

## Cartoon incites rage, controversy across the world

BY ELIAS BLONDEAU  
STAFF WRITER

For many, religion is a sensitive topic. But does a cartoon depicting a sacred figure in a comical light justify inciting violence?

Across the globe, heated reactions have erupted in response to a religiously-motivated cartoon.

France was the first affected; they deployed riot police to protect the offices of Charlie Hebdo magazine on Sept. 17, after the periodical printed offensive cartoons of the Muslim prophet Muhammad on the cover.

In an ironic twist, riots in Pakistan over an unrelated viral video that mocks the religious figure had recently turned fatal, claiming the lives of 19 people and counting, according to *The New Yorker*.

But for Charlie Hebdo, a periodical specializing in political humor, courting controversy comes with the turf.

In previous years, the French publication has printed satirical illustrations of respected figures such as Jesus Christ and the Pope. To Charlie Hebdo's editor, Stephane Charbonnier, it is important to print these illustrations and not succumb to pressure from outside parties.

"If we start saying we can't do these cartoons because there's a risk someone will be shocked, then we'll back down from publishing other cartoons," Charbonnier told BBC. "There always will be pressure for something less offensive, and so on and so on until we stop making them altogether."

A now-banned episode of Comedy Central's *South Park*

depicted Muhammad and earned the show's creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker numerous death threats. To some, this suggested that something about the revered figure incites more anger in viewers than the series' previous depictions of Christ and other religious icons.

According to Max Carter, head of the Friends' Center and religious studies professor, this is partially due to the fact that Muhammad is not a divine figure, per se, so much as a respected human being.

"The humanity of Jesus is equal in importance to his divinity, and depictions of Jesus have not been a major issue for Christians," said Carter in an email interview. "In contrast, Islam ascribes no partners to G-d (Allah); Muhammad is fully human — not divine."

"Depicting Muhammad was feared (because it might) encourage idolatry," he added. "More conservative forms of Islam hesitate to depict any human or animal form, lest it violate the commandment against idolatry."

Publication Charlie Hebdo, however, has no issue with ruffling the feathers of devout followers of any religion, says Laurent Leger, who writes for the magazine.

"We want to laugh at the extremists — every extremist," Leger told CNN. "They can be Muslim, Jewish, Catholic. Everyone can be religious, but extremist thoughts and acts we cannot accept."

Still, some think this isn't a joke so much as an attack. The ruling Islamist party of Tunisia saw the cartoon as a trap with the intent to "derail the Arab spring and turn it into a conflict with the West," according to Yahoo News.

But should artists hold back their opinions in fear of

retribution from such extremists? First-year student Adele Price doesn't seem to think so.

"I feel that artists have the same rights as religious extremists to express themselves," she said. "The expression of one should not limit the expression of the other."

Many echo this sentiment, and would agree that Charlie Hebdo made the right decision in printing the cartoon. When the well-known *South Park* episode featuring the prophet was pulled from the air, UCLA School of Law Professor Eugene Volokh felt that Stone and Parker's artistic freedom had been compromised.

"The consequence of this position is that the thugs win and people have more incentive to be thugs," Volokh told the *Los Angeles Times* in 2010.

"There are lots of people out there who would very much like to get certain kind of material removed, whether religious or political," said Volokh. "The more they see others winning, the more they will be likely to do the same. Behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated."

The world is left with a question.

When the reach of religion extends into the field of art, at what point does it stop being a tool of change and start turning into a weapon of artistic oppression?

To view the cartoon (warning: the content is explicit) Google French Muhammad cartoon 2012

## UK pension pots are wide open: dig in

### BRITAIN ATTEMPTS TO BOOST HOUSING MARKET BY MAKING PENSIONS AVAILABLE

BY JORDAN SMITH  
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A friendly reminder that the U.S. is not the only country suffering from a poor economy: the U.K. has proposed a plan allowing residents to tap into their pensions for financial assistance. Primarily, the scheme was designed to help boost the housing market, as many citizens were struggling to afford homes.

Though the concept is currently still in the planning stage, the Liberal Democratic party in the U.K. hopes it will increase the housing market by about \$200 million.

"We are going to allow ... parents and grandparents to use their pension pots to act as a guarantee so their children and grandchildren can take out a deposit and buy a home," said Nick Clegg, deputy prime minister at a Liberal Democratic party conference.

Homeownership is common in the U.K., but the recent economic struggle has pushed the cost of buying property to the point that many first-time buyers simply can no longer afford it.

