

French Mag pokes Muslims, publishes photos of Mohammed

Wednesday, 19 September 2012

A French satirical magazine has published caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed on Wednesday as worldwide protests continue against a US film. France announced it would close embassies and schools in around 20 countries, fearing violence.

French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo published the caricatures on Wednesday, saying the illustrations would "shock those who will want to be shocked." Nude illustrations of Mohammed were included among the various caricatures in the release. Meanwhile, Russian news agency Interfax reported that Parisian kiosks sold out all copies of the magazine almost as soon as it hit the shelves. Charlie Hebdo's website went down soon after the issue was published.

A group of Pakistani hackers claimed to have taken down the official Charlie Hebdo website on Wednesday, saying they demanded freedom from hypocrisy from the French government.

The group vowed to do "whatever is necessary to stop blasphemous content of our holy prophet" if the French government does not take action against "so-called blatant freedom of speech."

Security was beefed up and riot police deployed at the Magazine's offices in anticipation of retaliatory protests. Paris also announced that it would be closing its embassies and schools in around 20 countries, fearing subsequent violence, according to AFP.

French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius announced special security measures "in all the countries where this could pose a problem."

French schools in Tunisia for example will close from Wednesday until Monday morning due to security concerns following the cartoon furor, an embassy source told AFP. The Embassy said it had not received any direct threats and the move is a "preventative measure."

French politicians and religious leaders have called for calm at the decision to publish the images amidst violent worldwide Muslim protests against the American-made film "Innocence of Muslims" that have been raging since last week. Approximately 40 people have been killed in the wake of the violence across the globe. Any representation of Mohammed is considered insulting and blasphemous under Islamic law.