

Terrorism and “French Values”

Sowing and Reaping?

By [Kim Petersen](#)

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Region: [Europe](#)
Theme: [Terrorism](#)

There have been some horrendous, despicable killings by Muslim extremists in France. Such killings must be condemned.

French president Emmanuel Macron played the victim card, saying that France “will not give into terrorism.” Yet when 21st century France engages in overseas militarism, otherwise known as state terrorism, in places with large Muslim populations – *places that never attacked France*— such as Afghanistan, Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Chad, Somalia, Libya, North Mali, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen then what is to be expected? Is it okay for France to engage in militarism abroad and expect no blowback on French soil? Must not the French terrorism be condemned?

The embattled, unpopular French president has seized upon the gruesome killings to denounce terrorism and championed “French values,” such as freedom of speech. [1]

Once again the controversial publication *Charlie Hebdo* has provoked a lethal response.

The publication of cartoons defaming the prophet Mohammed, as any clued-in person could easily have predicted, have stirred heated Muslim protests. These provocative cartoons are defended as free speech. I am all for defending the right to free speech. I am not in favor of stupid speech, speech designed to belittle and incur the wrath of a particular group. I would certainly caution against the freedom to say what one wants knowing that it will result in violence and deaths.

But the French, especially its politicians, are hypocrites. If free speech allows one to impugn one religion, then that right to impugn must be allowed for all religions. Take the case of French comedian Dieudonné. He has been convicted in court eight times for upsetting Jewish sentiment and has consequently been embargoed by many venues where he would normally ply his trade.

Many years earlier, professor Robert Faurisson, an extreme skeptic of the typical Holocaust narrative, was hit with judicial proceedings, was fined, and lost his job. Is this respect for free speech? Professor Noam Chomsky experienced blowback for supporting free speech in the case of Faurisson. Chomsky held, “... it has been a truism for years, indeed centuries, that it is precisely in the case of horrendous ideas that the right of free expression must be most vigorously defended; it is easy enough to defend free expression for those who require no such defense.” [2]

As for France defending freedoms, *The Times* of Britain [notes](#),

French authorities have been accused of “judicial harassment” in a damning

Amnesty report that claims more than 40,000 people were convicted during the gilet jaune (yellow vest) and pension reform protests in 2018 and 2019 “on the basis of vague laws” aimed at restricting their rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

The controversial media outlet [Charlie Hebdo](#) is not about either free expression or speech. It fired a cartoonist for alleged anti-Semitism. [3] On its face, *Charlie Hebdo* signals that Islamophobia is *kosher*, but Judeophobia is *haram*.

Macron said “France is under attack.” [4] Were Afghanistan, Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Chad, Somalia, Libya, North Mali, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen not under attack when the French sent their guns to these countries? [5]

*

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Notes

1. Agence France-Presse, “[‘Nous ne céderons rien’ sur les valeurs françaises, assure Macron](#)” TVA Nouvelles, 29 October 2020.
2. Noam Chomsky, “[Some Elementary Comments on The Rights of Freedom of Expression](#),” Appeared as a Preface to Robert Faurisson, *Mémoire en défense*, 11 October 1980.
3. See “[‘Charlie Hebdo’ condamné pour le licenciement abusif du dessinateur Siné](#),” *Le Monde*, 10 December 2009.
4. “Attentat de Nice – ‘La France est attaquée’, 7 000 militaires déployés, les églises et les écoles sous surveillance : ce qu’il faut retenir des annonces d’Emmanuel Macron” [L’Indépendant](#), 29 October 2020.
5. Note some of these 21st century conflicts are still ongoing.

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