

Statement of Human Rights Without Frontiers concerning the attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo on 7th January 2015

HRWF (08.01.2015) - France mourns today. And all lovers of democracy mourn with her. The global outpourings of support and solidarity with the victims of the *Charlie Hebdo* killings in Paris demonstrate just how precious the freedom of speech, thought and opinion is to all of us. It is a fundamental right that we dare not compromise, even in the face of senseless violence of this sort.

Human Rights Without Frontiers expresses its deep sadness and outrage over this attack. There can be no justification, religious or otherwise, for such a barbaric act. It is significant that among the earliest voices to condemn the attack were Arab nations and Muslim leaders. In a time when anti-Muslim sentiment runs high in Europe, we must be careful to distinguish the religion of millions of peaceful law-abiding citizens from the criminal actions of violent extremists, which have no place in democratic societies.

Charlie Hebdo satirizes Muslims, Christians, Jews and people of all sorts. The art of satire has long been an important medium for the free expression of ideas throughout the world. It is often humorous, outrageous and even offensive at times. It is a method that has been employed by journalists, poets, writers and prophets of ancient times. To censor these voices, however unpleasant they may be to the hearers, is an affront to democracy. It is in times such as these that 'We Are All Charlie' or our humanity is diminished.