

Controversies over the provocative Portraits of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in Western media and Its Impacts:

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Abstract: *The start of the 21st century has been marked by controversies and provocations by West and western Media over depictions of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him), not only for recent caricatures or cartoons, but also regarding the display of historical artwork. Many western organisations, papers, Magazines, social networks and even websites organised Seminars and events like Cartoon, "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day!" to hurt and provoke Muslim world. Muslims believe that visual depictions of all the Prophets should be prohibited and are particularly averse to visual representations of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). The key concern is that the use of images can encourage idolatry. The main concern of the topic is that Islam does not allow the depictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) and it is against the faith and emotions of Muslims. It will also focus on the analysis of the distorted images, fabricated views, overgeneralization which typically characterize the Western representation of Prophet (PBUH) of Islam with reference to some particular incidents chiefly the Charlie Hebdo controversy, Danish newspaper, Controversial movie Innocence of Muslim, animated films and Social networks. This analysis comprises both Western and Muslim thinkers and it includes also biased and moderate or rather fair views of Western media.*

I. Introduction

The Western representation of Muslims and Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon Him) is not a recent fabrication but it had been operational and deep-rooted in the West conceptualization ever since the first contacts with Islam and Muslims. Down to the middle Ages, especially during the Crusade Wars and along the Muslims expansion in Europe until the very days of the Third Millennium, the West promotes almost the same stereotypes for the Prophet (PBUH) of Islam and Muslims. Throughout western history, Islam and the Prophet (PBUH) of Islam has been negatively portrayed in books and church sermons, by scholars, in paintings, in literature, poetry, in folklore and in political and religious discourse. The new spokesmen and new kinds of media, print, radio, TV, video cassettes, and the Internet are also full of bias and have reinvigorated Islamic discourse and developed a series of misconceptions and a huge audience throughout the world against Islam. Western Media is full of insults to Islam and Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon Him). It is fully affected by its historical baggage.

Depictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) were rare, never numerous in any community or era throughout Islamic history, and appeared almost exclusively in the private medium of Persian and other miniature book illustration. The key medium of public religious art in Islam was and is calligraphy. In Ottoman Turkey the *Hilya*¹ developed as a decorated visual arrangement of texts about Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) that was displayed as a portrait might be.

The Visual images, cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in the West and western Media have always been infrequent, but in 21th century it crossed all limits. In the middle Ages they were mostly hostile, and most often appear in illustrations of Dante's poetry. In the Renaissance and Early Modern period, Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was sometimes depicted, typically in a more neutral or heroic light. These depictions began to encounter protests from Muslims, and in the age of the internet, a handful of caricature depictions printed in the European press have caused global protests and controversy, and been associated with violence.

¹ The term *Hilya* denotes a religious genre of Ottoman Turkish literature, dealing with the physical description of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). *Hilya* literally means "ornament".

There is disagreement about visual depictions of Prophet (PBUH). Only oral and written descriptions are readily accepted by all traditions of Islam, there are many Hadith which have explicitly prohibited Muslims from creating visual depictions of figures only written physical descriptions whose authenticity is often accepted.

Concept of Portraits in World Major Religions.

Some major religions have experienced times during their history when images of their religious figures were forbidden. In Judaism, one of the Ten Commandments forbids "graven images". In Byzantine Christianity during the periods of Iconoclasm in the 8th century, and again during the 9th century, visual representations of sacred figures were forbidden. Even up to present day, different groups of Protestant Christians have had disputes about the appropriateness of having religious icons of Christ or the saints. The concern generally boils down to the concept of whether or not the image is becoming more important than what is being represented.²

Hindu religious books decline the depiction or images of God and other Religious Figures, "of him there is no likeness (pratima), whose glory is infinite³."

In Islam, Hadith explicitly ban the drawing of images of any living creature. Hence, most Muslims avoid visual depictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) or any other prophet such as Prophet Abraham, Prophet Moses or Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon them).⁴

Portraits of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in Western History:

Western representations of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was rare until the explosion of images following the invention of the printing press; He is shown in a few medieval images, normally in an unflattering manner, often influenced by his brief mention in Dante's Divine Comedy. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) sometimes figures in Western depictions of groups of influential people in world history. Such depictions tend to be favourable or neutral in intent; one example can be found at the United States Supreme Court building in Washington, D.C. Created in 1935, the frieze includes major historical lawgivers, and places Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) alongside Hammurabi, Moses, Confucius, and others.

In 1955, a statue of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was removed from a courthouse in New York City after the ambassadors of Indonesia, Pakistan, and Egypt requested its removal. The extremely rare representations of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in monumental sculpture are especially likely to be offensive to Muslims, as the statue is the classic form for idols, and a fear of any hint of idolatry is the basis of Islamic prohibitions. Islamic art has almost always avoided sculptures of any subject.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) is portrayed in a 15th-century fresco Last Judgement by Giovanni da Modena and drawing, Dante's The Divine Comedy⁵, in the Church of San Petronio, Bologna, Italy and artwork by Salvador Dalí, Auguste Rodin, William Blake, and Gustave Doré. There are also numerous book illustrations showing Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him).

Cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in Western Media and Muslim Responses:

Ridiculing and insulting the holiest figure in Islam is intolerable and unacceptable to Muslims. The abominable act of hurtful Cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) by Western Media from time to time is wilful disrespect to Islam and Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) and has enraged Muslims across the world. Portrayal of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) is the vilest of sins and is a serious religious offence. Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) and Islam has been negatively portrayed and disrespected for the petty benefit since from decades. Now in present times west and western Media made it their profession to provoke the Muslims and defame the religion of Truth and its Great Prophet (Peace be upon Him).

Der Spiegel the German news magazine printed a pictures of "moral Apostles" Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), Prophet Jesus (peace be upon Him), Confucius, and Immanuel Kant. In the subsequent weeks, the magazine received protests, petitions and threats against publishing the picture of Prophet

² Richard Halicks (2006-02-12). "Images of Muhammad: Three ways to see a cartoon". Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

³ Shukla yajur Veda 32.3

⁴ T. W. Arnold (June 1919). "An Indian Picture of Muhammad and His Companions". The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs, Vol. 34, No. 195. pp. 249–252. Retrieved 2007-05-01.

⁵ Jonathan E. Brockopp (30 April 2010). The Cambridge companion to Muhammad. Cambridge University Press. p. 130.

Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). The Turkish TV-station Show TV broadcast the telephone number of an editor who then received daily calls.⁶

In 2002, Italian police reported that they had disrupted a group of people to destroy a church in Bologna, which contains a 15th-century fresco depicting an image of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)⁷.

In 2005, an episode of 30 Days with Morgan Spurlock, titled "Muslims and America," depicted Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) twice, in a cartoon explaining the origins of the Islamic faith. There was no outcry over this.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) appeared in the 2001 South Park episode "Super Best Friends". The image was later removed from the 2006 episode "Cartoon Wars" and the 2010 episodes "200" and "201" due to controversies regarding Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) cartoons in European newspaper.

In 2005, Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published a set of editorial cartoons, many of which depicted Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). In late 2005 and early 2006, Danish Muslim organizations ignited a controversy through public protests and by spreading knowledge of the publication of the cartoons. According to John Woods, Islamic history professor at the University of Chicago, it was not simply the depiction of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) that was offensive, but the implication that Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was somehow a supporter of terrorism. In Sweden, an online caricature competition was announced in support of Jyllands-Posten, but Foreign Affairs Minister Laila Freivaldsn and the Swedish Security Service pressured the internet service provider to shut the page down. In 2006, when her involvement was revealed to the public, she had to resign.

On 12 February 2008 the Danish police arrested three men alleged to be involved in a plot to assassinate Kurt Westergaard, one of the cartoonists.⁸

In 2006, the controversial American animated television comedy program South Park, which had previously depicted Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) as a superhero character in the July 4, 2001 episode "Super Best Friends"⁹ has depicted Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in the opening sequence since that episode, attempted to satirize the Danish newspaper incident. In the episode, "Cartoon Wars Part II", they intended to show Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) handing a salmon helmet to Peter Griffin, a character from the Fox animated series Family Guy. However, Comedy Central, who airs South Park, rejected the scene, citing concerns of violent protests in the Islamic world. The creators of South Park reacted by instead satirizing Comedy Central's double standard for broadcast acceptability by including a segment of the episode "Cartoon Wars Part II" in which American president George W. Bush and Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon Him) defecate on the flag of the United States. The Lars Vilks Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) drawings controversy began in July 2007 with a series of drawings by Swedish artist Lars Vilks which depicted Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) as around about dog. Several art galleries in Sweden declined to show the drawings, citing security concerns and fear of violence. The controversy gained international attention after the Orebro-based regional newspaper Nerikes Allehanda published one of the drawings on August 18 to illustrate an editorial on self-censorship and freedom of religion.

While several other leading Swedish newspapers had published the drawings already, this particular publication led to protests from Muslims in Sweden as well as official condemnations from several foreign governments including Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Egypt¹⁰ and Jordan¹¹, as well as by the inter-governmental Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC)¹². The controversy occurred about one and a half years after the Jyllands-Posten Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) cartoons controversy in Denmark in early 2006.

List of Charlie Hebdo Provocative Publications:

⁶ Spiegel Special 1, 1998, page 76. Spiegel, Terror am Telefon, February 7, 2000.

⁷ Italy frees Fresco Suspects. New York Times. 2002-08-22.

⁸ Danish cartoons 'plotters' held BBC, 12 February 2008

⁹ South Park. Season 5 "Super Best Friends" Episode 68. 2001-07-04.

¹⁰ The Guardian "Egypt wades into Swedish cartoons row" 2007-09-09.

¹¹ Agence France-Presse "Jordan condemns new Swedish Mohammed cartoon" 2007-09-03.

¹² Organisation of the Islamic Conference. "The Secretary General strongly condemned the publishing of blasphemous caricatures of Prophet Muhammad by Swedish artist" (Press release). 2007-08-30

The newspaper Charlie Hebdo published a series of satirical cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). On 3 November 2011 cover of Charlie Hebdo, renamed Charia Hebdo (Sharia Hebdo). The word balloon reads "100 lashes if you don't die of laughter!"

