

# St. Petersburg Times

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## Free expression shouldn't fuel hate

As an organization whose mission it is to promote dialogue and respect among cultures and religions, we deplore the offensive publication of representations of the prophet Mohammed and the violence generated in response.

Whereas freedom of expression is a pillar of democracy, the exercise of this right carries with it a responsibility of good judgment. The use of stereotypes and labeling that insults deeply rooted religious feelings does not contribute to the creation of the type of inclusive environment that is conducive to constructive and peaceful dialogue.

Over the years, our world has become more global. The diversity of our cities, our schools and our workplaces is an irreversible reality and one that we believe enriches us tremendously. However, the changing face of our communities also raises the critical question of how to uphold one's own traditions, values and beliefs, while at the same time respecting (or not offending) the traditions, values and beliefs of others who have become our neighbors. Managing the inter-group dynamics of a diverse community is a very delicate task that requires sensitivity, openness and tolerance.

Maybe when the dust settles, we will begin to realize that building harmonious relationships between the different religions and cultures is a very serious matter in which we carry both a collective and an individual responsibility.

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