

## Defiant Charlie Hebdo

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [Religion](#)

*The satirical French publication normally has a circulation of around 60,000. USA Today said its latest edition has a three million copy run.*

Some reports said five million. Maybe more given heavy demand. Copies are being distributed worldwide, said AP. In 16 languages. Saying “readers in France mobbed newsstands...”

“...European newspapers reprinted (its) cartoons as a gesture of solidarity.” Red Eye Chicago said local booksellers are scrambling for copies.

Almost impossible to find locally where this writer lives and perhaps elsewhere across America. Red Eye said limited numbers could arrive by Friday.

Controversy stalks the issue. The cover again features the Prophet Muhammad. Holding a sign saying *Je Suis Charlie*.

Muslim groups expressed anger. Insulting their religion again, they said. Especially at a sensitive time.

Many Muslims believe depicting the Prophet is forbidden. Others feared the new cover may trigger more violence.

Cairo Al-Azhar Grand Sheik Abbas Shumann called CH’s new cover “a blatant challenge to the feelings of Muslims who had sympathized with this newspaper.”

At the same time, he urged Muslims worldwide to ignore it. “(B)y “showing tolerance, forgiveness and shedding light on the story of the Prophet.”

Reacting angrily “will not solve the problem but will instead add to the tension and the offense to Islam.”

Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood spokesman Murad Abaileh called CH’s new cover “offensive” to the Prophet. At the same time condemning last week’s killings.

Iran’s Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry spokesman Hossein Noushabadi strongly condemned CH’s new cover.

Saying “(t)he West has misinterpreted the concept of the freedom of speech. (It) does not mean sacrilege of the sanctities of a religion or its prophet.”

“Desecration of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) is a big sin and no Muslim would accept such a behavior.”

Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Marziyeh Afkham condemned last week's killings. Calling violence against innocent people anti-Islamic.

So are misuses of "freedom of expression, ideological extremism and character assassination of respectful figures of religions and nations, as well as insulting divine faiths and their values and symbols which are respected by those religions," she said.

"(I)appropriate and double standard policies in dealing with violence and extremism have led to the spread of those actions and behaviors."

She stressed President Hassan Rohani's idea of a world free from violence and extremism.

Urged one free from double standards. One of the leading causes of violent extremism. State-sponsored. Notably from Western countries.

Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif said in a world of differing cultures, "sanctities need to be respected."

"I think we would have a much safer, much more prudent world if we were to engage in serious dialogue, serious debate about our differences and then what we will find out that what binds us together is far greater than what divides us."

Egyptian cartoonist Makhlof suggested a CH cover with an ordinary regional man carrying a placard reading "I am an artist."

"I am for art and against killing," he added. "May God forgive everyone."

Anjem Choudary chaired the Society of Muslim Lawyers. He served as spokesman for the now banned Islam4UK organization.

Targeted for his anti-Western activism. Opposition to Britain's involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. Heavily criticized by UK media.

He denounced CH's new edition. Called it an "act of war." A "blatant provocation." Many mainstream Muslim organizations expressed outrage.

Egypt's Dar al-Ofra called it "an unjustified provocation against the feelings of 1.5 million Muslims." It'll "result in a new wave of hatred in French and Western society."

"What the magazine is doing does not serve coexistence and the cultural dialogue Muslims aspire to."

According to AP , threats appeared on militant web sites. Urging protests against CH. French Muslim leaders urged calm.

Suburban Paris Gennevilliers mosque administrator Abdelbaki Attaf said "(w)hat is uncomfortable for us is the representation of the Prophet."

"Any responsible Muslim will find it hard to accept that. But we shouldn't ban it."

"The French Council of the Muslim Religion and Union of French Islamic Organizations

released a joint statement.

Urging Muslims to “stay calm and avoid emotive reactions...incompatible with...dignity...while respecting freedom of opinion.”

CH’s lawyer Richard Malks said the publication won’t “back down. Otherwise none of this has any meaning.”

“If you hold the banner ‘Je suis Charlie,’ that means you have the right to blaspheme. You have the right to criticize my religion.”

There’s a time and place for everything. Depicting France’s Black Justice Minister Christiane Taubira as a monkey was hugely offensive. Way out of line. Unacceptable.