Cover of 14 January 2015 edition, with a cartoon in the same style as the 3 November 2011 cover, with the phrase Je Suis Charlie and the title reading "All is forgiven."¹³

On November 2, 2010, the office of the French satirical weekly newspaper Charlie Hebdo at Paris was attacked with a firebomb and its website hacked, after it had announced to publish a special edition with Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) as its "chief editor", and the title page with a cartoon of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) had been pre-issued on social media.

In September 2012, the newspaper published a series of satirical cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), some of which feature nude caricatures of Him. In January 2013, Charlie Hebdo announced that they would make a comic book on the life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)¹⁴. In March 2013, Al-Qaeda's branch in Yemen, commonly known as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, released a hit list in an edition of their English-language magazine Inspire. The list included Stéphane Charbonnier, Lars Vilks, three Jyllands-Posten employees involved in the Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him), cartoon controversy, Molly Norris from the "Everybody Draw Mohammed Day" and others whom Al-Qaeda accused of insulting Islam.¹⁵

And on January 7, 2015, the office was attacked again with 12 shot dead including Stephane Charbonnier.

Episode of Charlie Hebdo Attack

The world and Western Media has been silent about the killing of millions of people in the Muslim world. On one hand, around Twelve million people have been massacred in the Islamic world in the last 10 years, and on the other hand, twelve people were killed in Paris. We saw world and Western Media who did not speak up about the killing of millions should up at a rally of two million people with scores of world leaders in the French capital to protest against the recent attacks in Paris against the murder of only 12 people. Where they were when twelve million Muslims have been massacred?

Charlie Hebdo isn't only about Islam. It is believed that the imaginary and insulting caricature of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) is an insult and teasing satire on the faith of two billion Muslims and all those people who are peace lovers. That even Francis Pope admitted, while on a visit to Catholic Philippines.

Many Muslims throughout the world condemned Hebdo surgical killings. The death of a human is the death of humanity, Allah the Almighty Says, "if any one slew a person - unless it be for murder or for spreading mischief in the land - it would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people"¹⁶. There is no difference in brutal killings, whether in Damascus, Baghdad, Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza or in any other Country. If the People and world press does not react to all killings and massacres in the same manner regardless of religion or location, then all humanity will be doomed.

Charlie Hebdo attackers:

Cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) on cover pages of Charlie Hebdo magazine was outrageous and provocative. It was intended to hurt the sentiments of the Muslims across the world. Magazine has committed similar evil act in many times and by repeating the sinful act of blasphemy has hurt the religious sentiments of Muslims.

According to France24 news Channel, Charlie Hebdo attackers are reportedly from Algeria descent and 3rd from Senegal¹⁷. France invaded Algeria in 1930s and began 130 year rule of murder, racism, loot and misrule costing over one million Algerian lives. And even in 1990, it lost 100000 lives with the direct support from French and west to preserve grip on power because it is petroleum rich and self elected puppets are supported to reign inside without being seen. Nigeria another major oil producer received similar support for its war against its own people in 1960s causing one million deaths that later resulted in the emergence of Boko Haram¹⁸. Most of the Muslim world except Iran, Turkey and Arab peninsula fell to the generations of misrule in the 19th and

¹³ The Telegraph. "How I created the Charlie Hebdo magazine cover: cartoonist Luz's statement in full". 13 Jan 2015.

¹⁴ The Independent. "It's Charlie Hebdo's right to draw Muhammad, but they missed the opportunity to do something profound" 12 October 2014.

¹⁵ The Independent "ANALYSIS: Was Charlie Hebdo massacre Al-Qaeda's bid to re-establish itself as global terror force after being 'eclipsed by ISIS', asks Michael Burleigh". 9 January 2015.

¹⁶ Al- Quran Sûrah 5 verse 32.

¹⁷ Ham, Anthony. West Africa. Lovely Planet.2009.p.670

¹⁸ Al Jazeera "Civilians among dead in Nigeria offensive" 31 May 2013.

20th century. And people were looted, killed, exploited and then, when they were let free, again they were colonised indirectly & invisibly. And colonialism is dressed in new clothes. International Monetary fund and World Bank has colonial policies that brought the bankruptcy of Muslim Countries.

Reaction of Attack in Paris:

France-based National Observatory against Islamophobia Reported "At least 116 Islamophobic attacks on Muslims in France have been reported within two weeks of the Charlie Hebdo killings in Paris". Violence cannot be removed with violence and blood cannot be cleaned with blood, the world's security cannot be maintained by oppressing beliefs in the name of war on Terror and by other provoking segments.

According to the observatory's head Abdullah Zekri, attacks against Muslims in the country increased rapidly following the attack on the satirical magazine in Paris. In a statement, Zekri said that out of the 116 attacks, 28 were onslaughts on Muslim prayer halls, while French security officials recorded 88 other threats and acts of intimidation against Muslims¹⁹. Islamophobic attacks increased by 110 percent compared to the same period last year, Zekri added. He called for more effective methods to stop the attacks. "We expected effective measures for the protection of Muslims instead of speeches by the authorities," he said.

