



Isioma Daniel in front of her computer in Stavanger Aftenblad. In 2002 religious groups in Nigeria subjected her to a fatwa because of an article about Prophet Mohammed in the newspaper ThisDay.

PHOTO: LARS IDAR WAAGE/STAVANGER AFTENBLAD

## Several accusations of insulting Islam

Reporters and editors in different countries have been subjected to fatwas, a religious edict issued by an Islamic scholar. The fatwa issued by Ayatollah Khoemeini of Iran, calling for the death of writer Salman Rushdie in 1989, made the term known to the whole world. Records from international journalist organizations show that journalists in countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Mauritius also have been subjected to fatwas. While fatwas in Sunni-Islam is non-binding, Shiites are acquired to act on fatwas issued by their leaders.

Some of the journalists have been jailed after being convicted of blasphemy, among them the editor-in-Chief and a reporter of the Syrian *Senet*. The subject of prophet Mohammeds wives, which Isioma Daniel commented on, has also resulted in another fatwa. Three reporters of the weekly magazine *Al-Hilal* in Jordan were jailed after allegedly insulting the Prophet when describing his life with one of his wives.

Most recently, on March 20<sup>th</sup> this year, a fatwa was issued against two journalists from the Saudi newspaper *Al-Riyadh*. The two reformed-minded writers challenged traditional Saudi views on people from other faiths.

Sources: *International Federation of Journalists, Reporters Sans Frontiers, International Press Institute, International PEN, Committee to Protect Journalists, the International Freedom of Expression Exchange.*

## Fatwa

- The definition of a fatwa is much broader than pronouncing a death sentence upon someone: A fatwa is the answer which a competent and qualified religious authority gives to a question concerning a point of Islamic law (shari'a).
- The fatwa deals with practice of religion in many ways, although some questions are obviously more political than others.
- In the case of Isioma Daniel, the legitimacy of the fatwa was questioned in several ways.

Source: Mehdi Mozaddari: *Fatwa. Violence & Discourtesy, BBC.*

- Up until then I thought about the possibility of going back, and wondered if I could ever continue to work as a journalist in Nigeria. But after the fatwa, I had no idea what to do.

She was granted asylum in Norway, and says that she has a normal life. She also claims her life is not affected by the fatwa today. But she still takes precautions. When a documentary about her was set to be shown on Norwegian TV, Isioma had talks with the security department of the Norwegian police.

As a journalist in Norwegian regional newspaper Stavanger Aftenblad, she is now in a very different working environment from in Nigeria.

- I didn't get any support from my colleagues when this happened, and my editor did nothing to back me up either. He asked me why I hadn't written "properly", but he hadn't even read through the whole article before printing it. I clearly felt that they needed a scapegoat in this situation, she says.

## JOURNALIST KILLED IN DAGESTAN

Abdulla Alishayev last Wednesday became the second journalist to get killed in North Caucasus in less than a week.

According to regional police, Alishayev died Wednesday from wounds received in an attack overnight, Reuters reported.

"Alishayev received wounds to the shoulder and head. He was operated on, but his life could not be saved," police said.

The Russian journalist was said to have been attacked by unidentified attackers.

Last Sunday, opposition journalist Magomed Yevloyev died in police custody, according to police shot dead when reaching for a gun. Human rights workers said they did not believe the story.

## MARQUEZ ON JOURNALISM: -THERE'S NO BETTER JOB

The 81-year-old author Gabriel Garcia Marquez started out as a journalist, and says there is no better job.

The Colombian writer gave rare public comments at a seminar in northern Mexico last week.

"There's no better job", he said when speaking of journalism, according to AFP.

"We enjoy it when we find a jewel, but suffer like dogs when we see language used badly," the writer, who started out as a journalist, said.

But he also lamented the lack of time modern journalists have to carry out their work, and told that he sometimes telephoned editors and journalists to argue.

"When someone is under pressure, they don't have time to think, and the next day they say to themselves: 'it would have been better to do this'," he said.

## WHEN TIRED, GO ON A MOOSE SAFARI

Tired of computer-lessons? Want to get out and about in the Olympic town? One source of information on where to go and what to do is the Lillehammer tourist information site, at [www.lillehammerturist.no/english/summer](http://www.lillehammerturist.no/english/summer). There is also information available in Russian, Italian, Spanish, French and Netherlands.

Among the activities offered are moose safari, bobsleigh, horseback riding and mountain biking.