

Russian Regional Media Watchdog Urges Caution on Charlie Hebdo Cartoons

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Protesters hold a placard which reads "Where is Charlie? Charlie is everywhere" as they take part with hundreds of thousands of French citizens in a march in the streets of Paris on Jan. 11.

The Kamchatka branch of Russia's media watchdog has warned a number of news outlets to refrain from publishing caricatures of religious figures in the aftermath of last week's deadly attack on French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo, RBC news agency reported Tuesday.

"The media's publication of any caricatures of religious figures is inadmissible," the regional branch of media watchdog Roskomnadzor wrote in the letter, according to journalist Vladimir Yefimov, who transcribed its content onto his Facebook page on Tuesday.

The letter also warned that the publication of links to foreign and domestic material featuring such caricatures would be considered a violation of Russia's law against extremist activity, according to Yefimov. The veracity of Yefimov's report was confirmed by the letter's author, Maria Smetankina, a regional representative of of the watchdog, RBC news agency reported.

The federal branch of Roskomnadzor released a statement Tuesday saying that it had conducted "preventive work" with a number of federal and regional media outlets, reminding editors that the use of mass media for extremist activity constitutes a crime in Russia. Under Russian law, media outlets can lose their licenses for disseminating material deemed extremist.

"Roskomnadzor encourages domestic media outlets to choose other forms of expressing solidarity with their French colleagues who were tragically killed, rather than fueling sectarian tensions in Russian society," the statement read.

Charlie Hebdo is known for having controversially published comics depicting the prophet Muhammad. The two gunmen who stormed the publication's Paris offices last week, killing 12 people, said their actions had "avenged" the prophet.

The front page of this week's edition of Charlie Hebdo features — once again — a caricature of the prophet Muhammad. Many Western media outlets have also reproduced some of the satirical cartoons in solidarity.

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