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Morocco Leads Foreign Funding for French Mosques

Morocco is the largest donor for the construction and maintenance of mosques in France, according to a report released by the French Senate based on figures provided by the French Ministry of the Interior.

By Sana Elouazi

Morocco World News (12.02.2018) - <http://bit.ly/2CkS8QG> - The report finds that between 2011 and 2016, the Moroccan government allocated EUR 6 million, including wages to imams, to help finance mosques in France, where the secularism forbids the state from funding the establishment of any places of worship, according to a French law issued in 1905.

Morocco ranks just ahead of Saudi Arabia—whose financing is estimated at about EUR 3.8 million—and Algeria, whose contribution amounted to some EUR 2 million.

These foreign investments represent only about 20 percent of financing for mosques in France, the remaining 80 percent came from the French Muslim community.

Whereas private donations from members of France's Muslim community fund the majority of small mosques, big mosques are usually funded by other Muslim states especially Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, and Turkey.

The report states that there are about 2,450 mosques in France, mainly located in major cities. Sixty-four percent of these mosques are less than 150 square meters.

Islam, 2nd largest religion in France

The report notes that there are between 3 and 6 million Muslims in France, among whom almost 2 million are practicing; this figure makes Islam the second largest religion in France.

A just-released opinion survey by Institut Français d'Opinion Publique (IFOP) reveals that 56 percent of French people believe that Islam is compatible with the values of their country, while 43 percent believe the opposite.

This indicator that illustrates that the integration of French Muslims within France is still a work in progress.

On the other hand, this same survey reveals that 70 percent of the population would not be in favor of creating a tax on halal products whose revenues would be used to finance French Muslim organisations.

In an interview with the French weekly newspaper Le Journal Du Dimanche (JDD), president Emmanuel Macron said that he will lay the foundations for the organization of Islam in France in the first half of this year.

“We are working on structuring Islam in France and also on how to explain it,” said Macron.

He added that his objective is to “find the heart of secularism, the possibility of being able to believe as not to believe in order to preserve national cohesion and the possibility of having free consciences.”