Reaction of Muslim World Media on Charlie Hebdo attack:

The media in the Muslim world have also published a wide variety of reactions to the deadly attack on the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris.

In Iraq, the mainstream media paid very limited attention to the attack. Only three major Iraqi news outlets published news reports about the events. One newspaper also noted reactions from the Al-Azhar University in Cairo saying that Islam was against violence.

Paris-based Iraqi journalist Jawad Bishara told Radio Free Iraq's Samira Ali Mendi on January 08 2015 that the "Iraqi media have been largely indifferent because many more Iraqis are killed on a daily basis, and the outside world barely responds."

The Russian-language IslamNews.ru portal, which publishes news relating to Russian Muslims and the Muslim world, featured an opinion piece it solicited from Leonid Ivashov, the Kyrgyzstan-born vice president of the Academy on Geopolitical Affairs. Ivashov blamed the United States for the attack, saying that the Charlie Hebdo shootings were "most likely planned in the United States to destroy Islamic culture, Islamic tradition, and to pit Europeans against Islam." Ivashov said that the world is witnessing a "clash of civilizations" and that the Muhammad cartoons published by Charlie Hebdo were an excuse to incite fanatics.

The Daily Resalat said that the attack was a result of support for anti-Islamic media and other groups.

Reactions to the shooting in the Arab world have been mixed, with some outlets condemning the attack and others suggesting that the French satirical magazine had brought the attack on itself. Other outlets blamed the West and "colonial policies" for the phenomenon of terrorism. Another common theme was whether the Islamic State group was to blame for the attack.

The Turkish press has widely reported about the Paris massacre. In commentaries, too, the overall voice was one of condemnation, despair, and sorrow. But the tone and intensity varied to some extent.

While many Afghan media were on their weekend holiday, the Afghan Taliban took the opportunity to publish an article on its website on January 8 2015 describing the killings as "an alarm bell for those who have in the past insulted Islam and the Prophet." The Taliban did not go so far as to openly support the attack. The article, written by one Ahmad Zarif, who is not an official spokesman for the Afghan Taliban, opined that, "Those who mocked the Prophet have strengthened their security."

The front pages of major Pakistani newspapers initially focused on straight news coverage, before commentaries and editorials began emerging.

Although the more independent and reformist-leaning newspapers such as Sharq and Etemad also carried the story on their front page, the space dedicated to the news was much less than that of the daily Iran or of Hamshahri, the official newspaper of Tehran's municipality.

Sharq's headline on the event, which was run at the bottom of its front page, read: "Shooting At The Heart Of Europe". Sharq slammed the French satirical magazine for publishing Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) cartoons. "It is not acceptable that the president of France defends the freedom of speech in his speech after the attacks," wrote Sharq. "This popular journal had published an insulting illustration of the Prophet of Islam."

Reformist Daily Etemad also headlined with: Black Wednesday In Paris."Boosting the activities of extremist and anti-Islam groups and media (of which Charlie Hebdo was one) has led to the current security disaster in Europe," the outlet argued in an editorial. Resalat went on to say that "France has experienced the bitter taste of supporting terrorism."

¹⁹ France has one of the largest percentages of Muslims living in Western Europe, around eight million in total.

The Newspaper Kayhan, which operates under the supervision of the office of the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was relatively mute in its coverage.

Egypt's Shorouk News cast the blame for the attack on Charlie Hebdo itself. The paper's headline read that the French satirical magazine had a History of Insulting the Prophet, Ending in Fire.

Egyptian outlet Al Masry Al Youm reported comments by popular TV presenter Tamer Amin, who said that while some media reports have suggested that the IS group was behind the Paris shooting, "in my opinion, it was not IS that carried out this operation, but IS found an opportunity to say that it did in order to get a certain prestige." Amin said IS wanted to take advantage of the attack on Charlie Hebdo because the magazine had published caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him).

Egypt's Masr Alarabiya outlet pointed the finger of blame at IS, headlining with: IS Fulfils Its Threat and Attacks France.

Many other outlets criticized Charlie Hebdo for publishing cartoons mocking the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) and questioned whether such cartoons constituted free speech.

Depictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in Cinema

Muslims have always explicitly prohibited the depiction of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). Depicting the Prophets is wrong and is haraam, and it is not permissible even if some Muslims do that in Films.

Very few films have been made about Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). The 1976 film *The Message*, also known as *Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), Messenger of God*, focused on other persons and never directly showed Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) or most members of His family.

The Message.

Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), Messenger of God, released in the US as *The Message*, was the first major film about Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). The film was released on January 1, 1976 and on July 29 of the same year it had its premiere in "Plaza", a London cinema. There are two versions of the movie, an English one and an Arab one. The Arab version had also its premiere in a London cinema, Curzon, on August 19, 1976. Both versions were screened till September 29. So the English version was shown for nine weeks, and the Arab version for six weeks.

