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339 anti-Catholic incidents in eleven months in France



Source [<http://infos-bordeaux.fr/>].

HRWF (07.12.2016) – In October - November, the *Observatoire de la Christianophobie* reported and documented a total of 23 anti-Catholic incidents in 19 different places. For the first 11 months of the year, the same observatory recorded 339 anti-Catholic incidents perpetrated in 70 different *départements*.

During the night of 2-3 December, anti-Christian graffiti was tagged on the walls of the Catholic seminary of Bordeaux: "Neither nor Master", "I love Satan", and an untranslatable sexual insult. This form of hate speech is typical of extreme-left slogans.

It is not the first time that extreme-left activists target symbolic places related to the Catholic Church in Bordeaux. Alain Juppé, who lost the primaries of the upcoming presidential elections against François Fillon, is the mayor of Bordeaux. He is not known to have condemned such an act. Other politicians have not reacted either, and the media has ignored the incident.

On 3 December and over the last few weeks, anti-Catholic anarchist slogans were tagged several times on St. Clement church in Nantes.

Such incidents are rarely reported in the mainstream media. They are only published in local newspapers or publications with limited circulation.

Sources :

[Infos-Bordeaux](#)

[Observatoire de la Christianophobie](#)

[Breizh-Info](#)

Christian convert in French refugee camp told: 'We will kill you'

INTERVIEW: Refugee fled home in Iraq after facing hostility for leaving Islam

World Watch Monitor (02.11.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2e4FhuZ> - A Kurdish church leader smuggled to Britain says he received death threats – for having left Islam for Christianity – while living in makeshift camps in northern France.

The church leader, who did not wish to be identified, spent nine months living in camps outside the French cities of Calais and Dunkirk. He told World Watch Monitor that Kurdish Muslims in both camps antagonised him.

"In Calais, the smugglers [saw] my cross [round my neck], and said: 'You are Kurdish and you are a Christian? Shame on you,'" he recalled. "I said, 'Why? I'm in Europe, I'm free, I'm in a free country.' They said, 'No, you are not free, you are in the Jungle. The Jungle has Kurdish rule here – leave this camp.' The smugglers were from inside the camp, and were Kurdish. They said to me, 'We will tell the Algerians and Moroccans to kill you.'"

The church leader, who taught art in his home in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as helping to lead a church there, said he received further threats in the camp outside Dunkirk. "They [set] fire [to] my tent," he said.

He said he moved from the so-called "Jungle" camp in Calais to the Grande-Synthe camp near Dunkirk after one of the people-smugglers told him, "You're a Kurdish pastor? I've heard about you."

"He was really dangerous, like a gangster. I was really scared," he added.

The smugglers saw the cross round my neck, and said: 'You are Kurdish and you are a Christian? Shame on you.' They said to me, 'We will tell the Algerians and Moroccans to kill you.'

A convert to Christianity from a devout Muslim family, he left Kurdistan after receiving death threats. He said he was arrested and beaten by police for preaching in the streets, and twice received letters warning him that he would be killed if he did not return to Islam.

"In the mosque the imams talked about me, and my father, and my little brother, who became a Christian too... The imam talked about us – 'they are kafir [unbelievers], they have to die,' from the stage, into the mosque microphone. My father [a Muslim] was filled with shame," he said. "They were taught bad things about us in the mosque: 'The Christians are kafir.' Of course, they [also] say you are slaves to Israel, to the American people."

Within his family, five of his close relatives also became Christians, he said. This strained some relationships, including with his father and two brothers, who are imams. He said one of his brothers supports ISIS, which, he said, has "definitely, definitely" created sleeper cells in Kurdistan.

He said his elderly father also tried to kill him, entering his bedroom one night with a knife. He left home the evening that four men, whom he described as having long beards and belonging to IS, came to his family home and asked where he was. He heard his mother lie for him, saying he was not at home, and escaped through the back door without the opportunity to say goodbye to her.

He said he had flown from Kurdistan to Turkey and paid around US\$10,000 to cross the Mediterranean in the bottom of a boat packed with 56 others, including women and children. He also said he had experienced kindness, as he and a friend made their way through Europe from Greece, through Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. They travelled by bus and train and walked other stretches of the journey.

"The people were really friendly and some people, when they saw us, they cried. I cried too. I cried all the time, because I missed my family and my country," he said. "We went to Serbia. We were really tired; we didn't take a shower for a long time. I don't remember how long for, but we were really dirty. My whole body smelled really badly.

"When I was in Austria ... this family said: 'Stay with us in our house.' They're a really, really nice family. We [he was travelling with another Kurd] took a shower and we talked about our situation. I'm still in contact with them now."

He added that the help they received, such as sharing food, was what he had done for the Syrian refugees who flocked to Kurdistan after the outbreak of civil war.

He said an Evangelical church in France had provided him with water, heating and clothes and had paid for him to stay in a hotel for a while.

He said one reason he wanted to reach Britain, rather than remain in France, however, was that he was scared following the gruesome murder of Fr. Jacques Hamel in northern France in July at the hands of two young men who had pledged allegiance to IS.

Now seeking asylum in Britain, he said that when he gets permission to work, he would like to be a missionary and lead a Kurdish church in the UK. His church in Kurdistan,

which was made up of converts from Islam, was closed down by the authorities, but he said that he now feels safe in Britain.

Asked about how he felt about having to smuggle in illegally, he said: "Do you have another choice? No. What do you have to do? You have to get to [the] UK. With yourself alone? You cannot. You have to find one person to get you in the lorry. I know it's the wrong way, but what do you do?"

Trial of a Moroccan man who attempted to burn down several French churches

by Didier Descouens & Thierry Descouens

HRWF (22.10.2016) - On 20th October 2016 began the trial of a Moroccan jihadist who attempted to burn down several French churches.

On 19th September 2016, a 22-year-old Moroccan man was reported to have set fire to two churches in Millau, in southern France: the Sacré-Coeur church and the Notre-Dame de l'Espinasse, 400 meters away. French police then placed the third church in Millau under surveillance and at 5.00 pm arrested the man as he attempted to burn that church down as well.

Leaders of the parish reported that the man had made frequent visits to the first church and they had noticed him behaving strangely. French authorities have indicated that the man is already known to them for previous arson attacks in Paris and Millau.

The police did not communicate on these acts of vandalism and the name of the perpetrator was not revealed in the French media.

