

Charlie Hebdo team struggles to heal after massacre

PARIS, FRANCE: More than a month after jihadist gunmen massacred much of the *Charlie Hebdo* editorial team, those who survived are slowly trying to return to a semblance of normality...



Twelve people were murdered in the 7 January attack on the satirical weekly, including five of France's most beloved cartoonists.

After defiantly rushing out a "survivors' issue" the following week as donations and support flooded in, the weekly disappeared from newsstands.

"We needed a break, a rest... There were those who needed to work again straight away, like me, and those who wanted to take more time," says Gerard Biard, the paper's new chief editor.

"So we reached a compromise, and agreed on February 25... to start off again on a weekly basis."

So what will the second post-attacks issue look like? *Charlie Hebdo* has a long history of courting controversy, lampooning political and religious figures of all stripes.

The Kouachi brothers who carried out the 7 January attack, said they were taking revenge for the weekly's depictions of Prophet Mohammed - considered blasphemous in Islam.

But in a show of defiance, *Charlie Hebdo*'s "survivors' issue" featured Mohammed on its cover with a tear in his eye, holding a "Je Suis Charlie" sign under the headline "All is Forgiven".

"Je Suis Charlie" was the slogan taken up around the world to express solidarity with the weekly.

Some eight million copies were printed, a stunning number for a publication that had been struggling to stay afloat with a circulation of just 60,000 before the attack.

But the 14 January cartoon once again stirred anger, triggering sometimes violent protests in several Muslim countries.

The next cover is to be decided on Monday, as tradition has it at the satirical weekly, so that it can be as timely as possible.

Biard said the issue will inevitably deal with extremism, particularly in light of the shootings in Copenhagen on 14 and 15 February, which like in Paris targeted free speech and Jews.

"It's just as relevant as before. I know some will say that we are obsessed, but we're not the ones who are obsessed," Biard said.

"It's those who create the news who are obsessed. And those who create it are terrorists.

"After Copenhagen, we will be forced to talk about it again. But there's also Dominique Strauss-Kahn, it's lucky we have him!"

Biard was referring to the former head of the International Monetary Fund, whose trial on charges of aggravated pimping this month brought to light salacious details of his sex life.

Wednesday's issue will also address the debt crisis in Greece, featuring an interview with the country's new Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis. So the team is back at the drawing board.

"For this issue, we're starting over. The funerals have taken place, we have to make do with the absence of the others, and that's where it's tough," *Charlie Hebdo* columnist Patrick Pelloux said in a television interview.

"We've been realising for some time that they didn't just go away on holiday.

"The newspaper, just like any newspaper, must continue because life goes on, the news continues."

The editorial team is still working out of the offices of left-wing daily *Liberation*, where they relocated following the attack, but they are thinking of moving in a few weeks.

They visited a location in a southern district of Paris, but security now dominates their choices.

"Nothing is certain about these premises," Biard said, adding that a study was under way to determine whether the site could be fitted with a secure entrance.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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