

Washington Post cartoon slammed as racist and vile



Washington, November 9 (RHC)-- A cartoon in The Washington Post's opinion section has triggered controversy and sparked anger over its "racist" and "orientalist" depiction of Arabs and Palestinians.

Titled, "Human Shields," it depicts a man in a dark, striped suit, which has Hamas in bold white letters emblazoned on it, for the Palestinian group.

The man's eyebrows are arched, his nose is comically large. He has four children strapped to his body, including a baby positioned on his head. A woman – veiled and docile – and meant to represent Palestinian women, cowers behind him.

The man is lifting a finger and the thought cloud above him reads: "How dare Israel attack civilians?" According to the cartoon, published on November 6th, he is Hamas.

The title as well as the depiction of children and a woman tied to him, appear to reference allegations by Israel, which are often repeated by Western leaders and echoed by many mainstream media outlets, that Hamas uses human shields.

Next to the man, woman and children, who are flanked by a Palestinian flag, is a partial portrait of the Dome of the Rock in occupied East Jerusalem and beneath is an oil lamp.

The cartoon was published as more than 10,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, including 4,000 children, have been killed in Israeli military attacks since the war started on October 7th.

Two days after publication, the outrage on social media, as well as the Washington Post's website was growing. On X, formerly Twitter, a user called the image "beyond vile, bigoted and dehumanising."

Others said the dehumanization was reminiscent of anti-Semitic cartoons that depicted Jews in a negative light.

"I can't get over how this looks exactly like a traditional antisemitic character, just with a few modified features", posted one user, while another wrote: "Notably this is exactly how they used to depict Jews in European newspapers in the 1930s."

On the Post's website, one reader commented: "Shame on Washington Post for using racist tropes that are currently being used to justify a genocide where majority killed are children. Dehumanizing any peoples paves a way for injustices to occur. Unfortunate to see The Washington Post fuel that racist fire. This cartoon and the fact that it was published is appalling."

The cartoon is also reminiscent of those featured in the French satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo which were derogatory to the Prophet Muhammad. Protests have erupted across the Arab and Muslim worlds over these images in past years.

Finally, on Wednesday, The Washington Post bowed to the criticism, deleting the editorial cartoon.

The cartoonist, Michael Ramirez, a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, has attacked Palestinians before. In another cartoon, he plays on the slogan "Black Lives Matter", to make it "Terrorist Lives Matter", implying that the support that Black people in the United States have shown for Palestinians is tantamount to siding with Hamas.



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