Tensions following last week’s killings run high. Mosques in France were attacked.

Anti-Islamic protests erupted in Paris, Dresden and European cities. Muslims are vilified for their faith. Perhaps more violence will follow.

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) urged defending “our beloved Prophet...Exemplify his true ideals.”

“Muslims...believe in freedom of speech. (T)hey respect the right of people to say what they believe...”

“However, freedom of speech should not be translated in to a duty to offend.” Mutual respect matters.

MCB stressed the “merciful character of the Prophet. Enduring patience, tolerance, gentleness and mercy as was the character of our beloved Prophet (peace and Blessings be upon him) is the best and immediate way to respond.”

The Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) said:

“Just as Charlie Hebdo has the right to publish, we have the right to peacefully challenge negative portrayals of our religious figures.”

“The answer to speech one disagrees with should not be violence, but should instead be more speech promoting tolerance and mutual understanding.”

Charlie is a privately operated French satirical weekly. Featuring irreverent/nonconformist cartoons, reports, polemics and humor.

According to its deceased editor Stephane Charbonnier, its editorial viewpoint reflects “all components of left wing pluralism and even abstainers.”

It began publishing in 1970. Ceased in 1981. Reemerged in 1992. Publishes on Wednesdays. Including unscheduled special editions like its latest.

Gerard Biard replaced the deceased Charbonnier as editor-in-chief. CH’s name is derived from a monthly comics magazine called Charlie.

Later renamed Charlie Mensuel (Charlie Monthly). It took its name from the Peanuts' character Charlie Brown.

CH is no stranger to controversy. In 2007, Paris' Grand Mosque sued then editor Philippe Val for blaspheming Islam.

Three cartoons were cited. One showed the Prophet Muhammad with a bomb in his turban. An acquittal followed.

In July 2008, a column by cartoonist Sine (Maurice Sinet) cited a news item saying the son of then President Nicolas Sarkozy intended to convert to Judaism before marrying his Jewish heiress finance.

"He'll go far, this lad," Sine observed. Was fired days later. Sued unsuccessfully for unfair dismissal. But was awarded 90,000 euros in damages.

CH's February 2006 edition featured the title "Muhammad overwhelmed by fundamentalist." Showing a cover cartoon of a weeping Muhammad saying "it's hard being loved by jerks."

At the time, then French President Jacques Chirac condemned "overt provocations." Inflaming passions, he said.

Adding "(a)nything that can hurt the convictions of someone else, in particular religious convictions, should be avoided."

Future presidents Sarkozy and Francois Hollande expressed support for freedom of expression.

On November 2, 2011, CH's office was fire-bombed. Its web site hacked. After its special edition called "Charia Hebdo."

The Prophet Muhammad listed as "editor-in-chief." The cover featured a cartoon lampooning him. Saying "100 lashes of the whip if you don't die laughing."

Editor Charbonnier said "stupid people who don't know what Islam is "likely carried out the attack. (I)diots who betray their own religion."

French Council of the Muslim Faith head Mohammed Moussaoui condemned "the very mocking tone of the paper toward Islam and its prophet but reaffirm(e) with force its total opposition to all acts and all forms of violence."

In September 2012, CH published a series of satirical cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. Some featured nude caricatures.

The issue came days after Middle East violence followed release of an Islamic hate film. Titled Innocence of Muslims

Its producer Israeli/American filmmaker Nakoula Basseley (aka Nicola Bacily/Bacile) called Islam "a cancer."

A widely circulated You Tube trailer called Muhammad a buffoon. A donkey. A philanderer. An opportunist.

A pedophile. Homosexual. Religious fraud. One scene depicted him having sex. France increased security at embassies, consulates cultural centers and international schools in around 20 Muslim countries.

CH got police protection against possible attacks. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius criticized CH's publication.

On the one hand defending free expression. On the other asking if it's "sensible or intelligent to pour oil on the fire."

A White House statement said "we have questions about the judgment of publishing something like this."

Editor Charbonnier said "(w)e do caricatures of everyone, and above all every week, and when we do it with the Prophet, it's called provocation."

Following last week's killings, CH said it would continue publishing. Beginning with a special edition.

