

Vatican denounces 'blasphemous' *Charlie Hebdo* cover

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VATICAN CITY (RNS) The Vatican's newspaper on Wednesday (January 6) criticized French weekly *Charlie Hebdo* for manipulating faith in the magazine's latest front page, which depicts a blood-soaked God armed with a Kalashnikov.

The controversial cover commemorates a year since the terrorist attack against *Charlie Hebdo's* Paris headquarters, which left 12 people dead and led to a global debate on religious extremism and freedom of speech.

"One year later, the assassin is still on the run," reads the black and white front page, with a cartoon depicting a violent God.

The Vatican turned to its daily newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, to blast *Charlie Hebdo's* decision with an unsigned editorial titled "Manipulated faith."

"The French weekly once again forgets what religious leaders of every affinity have been repeating for some time, to reject violence in the name of religion," it said, describing the move as blasphemous.

"The choice of *Charlie Hebdo* shows the sad paradox of a world increasingly more careful of being 'politically correct,' to the point of being almost ridiculous ... But that doesn't want to recognize and respect the faith in God of every believer, whichever religion they practice," *L'Osservatore Romano* added.

The latest issue of *Charlie Hebdo* stands in stark contrast to the edition published in the aftermath of the attack, featuring a crying Muhammad under a headline reading "All is forgiven."

Two gunmen stormed the magazine's offices on January 7, 2015, shooting staff in an attack that was later claimed by Yemen's al-Qaeda branch.

After that attack, Pope Francis said freedom of expression was a “fundamental human right” and stressed that killing in the name of God was an unacceptable “aberration.”

But he also took issue with *Charlie Hebdo's* anti-religious stance.

“You can’t provoke, you can’t insult the faith of others, you can’t make fun of faith,” he said during a tour of Asia.

The Vatican later issued a statement that said the pope’s comments were not intended as a justification for the attacks.