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French Satirists at Charlie Hebdo Infuriate Russians With Mockery of Dec. 25 Plane Crash

December 28, 2016



The French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo has infuriated Russians with its cartoons once again. This Wednesday, the magazine released several comics mocking the Dec. 25 crash of a military plane in the Black Sea — a tragedy that claimed the lives of all 92 passengers, including 64 members of the the Alexandrov Ensemble, known to the world as the Red Army Choir.

On Monday, Russia observed a national day of mourning to honor the victims of the crash.

Related article: Russian Military Plane Crashes in Black Sea en Route to Syria, 92 Dead

The mood was slightly different at the offices of Charlie Hebdo, where cartoonists prepared sketches that are now causing a national scandal in Russia.

One of the cartoons depicts the falling Russian plane, and a member of the Red Army Choir singing "A-A-A-A-A-A!" joking that the musicians carolled as they crashed into the Black Sea.

Another cartoon published on Wednesday shows the Russian military plane crashing again, this time with a caption reading, "The bad news is that Putin wasn't on-board."

Embed:

> Charlie Hebdo в своем стиле: «Плохие новости — Путина там не было» pic.twitter.com/UA6pdyMjrC
>
> — Рустем Адагамов (@adagamov) December 28, 2016

A third comic shows the musicians singing under the water to a school of fish, with the crashed plane in the background. The caption reads, "After the disaster, the Red Army conquers a new audience."

Unapologetically offensive, Charlie Hebdo has satirized Russian plane crashes before. In November 2015, the magazine similarly mocked the terrorist attack on Russian Metrojet Flight 9268, which killed 224 people.

Embed:

> Russia slams Charlie Hebdo cartoons on Egypt crash, calls it 'sacrilege'https://t.co/eyzUU5ZEKA pic.twitter.com/BW6jD0xQjn
>
> — Deccan Chronicle (@DeccanChronicle) November 6, 2015

"This has nothing to do with democracy, self-expression, or whatever," the Kremlin's spokesperson said at the time about the drawings, calling them "pure blasphemy."

In response to the cartoons, a judge in Chechnya even banned Charlie Hebdo's official Twitter account throughout Russia, though the magazine hasn't used the account since January 2015. The judge ruled that Charlie Hebdo's art work illegally incited religious and ethnic hatred.

Related article: Russia Mourns Victims of Military Plane Crash

Just hours after Charlie Hebdo's latest work, there's already a petition hosted on Change.org calling for Russian sanctions against France, against the staff of Charlie Hebdo, and against Audrey Azoulay, France's minister of culture and telecommunications. Initiated by Russian journalist and blogger Nikolai Zubov, the petition had 419 supporters, at the time of this

writing.

In January 2015, gunmen attacked Charlie Hebdo's offices in Paris, killing 12 people and injuring 11 others. The shooters, who identified themselves as members of Islamic terrorist groups, then killed five more people in the surrounding region, before being shot dead by police. The gunmen described their actions as retaliation against the magazine's blasphemous cartoons mocking Islam. The attack sparked public demonstrations around the world in support of press freedoms, producing the common slogan “Je suis Charlie.”

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