

Sources—Paris, France, 2015

On January 7, 2015, two gunmen attacked the Paris headquarters of the French satirical magazine, *Charlie Hebdo*, and killed twelve people. The attacks are presumed to be in response to several controversial cartoons that the magazine published depicting the Prophet Muhammad.

The events have ignited a global debate on the topic of freedom of speech. Days after the attack, millions of people marched in rallies across France. Many carried posters and banners inscribed with the phrase “Je suis Charlie” (French for “I am Charlie”) to show solidarity with the magazine and support for free speech.

Yet the magazine has also drawn harsh criticism from individuals and leaders around the world, who contend that the cartoons went too far, and were offensive and disrespectful. *Charlie Hebdo* released a “survivors’ edition” a week after the attacks, featuring another cartoon depicting Muhammad—this time he held a sign reading “Je suis Charlie” with the heading “All is forgiven.” The publication created an uproar, and in some places sparked violent demonstrations, for example, in Pakistan and Niger. Several countries, including Turkey and Morocco, banned publication of the recent edition.

Below are excerpts from newspapers expressing contrasting views on whether the magazine should have been allowed to publish the controversial cartoons.

Source A

January 16, 2015 in *The Guardian*, London, England

“Pope Francis: freedom of expression has limits”

Pope Francis has said there are limits to freedom of expression and that following the *Charlie Hebdo* attack in Paris “one cannot make fun of faith”....

[T]he pope said freedom of speech was a fundamental human right but “every religion has its dignity.”

Asked about the attack that killed 12 people at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*—targeted because it had printed depictions of the prophet Muhammad—he said: “One cannot provoke, one cannot insult other people’s faith, one cannot make fun of faith.

“There is a limit. Every religion has its dignity...in freedom of expression there are limits.”...

Cautioning against provocation he said the right to liberty of expression came with the obligation to speak for “the common good.”

Source B

January 20, 2015 in *The Express Tribune*, Karachi, Pakistan

“Charlie Hebdo caricatures an attempt to divide people and civilisations: FO”

ISLAMABAD: Amid protests against *Charlie Hebdo* in major cities across the country, Pakistan condemned on Tuesday the publication of a sacrilegious cartoon on the French satirical magazine’s “survivor issue.”

“Echoing the sentiments of the people of Pakistan, the president and the prime minister have strongly condemned the publication, which has caused great offence to Muslims by hurting their sentiments and religious sensibilities all over the world,” Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said.

“We believe that freedom of expression should not be misused as means to attack or hurt public sentiments or religious beliefs,” the statement added.

Resolutions have been passed in the National Assembly and Senate condemning the publications.

“This is an attempt to divide peoples and civilisations. There is a need to promote harmony among people and communities instead of reinforcing stereotypes and making people alienated in their own countries,” it read.

Further, Adviser to the Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz has written a letter to the OIC secretary general recommending a legal action to seek an apology from the French magazine and joint action by the Ummah to get criminalisation of all acts of Islamophobia. [The OIC, or the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, is an international organization that has fifty-seven countries as members.]

On Monday, the Saudi-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation announced its plans to sue the controversial French magazine for publishing sacrilegious caricatures.

Secretary General of the organisation Iyad Madani while speaking to reporters in Riyadh said that freedom of speech has its limits and must not offend others.

Source CJanuary 18, 2015 in *The New York Times***“Charlie Hebdo and Free Expression”***The Opinion Pages—Editorial*

...Irreverent magazines like *Charlie Hebdo* have been a fixture in Western societies for many years, and France has a strong tradition of such journalism.

The Internet, moreover, has opened the door to almost every level and form of expression.

Yet there are legitimate questions raised about freedom of expression in this tragedy.

In the wake of the terror attack, French authorities began aggressive enforcements of a law against supporting or justifying terrorism, including arrests of people who spoke admiringly about the shootings at *Charlie Hebdo*. Not surprisingly, their actions have raised questions of a double standard—one for cartoonists who deliberately insult religion, when their cartoons are certain to antagonize Muslims at a time when anti-Muslim feelings are already at high levels in France and across much of Europe, and another for those who react by applauding terrorists.

The difference, according to French authorities, is between the right to attack an idea and the right to attack people or incite hatred.

The distinction is recognized in the various laws against hate speech or inciting violence that exist in most Western states.

As a consequence of World War II, France and several other European countries have laws against denying the Holocaust, and with a rise in anti-Semitism in France, authorities have actively sought to curb hate speech, like the anti-Semitic routines of a comedian, Dieudonné M’bala M’bala.

Freedom of expression is broader in the United States, but there, too, there are legal limitations on speech that involves incitement, libel, obscenity or child pornography.

But drawing the line between speech that is disgusting and speech that is dangerous is inherently difficult and risky...

Laws like those in France against “words or acts of hatred” are based on what is often a subjective judgment. And any constraints on freedom of expression invite government abuse.