With a print run of a million copies. Way more than its customary 60,000. Heavy demand increased it to 3 million.

Then 5 million or more for worldwide distribution. France contributed one million euros supporting the effort.

The Digital Innovation Press Fund donated 250,000 euros. In 2013, created by Google and a French publishing trade group.

The French Press and Pluralism Fund donated another 250,000 euros. The Guardian Media Group pledged 100,000 pounds.

Le Monde and French media giant Vivendi SA Canal Plus promised financial support.

The slogan Je suis Charlie first appeared on Twitter. Then spread widely online.

Created by French journalist Joachim Roncin following last week's killings. Perhaps the world's best known slogan. Propaganda rubbish crammed down our throats.

A web site [Understanding Charlie Hebdo](#) (UCH) cartoons was created. Calling its humor "very particular and somewhat unique in France."

"(A)bsurdist in the tradition of Rubrique-a-Brac." A humorous comic strip created by Gotib in 1968.

Widely regarded as one of the cornerstones of today's humorous bande dessinée (drawn strips).

Expressing views on historical figures. Political ones. Folklore. Foreign countries and cultures as well as other issues.

UCH compared CH in some respects to America's MAD magazine and British comic publication Viz.

CH humor is extremely satirical. Often crass, Showing “a complete lack of respect for many institutions,” said UCH.

“(E)mploy(ing) brutal satire against dogma, hypocrisy and hysteria, regardless of its source.”

Leaving “bitter aftertastes.” Former French President Sarkozy was a frequent target. So is current President Hollande.

CH is an equal opportunity offender. Arguably going too far at times. Lampooning is one thing. Over-the-top offensiveness another. Especially perhaps when attacking organized religions.

In 2011, after Avignon extremists vandalized “Piss Christ (a photo of a plastic crucifix submerged in urine), CH’s cover featured rolls of toilet paper labeled “Bible.” “Koran.” “Torah.”

The headline said: “In the shitter, all the religions.” CH’s anti-Islamic provocations gained it widespread notoriety.

Since first depicting the Prophet Muhammad offensively in 2006. Its editors saying they want to show believers the folly of their faith.

Hugely offending millions. Polar opposite legitimate lampooning. Reprehensible and then some.

Values no one should endorse. Continuing under its present staff. Endorsed and funded by France’s government.

Last weekend, white block letters topped Paris’ Arc de Triomphe, saying: “PARIS EST CHARLIE.”

Mayor Anne Hidalgo made CH an “honorary (Parisian) citizen.” A distinction she called reserved “for the most illustrative defenders of human rights throughout the world.”

Calling their eight slain staff members and four others “heroes.” At the same time, hypocritically defending free expression.

Calling it “sacred.” While French security forces arrested dozens extrajudicially. Outrageously accused of “glorifying terrorism.” By exercising their free speech right.

Including Black comedian Dieudonne. For posting a Facebook comment saying “I feel like Charlie Coulibaly.” The French kosher supermarket hostage taker.

In January, French authorities banned Dieudonne’s comedy show. Calling it anti-Semitic. For being anti-Zionist and anti-establishment.

CH blaspheming Islam is OK. Legitimate Israeli related criticism is called Jew-hating.

Dieudonne was clear and unequivocal saying “I am not anti-Semitic.”

“We live in a democratic country, and I have to comply with the laws, despite the blatant political interference.”

"As a comedian, I have pushed the debate to the very edge of laughter." Hate speech is not part of his vocabulary. His lawyers defended his free expression rights.

In 2002, he began criticizing Israel. In 2004, he ran in European elections representing a pro-Palestinian party.

Following last week's Paris killings, French authorities mobilized 10,000 security forces. Including thousands of combat troops.

Patrolling city streets. Guarding public areas. Protecting Jewish communities. Ignoring Muslim ones.

A [previous article](#) discussed police state France. Civil liberties are being attacked en route to eliminating them altogether.

As well as in Britain. Other European countries. Perhaps America most of all.

Claims about protecting national security ring hollow. Fabricated cover for increasing state terror.

Liberte, égalité and fraternité as well as other mottos like it are meaningless slogans. Fast disappearing freedoms in Western societies. Police state subjugation replacing them.

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