

National Coalition Against Censorship

275 Seventh Avenue, Suite 1504
New York, NY 10001
tel: (212) 807-6222
fax: (212) 807-6245
e-mail: ncac@ncac.org
web: www.ncac.org

Joan E. Bertin
Executive Director

NCAC PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Actors' Equity Association
American Association of
School Administrators
American Association of
University Professors
American Association of
University Women
American Booksellers Foundation
for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Ethical Union
American Federation of Teachers
American Federation of Television
& Radio Artists
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
American Library Association
American Literary Translators
Association
American Orthopsychiatric Association
American Society of Journalists
& Authors
Americans United for Separation of
Church & State
Association of American Publishers
Authors League of America
Catholics for Choice
Children's Literature Association
College Art Association
The Creative Coalition
Directors Guild of America
The Dramatists Guild of America
First Amendment Lawyers Association
International Reading Association
Lambda Legal
Modern Language Association
National Center for Science Education
National Communication Association
National Council for the Social Studies
National Council of the Churches
of Christ
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Teachers of English
National Education Association
The Newspaper Guild/CWA
Office of Communication,
United Church of Christ
PEN American Center
People for the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation
of America
Screen Actors Guild
Sexuality Information & Education
Council of the U.S.
Society of Children's Book Writers
& Illustrators
Student Press Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
Union of Democratic Intellectuals
Unitarian Universalist Association
United Methodist Communications,
United Methodist Church
Women's American ORT
Writers Guild of America, East
Writers Guild of America, West

September 14, 2009

Richard C. Levin
President, Yale University
PO BOX 208229
New Haven, CT 06520-8229

The Yale Corporation
c/o The Office of the Secretary
P.O. Box 208230
New Haven, CT 06520-8230

Dear President Levin and Members of the Yale Corporation,

We write to protest the decision to remove all images of Mohammed from the forthcoming book, *The Cartoons That Shook the World*, by Jytte Klausen, which will be published by Yale University Press in early October. The University's role in that decision compromises the principle and practice of academic freedom, undermines the independence of the Press, damages the University's credibility, and diminishes its reputation for scholarship.

The events surrounding the decision to remove the images are deeply troubling:

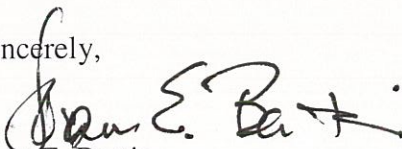
- The manuscript was submitted to Yale University Press with the explicit understanding that inclusion of the cartoons was a prerequisite for publication.
- The book was accepted for publication, fully vetted by the Press and met its exacting scholarly standards. It also passed the standard legal review and was unanimously approved by the University Publications Committee.
- Nonetheless, the University undertook its own unorthodox and unprecedented review in which it consulted various individuals, not about the substance of the book but solely about the risk that the illustrations could provoke a violent response. These consultants did not receive a complete copy of the manuscript; they were provided with only the images.
- Neither the names of the consultants nor their comments have been disclosed. Even the author was denied the opportunity to read the report or comments made by these reviewers unless she signed a nondisclosure agreement, which she declined to do.

- Yale Vice President and Secretary, Linda Lorimer, has openly acknowledged that the University made the decision to remove the images, based on an unspecified fear of violence. Former Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte, who is now a member of the Yale faculty, has stated that he “agreed with the decision by Yale” to remove the images, based on a “generic threat.”

No one involved in the decision has cited any actual threat of violence as a justification for the decision. Indeed, several Islamic scholars, including one of Yale’s handpicked experts, openly question the notion that the illustrations pose any risk of violence whatsoever, since the book would likely attract a small and specialized readership and the images have already been widely disseminated and are easily accessible online. In fact, some of the images that were removed, such as the Gustave Doré image of Mohammed in Dante’s *Inferno*, have *never* been associated with violence.

We recognize that there are people who will threaten violence to suppress ideas that they hate. They range from religious zealots seeking to ban images they consider blasphemous to animal rights advocates who recently threatened the staff of the San Francisco Art Institute over an art installation that they claimed represented cruelty to animals. However, even in the face of actual threats, we believe that there are ways for institutions like Yale to preserve their commitment to academic freedom and intellectual integrity.

Giving in to the fear of violence only emboldens those who use threats to achieve their ends. This misguided action establishes a dangerous precedent that threatens academic and intellectual freedom around the world.

Sincerely,

Joan E. Bertin

On behalf of:
American Association of University Professors
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
American Civil Liberties Union
American Library Association, Office for Intellectual Freedom
American Society of Journalists and Authors, First Amendment Committee
College Art Association
Freedom to Read Foundation
First Amendment Project
First Amendment Lawyers Association
Foundation for Individual Rights in Education
Middle East Studies Association