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French politicians, celebrities condemn 'new anti-Semitism'

France24 (23.04.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2gQPdeZ> - More than 250 French dignitaries and stars have signed a manifesto denouncing a "new anti-Semitism" marked by "Islamist radicalisation" after a string of killings of Jews, published in the Sunday edition of *Le Parisien* newspaper.

The country's half-a-million-plus Jewish community is the largest in Europe but has been hit by a wave of emigration to Israel in the past two decades, partly due to anti-Semitism.

"We demand that the fight against this democratic failure that is anti-Semitism becomes a national cause before it's too late. Before France is no longer France," reads [the manifesto](#) co-signed by politicians from the left and right including ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy and celebrities like actor Gérard Depardieu.

The signatories condemned what they called a "quiet ethnic purging" driven by rising Islamist radicalism particularly in working-class neighbourhoods. They also accused the media of remaining silent on the matter.

"In our recent history, 11 Jews have been assassinated – and some tortured – by radical Islamists because they were Jewish," the declaration said.

The murders referenced reach as far back as 2006 and include [the 2012 deadly shooting](#) of three schoolchildren and a teacher at a Jewish school by Islamist gunman Mohammed Merah in the southwestern city of Toulouse.

Three years later, an associate of the two brothers who massacred a group of cartoonists at satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo killed four people in [a hostage-taking at a Jewish supermarket](#) in Paris.

In April 2017, an Orthodox Jewish woman in her sixties was thrown out of the window of her Paris flat by a neighbour shouting "Allahu Akhbar" (God is greatest).

The latest attack to rock France took place last month when two perpetrators stabbed an 85-year-old Jewish woman 11 times before setting her body on fire, in [a crime treated as anti-Semitic](#).

Her brutal death sent shockwaves through France and prompted 30,000 people to join [a march in her memory](#).

Condemning the "dreadful" killing, President [Emmanuel Macron](#) reiterated his determination to fighting anti-Semitism.

"French Jews are 25 times more at risk of being attacked than their fellow Muslim citizens," according to the manifesto.

It added that some 50,000 Jews had been "forced to move because they were no longer in safety in certain cities and because their children could no longer go to school".

(FRANCE 24 with AFP)

More information :

Le Parisien: <https://bit.ly/2qSuNCt> - <https://bit.ly/2qOXQaH>

L'Express: <https://bit.ly/2HQ0Meq>

Le Vif: <https://bit.ly/2HnkSvH>

France 'expels' controversial Salafist preacher to Algeria

France24 (19.04.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2F7IvpU> - Controversial Salafist preacher, Imam El Hadi Doudi, who was based in the southern French city of Marseille, was expelled to Algeria Friday morning following a lengthy legal process, according to a French media report.



El Hadi Doudi. Credit Anne-Christine Poujoulat/Agence France-Presse - Getty Images

The 63-year-old preacher -- who was born in [Algeria](#) and does not have [French](#) citizenship -- was expelled on Friday, the AFP reported quoting an unnamed French interior ministry source.

The expulsion followed a deportation order issued by the French interior ministry on Tuesday.

But Doudi's expulsion application was suspended pending a ruling by the [European Court of Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#), which finally ruled in favour of the deportation on Thursday.

The ruling followed an appeal by the Salafist cleric's lawyer, Nabil Boudi, who argued that his client would be tortured or suffer "inhuman or degrading treatment" if he was returned to Algeria.

The court granted the French government 72 hours "to gather the additional information necessary to make an informed decision". Doudi was held in an administrative detention center pending the court's final ruling.

Sermons targeting women, Jews, Shiites

The imam of the as-Sounna mosque, in the heart of Marseille, was one of the most high profile cases in the French government's effort to combat radicalisation.

The [new de-radicalisation plan](#) announced by French President [Emmanuel Macron's](#) government includes increased surveillance of Muslim clerics accused of hate speech and incitement to violence.

The as-Sounna mosque was closed in December following allegations that Doudi was provoking discrimination, hatred and violence toward an individual or group.

A confidential government investigative report, seen by the [New York Times](#), cited numerous sermons by Doudi, where he preached that Jews are "unclean, the brothers of monkeys and pigs". Women, the preacher stressed, could not leave their homes without authorisation, and an apostate "needs to be eliminated by the death penalty to protect Muslims".

In its expulsion application, the French Interior Ministry cited the radical imam's "deliberate incitement to discrimination, hatred or violence against a particular person or group of persons", notably women, Jews, Shiites and people committing adultery.

Radical clerics under scrutiny

Following a spate of deadly terrorist incidents since the 2015 [Charlie Hebdo attacks](#), France has tightened its anti-terror laws while attempting to tackle the spread of Islamist extremism particularly in French prisons, schools, mosques and Islamic centres.

Between 2012 and 2015, the French Interior Ministry expelled 40 Muslim clerics while another 52 people – including clerics – were expelled over the past 28 months, according to the New York Times.

