



PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

***Atheist Freethinkers* Condemns Horrific Attack on
Charlie Hebdo, Calls for Repeal of Blasphemy Laws**

Montreal, 8th January 2015 – *Atheist Freethinkers* (LPA-AFT), an association which promotes secularism and supports the rights of atheists, condemns the horrific attack yesterday on the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in which two well armed and very professional gunmen killed 12 persons, including eight journalists and two policemen, before shouting “Allahu Akbar” and bragging that they had avenged the prophet Muhammad, then fleeing through the streets of Paris. *Charlie Hebdo* had already been the target of Islamist threats and was under police surveillance.

This is a tragic and horrific event. We express our condolences to the friends, colleagues, families and loved ones of the deceased and the wounded. Beyond the grief and mourning for this senseless extinguishing of human life, this event is an attack on the fundamental freedoms of all human beings: freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom to be informed. It is a blow in favour of obscurantism and dogmatism.

The best way that we as Canadians can honour the victims of today's attack and pay homage to their legacy is to repeal Section 296 of the Criminal Code which makes “blasphemy” a crime and to work assiduously for the repeal of all laws in all countries which criminalize “blasphemy” or apostasy. We must also repeal paragraph 319(3)(b) of the Hate Propaganda provisions of the Criminal Code because it exempts religious discourse from prosecution, thus granting a dangerous privilege to religions, permitting them to make hateful statements with impunity. It must not be forgotten that so-called “holy” books sometimes incite the faithful to hatred of or violence against certain groups such as nonbelievers.

It is this sense of entitlement held by religious leaders and many believers, the attitude that their tenets are so divinely important as to be above the law, to be more important than even basic human decency, which is at the root of today's attack on *Charlie Hebdo*.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

David Rand

aft at atheisme.ca

Jaque Parisien

jaque.parisien at gmail.com

Web site: <http://AFT.atheisme.ca>