Tastes, standards and situations change, and in the end it is best for editors and societies at large to judge what is fit—or safe—to print....

Source D

January 15, 2015 in *The New York Times*

“French Rein In Speech Backing Acts of Terror”

By Doreen Carvajal and Alan Cowell. Carvajal is an American journalist and Alan Cowell is a British journalist. Both are based in Paris.

PARIS—The French authorities are moving aggressively to rein in speech supporting terrorism, employing a new law to mete out tough prison sentences in a crackdown that is stoking a free-speech debate after last week’s attacks in Paris....

All told, up to 100 people are under investigation for making or posting comments that support or try to justify terrorism....

The arrests have raised questions about a double standard for free speech here, with one set of rules for the cartoonists who freely skewered religions of all kinds, even when Muslims, Catholics and others objected, and yet were defended for their right to do so, and another set for the statements by Muslim supporters of the gunmen, which have led to their prosecution.

But French law does prohibit speech that might invoke or support violence. And prosecutors, who on Wednesday were urged by the Ministry of Justice to fight and prosecute “words or acts of hatred” with “utmost vigor,” are relying particularly on new tools under a law adopted in November... [which] includes prison sentences up to seven years for backing terrorism.

Some of those who were cited under the new law have already been sentenced, with the criminal justice system greatly accelerated, moving from accusations to trial and imprisonment in as little as three days....

The accused did not have to threaten actual violence to run afoul of the law....

The most prominent case now pending in the French courts is that of Dieudonné M’bala M’bala, a provocative humorist who has been a longtime symbol in France of the battle between free speech and public safety. With nearly 40 previous arrests on suspicion of violating antihate laws, for statements usually directed at Jews, he was again arrested on Wednesday, this time for condoning terrorism. He faces trial in early February in connection with a Facebook message he posted....

Prosecutors and other lawyers say the difference is laid out in French law, which unlike United States laws, limits what can be said or done in specific categories. Because of its World War II history, for example, France has speech laws that specifically address anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial. In the case of the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonists, prosecutors said, the targets were ideas and concepts, and though deemed extreme by some, the satire was meted out broadly.

“A lot of people say that it’s unjust to support *Charlie Hebdo* and then allow Dieudonné to be censored,” said Mathieu Davy, a lawyer who specializes in media rights. “But there are clear limits in our legal system. I have the right to criticize an idea, a concept or a religion. I have the right to criticize the powers in my country. But I don’t have the right to attack people and to incite hate.”...

Source E

January 8, 2015 in *The New York Times*

"I Am Not Charlie Hebdo"

By David Brooks. Brooks grew up in the United States and is based in Washington, D.C.

The journalists at *Charlie Hebdo* are now rightly being celebrated as martyrs on behalf of freedom of expression, but let's face it: If they had tried to publish their satirical newspaper on any American university campus over the last two decades it wouldn't have lasted 30 seconds. Student and faculty groups would have accused them of hate speech. The administration would have cut financing and shut them down.

Public reaction to the attack in Paris has revealed that there are a lot of people who are quick to lionize those who offend the views of Islamist terrorists in France but who are a lot less tolerant toward those who offend their own views at home....

So this might be a teachable moment. As we are mortified by the slaughter of those writers and editors in Paris, it's a good time to come up with a less hypocritical approach to our own controversial figures, provocateurs and satirists....

[I]n thinking about provocateurs and insulters, we want to maintain standards of civility and respect while at the same time allowing room for those creative and challenging folks who are uninhibited by good manners and taste.

If you try to pull off this delicate balance with law, speech codes and banned speakers, you'll end up with crude censorship and a strangled conversation. It's almost always wrong to try to suppress speech, erect speech codes and disinvite speakers.

Fortunately, social manners are more malleable and supple than laws and codes. Most societies have successfully maintained standards of civility and respect while keeping open avenues for those who are funny, uncivil and offensive....

Healthy societies, in other words, don't suppress speech, but they do grant different standing to different sorts of people. Wise and considerate scholars are heard with high respect. Satirists are heard with bemused semirespect. Racists and anti-Semites are heard through a filter of opprobrium and disrespect. People who want to be heard attentively have to earn it through their conduct.

The massacre at *Charlie Hebdo* should be an occasion to end speech codes. And it should remind us to be legally tolerant toward offensive voices, even as we are socially discriminating.

Source FJanuary 9, 2015 in *The New Yorker***“Unmournable Bodies”**

By Teju Cole. Cole is a Nigerian-American writer and photographer based in New York.

...More than a dozen people were killed by terrorists in Paris this week. The victims of these crimes are being mourned worldwide: they were human beings, beloved by their families and precious to their friends. On Wednesday, twelve of them were targeted by gunmen for their affiliation with the satirical French magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. *Charlie* has often been aimed at Muslims, and it's taken particular joy in flouting the Islamic ban on depictions of the Prophet Muhammad. It's done more than that, too, including taking on political targets, as well as Christian and Jewish ones.... Illustrations such as this have been cited as evidence of *Charlie Hebdo's* willingness to offend everyone. But in recent years the magazine has gone specifically for racist and Islamophobic provocations, and its numerous anti-Islam images have been inventively perverse, featuring hook-nosed Arabs, bullet-ridden Korans,...and mockery of the victims of a massacre. It is not always easy to see the difference between a certain witty dissent from religion and a bullishly racist agenda, but it is necessary to try....

