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EarthTimes (10.03.2010) / HRWF (11.03.2010) - Website: <http://www.hrwf.net> - Email: info@hrwf.net - Several Swedish newspapers Wednesday reprinted a controversial caricature of the Prophet Mohammed as a dog, the day after an alleged plot to murder the cartoonist was disclosed. Seven arrests were reported Tuesday in Ireland while one woman was charged in the United States on charges of conspiring to commit terrorism. The target of the alleged murder plot was Swedish artist Lars Vilks, who made the caricature in 2007.

Vilks has been threatened several times. A bounty of 100,000 dollars was placed on his head back in 2007 by an Iraq-based insurgency group after publication of the caricature. Early this year, Vilks said he had received threatening phone calls from Somalia.

Those phone calls came roughly a week after a newspaper cartoonist in neighbouring Denmark survived an attack when a Somali-born man broke into his home.

Vilks appeared unruffled on learning of the arrests in Ireland and the US, telling the newspaper Dagens Nyheter he was "not afraid, but you need a plan if something highly unlikely should happen."

His plan included keeping an axe near the entrance to his home in southern Sweden and a secure room upstairs.

A bounty of 50,000 dollars was also posted for Ulf Johansson, editor in chief of the daily Nerikes Allehanda in Orebro, a city in southern central Sweden.

Johansson was threatened after publishing the caricature in August 2007 after he learned that organizers of an arts exhibition had decided not to display it.

The publication outraged Muslims in some countries, and Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt met with ambassadors from some two dozen Islamic countries to explain the Swedish laws on freedom of expression.

Stockholm tabloid Expressen on Wednesday said it decided to reprint the caricature "in support of freedom of speech," saying it was necessary to be able to publish matters that were considered controversial.

An editorial in the Stockholm daily Dagens Nyheter said a "threat against him (Lars Vilks) is ultimately a threat against all Swedes."

Swedish broadcaster SVT's arts and culture programme also showed the caricature as did the Sydsvenskan daily.

Tabloid Aftonbladet, the country's largest-circulation newspaper, decided not to reprint the caricature. Editor-in-chief Jan Helin said such a move "would not have been a constructive contribution."

Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard has also been the subject of several plots due to his controversial cartoon of the Prophet Mohammed with a bomb in his turban. The cartoon was one of 12 images published in September 2005 by Danish daily Jyllands-Posten. The cartoons sparked outrage among Muslims and violent protests worldwide in early 2006.
