

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS, THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE AND THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

We are deeply alarmed at the repercussions of the publication in Denmark several months ago of insulting caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed and their subsequent republication by some other European newspapers and at the violent acts that have occurred in reaction to them.

The anguish in the Muslim World at the publication of these offensive caricatures is shared by all individuals and communities who recognize the sensitivity of deeply held religious belief. In all societies there is a need to show sensitivity and responsibility in treating issues of special significance for the adherents of any particular faith, even by those who do not share the belief in question.

We fully uphold the right of free speech. But we understand the deep hurt and widespread indignation felt in the Muslim World. We believe freedom of the press entails responsibility and discretion, and should respect the beliefs and tenets of all religions.

But we also believe the recent violent acts surpass the limits of peaceful protest. In particular, we strongly condemn the deplorable attacks on diplomatic missions that have occurred in Damascus, Beirut and elsewhere. Aggression against life and property can only damage the image of a peaceful Islam. We call on the authorities of all countries to protect all diplomatic premises and foreign citizens against unlawful attack.

These events make the need for renewed dialogue, among and between communities of different faiths and authorities of different countries, all the more urgent. We call on them to appeal for restraint and calm, in the spirit of friendship and mutual respect.

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