Sources: Barnabas Fund – Centre Presse Aveyron – Journal de Millau

FRANKREICH: FECRIS, eine fragwürdige NGO zu 100% von der französischen Regierung finanziert

Stellungnahme von CAP am OSCE ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warschau

Lesen Sie den ganzen Artikel auf <http://www.hrwf.eu> und <http://www.foref-europe.org>

CAP (27.09.2016) - Die *Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers Pour la Liberté de Conscience* (Koordination der Vereine und Individuen für die Gewissensfreiheit) wurde im Jahr 2000 ins Leben gerufen, um religiöse Minderheiten gegen Diskriminierung in Frankreich und Europa zu verteidigen. Die *Coordination* ist eine von den Vereinten Nationen anerkannte NGO.

Monsieur Valls, der amtierende Premierminister Frankreichs, erklärte vor einigen Wochen in der französischen Nationalversammlung, dass kein Rechtsbegriff für das Wort "Sekte" (bzw. "Kult") existiere.

Das Ministerium des französischen Premierministers finanziert dennoch zu 100% einen Verein namens FECRIS (European Federation of Research and Information Centers on Sectarianism), die vom Europarat und den Vereinten Nationen bereits als NGO anerkannt wurde. Laut seinen Statuten ist es das Ziel dieses Vereins, "Sekten bzw. Kulte oder Guru als eine Organisation oder ein Individuum, die Glaubenslehren und Verhaltenstechniken eigennützig missbrauchen" zu identifizieren.

Wie kann ein Premierminister in Frankreich erklären, dass es keinen Rechtsbegriff für Sekte bzw. Kult gibt, und gleichzeitig zu 100% eine NICHT-REGIERUNGSORGANISATION finanzieren, dessen Ziel im Aufzeigen von Sekten oder Kulturen besteht. Darüberhinaus erwähnen die Statuten von FECRIS, dass "die Arbeit des Vereins weder religiös noch politisch" ist.

Wenn die Arbeit von FECRIS nicht religiös ist und behauptet wird, in religiöser Hinsicht neutral zu sein, wie erklärt dann der Verein, dass eine in einem säkularen Staat (Frankreich) registrierte Organisation massiv von den öffentlichen Geldern französischer Steuerzahler finanziert wird, während sein Vize-Präsident, Alexander Dvorkin, ein russischer Staatsbürger, für seine Anti-Sektenaktivitäten vom Patriarchen der Russisch-Orthodoxen Kirche gesegnet und bezahlt wird. Dieselbe Russisch-Orthodoxe Kirche verfolgte jahrelang religiöse Minderheiten in Russland gemeinsam mit Putin.

Wie kann Alexander Dvorkin, der Vizepräsident von FECRIS, Falun Gong attackieren, während die Verfolgung dessen Mitglieder bereits ausführlich in den Berichten der Vereinten Nationen seit dem Jahr 2000 denunziert wird?

Wie kann Frankreich weiterhin einen Verein wie FECRIS finanzieren, der sogar von den Vereinten Nationen als verfolgt anerkannte Gruppen wie Falun Gong angreift?

Selbst der amtierende Premierminister Frankreichs, Monsieur Valls, brachte sein tiefstes Bedauern über die Situation der Falun Gong-Praktizierenden in China zum Ausdruck, als er noch Mitglied der Nationalversammlung war. Zum damaligen Zeitpunkt, thematisierte er das Problem des Schicksals von Falun Gong-Praktizierenden in China beim französischen Außenministerium.

Vor einigen Jahren griffen FECRIS und dessen Mitgliedsvereine eine italienische Soziologin an, da ihr Bericht über eine bestimmte religiöse Minderheit nicht mit den Erwartungen von FECRIS übereinstimmte. Nun attackiert FECRIS eine Minderheit in der Ukraine, wie Human Rights Without Frontiers vor kurzem berichtete.

Hiermit fordern wir den französischen Premierminister Monsieur Valls auf, die finanzielle Unterstützung von FECRIS einzustellen und dem Verein damit in den Status einer Nicht-Regierungsorganisation (NGO) wieder zurückzuführen.

ФРАНЦИЯ: FECRIS – НЕПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ, ФИНАНСИРУЕМАЯ ФРАНЦУЗСКИМ ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВОМ

**Заявление Координации ассоциаций и отдельных лиц по вопросам
свободы совести на Совещании ОБСЕ по учету человеческого измерения**

Координация ассоциаций и частных лиц по вопросам свободы совести
(27.09.2016) – <http://www.osce.org/odihr/268651?download=true> – Координация

ассоциаций и частных лиц по вопросам свободы совести была создана в 2000 году для защиты религиозных меньшинств от дискриминации во Франции и в Европе.

Координация является неправительственной организацией, признанной ООН.

На собрании Национальной Ассамблеи, состоявшемся несколько недель назад, нынешний премьер-министр Франции, г-н Вальс, напомнил, что во Франции не существует юридического определения слова «секта / культ».

Тем не менее, департамент Премьер-Министра Франции полностью (на 100%) финансирует Ассоциацию FECRIS (Европейскую федерацию центров по исследованию и информированию о сектантстве), которая признана Советом Европы и ООН как неправительственная организация, целью которой, согласно ее Уставу, является выявление «секты / культа, организации гуру или физического лица, неправомерно использующего убеждения и поведенческие методы для собственной выгоды».

Как Премьер-Министр может заявлять, что нет никакого юридического определения секты / культа во Франции и в то же время на 100% финансировать НЕПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННУЮ ассоциацию, цель которой состоит в том, чтобы указывать на «секты / культы»?

Кроме того, в своем Уставе FECRIS говорит, что «действия Федерации не являются ни религиозными, ни политическими».

Если действие FECRIS не является религиозным и претендует на то, чтобы быть нейтральным в этом отношении, тогда как данная структура может объяснить факт, что организация, зарегистрированная в секулярном государстве – во Франции – массово финансируется за счет средств всех налогоплательщиков Франции, в то время как ее вице-президент Александр Дворкин, гражданин России, благословляется и финансируется Патриархом Русской Православной Церкви за свою анти-сектантскую деятельность. Русская Православная Церковь вместе с г-ном Путиным уже в течение долгих лет преследует религиозные меньшинства на территории России.

Кроме того, некоторое время назад Александр Дворкин подверг жесткой критике Фалуныгун.

Как вице-президент FECRIS Александр Дворкин, может атаковать Фалуныгун, в то время как преследование членов этой группы было широко осуждено в рамках докладов ООН, начиная с 2000 года?

Как Франция может пойти на финансирование такой ассоциации как FECRIS, атакующей группу Фалуныгун, преследования которой признаны ООН?

Даже нынешний Премьер-Министр Франции, г-н Вальс, будучи членом Национальной Ассамблеи, выразил свою глубокую озабоченность положением Фалуныгун в Китае. В то же время он и Министерство иностранных дел Франции подняли вопрос о судьбе практикующих Фалуныгун в Китае.

