big terrorism; they repeat such acts of blasphemy against Prophet Mohammad every few years. It should be stopped," said Razi Hussani, TLP district leader in Karachi.

Mere printing of this cartoon is held to be "big terrorism," though it causes no physical harm to anyone, and no mental anguish if you simply avoid looking at it. No one is forcing anyone in Pakistan, or anywhere, for that matter, to buy, read, or look at that magazine. Very likely among the tens of thousands of rioting Pakistanis only a handful have actually seen a copy of the reprinted cartoon. But the Pakistanis are not mollified. They can go searching for that cartoon on the Internet. Or they can just imagine what it looks like. This self-inflicted and entirely avoidable emotional anguish, we are expected to believe, makes this cartoon "big terrorism"

for Muslims, presumably equivalent to the Twin Towers being brought down in New York, the vehicular homicides in Nice and Barcelona, the dismembering of Drummer Lee Rigby on a London street.

“Similar rallies held in Pakistan in 2015 turned violent, with scores injured as police clashed with protesters trying to make their way to the French consulate in Karachi.

“Pakistan’s government also condemned the reprinting of the cartoons. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said the South Asian country believed in freedom of expression but such liberty does not mean a license to offend religious sentiment.

The government condemned not the violent rioters screaming “Death to France,” but rather, the reprinting of the cartoons. Shah Mehmood Qureshi insists he believes in freedom of expression, except when he doesn’t, and he doesn’t whenever the religious sentiments of Muslims are offended. And they are offended so very greatly, and so very often. Somewhere in the world, there is always a Muslim mob rioting over a perceived offense to Muslim sensibilities: Charlie Hebdo, Jyllans-Posten, Salman Rushdie have all caused riots in Muslim lands worldwide. The mere “rumor” that a Christian man had said “something blasphemous” – no one knew what it was, but that hardly mattered – started riots in Bichi, a city in northern Nigeria. In 2019, a Muslim student in Pakistan accused his Hindu headteacher of making blasphemous remarks about Muhammad. Hearing about this, a large Muslim mob then attacked and destroyed a Hindu temple, Hindu-owned shops, and the school owned by the headteacher, all because that student wanted to get back at his teacher, possibly for nothing more than a bad grade.

Many Christians have been jailed, and some killed by mobs, in Pakistan, on the flimsiest of charges of “blasphemy.” Most

recently, there was the case of Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian who was given a death sentence for “blaspheming.” Her accusers were Muslim women with whom she picked berries. They asked her to fetch water for them; Asia Bibi took a sip from the jug. They were incensed because she dared to drink water out of a communal cup, that Christian lips should not have touched, and they decided to claim she had insulted Muhammad. Five days after her supposed “blasphemy,” the police barged into her family’s hovel, and dragged her off. She was tried, convicted, and spent nine years in solitary confinement on death row. Her sentence was finally overturned by the Supreme Court, but she remained in jail for her own safety while Muslim mobs in Pakistan called for her execution. Main roads were blocked, cars and buses were set alight, toll booths ransacked, and police officers attacked. Particularly in the eastern province of Punjab, many offices, businesses, and even schools were forced to close as commuting became impossible. All of this mayhem was created to force the government to carry out Bibi’s original death sentence. It didn’t work.

Eventually she was spirited out of the country to Canada. But she and her family will forever live with the fear that someday some Muslim fanatic will recognize her, and decide to carry out that death sentence.

There have been many Asia Bibis – not released, but executed for “blasphemy” – in the last 1,400 years of Islam.

Charlie Hebdo has long tested the limits of what society will accept in the name of free speech.

What Charlie Hebdo has actually done is test the limits of what Muslims will accept in the name of free speech. The answer is clear: when it comes to claims of blasphemy against Muhammad, they will accept nothing.

“We will never lie down. We will never give up,” Charlie

Hebdo editor Riss Sourisseau wrote in explaining the decision to re-publish the cartoons.

Riss Sourisseau's resolution echoed that of his murdered predecessor, Stephane Charbonnier, who said that "I would rather die standing than live on my knees."

Charbonnier. Sourisseau. This is what bravery sounds like. This is what Muslim fanatics wish to destroy.

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