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# **A defence of Charlie Hebdo must also turn into defence of other blasphemers and apostates - “It could really have been any of us”**

Friday 9 January 2015, by [NAMAZIE Maryam](#) (Date first published: 8 January 2015).

Those of us who have openly criticised Islam and Islamism have faced many a threat and intimidation from the far-Right Islamist movement.

I have had phone calls saying I will be decapitated to recorded messages from the Islamic regime of Iran saying my time is near (yes, they have so many threats to make, they need to use recordings!). I've been called every derogatory and threatening term you can imagine from kafir, murtad, munafiq to fitnah and janazie (corpse)...

I don't think there are many atheist, ex-Muslim or secular activists (including Muslims) like myself who have spoken up publicly and not faced some form of threat or intimidation.

So for us, Charlie Hebdo's refusal to back down when so many have has meant a great deal over these years. Also, though, in addition to the rage one feels at any such tragedy, the massacre is personal for us.

It could really have been any of us. We are truly all Charlie Hebdo.

With the focus now on Charlie Hebdo and the crucial need and right to criticise Islam and religion, though, let us not forget the many across the globe who face execution or imprisonment for “insulting the prophet” and criticising Islam. Below you will find some examples which include Muslims, believers and atheists; the charges aim not to protect “Muslim sensibilities” as we so often hear in the west but to protect the status quo and the political power of Islamists.

A defence of Charlie Hebdo must also be turned into a defence of the many who refuse and resist.

Most urgent is the case of Raif Badawi who tomorrow on 9 January 2015 faces his flogging sentence. Raif Badawi was sentenced to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes for “insulting Islam” in Saudi Arabia. he is to receive the first 50 torturous lashes tomorrow after Friday prayers [1].

Columnist Fatma Naoot, accused of insulting Islam, will stand trial on Jan. 28 in Egypt on allegations she criticised Islamic animal sacrifices [2]. In January 2015, 82 year old Muslim scholar Kassim Ahmad lost his bid to challenge the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Department which charged him with insulting Islam after the Malaysian High Court ruled that his case fell under the Shariah Court [3].

28 year old Mauritanian journalist and anti-slavery activist Mohamed Cheikh Ould Mkhaitir, has been sentenced to death on 25 December 2014 for “insulting the prophet” [4].

An Egyptian journalist Bishoy Boulous Armia (32) has been given a five-year prison sentence for allegedly causing “sectarian strife” and “insulting Islam” as he reported on the persecution of Christians in Egypt [5].

In December 2014, there has been a campaign of threats to kill artists and writers for “insulting Islam” in the Gaza strip [6].

In December 2014, Indonesian police named The Jakarta Post editor-in-chief, Meidyatama Suryodiningrat, as a suspect in a blasphemy case stemming from a caricature on ISIS. An Islamic group filed a complaint against the newspaper, saying it had “insulted Islam” [7].

An investigation has been opened against Junaid Jamshed, better known as “disco mullah”, in December 2014 after he reportedly “insulted” one of Prophet Muhammad’s wives in Pakistan where blasphemy is punishable by death [8]

In December 2014, Islamists called for “public execution” of Algerian novelist Kamel Daoud because of his having “insults [to] Allah”.

In early December, bloggers Tan Jye Yee, 26, and Vivian Lee, 25, were revoked and were charged in the Malaysia under the Sedition Act for insulting Islam and Ramadan in a Facebook account [9].

30 year old blogger Soheil Arabi has been sentenced to execution in Iran for “insulting the prophet” on Facebook [10].

Women’s rights campaigner Souad al-Shammary has been imprisoned since 28 October 2014 on accusations she has “insulted Islam” and the prophet in Saudi Arabia [11].

27 year old Mohsen Amir-Aslani convicted of insulting prophet Jonah and making ‘innovations in religion’ through interpretations of Qur’an was hanged in Iran in September 2014 [12].

47 year old British-Iranian Roya Nobakht was sentenced to 20 years in prison for “insulting Islam” when she said on Facebook that the Iranian regime was “too Islamic” [13].

In September 2014, Muhammad Shakil Auj, Dean of the faculty of Islamic Studies at the University of Karachi, was shot dead by gunmen two years after being accused of committing blasphemy [14].

49 year old mother of five Asia Bibi has been in prison for five year awaiting execution for blasphemy in Pakistan [15].

The list goes on and on.

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<http://freethoughtblogs.com/maryamnamazie/2015/01/08/a-defence-of-charlie-hebdo-must-also-turn-into-defence-of-other-blasphemers-and-apostates/>

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## Footnotes

- [1] <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/saudi-arabia-activist-raif-badawis-1000-lashes-public-flogging-commence-after-friday-prayers-1482540>
- [2] <http://www.thecairopost.com/news/131854/editors-choice/religious-speech-freedom-of-expression-or-insult>
- [3] <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/scholar-kassim-ahmad-loses-bid-to-challenge-religious-authority>
- [4] <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/12/25/mauritania-justice-execution-idINKBN0K30OX20141225>
- [5] <http://www.crossmap.com/news/imprisoned-egyptian-christian-journalist-awaits-impending-appeal-verdict-on-28-december-15047>
- [6] <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/world/threats-to-artists-raise-fears-of-islamic-state-coming-to-gaza/story-fnb64oi6-1227166931245?nk=a4d0e364aff53db7f09307c13798842c>
- [7] <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/jakarta-post-editor-amazed-by-accusation-insulting-islam-over-anti-isis-cartoon-1479263>
- [8] <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/pakistans-disco-mullah-accused-insulting-prophet-muhammads-wife-616154>
- [9] <http://www.theborneopost.com/2014/12/09/passports-of-blogger-political-activist-revoked/>
- [10] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSZARNztILY&feature=youtu.be>
- [11] <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/saudi-arabias-first-female-lawyer-detained-accused-insulting-islam-219350761>
- [12] <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/29/iran-executes-man-heresy-mohsen-amir-aslani>
- [13] <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/foreign-office-speak-iranian-authorities-3629764>
- [14] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/pakistani-academic-accused-of-blasphemy-shot-dead-in-karachi-9744154.html>
- [15] <http://www.dw.de/a-subdued-christmas-in-peshawar-a-call-for-unity/a-18151375>