Несколько лет назад, FECRIS и ее члены-ассоциации напали на итальянского социолога, потому что ее доклад о конкретных религиозных меньшинствах не соответствовал ожиданиям FECRIS и итальянской анти-сектантской / культовой ассоциации.

Как недавно сообщила организация «Права человека без границ», теперь FECRIS атакует группу меньшинств в Украине.

В связи с этим мы просим Премьер-Министра Франции, г-на Вальса, положить конец финансовой поддержке FECRIS, вернув ей статус НЕПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННОЙ организации.

FRANCE: FECRIS, una ONG 100% finanziata dal governo francese

Dichiarazione di CAP all'OSCE/ODIHR

A cura di Raffaella Di Marzio.

CAP (27.09.2016). *The Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers Pour la Liberté de Conscience* (Coordination of Associations and Individuals for Freedom of Conscience) è stata fondata nel 2000 per difendere le minoranze religiose dalle discriminazioni in Francia e in Europa ed è riconosciuta dalle Nazioni Unite.

Il Sig. Valls, Primo Ministro del governo francese, ha ribadito, poche settimane fa, che «in Francia non c'è alcuna definizione legale di 'setta'» Tuttavia, il Dipartimento del primo ministro finanzia al 100% un'associazione chiamata FECRIS (European Federation of Research and Information Centers on Sectarianism), riconosciuta dal Consiglio d'Europa e dalle Nazioni Unite come ONG, che si propone di identificare come «setta o guru l'organizzazione o l'individuo che abusa delle persone utilizzando credenze e pratiche per scopi personali». Come può un primo ministro affermare che non c'è alcuna definizione legale di "setta" e, nello stesso tempo, finanziare una ONG come la FECRIS che ha come scopo proprio quello di identificare le "sette"?

La FECRIS dichiara di non essere un'organizzazione religiosa e politica: ma come può essere vero questo, se in Francia è finanziata da uno stato laico (con le tasse dei cittadini) e il suo vicepresidente, Alexander Dvorkin, un cittadino russo, è finanziato e benedetto dal Patriarca della Chiesa Ortodossa Russa per le sue attività antisette? Si tratta della stessa Chiesa Ortodossa che, in collaborazione con Putin, perseguita da anni le minoranze religiose in Russia.

Inoltre, un po' di tempo fa Dvorkin ha attaccato e criticato anche Falung Gong. Come può fare una cosa simile, mentre la sorte di Falun Gong e la persecuzione dei suoi membri è oggetto di innumerevoli denunce presentate alle Nazioni Unite fin dal 2000? E come può la Francia continuare a finanziare questa ONG?

Pochi anni fa la FECRIS e le sue associazioni federate hanno attaccato una sociologa italiana solo perché aveva dichiarato di non condividere quanto la FECRIS, e le associazioni italiane che ne fanno parte, affermavano a proposito di una minoranza religiosa. Ora, la FECRIS sta attaccando un gruppo in Ucraina, come recentemente ha denunciato Human Rights Without Frontiers.

Noi perciò chiediamo al Sig. Valls, primo ministro francese, di mettere fine al finanziamento della FECRIS restituendole il suo status di organizzazione NON GOVERNATIVA.

FECRIS, a questionable NGO 100% financed by the French government

Statement by CAP at the OSCE/ ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw

CAP (27.09.2016) - <http://www.osce.org/odihr/268651?download=true> - The Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers Pour la Liberté de Conscience (Coordination of Associations and Individuals for Freedom of Conscience) was created in 2000 to defend religious minorities against discrimination in France and in Europe.

The Coordination is a NGO that is recognized by the UN.

Mr. Valls, the current Prime Minister of France, recalled some weeks ago at the National Assembly that in France there is no legal definition of the word « sect/cult ».

However, the department of French PM fully finances (100%) an association called FECRIS (European Federation of Research and Information Centers on Sectarianism), which is recognized by the Council of Europe and the UN as a NGO and the objective of which is, according to its bylaws, to identify « as a sect/cult or a guru the organization or the individual which misuses beliefs and behavioral techniques for his own benefit ».

How can a Prime Minister declare that there is no legal definition of a sect/ cult in France and at the same time finance at the level of 100% a NON-GOVERNMENTAL association whose objective is to point at "sects/cults"?

Moreover, FECRIS says in its bylaws that « the action of the Federation is neither religious nor political ».

If the action of FECRIS is not religious and claims to be neutral in this regard, how can it explain that an organization registered in a secular state – France – is massively financed with the money of all French tax-payers, while its vice-president, Alexander Dvorkin, a Russian citizen is blessed and financed by the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church for its anti-sect activities. This same Russian Orthodox Church which, along with Putin, has been persecuting religious minorities for years in Russia.

Moreover, some time ago, Alexander Dvorkin fiercely criticized Falun Gong.

How can Alexander Dvorkin, vice-president of FECRIS, attack Falun Gong while the persecution of its members has been extensively denounced in UN reports since the years 2000?

How can France go on financing an association like FECRIS which attacks a group like Falun Gong whose persecutions are recognized by the UN?

Even the current Prime Minister of France, Mr Valls, had expressed his deep concerns about the situation of Falun Gong practitioners in China when he was a member of the National Assembly. At that time, he had raised the issue of the fate of the Falun Gong practitioners in China with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France.

A few years ago, FECRIS and its member associations have attacked an Italian sociologist because her report about a specific religious minority was not in line with the expectations of FECRIS and Italian anti-sect/cult associations.

Now, FECRIS attacks a minority group in Ukraine, as *Human Rights Without Frontiers* has recently reported.

We therefore ask Mr Valls, France's Prime Minister, to put an end to the financial support of FECRIS, sending it back to its status of NON GOVERNMENTAL organisation.

Statement about Miviludes and Caimades at the OSCE/ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting

CAP (26.09.2016) - <http://www.osce.org/odihr/270421?download=true> - CAP is an association created in 2000 to unite minority religions in Europe to counter discrimination concerning the right to freedom of conscience and belief. It has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. For years France has put in place a discriminatory apparatus of fight against minorities of religion or belief stigmatized as "sects".

Since 2009, the Inter-ministerial Mission of Vigilance and Fight against Sectarian Deviances (MIVILUDES) has held a repository of records on hundreds of movements it characterized as "sectarian" on the sole basis of denunciations or complaints against minority belief movements. These records are provided by MIVILUDES to Judges, Prosecutors, personnel dealing with Youth and Family matters, Ministries and other officials.

