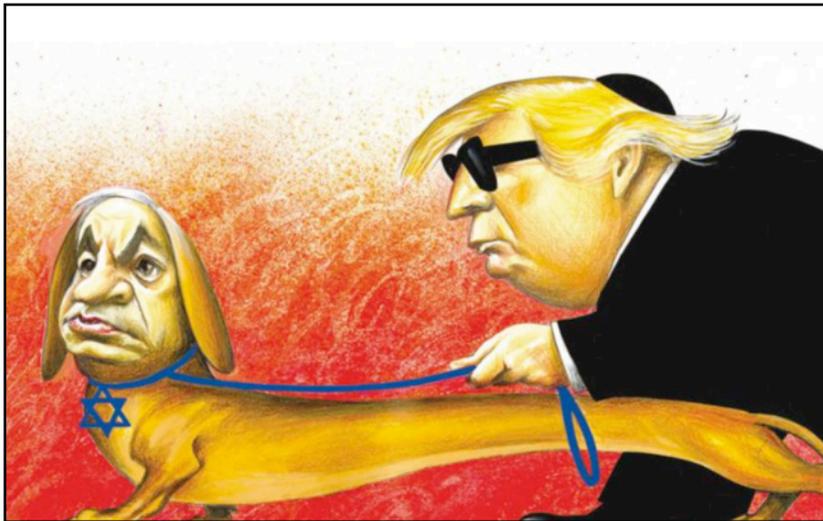


## The New York Times cuts all political cartoons, and cartoonists are not happy

The New York Times is again making news for how it handles editorial cartoons — or in the latest turn, will *not* handle editorial cartoons.

Beginning next month, the Times will cease running daily political cartoons in its international edition, editorial page editor James Bennet said Monday in a [statement](#) — a move that brings the overseas newspaper “into line with the domestic paper,” which in recent years had [ceased running](#) weekly roundups of syndicated cartoons and experimented instead with longer-form [editorial comics](#).

The decision came to light Monday when longtime contributor Patrick Chappatte wrote on his [blog](#) that he was told the news last week by Times editors. In his [post](#), Chappatte pointed to the Times controversy from April, when a cartoon depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a guide dog — wearing a Star of David collar tag and leading a blind, yarmulke-wearing President Trump — was widely [condemned](#) as anti-Semitic and evocative of Nazi propaganda.



The cartoon, by Portuguese artist Antonio Moreira Antunes, was distributed by the syndicate CartoonArts International, selected by a Times editor in Hong Kong and published in the global edition of the Times, which ultimately [apologized](#) for the cartoon. Last month, publisher A.G. Sulzberger said in a staff memo that the Times would [cease publishing cartoons](#) by nonstaff members.

Bennet’s statement, however, is worded as if to dispel any direct connection between the Antunes cartoon fallout and the employment of contract contributors such as Chappatte.

“We’re very grateful for and proud of the work Patrick Chappatte and [Singapore-based cartoonist] Heng Kim Song have done for the international edition of The New York Times,” Bennet said in the statement before adding: “For well over a year we have

been considering bringing that edition into line with the domestic paper by ending daily political cartoons and will do so beginning on July 1st.”

Through a Times representative Tuesday, Bennet declined The Washington Post’s request for comment.

Many editorial cartoonists have been angered by the Times’s frequent reluctance to publish political cartoons in its domestic paper — and have been vocal about the imperiled nature of their industry. Over the past three decades, the ranks of staff political cartoonists in North American papers have dwindled from hundreds to dozens. Such Pulitzer Prize winners as [Steve Benson](#) and [Nick Anderson](#) have recently been laid off, and last year, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette fired veteran cartoonist [Rob Rogers](#), a Pulitzer finalist this year, for his anti-Trump commentary. All three artists generally work in traditional political cartoon formats of one or two panels.

In recent years, the Pulitzer Prizes have recognized as finalists a handful of political cartoonists who instead often work in a multi-panel, narrative form of commentary, including Matt Bors, Jen Sorensen, Dan Perkins (a.k.a. Tom Tomorrow) and Ken Fisher (a.k.a. Ruben Bolling). Yet it was graphic journalism by the Times that sparked [industry controversy](#): The Pulitzer Board last year awarded a Times entry that was a visual narrative but, in a historic first for the [editorial cartoon category](#), was not a direct commentary in nature. The winning work, [“Welcome to the New World”](#) by Jake Halpern and Michael Sloan, was a nonfiction “graphic novel” series about a family of Syrian refugees.

On Monday, Bennet wrote that the Times plans to do “more such work and [hopes] to collaborate with Patrick and Heng and others on such projects in the future.”

“I’m glad they’re leaving that door open,” the Geneva-based Chappatte told The Post on Tuesday, noting that he was a proponent of this kind of comics journalism for the Times in 2016, with his graphical series [“Inside Death Row.”](#)

Bennet wrote that such long-form visual journalism expresses “nuance, complexity and strong voice from a diversity of viewpoints across all of our platforms.”

But the Times is nixing “tip of the spear” single-panel cartoons — a form of pointed critique that in American newspapers dates back to the 19th-century work of the legendary Thomas Nast, as well as to pamphlet images published by [Benjamin Franklin](#).

Chappatte said Monday that he still believes in the power of such images, writing: “In the insane world we live in, the art of visual commentary is needed more than ever. And so is humor.”

Chappatte began a quest to get political cartoons into the Times nearly 25 years ago, eventually persuading the Paris-based International Herald Tribune, then a joint venture between The Post and the Times, to hire an “in-house editorial cartoonist.” Just three months ago, Chappatte won the Overseas Press Club’s cartoon award.

But Chappatte speculated Monday that his decades of work have been “undone” by the Trump/Netanyahu cartoon. “I’m afraid this is not just about cartoons, but about journalism and opinion in general,” wrote Chappatte, who is in his early 50s. “We are in a world where moralistic mobs gather on social media and rise like a storm, falling upon newsrooms in an overwhelming blow.”

Some political artists view the Times’s decision to end daily political cartoons as a repudiation of the art form.

“It is their clarity and pointedness, the sharpness of their satire, that make them such powerful vehicles for expressing opinion,” Association of American Editorial Cartoonists President Kevin Siers, a Pulitzer-winning cartoonist for the Charlotte Observer, said in a statement Tuesday.

“There is no ‘on the other hand’ in an editorial cartoon,” the AAEC continued. “This power, understandably, makes editors nervous, but to completely discontinue their use is letting anxiety slide into cowardice.”

Speaking to the larger landscape, Matt Wuerker, the Pulitzer-winning cartoonist for Politico, said: “The collapsing space for political cartoons and satirical commentary because editors don’t have the spine to stand up to social-media outrage campaigns is bad for free speech, and bad because political debate benefits from a little humor now and again.”

Taking a similar view on the bigger issue is Daryl Cagle, head of the syndicate Cagle Cartoons, which distributes Chappatte’s work to about 800 subscribing clients.

“By choosing not to print editorial cartoons in the future, the Times can be sure that their editors will never again make a poor cartoon choice,” Cagle said. “Editors at the Times have also made poor choices of words in the past. I would suggest that the Times should also choose not to print words in the future — just to be on the safe side.”



Cartoon published on the front page of the NYT website on January 8, 2015, after the Charlie Hebdo attacks. See an archive of Chappatte’s cartoons for the NYT [here](#). His comics journalism series inside death row [here](#).