

**A French Teacher Showing A Cartoon Of The Prophet Was Beheaded, Making Headlines Worldwide**

**by M. Basheer Ahmed M.D**

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A young Chechen immigrant Abdullah Anzorov beheaded Samuel Paty, a schoolteacher in France.

While teaching a class on "Free Speech," Mr. Paty was shown a cartoon of Prophet Muhammed published in the French magazine Charlie Hebdo which was offensive to Muslims. Abdullah, an 18-year-old student in the class, stabbed him. Abdullah was shot dead by the police.

The French president posthumously conferred the highest civilian award on Samuel Paty to show that the country stands by his courage and conviction. Abdullah Anzorov had no previously known affiliations with terrorist organizations and was not identified as a potential terrorist. He was probably radicalized in France. French authorities arrested an imam known for his inciting and violent speeches connected with the crime and closed a mosque to curb hate speeches. Abdullah was inspired by certain teachings of Islam that commanded its followers to kill anyone disrespecting the Prophet.

Many Muslim countries and organizations condemn this heinous act, and Saudi Arabia led other Muslim nations to condemn the attack. In Egypt, the country's highest religious authority condemned the senseless violence that undermines Islam's priority of maintaining the sanctity of human life. Members of the Muslim community in France and elsewhere have consistently denounced such brutal acts, describing them as going against the precepts of their religion. The cartoons published by the magazine are offensive to Muslims, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) said that it always condemns practices of blasphemy and insulting Prophets of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism as it condemns any crime committed in the name of religion.

Most often, our hypersensitivities motivate the cartoonists to mock us. If we do not respond, these cartoonists will go away. After the Jan 7, 2015 incident, the French magazine printed 7.95 million copies in six languages, compared to its typical print run of 60,000 in French only. Killing over what is allegedly blasphemous is not confined to European countries, supposedly mired in Islamophobia and racism. But such killings are common in Muslim countries like Pakistan, Nigeria, Sudan, etc. Such killings have widespread support amongst Muslims, and Pakistanis have reacted similarly over the killing of Salman Taseer, where the murderer became a saint to the local Muslims.

Nothing is more heinous than taking the life of someone who teaches freedom of speech to his students. However, it is also a teacher's responsibility to be aware of hurting the pupils' emotions while explaining the tolerance for freedom of speech. Teachers should maintain a delicate balance when teaching students controversial material to foster critical thinking without any offense. They should respect parents' trust in teachers and not challenge the students' core beliefs in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic communities. Muslims must be aware that at schools, teachers try to instill the basic concepts of critical thinking and free speech, even if they use materials that we might not condone as Muslims. In the mosque, some imams try to instill hatred and violence as the only way Muslims can protect themselves against perceived attacks on Islam.

The rise of far-right ideology and the propagation of anti-immigration policies have exacerbated religious minorities' status in Europe. Anti-Muslim right-wing politics in Europe is rising, and it is unwise for Muslims to give them such excuses to legitimize their politics. Muslims are playing into the orientalist caricature "as bloodthirsty people out to kill the infidels. "Muslims were also critical of double standards as a comedian making jokes about the Holocaust has been convicted eight times in French court.

Punishing alleged blasphemers violates Quranic and Prophetic teachings. People who seek to "protect" God or His Messenger via lynching or issuing death threats are themselves an insult to Islam and the Prophet.

**Quranic verses do not prescribe punishment for Blasphemy**"If you hear God's revelations being mocked and ridiculed, don't be with them unless they delve into another subject. Otherwise, you will be as guilty as they are. God will gather the hypocrites and the disbelievers together in Hell" (4:140). "But indeed, they uttered blasphemy. If they repent, it will be best for them. But if they turn back (to their evil ways), Allah will punish them"… (9:74)

**The Prophet's advice for blasphemers**,

Suhail bin Amr, the poet, blasphemed the Prophet, but the Prophet asked his Companions to treat him kindly after being captured during the Battle of Badr. Prophet also rejected his companions' advice to execute AbdAllah bin. Ubayy is the chief hypocrite because "People will say that Muhammad kills his Companions."

Prophet Muhammad was sent as a mercy to humanity, and a blessing to the universe, and he was entrusted only with getting all people to live in peace and harmony.

Many Muslims oppose the young French man who murdered the teacher but insist that the teacher is responsible for the provocation. Some argue a double standard exists, giving the example of punishment for Holocaust deniers. Unfortunately, A young 18-year-old lost his life for nothing, and Muslims worldwide feel its repercussions.

I would have suggested that Abdullah should have written a letter to the teacher instead of killing his teacher on "how one's feelings get hurt if somebody uses bad language towards one's mother." He loves the Prophet more than his mother, and how the cartoon hurts his feelings and how he has to control his anger as per the teachings of his Prophet, who was sent to the world as a mercy to humankind. The letter would have been published in newspapers with the support of several influential Muslims and others in France and maybe the world. The teacher might have sent an apology to the young man.

This is my suggestion for using logic and rationale based on understanding what the Quran and the Prophet teach us. I am sure we all know the example when a Non-Muslim came to visit the Prophet in Masjid e Nabavi and urinated in the Sacred Mosque, Sahabas were ready to kill him, but Prophet stopped them, saying, "Let him be relieved from pressure." The man could not provoke anger and finally accepted Islam as he was impressed with the tolerance shown towards him.

*Dr. Basheer Ahmed is the former professor of psychiatry at South Western Medical School, Dallas, Texas, and chairman emeritus at MCC for Human Services North Texas He can be reached at*[*mbahmed05@yahoo.com*](mailto:mbahmed05@yahoo.com)