Clegg revealed the plan to the public, explaining that pensions meant for retirement, which were previously untouchable, have now been made accessible for the benefit of families across the U.K.

"People who borrow from themselves tend to make wiser investment choices — they are less likely to buy a house they cannot afford," said Natalya Shelkova, assistant professor of economics at Guilford College, in an email. "What is likely to happen is that their pension fund will get hurt, but at the same time they'll have an asset that is the house. In addition, people who borrow will not pay the interest to the bank, but rather pay

it to themselves in the future."

The Liberal Democrats claim the plan will help people climb up the property ladder rather than force them to save exorbitant sums of money solely to put down on a deposit. Party aides also claim that about 5 percent of people with pensions large enough will use this plan, with an estimated 12,500 U.K. citizens benefiting from the new policy.

"We have thousands of young people who are desperate to get their feet on the first rung of the property ladder, but deposits have doubled and the number of young people asking help from family members to get a mortgage has doubled," Clegg told BBC television.

But some are not yet convinced. Critics claim that the plan will be counterproductive, as it would raise prices in the housing market where high prices are already an issue. Those opposed also point out the falling value of the average pension, leaving the ability to tap into pensions only applicable to those who are wealthy enough.

"The obvious way to allow more people to get their foot on the housing ladder is to bring prices down," British journalist Larry Elliott wrote in the *Guardian*. "Clegg's idea would have the opposite effect. It would push up prices and only help young people with well-off parents. Bad economics and regressive to boot."

Another component of the plan worth considering is that this arrangement also takes money from retirement funds, which are already reportedly low in the U.K. and can only be used once by each citizen.

"Pensions are designed to mature into a decent retirement income, not for other purposes," said Otto Thoresen, director general of the Association of British Insurers, to CNBC. "Any scheme which uses pensions as a guarantee must ensure that it does not inadvertently make the saver worse off when they retire."

With luck and much participation, the new allowance should help the British housing market find its footing in the U.K. economy once again.

## Imposter pilot takes to the skies from Germany to Italy

BY ALLISON DEBUSK  
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Have you ever wished that your life could be like a movie? An Italian man recently starred in his own sequel to the movie "Catch Me If You Can."

In April, the 32-year-old man used false identification and a pilot's uniform to sneak into the cockpit of an Air Dolomiti flight from Munich, Germany, to Turin, Italy. It has been widely reported that the man did not even have a ticket to board the aircraft.

Police arrested the man in the Turin airport on Sept. 22 after searching for him for months.

When the man snuck onto the plane, he told the pilots his name was "Andrea Sirlo and even set up a phony Facebook page complete with fake flight attendant friends," reported Melanie Eversley for USA Today.

"On his Facebook profile, the man also falsely bragged he was a commercial pilot and claimed he was promoted to captain's rank while still young," France D'Emillo reported for the *Toronto Star*.

While in the air, two trained and certified pilots flew the plane and the imposter did not touch the controls. It is unknown as to whether he used the same technique to sneak onto other flights, or if he was planning on doing so the day of his arrest.

When found by police, he was wearing clothes that resembled a pilot's uniform, but without any company logo. Eventually he led police to his stash of similar clothes and fake ID cards.

Police issued a statement announcing that the man has been cited as a security

risk and is being charged with, among other things, "usurping a title." For now though, he remains a free citizen while the investigation continues.

Christoph Meier, a spokesperson for the German airline Lufthansa, the parent airline to Air Dolomiti, has acknowledged the situation, but denies that the man could have boarded the plane without some kind of ticket.

This still does not explain how the man managed to get into the cockpit and co-pilot the airplane for the duration of the flight. No one seems to have an answer as to how this man successfully entered the plane and, even more impressively, posed as a pilot.

Until the completion of the investigation, these questions will remain unanswered.

The situation, however, raises concerns for people who fly regularly.

"That's pretty terrifying to think about. I fly pretty often, so I'm not a nervous flyer and I know emergency procedures, but that makes me pretty nervous," said first-year Liz Harrison, who flew from England to the U.S. this past June.

"That would be very disturbing actually," said junior Saima Noorani. "First of all, (you're) supposed to be a pilot to be in the cockpit. If for some reason the actual pilot can't control the plane, it's his responsibility." Noorani concluded, "If he can't control the plane, that jeopardizes everyone's life on the plane."

Although Leonardo DiCaprio made this story look glamorous on the silver screen, this real-life sequel does not bode as well with critics.