

Press Release

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Council of Europe Secretary General on controversy regarding the caricatures of Prophet Mohammad

Strasbourg, 06.02.2006 - "The violence, destruction and hate which marred some of the protests against the publication of caricatures of Prophet Mohammad over the weekend are totally unacceptable but I am confident that they are not supported by the vast majority of people of Islamic faith, regardless of how offended they feel by these caricatures", said Terry Davis in commenting on the controversy regarding the publication of caricatures of Prophet Mohammad in several European newspapers.

"Everyone needs to act, on the basis of dialogue and mutual respect and prevent any further escalation. Political and religious leaders in the Islamic world share the responsibility to calm the situation down.

As for the caricatures themselves, I must stress that all freedoms, including the freedom of speech, come with responsibility.

The European Convention on Human Rights guarantees the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas. The European Court of Human Rights has also repeatedly ruled in favour of this freedom even in cases when the views expressed were offensive.

But having the right to cause offence does not make it right to do so. It is the responsibility of editors and journalists to use good judgment in deciding what should or should not be published. The publication of caricatures may not have transgressed any legal boundaries, but it certainly violated ethical norms based on mutual respect and acceptance of other people's religious beliefs" concluded the Secretary General.

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