In parallel, training sessions on "sects" are regularly delivered to these officials, in particular Judges and Police forces. A special anti-sect Task Force has been created, CAIMADES (Assistance and Intervention Unit for Sectarian Drifts), within the Central Direction of the Judiciary Police which undertakes investigations as soon as an individual is suspected to belong to a "sect".

Since its creation in 2009, this Task Force has proceeded to biased investigations upon the denunciations received by MIVILUDES, where the members of minorities were systematically presumed guilty.

CAP received a number of testimonies over the years which evidence their prejudice, such people suspected of shamanistic practices whose homes were raided and were put in custody, groups of persons denounced to MIVILUDES as "dangerous sects" who were interrogated and put under pressure to denounce their "guru", others denounced as being "gurus" who were put in preventive detention for up to 18 months, etc.

The last testimony and request of assistance received by CAP was from a man of Indian origin residing in Canada. His girlfriend in France was organizing meditation seminars and was denounced to MIVILUDES as such. During his last visit to her, they were part of group of 6-7 people in meditation when a whole police force raided and arrested them. They were all armed and behaved as if they were dealing with terrorists.

He was explained that the charges against him were that he "had used fraudulent techniques to manipulate weak minds to defraud them of their money" and "had used Indian techniques and created mysterious Indian atmosphere to influence these people" and that he "belonged to the sect of sex guru OSHO".

This man could not understand the accusations since "guru" in India simply means religious leader and a sect is simply a religious denomination. He was put in preventive detention for six months with prohibition to leave France and has been waiting for trial for now two years.

The apparatus set by France to fight against minorities of religion or belief is unduly repressive and discriminatory, and should be disbanded.

We respectfully ask OSCE to remind the French authorities of their obligations concerning freedom of religion or belief and the rights of minorities in France.

Rise of Islamophobic political discourses: a threat to the tolerance in Europe

European Forum of Muslim Women (26.09.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2dyIfo0> -

Introduction

In past decades, Islamophobia has been on the rise in Europe. Multiple reports have pointed to the disproportionate impact of such discriminations on Muslim women. Many Muslim Women are notably more easily identified to their faith through their clothing such as the headscarf.

With the rising Islamophobia in Europe, we also notice a dangerous rise in Islamophobic public discourse on behalf of policy-makers and parties from the entire political spectrum.

We can see how the framing of Muslim women and their religious belief, notably in how they choose to dress, as antagonistic to European societies, has succeeded in marginalizing them in the public opinion and moreover, has played a key part in fostering discrimination, intolerance and hate speech and crimes against these women.

Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women

Dangerous amalgams by politicians has had a direct impact on Muslim women in daily aspects of their lives, such as how they choose to dress, or their access to employment or higher studies. These amalgams contribute to the construction of a false image of the Muslim women that choose to wear religious garb and associates them with the actions of marginal acts of extremism and terror, or with a certain perception of Islam.

Spread of disruptive discriminatory political discourses

It is apparent now, that discrimination and harassment against Muslim woman has become a tolerated norm. Former UK Prime Minister David Cameron famously declared that "Muslim women were traditionally submissive". In France, current Prime Minister Manuel Valls has declared that the headscarf must become an essential fight for the French Republic. Similarly another member of Valls' French government, F. Rossignol ironically minister for women's rights has compared on live television, Muslim women who choose to wear the headscarf to "Negros" that choose slavery. France in particular seems to have institutionalized a witch-hunt against Muslim women, with MP Manuel Valls also declaring that there should be a ban on headscarves in universities, while former President Nicolas Sarkozy has stated "we don't want women wearing headscarves". In neighboring Germany, Bavarian Interior minister Joachim Herrmann declared "It is clear that the burqa isn't the right article of clothing for the population in Germany," In the UK, UKIP chief Nigel Farage said about Muslim women wearing the burqa that they were "oppressed" and were a potential security threat". In Belgium, Flemish deputy Nadia Sminate declared on the burkini: "I don't think women, in the name of faith, would want to wear such a monstrosity".

Consequences of Islamophobic public discourse

These are only excerpts from a plethora of declarations and statements by numerous European politicians. Such rhetoric definitely liberates islamophobic speech and crime across society, but more worryingly; it systematically fails at involving the main subject of interest in the discussion. All these declarations, speak for Muslim women rather than with Muslim women. They are labeled, as oppressed and unfit to decide for themselves, personified into one homogenous group, a dangerous, oppressed group that we must regulate and legislate against or worse, that we must save and emancipate. This infantilization and personification of Muslim women is indeed deplorable and symptomatic of a profound misunderstanding of Muslim women by the political class. The infantilization also sends us back to the outrageous comparison made by French minister Rossignol, which not only strips women of all their freedoms (including freedom of expression and freedom of belief) and human rights but goes as far as denying their condition of fully fledged free human beings.

This type of discourse, which condemns the influence and social pressure in poor neighborhoods, paradoxically carries another form of social pressure, from the state this time, which creates an even stronger exclusion of Muslim women.

Such discourses are scarcely ever condemned by higher European authorities or by other parties in the political spectrum. The danger lays in the fact that they are never questioned and as such, may be taking for face value as factual truths.

Conclusions

France can be viewed as a prime example of a drifting state when it comes to the fundamental rights of all its citizens. France's Muslim minority, and more particularly women, has been facing relentless harassment by policy-makers and politicians at large. It is noted that all mainstream parties mutually agree on discriminating positions regarding Muslim Women.

European Forum of Muslim Women's statement

What we particularly deplore at the European Forum of Muslim Women, is the total lack of reprimand or sanction from the international community as such stigmatization goes on, despite multiple reports by Human Rights NGO's. We also deplore the existing double standards of guarding human rights and gender equality of all women, regardless of religion and faith.

We recognize that a wide-spreading conducive environment availing the rise of Islamophobia is fueling:

- An expression of sexism and gender equality (e.g. through increasing the gender gap in employment amongst Muslim women)
- A rampant expression of Gender Based Violence based on one's religion (e.g. hate crime against religious groups) A tolerated and institutionalized violation of women's human rights (violating the freedom of expression and right to a private life, right to security etc.)

European Forum of Muslim Women's recommendations

We hence urge all the present country delegations to take heed of the issue of increased institutionalized discriminations through public discourses, more pressingly in countries such as France where it has become rampant, and to take the available means to hold such countries accountable to their commitment to fundamental rights.

We hence urge all the present country delegations to acknowledge institutionalized discriminations and to hold such countries accountable to their commitment to fundamental rights.

We urge country delegations to adopt a code of conduct for political representatives.

We urge all states to protect the rights of all women, including Muslim women, in their freedom of expression, of thought and of religion.

Finally, we acknowledge that this issue requires intersectional response, and are looking forward to all civil society actors in achieving equality for all women regardless of their background.