When director Mustafa Akkad (1935-2005) was shooting the film, he made use of an American cast and an Egyptian cast. In the English version Anthony Quinn played Hamza (RA), Michael Ansara Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him) principal opponent Abu Sufyan, and Irene Papas Abu Sufyan's wife Hind. In the Arab version these roles were played by Egyptian actors. However, in a number of overall shots, in which a large group is acting, such as the Battle of Badr, it can be heard that the scene is shot only once, as the actors shout "Allahu Akbar", whereas in other similar scenes the director opted for "God is great".

Although the movie is about Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), the director decided to shoot the film so as to not depict Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). Akkad frequently changed the position of the camera at moments when Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) would be brought into vision. When Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was essential to a scene, the camera would show events from his point of view.²⁰

The Message became very popular, not the least in the circles of Muslims, for example in Africa, and Asia. Even so, two well-known fatwas from Al-Azhar University and Shiite Council of Lebanon were issued about *The Message*.

It is certainly probable that this is not the result of the creativity of the filmmakers but of the rules announced by the Islamic scholars of the Azhar and the Shia Council of Lebanon, who prohibited any representation of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him) wives as well as of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) himself.²¹

Muhammad (Peace be upon Him): The Last Prophet

Muhammad (Peace be upon Him): The Last Prophet is an animated film produced by Badr International according to the same principles as "*The Message*". Its director is Richard Rich. The movie was released in 2004 and it was screened in a limited number of movie-theatres in the United States and the United Kingdom. The film focuses on the early period of Islam.

Innocence of Muslims

The anti-Muslim video clip of fourteen minute called *The Real Life of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) or Innocence of Muslims* is a story which was created by Nakoula Basseley Nakoula. It was uploaded onto YouTube in July 2012 and later dubbed in Arabic and uploaded in September 2012. It was perceived as denigrating of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), and caused demonstrations and violent protests

²⁰ Gruber (2010), p.27

²¹ Gruber (2010), p.43

against the video to break out on September 11 in Egypt and other Arab and Muslim nations, as well as some western countries.²²

Depictions of other Prophets (PBUT) and Sahaabah(RA) in Cinemas.

It is not permissible to depict the Prophets and Messengers of Allah (Blessings and peace of Allah be upon them) or to depict the Sahaabah (May Allah be pleased with them), because doing that involves detracting from their status and showing disrespect to them, and it is a transgression against their dignity and undermines them, and because it involves fabrications and lies against the best of the creation of Allah the Almighty.

The Messiah

A film on Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon Him) as for the film referred to, its producer claimed that he made this movie from an Islamic point of view, as his idea was based on denying the story of the crucifixion, in accordance with what is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an²³"That they rejected Faith; That they uttered against Mary A grave false charge; That they said (in boast): 'We killed Christ Jesus The son of Mary, The Messenger of Allah.'But they killed him not, Nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjunction to follow, for of a surety they killed him not. Nay, Allah raised him up Unto Himself; and Allah Is Exalted in Power, Wise. And there is none of the people of the book (Jews and Christians) But must believe in him (Jesus) before his death; And on the Day of Judgment He (Jesus) will be a witness against them."He also affirmed that the Messiah foretold the coming of our Prophet Muhammad (Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon Him).

And he said that it was primarily aimed at the West, to refute the repeated Western insults of our Prophet (Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon Him) in particular and of Islam in general; to highlight the status of the Messiah (Peace be upon Him) among the Muslims; to show that Islam teaches belief in all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah without exception, and that it does not discriminate between them.

Although we believe that the Messiah (Peace be upon Him) was not crucified and was not killed, and the Holy Qur'an clearly states that, we do not agree that this should be presented in theatrical or cinematic form in which a person acts the part of the Messiah (Peace be upon Him), or even that a picture should be drawn of him. All of that is forbidden and is haraam, because it detracts from the status of the Prophets of Allah (Peace be upon Them) and lowers their status in people's eyes, because it usually involves telling some kind of lies about them and shows them in a manner other than how they really were, whether that is to a lesser or greater extent. So it is not permissible for anyone to tell lies about the Prophets of Allah (Peace be upon them) or to detract from their status, or to depict them, no matter how noble his intention or aim is. The intention may be noble but the means must also be Islamically acceptable.

In that case, a mistake made by some Muslims should not be taken as proof against sharee'ah; nor is it a mistake for which all Muslims should be blamed. Allah, may He be exalted, says, "Say: Shall I seek a lord other than Allah, while He is the Lord of all things? No person earns any (sin) except against himself (only), and no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another. Then unto your Lord is your return, so He will tell you that wherein you have been differing." ²⁴

Other Film Projects.

In October 2008, Producer Oscar Zoghbi, who worked on the original The Message, stated that he would shooting a remake called The Messenger of Peace, to be shot around the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.²⁵[9]

In October 2012, Iranian director Majid Majidi began shooting a film titled Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) with plans to show Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) on screen, though not his face, as per Shia tradition.

Film producer Barrie M. Osborne has been hired as an adviser on a possible series of epics about Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). The films, which are financed by a Qatari media company and will be supervised by the Egyptian cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, are unlikely to depict Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) at all on screen as per Sunni tradition which sees all renderings of the prophet as blasphemous.²⁶
Calligraphy: Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in Islamic art.

