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France's Macron 'the No. 1 Terrorist in the World,' Chechen Mufti Says

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Macron vowed that France "will not give up cartoons" after a teacher was beheaded for showing students depictions of the Prophet Mohammad. **Lewis Joly / POOL / AFP**

The grand mufti of Russia's southern republic of Chechnya has joined a growing chorus of Muslim figures and countries condemning France over its assertion of the right to mock religion following the murder of a French schoolteacher.

The Islamic world's backlash came after French President Emmanuel Macron, reacting to the Oct. 16 beheading of teacher Samuel Paty by a Chechen extremist for showing pupils cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, vowed that France "will not give up cartoons."

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"Macron, you are terrorist No. 1 in the world," Chechen mufti Salakh Mezhiyev said on the Chechen Spiritual Board of Muslims' Instagram account Monday.

“By insulting our prophet, you insult all prophets (peace be upon them) and all religions,” Mezhiyev said, accusing Macron of “ordering” the display of Prophet Muhammad cartoons on “all goverment buildings” in France.

Cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad were indeed projected onto local government buildings in southern France following a memorial service for Paty attended by Macron in Paris last week. There is no evidence of Mezhiyev’s claim that Macron had ordered the displays.

Depictions of the Prophet Muhammad are seen as offensive by many Muslims, but in France such cartoons have become identified with a proud secular tradition dating back to the Revolution.

Paty had shown his pupils examples of the Muhammad cartoons over which 12 people were massacred at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in 2015.

Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov echoed Mezhiyev’s comments on his own social media page, writing that Macron “is starting to look like a terrorist.”

“If you call [the murderer] a terrorist, then you Macron are 100 times worse because you’re inducing terrorism,” Kadyrov wrote. “You can safely call yourself the leader and mastermind of terrorism in your country.”

Mezhiyev claimed that Paty was “well aware of his actions” and accused Macron of “deliberately inciting Muslims toward provocative actions by turning the mad professor into a ‘national hero’.”

“Macron, the whole essence of true terrorism and extremism nurtured on the Western pseudo-values of multi-liberalism and permissiveness is manifested in you and your kind,” the mufti said.

Mezhiyev’s criticism follows reports of two Chechen MMA fighters praising Paty’s murder by 18-year-old Chechen refugee Abdullakh Anzorov in since-deleted Instagram stories.

The backlash over Macron’s defense of the right to mock religion after Paty’s murder has widened with Gulf countries pulling French goods from supermarket shelves, Syrians and Libyans torching pictures of Macron and French flags.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan led the charge against Macron and has also called for a boycott of French goods.

AFP contributed reporting.

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