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Region: Balkans



The study "[The Charlie Hebdo Effect in the Balkans](#)" analyses how the Balkan media as well as political and religious leaders responded to the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, while also taking a close look at legislation of freedom of speech in the countries.

In a close-up analysis of responses to the attacks in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia, the study stresses that Balkan leaders and Balkan media have condemned the attacks unanimously, with the majority of Balkan political leaders attending the solidarity march in Paris. Journalists understood this to be a hypocritical PR exercise, as old practices of controlling media are still in practice in Balkan countries, despite new legislation attempting to leave authoritarian practices in the past.

According to the study, religious leaders in the Balkan countries condemned the attacks, however, also acknowledging the Mohammed caricatures as a provocation directed at Muslims. They pointed out that religion is sacred and should therefore not be mocked.

The study further notes that there has been no significant increase of anti-Muslim sentiments across the region. However, the study criticises that media focused on emotions and reactions to the attacks, rather than using the opportunity to start a critical conversation about freedom of expression and the role of media.