²² Brendan. The Arab Conquests of the Middle East. Twenty-First Century Books. p. 34.

²³ Al-Qur'an Sûrah 4 verses 156-159

²⁴ Al-Quran Sûrah An'aam 6 Verse 164]

²⁵ Christiane Gruber: Images of the Prophet In and Out of Modernity: The Curious Case of a 2008 Mural in Tehran, in Christiane Gruber; Sune Haugbolle (17 July 2013).

Visual Culture in the Modern Middle East: Rhetoric of the Image. Indiana University Press. p. 3–31.

²⁶ Omid Safi (2 November 2010). Memories of Muhammad(Peace be upon Him): Why the Prophet Matters. Harper Collins. p. 171.

Arnold, Thomas W. (First published 1928, reprint 2002–11). Painting in Islam, a Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture. Gorgias Press LLC. pp. 91–9.

Calligraphy is a continuous tradition in Islamic lands (such as in literature, science, and history) as early as the 8th century, such art flourished during the Abbasid Caliphate (c. 749 - 1258, across Spain, North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Mesopotamia, and Persia).²⁷

The elaborated form of the calligraphic tradition was founded in the 17th century by the Ottoman calligrapher Hafiz Osman²⁸. The format customarily starts with a Bismillah, shown on top, and is separated in the middle by Holy Quran 21:107: "And We have not sent you (Muhammad Peace be upon Him) but as a mercy to the worlds"²⁹. Four compartments set around the central one often contain the names of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali, each followed by "radhi Allahu anhu" ("May Allah be pleased with them"). Depictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) are also found in Persian manuscripts in the following Timurid and Safavid dynasties, and Turkish Ottoman art in the 14th to 17th centuries, and beyond. Perhaps the most elaborate cycle of illustrations of Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him) life is the copy, completed in 1595, of the 14th-century biography *Siyer-i Nebi* commissioned by the Ottoman sultan Murat III for his son, the future Mehmed III, containing over 800 illustrations³⁰.

Throughout Islamic history, depictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in Islamic art were rare. Even so, there exists a "notable corpus of images of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) produced, mostly in the form of manuscript illustrations, in various regions of the Islamic world from the thirteenth century through modern times"³¹. Depictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) date back to the start of the tradition of Persian miniatures as illustrations in books. The illustrated book from the Persianate world³² contains the two earliest known Islamic depictions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)³³.

"Islam has never welcomed painting as a handmaid of religion as both Buddhism and Christianity have done. Mosques have never been decorated with religious pictures, nor has a pictorial art been employed for the instruction of the heathen or for the edification of the faithful"³⁴.

Portraiture of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in Islamic Stories.

A number of hadith and other writings of the early Islamic period include stories in which portraits of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) appear. Abu Hanifa Dinawari, Ibn al-Faqih, Ibn Wahshiyya and Abu Nu'aym tell versions of a story in which the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius is visited by two Meccans. He shows them a cabinet, handed down to him from Alexander and originally created by Allah for Adam, each of whose drawers contains a portrait of a Prophet (PBUT). They are astonished to see a portrait of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) in the final drawer. Sadid al-Din al-Kazaruni tells a similar story in which the Meccans are visiting the king of China. Kisa'i tells that God did indeed give portraits of the prophets to Adam.³⁵

Ibn Wahshiyya and Abu Nu'ayn tell a second story in which a Meccan merchant visiting Syria is invited to a Christian monastery where a number of sculptures and paintings depict Prophets and saints. There he sees the images of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) and Abu Bakr (RA), as yet unidentified by the Christians.³⁶ In an 11th-century story, it is said so have sat for a portrait by an artist retained by Sassanid king Kavadh II. The king liked the portrait so much that he placed it on his pillow.

Later, Al-Maqrizi tells a story in which Muqawqis, ruler of Egypt, meets with Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him) envoy. He asks the envoy to describe Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) and

²⁷ J. Bloom & S. Blair (2009). *Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art*. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc. pp. 192 and 207.

²⁸ F. E. Peters (10 November 2010). *Jesus and Muhammad (Peace be upon Him): Parallel Tracks, Parallel Lives*. Oxford University Press. pp. 160–161.

²⁹ Jonathan E. Brockopp (30 April 2010). *The Cambridge companion to Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)*. Cambridge University Press. p. 130.

³⁰ Tanındı, Zeren (1984). *Siyer-i nebî: İslam tasvir sanatında Hz. Muhammed'in hayatı*. Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları.

³¹ Gruber (2005), p. 240-241

³² (Warka and Gulshah, Topkapi Palace Library 841, attributed to Konya 1200–1250)

³³ Grabar, p. 19; Gruber (2005), p. 235.

³⁴ Arnold, Thomas W. (First published 1928, reprint 2002–11). *Painting in Islam, a Study of the Place of Pictorial Art in Muslim Culture*. Gorgias Press LLC. pp. 91–9.