In 2017, 20 radicalised foreign nationals were expelled from French territory, according to French Interior Minister Gérard Collomb.

Last month, France expelled Mohammed Tlaghi, a substitute imam at a mosque in Torcy, an eastern Parisian suburb, due to radical sermons, under an expulsion order issued on March 2.

The as-Sounna mosque, where Doudi preached, has been closed since December 11, 2017, when the Marseille police department issued a six-month closure order, which was ratified by France's top administrative court earlier this year.

(FRANCE 24 with AFP)

Hate speech: An Algerian imam faces deportation

HRWF (15.04.2018) - The French government is trying to expel El Hadi Doudi, an imam preaching a fundamentalist form of Islam contrary to human rights. On 8 March, a Commission composed of administrative and judicial magistrates opened the way to the deportation of the controversial imam after it identified cases of hate speech in the numerous sermons of the imam. Jews are "unclean, the brothers of monkeys and pigs," he said. Adulterers "must be punished by stoning to death or decapitation," while women "must not leave the home without authorization." The apostate "needs to be eliminated by the death penalty, to protect Muslims." Most damning, the Commission report said, Imam Doudi "explicitly" justified jihad.



El Hadi Doudi, an imam who preaches a fundamentalist form of Islam, at a courthouse in Marseille, France, in February. The French government is trying to expel him. Credit Anne-Christine Poujoulat/Agence France-Presse - Getty Images

Imam Doudi, 63 was born in Algeria and is not a French citizen. As he is very active on internet, his influence extends not only in France but also throughout Europe. His lawyer said he is the only imam authorized to issue fatwas. Over 37 years, he has often criticized Jews, women and the modern world, yet former governments have long tolerated his hard-line sermons. President Macron is adopting a tougher line, especially about hate speech.

However, France had never been lax in its fight against extremism and terrorism. From 2012 to 2015, the then Interior Ministry kicked out 40 Muslim clerics, and another 52 people, including clerics, were also deported over the last 28 months.

"It's not just the terrorist organizations, the armies of Daesh, the imams of hate and death that we are fighting," Mr. Macron said, referring to the Islamic State, in a speech last week honoring Lt. Col. Arnaud Beltrame, a police officer who died in terrorist attack at a supermarket in southern France after swapping himself with a hostage.

"What we are fighting is also this subterranean Islamism, which advances through social networks, which accomplishes its task invisibly, which works silently on the weak and the unstable, betraying even those it claims to represent, who, on our very soil, indoctrinate through proximity and daily corrupt," Mr. Macron said.

The expulsion of Imam Doudi was recommended by the Marseille authorities under a French law regarding "deliberate acts tending to provoke discrimination, hatred and violence toward an individual or a group."



The Sounna mosque where Imam Doudi preached in the Third Arrondissement of Marseille, was shut by officials in December. Credit Boris Horvat/Agence France-Presse - Getty Images

Marseille - France's second-largest city, one-fifth Muslim - is not especially radicalized. Other cities in the south of France, like Nice, have had higher numbers of young people leave to fight in Syria, and greater proportion of Muslim residents on the government's terrorism watchlist. However, almost all of the fines in Marseille for wearing a face-covering, head-to-toe veil - which is illegal in France - have been imposed in the vicinity of Imam Doudi's mosque, the police say. The authorities are growing increasingly concerned about the potential for radicalization - especially since two young women were killed in a knife attack at the city's main train station in October.

The Sounna mosque where Imam Doudi preached, on the Boulevard National in the Third Arrondissement of Marseille, was closed by officials in December on the grounds that his sermons could "provoke acts of terrorism." Five members of Imam Doudi's flock left to fight jihad in Syria, according to the police.

His sermons are "exactly contrary to the values of the Republic," said Marseille's prefect of police, Olivier de Mazières, a terrorism specialist who has led the case against the cleric.

To the caliphate and back: French women under the Islamic State group

by [Ségolène ALLEMANDOU](#)

France 24 (09.04.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2HkIroI> - Who are the French women who have left to join the Islamic State group abroad? Journalists Céline Martelet and Édith Bouvier

attempt to answer the question in their new book, "A Scent of Jihad", which details the lives of 15 women in Iraq and Syria.

Lola spends her days baking in the heart of the [Islamic State \(IS\) group](#)'s self-declared caliphate; Cécile stays awake at night, counting Russian air strikes, while Léa has given birth to three children in as many years.

In their new book, "A Scent of Jihad", Martelet – a senior reporter for France's RMC radio – and Bouvier – a freelance journalist based in the Middle East – share the stories of 15 women who left their homes in France to join the IS group in Iraq and Syria.

What emerges is a clearer picture of the specific role these women played within the organisation, as well as the French government's haphazard attempts at deradicalising them.



FRANCE 24 spoke with Martelet about these young women, whom she refused to describe as jihadists because "unless proven otherwise, they never took up arms to fight".