Vandalism against Catholic churches

HRWF (08.09.2016) – The website of [Intolerance Against Christians](#) has published some cases of vandalism committed against Catholic churches in France in August.

Vandalism and attempted arson in Hautmont church

August 27, 2016: Police opened an investigation after a bystander reported smelling smoke from the church of Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption. Investigators discovered damages statues, as well as missals, songbooks, and wreaths knocked to the floor. The altar tablecloth was burnt, but the fire did not spread to the rest of the church. Source: [La Voix du Nord](#)

City church in Indre-et-Loire vandalized

August 14, 2016: The church of Notre Dame in Vouvray was vandalized with black spray paint during the weekend of August 14, 2016 with a message accusing the church of fundamentalism and calling Christianity a sect: "Intégriste Christianize = Secte." An investigation was initiated. Source: [L'Observatoire de la Christianophobie](#)

Statue of Virgin Mary beheaded in Alpes de Haute-Provence

August 14, 2016: During the weekend of August 14th, a hiker discovered the chapel door forced open and the statue of Notre-Dame-de-la-Salette removed from its display, decapitated, and left outside the building with its head at its feet. Police are investigating. Source: [Dici](#)

Stained glass windows destroyed in church

August 14, 2016: At least 40 stones were thrown at four stained glass windows in a church in Delme, possibly using slingshots from outside the church. Damage is estimated to be 20,000 euros. Police are investigating. Source: [Le Républicain Lorrain](#)

France burkini: Highest court suspends ban

France's highest administrative court has suspended a ban on full-body "burkini" swimsuits that was imposed in a town on the Mediterranean coast.

BBC (26.08.2016) - <http://bbc.in/2bSIOrM> - The ban in Villeneuve-Loubet "seriously and clearly illegally breached fundamental freedoms", it found.

The ruling could set a precedent for up to 30 other towns that imposed bans on their beaches, chiefly on the Riviera.

At least three mayors have already said they will keep the bans in their towns.

The court will make a final decision later on the bans' legality.

Correspondents in France say the court's decision means that all the bans on burkinis are likely now to be overturned,

But town hall authorities in Nice and Frejus, as well as in the Corsican village of Sisco, have vowed to keep the bans in place.

Nice saw a devastating attack by a follower of so-called Islamic State in July while Sisco witnessed clashes this month between villagers and Muslim bathers.

A human rights group, the Human Rights League (LDH), and an anti-Islamophobia association (CCIF), brought the ban in Villeneuve-Loubet to the court's attention.

Patrice Spinosi, a lawyer for the LDH, said outside court that people who had been fined could claim their money back.

But the town's mayor, Lionnel Luca, said: "We need to decide if we want a smiley, friendly version of sharia law on our beaches or if we want the rules of the [French] Republic to be implemented."

'Public humiliation'

Amnesty International welcomed the court's decision. The human rights group's Europe director, John Dalhuisen, said it had "drawn a line in the sand".

He said: "French authorities must now drop the pretence that these measures do anything to protect the rights of women.

"These bans do nothing to increase public safety but do a lot to promote public humiliation."

On Thursday, Prime Minister Manuel Valls described the burkini as "a political sign of religious proselytising".

The French Republic was "not at war with Islam", he argued, but "protecting [Muslims] against discrimination".

The burkini bans have ignited fierce debate in France and worldwide.

Opinion polls suggested most French people backed the bans, which town mayors said were protecting public order and secularism.

Muslims said they were being targeted unfairly.

The "burkini bans" actually make no mention of the burkini.

The rules simply say beachwear must be respectful of good public manners and the principle of secularism.

The controversy intensified after pictures and video of police appearing to enforce the ban by making a woman take off an item of clothing prompted widespread anger.

The court said local authorities did not have the power to restrict individual liberties in this way without "proven risk" to public order.

What is a burkini?

- A burkini is a full-body swimsuit that covers everything except the face, hands and feet
- The name is a mix of the words "burka" and "bikini"
- Unlike burkas, burkinis leave the face free
- Burkinis are marketed to Muslim women as a way for them to swim in public while adhering to strict modesty edicts
- The French bans have referred to religious clothing and as they were loosely phrased, came to be understood to include full-length clothing and head coverings worn on the beach - not just burkini swimsuits

Why have the bans been imposed?

After a militant Islamist ploughed a lorry into families on the seafront at Nice on 14 July, killing 86 people, the city's authorities said a ban was "a necessity".

Local leaders have described their actions as appropriate and proportionate.

But the bans are not just a response to a spate of deadly jihadist attacks on French soil. France has long-standing laws on secularism, and the Nice ban focused on "correct dress, respectful of accepted customs and secularism, as well as rules of hygiene and of safety in public bathing areas".

What French law says on secularism and religious clothing

- In 2010, France became the first European country to ban the full-face veil in public
 - A 2004 law forbids the wearing of religious emblems in schools and colleges
 - The 1905 constitution aims to separate Church and state. It enshrines secularism in education but also guarantees the freedom of religion and freedom to exercise it. The original text made no reference to clothing
-

Corsica brawl: Five hurt in clashes on French beach

A beach brawl on the French island of Corsica between three families of North African descent and local youths has left five people injured and three cars burnt out, regional prosecutors say.

BBC (14.08.2016) - The brawl on Saturday began after the families objected to photos being taken, witnesses say. Stones and bottles were thrown.

Reports say some of the brawlers were armed with hatchets and harpoons.

Unrest continued on Sunday at a protest in the regional capital.

The head of the regional executive, Gilles Simeoni, has appealed for calm.

The incident took place on a creek near the village of Sisco, Upper Corsica.

Tension has grown this summer between local communities and Muslims of North African origin in the south of France, especially following the massacre of 85 people by a lorry driver in the city of Nice on 14 July.

At the end of last month, an outlawed Corsican paramilitary group warned Islamist militants against targeting their island.

Earlier this week, the resort town of Cannes controversially banned the wearing of the Islamic bathing costume for women, the burkini.

'Hatchets and harpoon'

Three of the injured have been released from hospital in Bastia and the other two were due to be sent home shortly, prosecutors said in a [statement](#) (in French).

They described the brawl as being of "great violence".

French media report that the trouble began around 18:15 (16:15 GMT) when tourists took photos of women bathing. Reports say the women were wearing burkinis.

Ange Vivoni, mayor of Sisco, told reporters that when a local teenager was stabbed, the victim's "family and all the people of Sisco got together".

According to [the newspaper Le Figaro \(in French\)](#), some of the older men in the bathing party had attacked a group of local teenagers on the beach with hatchets.

