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11-18-2009

### November 18, 2009: The Yale Press Decision Not to Publish the Cartoons of Muhammad

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#### Repository Citation

Ledewitz, B. (2009). November 18, 2009: The Yale Press Decision Not to Publish the Cartoons of Muhammad. Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/ledewitz-hallowedsecularism/359>

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Title: The Yale Press Decision Not to Publish the Cartoons of Muhammad

Date: 2009-11-18T08:25:00.002-05:00

11/18/2009—The November/December issue of Yale Alumni Magazine contains a depressing reminder of the decision of the Yale University Press to publish the book, *The Cartoons That Shook the World* by Jytte Klausen, without the cartoons. On one level, the decision to publish the book in the first place seems a cynical play for publicity, sales and good will in the Muslim world. If the Press was worried about fallout from publishing the cartoons, the obvious thing to do was to allow some other press to publish the work with its integrity intact. The Press now gets to have it both ways. On another level, the decision not to include the cartoons is pure cowardice. It is certainly possible that publishing the book with the cartoons would have led to violent demonstrations, even deaths. But not doing so is a particularly dramatic example of what is known in First Amendment Law as the Heckler's Veto. The law tries not insist that the speaker modify the message in the face of even a violent response. People have died in the past to defend freedom of speech and of the press. We used to believe that was worth doing. The action of the Yale Press is particularly offensive to people like me, who find value in Our Religions. The Yale Press is giving in to the worst tendencies of religion, which will only perpetuate these tendencies. We cannot reform the fundamentalist views of others, but we don't have to give in to them.