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Salient Publishes Danish Cartoons

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By **DAN R. RASMUSSEN**
Crimson Staff Writer

With riots raging across the Muslim world over the publication of Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad, the editors of The Harvard Salient republished four of the cartoons in the paper's Feb. 8 edition, angering a number of student groups.

Asserting that they would not "[cater] to a sensitivity borne of fear of death that has plagued many would-be critics of Islam," the editors of the biweekly conservative paper printed the cartoons—including one in which Muhammad's turban takes the shape of a bomb—juxtaposed with anti-Semitic cartoons from papers in the Middle East.

In the editorial printed next to the cartoons, the Salient's editors also criticized "the way Islam has been usurped worldwide for purposes of violence and oppression," and called the violent disturbances in the Muslim world "shameful."

Responding to the Salient's decision to print the cartoons, the Harvard College Interfaith Council announced that it would host a forum on Thursday night at 7 p.m. in the Kirkland Junior Common Room to discuss the cartoons and put them into a broader context. The forum will be co-sponsored by various religious and political groups, including Harvard Hillel and the Harvard Political Union.

Travis R. Kavulla '07, the editor of the Salient—which is printed on The Crimson's printing presses—said yesterday that he hoped the publication of the cartoons would foster positive discussion about the issue and raise awareness of the problems facing the Middle East.

"These cartoons do carry a meaningful message," he said. "We didn't do this to insult Muslims but to highlight real problems in the Middle East, whether that's a propensity for suicide bombing or poor treatment of women."

But Khalid M. Yasin '07, president of the Harvard Islamic Society, said the Salient is failing to distinguish between the behavior of those who call themselves Muslims and the religion of Islam itself.

"We're obviously offended and angered by the Salient's decision to publish the cartoons and their articles," Yasin wrote in an e-mail last night. "It seems the Salient has decided to focus on Islam and I'm honestly concerned about the Islamophobic nature of their features."

Last semester, controversy erupted over a parody published on The Salient's back page, which featured a mock ad of a Fulla doll, a Barbie imitation doll sold in the Middle East. The ad suggested that the doll, which is sold with Islamic dress, says programmed phrases such as, "Human Rights? That's silly," and "Yes, husband."

The former president of the Harvard Society of Arab Students, Rami R. Sarafa '07, said yesterday that student organizations should "stand united against the Salient's decision to publish the cartoons."

"The decision to republish the cartoons was in very bad taste and completely disrespectful to the Harvard Muslim community," Sarafa said.

Kavulla defended his paper's decision to publish the cartoons.

"It does make a powerful point when you contrast these cartoons with even more vile cartoons from Middle Eastern publications," he said, referencing a cartoon from the Egyptian paper al-Ahram depicting Jews killing children and drinking their blood, which the Salient published next to the cartoons of Muhammad. "I hate to say it, but provocative content can have meaning."

Om L. Lala '07, the president of the Harvard Interfaith Council, said that the Salient's decision to print the cartoons brought the international issue closer to home and made Harvard seem like "a microcosm of the whole world," she said.

"It presents an opportunity to engage in dialogues with that opinion—the opinion that these cartoons should be published," Lala said.

While Kavulla, who is also a former Crimson editorial executive, maintained that the purpose of publishing the cartoons was to promote "intelligent discussion" on campus, the president of the Harvard Democrats, Eric P. Lesser '07, said the publication of the cartoons was having a negative effect on campus dialogue and that The Salient is no longer relevant on campus.

"The Salient, especially this year, has totally marginalized itself to the point where it has become almost a caricature of itself," Lesser said, labeling The Salient editors "extremists".

"[The Salient is] totally out of the mainstream. It doesn't reflect the values of anyone but a fringe group of people."

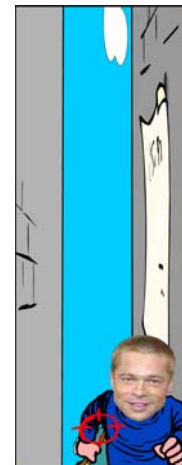
Stephen E. Dewey '07, the president of the Harvard Republican Club, said that while he believes the initial publication of the cartoons by the Danish newspaper was "inappropriate," the republication of the cartoons by other media outlets is "a justified response to the violence and attempts at censorship currently being perpetrated."

—William C. Marra contributed to the reporting of this story.

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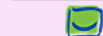
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