When the teenagers' parents arrived from the village, two of them were reportedly injured with harpoons. Villagers allegedly then set alight cars belonging to the bathers.

Another French daily, [Le Monde, reports \(in French\)](#) that one man was injured twice by a harpoon after his son was beaten up. Stones and bottles were also thrown.

Two fathers from among the bathing party were also injured during the brawl, the paper adds.

According to Le Monde newspaper, the three involved in the brawl are all Muslims.

Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve condemned the violence and also appealed for calm.

Hundreds of people held a protest in Bastia, heading for a housing estate, where some of those involved in Saturday's brawl are said to live.

Riot police could be seen pushing them back and tear gas was reportedly fired when stones were thrown.

Priest's murder a 'desecration of French democracy', says Hollande

Mehdi Fedouach, AFP

French President François Hollande described the killing of Father Jacques Hamel by two men swearing allegiance to the Islamic State (IS) group as a "desecration of French democracy", in an address to the nation on Tuesday evening.

France24 (26.07.2016) - <http://f24.my/2a88Lam> - Two attackers killed Hamel and seriously wounded at least one other hostage in a church in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, near Rouen early Tuesday before they were shot dead by police.

The two assailants entered the church during Mass, taking the 86-year-old priest and four other people hostage, including two nuns. Police said the men killed the priest by slitting his throat.

An interior ministry spokesperson said a second hostage was "between life and death".

Pierre-Henry Brandet, the spokesperson for the interior ministry, said the identities of the attackers remained unclear, but that anti-terrorism prosecutors would lead the investigation.

He told reporters at the scene that the two assailants had been killed by the BRI, a specialised police group, as they came out of the church building.

Brandet said bomb squad officers aided by sniffer dogs had been scouring the church for any possible explosives.

IS group claims attack

The IS group claimed responsibility for the deadly assault in a statement via their Amaq news agency, saying two of their "soldiers" had responded "to the call to target" Western countries.

Police sources told French media that one of the two perpetrators was on one of France's terror-watch lists, known as the "fiche S". The man had been put under house arrest after attempting to reach Syria last year, the sources told AFP and iTele.

French police have arrested one person in connection with the attack, a source close to the inquiry said.

'We will stand together'

In an address to the nation on Tuesday evening, Hollande renewed his call for the people of France to stand together in the fight against terrorism. He added that the

government was determined to confront the jihadist threat, and would deploy all the material and human resources necessary.

However, Hollande cautioned against restricting civil liberties, saying that waiving constitutional freedoms would weaken the unity of the nation.

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls also expressed "horror at the barbaric attack on a church".

"The whole of France and all Catholics are wounded. We will stand together," he wrote on Twitter.

The archbishop of Rouen, Dominique Lebrun, said in a statement: "I cry out to God with all men of goodwill. I invite non-believers to join in the cry. (...) The Catholic Church has no other arms besides prayer and brotherhood among men."

At the Vatican, the pope's office condemned the "barbarous killing" of the priest, saying the crime was even more heinous because it took place in a sacred place.

The incident comes as France is under high alert after an [attack in Nice](#) that killed 84 people and a string of deadly attacks last year claimed by the IS group.

The Nice attack was the third major strike on France in 18 months. Two attacks in Germany [claimed](#) by the IS group since then have also increased jitters in Europe.

After the attack in Nice, France extended a [state of emergency](#), giving police extra powers to carry out searches and place people under house arrest for another six months.

It was the fourth time the security measures have been extended since the IS group jihadists [struck Paris](#) in November, killing 130 people at restaurants, the Bataclan concert hall and the national stadium.

A Muslim convert to Christianity in Guinea denied asylum in France

The European Court asks France not to deport her during the Court's proceedings

HRWF (05.07.2016) - A Guinean national married to a Christian and facing violent reprisals from her Muslim father and brothers sought asylum in France in 2014, where she was arrested and served with an order for immediate return to Guinea. Her asylum application was fast-tracked but was rejected. The ECtHR directed the French Government not to deport her for the duration of the Court's proceedings. The Court held that there would be a violation of Article 3 (torture, inhuman, or degrading treatment) in the event of her removal to Guinea but that there had been no violation of Article 13 taken in conjunction with Article 3 in regards to lack of effective remedy in the French courts.

R.D. v. France (application no. 34648/14)

The applicant, Ms R.D., is a Guinean national who was born in 1993 and lives in Neuilly-sur-Seine (France). The case concerned the procedure for her deportation to Guinea. She is married to a Christian and has endured all sorts of violent reprisals on the part of her Muslim father and brothers.

Ms R.D., who is from Conakry (Guinea), states that her family are Muslim and her father an imam. In 2010 she met X, who is a Christian, and they kept their relationship secret. In March 2012 X asked for her hand in marriage. R.D.'s father categorically refused to allow his daughter to marry a non-Muslim. R.D.'s father and brothers threatened to kill her if she continued the relationship.

Ms R.D. ran away from home and took refuge at X's house. They married in November 2012, when she was three months' pregnant. In December 2012 her father, brothers and half-brothers burst into the house she shared with her husband, X. They beat her up and brought her back to her father's house by force. The police, who had been alerted by the neighbours, went to the house and found her tied to a tree. She was released and taken to hospital where she learnt that she had lost her child. She was kept in hospital for two months. She then took refuge with an uncle in a town 800 km from Conakry. Meanwhile, her father, an influential imam, had her husband arrested. Her in-laws' house was wrecked. When threatened with being discovered at her uncle's house, Ms R.D. fled. She left Guinea for France.

After arriving in France in February 2014 she sought help from associations in Reims in obtaining an address for administrative purposes so that she could lodge an asylum application. After being alerted by compatriots and fearing that her father would find her in France, she attempted to escape and was arrested at the Gare du Nord in Paris. On 28 April 2014 the authorities served her with an order for her immediate removal to Guinea and an administrative detention order. She unsuccessfully sought judicial review in the Paris Administrative Court. On 30 April 2014 she lodged an asylum application which was processed under the fast-track procedure and rejected. An appeal by Ms R.D. is still pending. On 13 May 2014 the Court decided to indicate to the Government, under Rule 39 of the Rules of Court (interim measures), not to deport R.D. to Guinea for the duration of the proceedings before it.

Ms R.D. alleged that enforcement of her deportation to Guinea would expose her to a risk of treatment contrary to Article 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Relying on Article 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention taken in conjunction with Article 3, she complained that, owing to the examination of her asylum application under the fast-track procedure, she had not had an effective remedy under French law by which to assert her complaint under Article 3.