³⁵ Grabar, Oleg (2003). "The Story of Portraits of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)". *Studia Islamica* (96): 19–38.

³⁶ Asani, Ali (1995). *Celebrating Muhammad (Peace be upon Him): Images of the Prophet in Popular Muslim Piety*. University of South Carolina Press. pp. 64–65.

checks the description against a portrait of an unknown prophet which he has on a piece of cloth. The description matches the portrait.³⁷

In a 17th-century Chinese story, the king of China asks to see Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him), but Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) instead sends his portrait. The king is so enamoured of the portrait that he is converted to Islam, at which point the portrait, having done its job, disappears.³⁸

The Personality of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) as depicted by his Companions (RA)

Al-Quran "(O Beloved!) We have been watching your radiant face turning frequently towards heaven. So We will indeed make you turn towards that Qibla (direction of Prayer) with which you feel pleased....."³⁹

Starting with the verse of Quran where Allah told us about the importance he had for Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him) face that Allah saw it turning toward heavens so he changed the Qibla because of that face.

Face:

Hadhrat Aisha (May Allah be well pleased with her) narrates, "The Holy Prophet Muhammad's (Peace be upon Him) face was the most beautiful among all men and His Complexion was the most luminous." Hadhrat Abdullah bin Umar (May Allah be well pleased with him) says, "I have never seen anybody stronger and braver; more generous and more benevolent, more pure and more radiant than the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)"⁴⁰

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Abbas (May Allah be well pleased with them) says, "The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) had no shadow. His radiance would eclipse even the bright sun. In front of a lighted lamp, His radiance would be more powerful."⁴¹

The luminosity of his face would further increase on occasions of happiness and joy. As Hadhrat Ka'ab bin Malik (May Allah be well pleased with him) says, "Whenever the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was happy, His face would become even more luminous."⁴²

"His face shone like the moon." - (Hind bin Abi Hala)

"His face was round like the moon." - (Bara bin Azib)

"His face was not quite round but inclined to roundness." - (Hazrat Ali (R.A))

"Broad forehead, slanting thick brows parted in the middle. A vein protruded between the two parts which became more prominent in anger." (Hind bin Abi Hala)

Colour:

"Neither white like lime, nor tanned, but brown with whiteness predominant." - (Hazrath Anas(R.A))

"White, reddish." - (Hazrath Ali (R.A))

"White but wholesome." - (Abu Tufail)

"White and bright." - (Hind bin Abi Hala)

Eyes:

"Black, with long eyelashes." (Hazrath Ali)

"Black and drooping. Habit of looking from the corner of the eyes in shyness." - (Hind bin Abi Hala)

"Red lines in the white parts, wide sockets, and natural grey corners." - (Jabir bin Samra)

Nose:

"Somewhat high with unique brightness whereby it looked large at first sight." - (Hind bin Abi Hala)

Cheeks:

"Even and soft, a bit of flesh drooping at the lower end." - (Hind bin Abi Hala)

Mouth:

"Moderately wide." - (Hind bin Abi Hala)

Teeth:

"Thin and bright, symmetrical, openings in front teeth." - (Hazrath Ibn Abbas)

"When talking a light seemed to sparkle from the teeth." - (Hazrath Anas)

Beard:

"Full and thick." - (Hind bin Abi Hala)

Neck:

³⁷ Grabar, Oleg (2003). "The Story of Portraits of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)". *Studia Islamica* (96): 19–38.

³⁸ Leslie, Donald (1986). *Islam in Traditional China*. Canberra College of Advanced Education. p. 73.

³⁹ Al-Quran Sûrah 2 Verse 144

⁴⁰ (Sunan Darmi, Vol 1, Pg No: 30)

⁴¹ (Subul ul Huda war rashad, Vol 2, Pg No: 39/40)

⁴² (Sahih Bukhari, Vol 1)

“Thin and long, beautifully chiselled like a statue Colour of the neck white like silver and handsome.” – (Hind bin Abi Hala)

Head:

“Large but symmetrical.”- (Hind bin Abi Hala)

Hair:

“Neither quite straight, nor sheep like.” – (Qatada)

“Slightly curly.” – (Hazrath Anas)

“Thick, sometimes touching ear lobes and sometimes reaching upto shoulders.”- (Bara bin Azib)

“Parted in the middle.” - (Hind bin Abi Hala)

“The body did not have much hair. A line of hair running from the chest to the navel.” – (Hazrath Ali and Hind bin Abi Hala)

“There were some hair on shoulders, arms and upper chest.” (Hind bin Abi Hala)

General Structure:

“Body well built, bones joining limbs large and strong.”- (Hind bin Abi Hala)

“Body was not fat.” (Hazrath Ali)

“Neither tall nor short, small but middle-sized.” – (Hazrath Anas)

“Inclined to be tall. Among the people he appeared to rise higher than others.” – (Bara bin Azib)

“The abdomen was not protruding.” – (Umme-e-Mabad)

“Despite has poor conditions and lack of proper food his body was stronger and more virile than those of better nourished persons.” – (Al-Mawahib)

“I have not seen a braver and stronger man than the Prophet.” – (Ibn Umar)