This week's events took place against the backdrop of France's ugly colonial history, its sizable Muslim population, and the suppression, in the name of secularism, of some Islamic cultural expressions, such as the hijab [veil]. Blacks have hardly had it easier in *Charlie Hebdo*: one of the magazine's cartoons depicts the Minister of Justice Christiane Taubira, who is of Guianese origin, as a monkey (naturally, the defense is that a violently racist image was being used to satirize racism); another portrays Obama with the black-Sambo imagery familiar from Jim Crow-era illustrations.

But it is possible to defend the right to obscene and racist speech without promoting or sponsoring the content of that speech. It is possible to approve of sacrilege without endorsing racism. And it is possible to consider Islamophobia immoral without wishing it illegal.... The A.C.L.U. got it right in defending a neo-Nazi group that, in 1978, sought to march through Skokie, Illinois. The extreme offensiveness of the marchers, absent a particular threat of violence, was not and should not be illegal. But no sensible person takes a defense of those First Amendment rights as a defense of Nazi beliefs....

The scale, intensity, and manner of the solidarity that we are seeing for the victims of the Paris killings, encouraging as it may be, indicates how easy it is in Western societies to focus on radical Islamism as the real, or the only, enemy. This focus is part of the consensus about mournable bodies, and it often keeps us from paying proper attention to other, ongoing, instances of horrific carnage around the world: abductions and killings in Mexico, hundreds of children (and more than a dozen journalists) killed in Gaza by Israel last year, internecine massacres in the Central African Republic, and so on. And, even when we rightly condemn criminals who claim to act in the name of Islam, little of our grief is extended to the numerous Muslim victims of their attacks, whether in Yemen or Nigeria—in both of which there were deadly massacres this week—or in Saudi Arabia, where, among many violations of human rights, the punishment for journalists who “insult Islam” is flogging. We may not be able to attend to each outrage in every corner of the world, but we should at least pause to consider how it is that mainstream opinion so quickly decides that certain violent deaths are more meaningful, and more worthy of commemoration, than others.

Source G

January 15, 2015 on *Informed Comment*, a blog about the Middle East, history, and religion

“Civilization’s Advance has depended on ‘Blasphemy’ of Thinkers & Mystics”

By Farhang Jahanpour. Jahanpour is an Iranian writer and professor in England.

The Wednesday edition of *Charlie Hebdo* (a week after the barbaric attack by two deranged terrorists on its premises) carried a cartoon of Prophet Muhammad, with a caption “Je Suis Charlie,” with a tear drop on his face announcing, “all is forgiven.” It is not clear who is forgiven and for what, but if it refers to the terrorists it certainly is not appropriate.

This time the magazine did not publish only 60,000 copies as it usually does, but three million copies, thanks to the generous help that it has received from various sources and also with the help of cartoonists from all over the world.

Richard Malka, a Sephardic Jew, who saw ten colleagues and four of his co-religionists massacred on that dreadful day, was one of the first to call for the magazine to continue functioning. When asked whether they would publish more cartoons of Muhammad, he replied in an interview with France Info radio on Monday: “Naturally. We will not give in, otherwise all this won’t have meant anything.”

Free speech tops all other considerations

This is as it should be, because in the final analysis freedom of expression tops all other considerations, as it is at the root of all other liberties and the quality of life that we enjoy in democratic societies.

More than three million people demonstrated in Paris and other French cities on Sunday, carrying the sign “Je Suis Charlie.” This did not mean that they agreed with everything that *Charlie Hebdo* stood for, but they wished to uphold the right of that satirical magazine to express itself freely.

Only a few days before the attacks in Paris, Pen America published a disturbing report on “Global Chilling. The Impact of Mass Surveillance on International Writers,” showing that mass surveillance by the United States and other governments had produced a very negative effect on free expression, leading to self-censorship. It further showed that concern about surveillance was almost as high among writers living in democracies (75%) as it was among those living in non-democratic states (80%). It would be tragic if the killing of a few journalists in Paris were allowed to result in greater self-censorship and to curtail freedom of expression.

The terrorists and those who wish to limit freedom of expression by violent means should learn that far from forcing others to silence, their acts will backfire and will have the opposite effect. If the terrorists intended to help the cause of Muslims in the world, it has had precisely the opposite effect and has intensified a climate of suspicion and cultural clash between Islam and the West.

It should be added that the terrorist outrage was not an Islamic act against Christians, Jews and secularists. It was the act of two terrorists against Muslims, Christians, Jews and people of no faith....