Violation of Article 3 – in the event of Ms R.D.'s removal to Guinea

No violation of Article 13 taken in conjunction with Article 3

Interim measure (Rule 39 of the Rules of Court) - not to deport Ms R.D.- still in force until this judgment becomes final or until further order.

Just satisfaction: The applicant did not submit a claim for just satisfaction

A new wave of attacks against Catholics in France, Belgium

Catholic News Agency (02.06.2016) - <http://bit.ly/25DoMtW> - In recent weeks, Catholics in France and Belgium – countries still recovering from brutal ISIS attacks – have been hit with numerous acts of violence and aggression, including fires set in churches, an assault on a priest, the desecration of a tabernacle and the hacking of more than 100 Catholic websites.

In the French periodical La Provence, local priest Father Benoît Delabre reported that two weeks ago, the altar at the Church of St. Madeleine-de-l'Île was set fire in Martigues, about 800 kilometers south of Paris.

"The altar...is marble, which prevented the fire from spreading. I can't imagine what would have happened with a wooden altar. The consequences for our church would have been tragic."

He also said that on May 15, another unknown person desecrated the tabernacle which contained the consecrated hosts in the church at Jonquières in the same region. Additionally, Father Delabre himself was attacked last Sunday by a man he caught at the church door who appeared to be "trying to steal something."

"We know just how serious these attacks are on signs and persons because of their faith...The Catholic faith, its symbols and those that profess it, deserve to be respected just like every kind of religious expression that does not disturb the public order," he said.

Gaby Charroux, the mayor of Martigues, said in a statement that "thefts of every kind in churches in France are more and more frequent" and promised the police will curb the attacks.

The publication La Croix reported that in April, more than 100 websites of churches and congregations were hacked by suspected Tunisian cyber-jihadists who call themselves the Fallaga Team.

In Belgium, on the afternoon of May 24, two fires considerably damaged the church in Mont-Sainte-Geneviève which dates from the 16th century. The first one began in the sacristy. The fire fighters had barely left the scene after managing to control that fire when another much bigger fire in the church roof was reported.

The police from Hainut, 37 miles southeast of Brussels, are looking for the culprits.

Pope Francis: States should be secular, but protect religious freedom

By Mark Woods

Christian Today (17.05.2016) - <http://bit.ly/27QaZPk> - States must be secular, according to Pope Francis, and "Confessional states end badly."

Speaking to French journal La Croix and responding to a question about "laïcité", the French system of the separation of Church and state, Francis said: "I believe that a version of laïcité accompanied by a solid law guaranteeing religious freedom offers a framework for going forward."

He added: "If a Muslim woman wishes to wear a veil, she must be able to do so. Similarly, if a Catholic wishes to wear a cross. People must be free to profess their faith at the heart of their own culture, not merely at its margins."

France imposed a ban on Muslim women wearing a burqa to veil their faces in public in 2010. The ban was upheld by the European Court of Human Rights in 2014.

A move by Marks and Spencer to introduce "burkini" swimsuits was criticised by France's women's rights minister, Laurence Rossignol, who said: "What's at stake is social control over women's bodies. When brands invest in this Islamic garment market, they are shirking their responsibilities and are promoting women's bodies being locked up."

Pope Francis said in his La Croix interview: "The modest critique that I would address to France in this regard is that it exaggerates laïcité. This arises from a way of considering religions as sub-cultures rather than as fully-fledged cultures in their own right."

"I fear that this approach, which is understandable as part of the heritage of the Enlightenment, continues to exist. France needs to take a step forward on this issue in order to accept that openness to transcendence is a right for everyone."

Asked what he thought of France, the Pope said: "It is the eldest daughter of the Church, but not the most faithful!" He said he was fascinated by: "On one hand, that exaggerated laïcité, the heritage of the French Revolution, and on the other hand, so many great saints."

Financing for the 'de-radicalisation' of 'anti-sect' movements called into question

HRWF (02.03.2016) – Two prominent figures of de-radicalisation in France have put down their arms: one having not had her accreditation renewed and the other renouncing her mission for political reasons. They have left the scene, but it is difficult to assess whether they have in fact succeeded in their mission.

It is equally unclear whether these 'anti-sect' movements, whose objectives, mission and methodology have been frequently criticised for years, have simply lost credibility, provoking a gradual reduction of support coming from public funds. These have been practically their sole source of financial income (95% of their budget).

Transparency and efficiency of de-radicalisation in question

Dounia Bouzar and Sonia Imloul, two high priestesses of de-radicalisation, have left the key under the door, although it was their own organisations, the Centre for the Prevention of Abuse by Sects linked to Islam (the CPDSI in French) for the former and the House of Prevention for Families (or the MPF) for the latter, which used to sound the alarm to the Interior Ministry whenever a family member was potentially being radicalised.

Did these two structures have a really adequate response to the phenomenon of radicalisation, or did they just benefit from the theoretical and practical gap that existed on the subject? In any case, their methods, radically different from one another, have left many observers sceptical. Sonia Imloul, partisan of a 'cultural' (religious) approach, made an appeal to Salafists, whom she called 'quietists,' to direct their youth on the right path. As for Dounia Bouzar, she framed radicalisation as being in the grip of a cultish

influence, which operated more than 90% on the internet, and instructed families to remind their youth of childhood memories.

Natalie Goulet, the senator of Orne and president of the Commission of enquiry on jihadist networks, expressed surprise at the lack of evaluation of these missions: 'There is nothing, no numbers, no names. When Mme Bouzar, against whom I have nothing personally, announced that she had prevented 400 departures, what was the tool she used to confirm such a statement? With the 600 000 euro budget she had allocated to her organisation, it would have been logical that she could provide some proof.'

The affair has been closed for Sonia Imboul since last November: created in September 2014, the MPF did not have its support renewed. In the absence of tangible results that the organisation had claimed without sufficient documentation, the government decided not to renew its contract. Imboul had been subsidised for her activities to the tune of 35 000 euros and received families in an apartment in Aulnay-sous-Bois.

Dounia Bouzar announced that she would renounce her mission as a 'protest against the deprivation of nationality.'

Nathalie Goulet requested the security service of the Senate Finance Commission to lead an audit of the usage of funds that have been attributed to various structures that fight against radicalisation.

Anti-sect movements: the need and the interest

One could wonder whether anti-sect movements are actually needed and what is the interest of the state to finance organisations that are forever kept on life support by state institutions. Such questions are doubtless more and more shared by public officials, since government funding is slowly but surely drying up and not only in France.

In the last fifteen years, FECRIS (European Federation of Centers of Research and Information on Sectarianism) has been financed almost entirely by the French State in the form of special funding by the Prime Minister. Its ratio of public funding by the French State compared to its private memberships/ donations has averaged 90%. Last year, public funding to FECRIS and its affiliates in France continued to decrease: 25,000 EUR in 2015 compared to 32,200 EUR in 2014.