Shoulder and Chest:

“Chest broad and even with the abdomen.” – (Hind bin Abi Hala)

“Chest broad.” – (Bara bin Azib)

“Width between shoulders more than usual.” – (Hind bin Abi Hala and Bara bin Azib)

“Portion between shoulders fleshy.” – (Hazrath Ali)

Arms and Hands:

“Wrists large, palms wide and fingers symmetrically large.” (Hind bin Abi Hala)

“I have not touched any thick or thin silk or anything else which was softer and fleshier than Prophet’s palms.” – (Hazrath Anas)

Calfs and Feet:

“Calfs were not fleshy but symmetrical.” – (Jabir bin Samra)

“Feet were fleshy, lower parts of feet little hollow and feet so smooth that they could not retain water.” – (Jabir bin Samra)

“Very little flesh on heels.” – (Jabir bin Samra)

One more description sourced to Ali ibn Abi Talib is as follows:

The Apostle of Allah, May Allah bless him, is neither too short nor too tall. His hair are neither curly nor straight, but a mixture of the two. He is a man of black hair and large skull. His complexion has a tinge of redness. His shoulder bones are broad and his palms and feet are fleshy. He has long al-masrubah which means hair growing from neck to navel. He is of long eye-lashes, close eyebrows, smooth and shining fore-head and long space between two shoulders. When he walks he walks inclining as if coming down from a height....I never saw a man like him before him or after him.⁴³

In one of the earliest sources, Ibn Sa'd's Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir, there are numerous verbal descriptions of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him).

The most graphic description of the Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) was given by an old woman at whose house the Prophet stopped on his way from the cave of Thaur to Medina and her goats gave so much milk that the Prophet and his companions were fully satisfied and yet there was much left over.

When the old woman’s husband returned home and expressed his surprise, the woman gave the description of the Prophet as follows:

“Handsome features, bright face, likeable temperament, neither the abdomen protruding nor hair of the head fallen out, graceful, handsome, eyes black and large, hair long and thick, voice clear, long neck, bright black of the eye, natural grey corners, thin and drooping eyelashes, black and curly hair, silent with dignity inclined to cordiality, graceful and captivating at a distance and very sweet and most handsome from near, talk sweet and words clear, neither more nor less than necessary, all talk consistent, middle-sized, neither short so as to look insignificant nor tall to look unbecoming, a fresh twig of handsome plant, charming to look at and well-

⁴³ Ibn Sa'd – Kitabh al-Tabaqat al-Kabir, as translated by S. Moinul and H.K. Ghazanfar, Kitab Bhavan, New Delhi

built. His companions are so devoted that they always surround him, quietly listen to what he says and promptly obey what he orders. Obeyed, liked, neither verbose nor cryptic.”

II. Conclusion

This continues insult of Prophet (Peace be upon Him) and Islam hurts the feelings of nearly two billion Muslims all over the world. The cartoons and other slander damage relations between the followers of the (Abrahamic) faiths and world faiths as well. Religions need to be respected and unless we learn to respect one another it will be very difficult in a world of different views and different cultures and civilisations. The images, Cartoons, Videos, Drawings, or any type of visual material of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) or the other Prophets (Peace be upon Them) or the Sahaabah (RA) is not permissible. Media has to be responsible and respectful to religious beliefs. Media responsibility is to ensure full respect of all religions figures and freedom of expression does not in any way justify disregard to religion. The above topic conveys a message to west and Western Media to stop anti Islam and anti Muslim propaganda and immediately put a ban on the disrespect and provoking publications. Provokes the emotions of Muslims and hurt their feelings could fan the flame of a vicious circle of extremism. Depictions, cartoons, images or other visual Portrayal of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is like pouring oil on the fire and will have dangerous consequences. The idea to target Islam as an entire religion would be counter-productive. Freedom of Expression includes the respect of sentiments of civilized society also and Muslims are of that. Insulting their revered icons is an insult to ethics of life. Loss of dignity of an individual and community are delicate issues that must be handled with tolerance and wisdom.

Islam renounces the practice of violence, whether they are Muslim or anything else. In holy Quran Sûrah 5 Verse 32, Allah the Almighty Says “if any one slew a person..... It would be as if he slew the whole people: and if any one saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of the whole people” .But instead of this western Media is lying and spreading hate every tactfully about the Islam and Prophet (Peace be upon Him) of Islam. Allah Almighty spoke in another Noble Verses of the Glorious Quran about the liars and deceivers, and promised them Hell Fire for their evil:

"And, do not cloak (and confuse) the truth with falsehood. Do not suppress the truth knowingly. (The Noble Quran, 2:42)"

Al-Quran 82:14, "And verily, the Fujjar (the wicked, sinners, evil-doers....) will be in the blazing Fire (Hell),"

So we should follow that straight path, the path of those with whom Allah Almighty is pleased of the Prophets (Peace be upon Them), Siddeeqs, Martyrs and Righteous, and we should refrain from that which is closer to frivolity and fulfilling whims and desires than it is to serious effort and high resolve.

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