

This case was prepared by University of Georgia journalism student Brenna Beech for JOUR 5170, Advanced Studies in Journalism, based on sources cited below.

The *Charlie Hebdo* Cartoons

Charlie Hebdo is a satirical French magazine known for their publication of jeering cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad, the Islamic State militant group leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and other highly controversial topics.

Over the years, the publication has seen a few attacks by Muslim extremist groups and a few employees have received personal death threats. Most recently, gunmen attacked the magazine office in Paris and killed 12 people in what BBC News calls “the worst attack on a magazine which has been hit by violence before.”

On January 7, 2015, two masked gunmen made their way into the *Charlie Hebdo* weekly editorial meeting, calling four cartoonists by name and killing them as well as four others in the meeting. BBC News writes, “Witnesses said they had heard the gunmen shouting “We have avenged the Prophet Muhammad” and “God is Great” in Arabic while calling out the names of the journalists.”

- As an editor, would you have decided to publish cartoons that depicted Muhammad in a satirical light, knowing the strong beliefs of Muslims?
- If you were the editor of a publication like this, and this attack happened to you, how would you come back from this? Would you continue to publish your content as usual or would you refrain from publishing some things in fear of further retaliation?

The gunmen, brothers, one of which was a convicted Islamist who police knew had been involved in militant activities for quite some time, were finally found on the morning of January 9th and killed at the scene after firing at police officers (BBC). BBC writes that the brothers “told the local media they would die “martyrs” deaths.”

This event has sparked conversation at many publications about whether or not to republish certain images referring to publications being discussed in articles, in this case the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons, that might insult readers. *The Huffington Post* writes that *The New York Times* was weighing the “value of showing the images against the social cost of insulting a segment of their readers.”

- If you were the editor of a big-time newspaper covering the story of the violence that happened at *Charlie Hebdo*, would you republish the images that created the stir?
- How else could you depict the images that sparked the violence without further offending anyone?
- Would it even matter to you that anyone was offended?
- How do the media’s First Amendment rights come into play in this situation?
- Would you defend the right for *Charlie Hebdo*, or any other publication, to publish possibly consequential images and illustrations?

Sources

- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-15551998>
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30708237>
- [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/erik-bleich/limiting-hate-speech-is-i b 6459024.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/erik-bleich/limiting-hate-speech-is-i-b-6459024.html)