FECRIS has three member associations in France, which are also almost entirely funded by the French State or public institutions: UNADFI (National Union of Associations of Defence of the Family and the Individual) has averaged 96% public funding compared to its private memberships/ donations – GEMPPI (Study Group of Movements of Thought for the Protection of the Individual) 94% - CCMM 98% (Center Against Mental Manipulations). In 2015, UNADFI received 42,000 EUR against 45,000 EUR in 2014 and 46,000 EUR in 2013. CCMM got 17,500 EUR in 2015 against 18,400 EUR in 2014.

The purpose and activities of FECRIS affiliates and the founding association in France pose serious problems regarding freedom of religion or belief. Their writings and positions provide evidence that they lead an ideological crusade with public financing which cannot be reconciled either with the French Constitution or the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by France. The very mode of operation of FECRIS and its affiliates in France based on collecting and spreading one-sided reports and refusing dialogue with groups they label as 'sectarian' infringes upon the recommendations of tolerance and dialogue expressed by the United Nations Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief. Their readiness to make accusations and value judgments and to stigmatize religious or belief minorities can only instil prejudice and result in discrimination and violence. A number of leaders or spokespersons of FECRIS and its affiliates have been found guilty of defamation and hate speech.

The French State has better things to do than finance front organisations whose leaders and membership are motivated for personal or ideological reasons. There are weightier matters to consider in the face of international and French terrorism which threatens the security of tens of millions of French and protection of youth against jihadists who spread hatred, violence and bloodshed in the name of Islam.

(*) See **"Freedom of Religion or Belief: Anti-sect Movements and State Neutrality. A Case Study: FECRIS"** (394 pages) published by the Journal for the Study of Beliefs and Worldviews (Technische Universität Dresden, Germany) - <http://www.hrwf.net/images/reports/2012/2012fecrisbook.pdf>

France's official blindness to religion only masks religious hatred

French secularism, or laïcité, treats religion as a dirty little secret, and manifests itself as a restriction of public prayer or the open expression of religious identity



The Guardian (04.02.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1PyNe2H> - On Monday morning, without warning, a group of heavily armed French police descended on the Calais refugee camp to flatten a 100-metre buffer zone between the camp and the motorway. A church and a mosque were torn down, despite promises that they wouldn't be touched. It's all part of a wider effort by the French authorities to shift refugees into a new camp of numbered shipping containers, surrounded by a large wire fence.

This new camp affords the French a greater degree of administrative control – with biometric handprints being introduced as passes – and sucks refugees further into the French system. This can be seen as a tacit acknowledgment that the French have responsibility for processing their asylum claims in France.

But why don't the refugees want asylum in France? One reason is because many of them perceive Britain to have a stronger tradition of religious tolerance than France. And this often surprises the French, because they pride themselves on their much-discussed

notion of laïcité – roughly, secularism plus – so sacred a notion that it's enshrined in article one of the French constitution.

For its defenders, laïcité is a way of ensuring the state's systematic blindness when it comes to religion. It is an official pretence not to notice whether or where somebody prays. For its detractors, this supposed neutrality is nothing of the sort, but rather a cover for the eradication of religious visibility, indeed religious rights, from the public sphere. This week, both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch condemned the French police's human rights violations against Muslims.

Laïcité began as justification for eradicating the influence of the Catholic church – and involved the murder of thousands of priests during the revolution. It continues as a cover for discrimination against Muslims. It is no coincidence, for example, that the ban on the wearing of headscarves in public schools, a ban which also included Jewish boys wearing their kippot and Sikhs wearing their turbans, followed the electoral success of the far right in April 2002. Just as colour-blindness with respect to race is not the same thing as being anti-racist, so too laïcité is not the same thing as being anti-discriminatory. Indeed, this whole neutrality-as-blindness philosophy means that the French state won't even collect statistics about ethnicity or religion, thus refusing to evaluate, or even face, the extent of their problem. For example, how many North Africans are there in top positions? The French state won't say. Indeed, it won't even ask.

And it's this same official "blindness" that led the French police not to notice that the buildings they were destroying in Calais had any religious significance. As the Ethiopian pastor looked on, clutching a blue wooden cross he'd salvaged from the wreckage, the Gallic Robocops trampled all over his church, treating it as of no more emotional consequence than the disgusting Portaloos they were also removing. Religion's comfortable despisers may sneer, but faith is one of the few things that people in the camp have to cling on to. Not noticing this is not a form of neutrality.

Secularism can mean many different things. For some it is the simple separation of church and state: no bishops in the House of Lords, no religion test for political office etc. For others, secularism is something much more: purging religion from the public sphere. It's a bit like the Victorian attitude to sex: if you must do it, do it privately and don't talk about it. Here, secularism treats religion as a dirty little secret, and manifests itself as a restriction of public prayer or the open expression of religious identity. And that's about as neutral as the attitude to God taken by state communism.

In a recent survey in Le Journal du Dimanche, 56% of people said they would react badly if their daughter married a Muslim, 91% of people said that Jews in France "are very insular", and 56% that they "have a lot of power". State blindness isn't helping. Laïcité doesn't eradicate religious hatred. At best, it simply camouflages it. At worst, it provides it with an alibi.

Teen who stabbed French Jewish teacher cited IS group

France 24 (11.01.2016) - <http://f24.my/1PFftfH> - A teenager who stabbed a Jewish teacher in the southern French city of Marseille Monday is a Turkish citizen of Kurdish origin who told police he attacked in the name of the Islamic State (IS) group, according to a prosecutor.

The attack, which left the 35-year-old teacher with an injured hand and shoulder, occurred in broad daylight in the south of the city, Marseille prosecutor Brice Robin told reporters Monday.

The 15-year-old ethnic Kurd rushed the victim from behind and stabbed him in the shoulder, then chased after him for a few metres until he fell, Robin said.

The victim fended off the assailant using his arms and legs, as well as his "holy book", which was damaged in the scuffle, the prosecutor said.

The teenage suspect "has the profile of someone who was radicalised on the Internet", Robin told a press briefing.

"He claimed to have been acting for Daesh," Robin said, using the Arabic acronym for the IS group.

"You get the sense that he does not have a full grasp of the fundamentals of Islam," he added.

A good student radicalised online

The boy admitted to investigators that he planned to arm himself and kill police as soon as he is released, according to Robin.

The prosecutor said the teenager's family was unaware of his radicalisation and that he was a "good student".

"It appears there was a form of premeditation" with the intent of killing the victim because of his religion, Robin said.
