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Top UN officials condemn deadly attack on French magazine, 'Charlie Hebdo'



Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Irina Bokova. UN Photo/Devra Berkowitz

7 January 2015 – Senior United Nations officials have condemned the attack on the offices of French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* that took place in Paris today, which news reports indicate killed 10 media workers and two police officers.

"This attack is an attack against the media and against freedom of expression," said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which is the agency mandated to defend freedom of expression and press freedom. "My thoughts are with the families of the victims and to those who were injured."

According to media reports, masked gunmen opened fire with assault rifles in the office of *Charlie Hebdo* in central Paris, reportedly killing four of the magazine's cartoonists and its editor. The unidentified gunmen were reported to have then fled the scene, exchanging shots with police in the street, killing two officers.

Ms Bokova's [statement](#) said she was horrified by the incident, which was more than a "personal tragedy" and which provided more motivation to bring the perpetrators to justice.

"UNESCO is more determined than ever to protect the free and independent press," she said. "The international community cannot let extremists sow terror and prevent the free flow of opinions and ideas."

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, also [spoke out](#) against what he described as an "appalling and ruthless attack," urging anyone with information that could help locate anyone involved in planning or carrying out the attack, to immediately bring it to the attention of the French authorities, before other lives are lost.

"Freedom of expression and opinion are a cornerstone for any democratic society. Those trying to divide communities on grounds of religion, ethnicity or any other reason must not be allowed to succeed," he said, underlining the importance of arresting and punishing those responsible while refraining from attaching blame to any wider group.

"If this attack is allowed to feed discrimination and prejudice, it will be playing straight into the hands of extremists whose clear aim is to divide religions and societies. With xenophobia and anti-migrant sentiments already on the rise in Europe, I am very concerned that this awful, calculated act will be exploited by extremists of all sorts."

Updated: 11.40 a.m.

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