



## Charlie Hebdo Attack

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# 1 Introduction

- **Charlie Hebdo is a French satirical weekly newspaper** that has never spared anyone or anything, from politics to religion, including Islam. On 7 January 2015, the magazine's Paris newsroom was attacked. Twelve people were killed, including four prominent cartoonists.
- According to almost all reports, the attack occurred because of the treatment of the image of Mohammed in some cartoons.
- The horrific terrorist attack in Paris at the office of the French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* is a direct assault on the freedom of speech, thought and expression, the fundamentals on which all open, democratic societies are built.

# 2 Possible reasons behind the attack

- The press has been reporting that the attack by Muslim extremists on the office of the magazine Charlie Hebdo was motivated by the so-called **"blasphemous" cartoons** published in that magazine. Even though this was the ostensible excuse for the attack, the real reason lies much deeper.  
**According to some people following may be the possible reasons:**
- France has a large Muslim population, but they are assimilated into secular French society to a very large extent. Middle Eastern radicals have had a very hard time recruiting them. But the Islamic extremists see an opportunity to expand their recruitment efforts, if only those French Muslims can be marginalized and radicalized.
- Al Qaeda wants to mentally colonize French Muslims, but faces a wall of disinterest. But if it can get non-Muslim French to be beastly to ethnic Muslims on the grounds that they are Muslims, it can start creating a common political identity around grievance against discrimination.
- What better way than by causing a right-wing backlash against a Muslim attack on a French institution? The resulting discriminatory behavior by right-wing and racist French citizens will drive these peaceful Muslims into the waiting arms of Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other terrorist groups that will offer help and training for these newly oppressed citizens.
- This horrific murder was not a pious protest against the defamation of a religious icon. It was an attempt to provoke European society into pogroms against French Muslims, at which point Al Qaeda recruitment would suddenly exhibit some successes
- Maintaining freedoms and equality before the law in the face of a severe challenge to security is the most difficult test for any democratic polity and society.

# 3 Reaction across the world and U.N.

- **The mass rallies** throughout the western world held in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo and supermarket attacks suggest we are at a pivotal moment. Never before has the world seen footage like that of the world leaders walking with arms linked in the streets of Paris.
- **European nations** have already pushed for tighter anti-terror controls including an EU-wide database of passenger travel information, increased internet surveillance and even changes to the Schengen border-free travel area.
- **U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon** has expressed outrage over the "cold-blooded" and "unjustifiable" terrorist attack against French magazine Charlie Hebdo, with the UN Security Council underlining the need to bring perpetrators of terrorism to justice.
- The members of the Security Council "strongly condemned this intolerable terrorist act targeting journalists and a newspaper" and underlined the need to bring perpetrators of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice.
- "The members of the Security Council reaffirmed the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed," the statement said.

## 4 “Freedom of Speech” and Journalism

- Every country limits free speech. Some do so only to prevent immediate harms, such as libel, violence or child pornography; others ban “hate speech” (offensive utterances against groups such as gay people or racial minorities) or blasphemy. In the wake of the Paris attacks, these differing approaches are colliding both with each other and with free speech, which is in many places at best a wavering ideal.
- Even in France, not all agree with the distinction drawn **between “impertinence” and racism**, Holocaust denial and the like. A poll published a week after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks found that two-fifths felt that, since images of the Prophet offended Muslims, they should not be published. And some see double standards.
- French newspapers have united in condemning the killing of journalists at the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* as an unacceptable assault on freedom of expression.
- For newspapers to tell the story to their readers, newspapers worldwide were faced with a choice: to publish the relevant cartoons, because of journalistic necessity and at the same time as a message in favour of free expression, or to limit themselves to a description of the relevant cartoons - as they are considered too “controversial,” and/or to respect their editorial policy regarding the publication of any material which some of their readers might find offensive. The issue has led to a discussion about satire and its boundaries which always result in good/bad consequences.
- Journalist for covering any news/article takes risk of their life. *Charlie Hebdo* has created this issue majorly.

## 5 Charlie Hebdo attack and India

- Self-censorship in order not to hurt religious sensibilities is now the norm in most parts of the world, so too in India, where media and expressions of popular culture including cinema, art and writing have to walk the tightrope daily in deference to what Salman Rushdie in an interview to this newspaper described as the non-existent “right to not be offended”: the fracas caused by **Hindutva groups against the film PK** is the most recent example of this.
- In truly democratic societies, this should not be the case, and that is what *Charlie Hebdo* believed and practised. Irrespective of what anyone thinks of its editorial policy, all who believe in freedom of expression and the democratic way of life must express solidarity with the magazine, and condemn this unspeakable act of violence against them.
- **Shirin dalvi** case is example of such incidence in low degree which brings question on the relevance of freedom of expression.

**Shirin Dalvi case:** The incident *Charlie Hebdo* attack which brought global attention to the conflict between free speech and extremist action to prevent it and in particular the violent reaction of some Muslims to criticism and caricature of Islam. The episode had life-changing repercussions for Shirin Dalvi the Mumbai editor of Urdu daily, *Avadhnama*. A bi-lingual newspaper published in Hindi and Urdu, *Avadhnama* is headquartered in Lucknow, and listed in the name of one Taqdees Fatima Rizvi. *Avadhnama*’s January 17 edition in reporting the news of the attack on *Charlie Hebdo* had used one of the cartoons first published by *Charlie Hebdo* in 2006. Some local readers found it offensive and saw it as an insult to the Muslim community. On January 17, Dalvi, a 47-year-old journalist from Mumbai and India’s only woman editor of an Urdu daily was charged under Section 295A of the IPC, 1860 for outraging religious sentiments by insulting religion with “malicious intent”.

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