FRANCE 24: In the first two chapters of your book, which are titled "Shopping Queens" and "Desperate Housewives", you describe Léa, Cécile and Stéphanie's daily lives in the caliphate, which revolve largely around cooking and fashion. Why the attempt to make their lives seem so ordinary?

Céline Martelet: When we first began talking with them, there was no question of talking about propaganda. Our job as journalists was to find out who they were, what they did. Our conversations were centered around their daily lives, and in Léa's case, she cooked a lot. We were a sort of window onto another world for them, because they were mostly used to talking among themselves or crying with their families. The reality is that they're just young women.

Did these interviews, which took place over three years, allow you to establish a profile of the type of young French woman who is prone to joining the IS group abroad?

It turns out there's no standard profile for girls or for boys. Many are converts, others were raised by non-practicing Muslim families but later radicalised. Some grew up in

wealthy areas around Paris, others in small towns near [the central town of] Tours, or Nice [in the south of France]. They aren't just girls from poor neighbourhoods. Whether they're in Syria, have returned to France or have attempted to leave, they could all be our sisters, our cousins or childhood friends.

They all seem to have experienced what you describe in your book as a "rupture".

Some don't have a father, others have mothers who smothered them or who abandoned them after remarrying. There are some who come from dysfunctional families with parents who are constantly fighting. Others confided that they had been victims of sexual abuse, often at the hands of a family member, but had never spoken about it before. They only felt free to discuss it after their return. I want to be clear that it's not a way of excusing their behaviour or turning them into victims. We just communicated facts.

To finance their trip, almost all of the young women applied for a personal loan or used money from welfare or unemployment benefits. It's a real affront to the French government, which has been slow to react to people leaving to join the IS group.

Between 2013, when the Islamic State group was founded, and 2015, when the attack against [French satirical newspaper] [Charlie Hebdo](#) happened, the authorities were unaware of the waves of departures, regardless of gender. During this time, numerous young girls left their homes, including the 14-year-old Soraya. She boarded a plane in September 2014, crossed five borders, cleared five customs and landed in Syria without anyone stopping her, despite the fact that back in France her mother tried to move heaven and earth to have her arrested.

When we started our investigation, the police asked us, "Why are you interested in these girls? They're just sex slaves." We also heard two girls who had left to go to Syria referred to as "nothing more than two sluts on the other side of the border".

When did the Interior Ministry become aware of the phenomenon?

The catalyst was when they discovered [a car filled with gas cylinders parked near Notre Dame Cathedral](#) in Paris in September 2016. It was an attempted attack that had been conceived and put into motion by women. At that moment, the authorities' view shifted, on both the judicial and police level. We no longer saw these women as the stupid or empty-headed victims of their husbands. We realised that they were just as much immersed in ideology as their partners, sometimes even more so.

You write that "the courts in Paris are profoundly sexist". Why?

For the time being, not a single woman has been tried in court, which is not the case with men. Instead, they've been sent to prison for association with terrorist criminals. But we've noticed that the sentences are becoming longer and longer: Granny Jihad, who travelled to Syria three times, was given 10 years in prison, while earlier this month a 24-year-old named Maeva was sentenced to eight years.

The justice system is just beginning to understand that they've really embraced the ideology and that some have taken on the role of recruiter. In fact, they are all [recruiters]. As soon as they arrive [in Iraq or Syria], they talk with other girls in France and try to convince them to come out. You have to understand it's not a role that they've been assigned, they do it of their own accord: They become enablers. The justice system seems less susceptible to the image these young women initially project of being victims.

The IS group has lost a significant amount of territory in Iraq and Syria. Are there still as many young women leaving to join the group?

The IS group's territory hasn't been reduced to nothing. They still have a long tract of land that extends along the Euphrates River from Raqqa to the Iraqi border. The young French women there are still in touch with their families, to whom they say everything's fine, that they're not being bombarded like before. They often use the Internet. I think we're talking about at least a hundred people.

A few weeks ago, a 21-year-old woman was arrested in Afghanistan while trying to join an organisation linked to the IS group. Their territory might be smaller, but the ideology remains the same. That's what we need to fight against, and it's going to take a lot of time.

You write that the real danger are the women who stay in France. Why?

In the end, the caliphate was just a pretext that gave shape to an ideology that is still very strong. The women who are still in France were either unable to leave or they've been detained. Those being held at prisons in Fleury-Fresnes [in the southern suburbs of Paris] say that they're among sisters. We haven't been able to break this bond. Not to mention the risk that they might contaminate other detainees.

It would appear French authorities have bungled the deradicalisation process...

Some cases have been taken over by [RIVE](#) (an organisation committed to combatting extremist violence), which was launched in 2016. The idea was to deal with each situation on a case-by-case basis, because it appears it's the only thing that works. They've mobilised non-profits and psychologists, it just takes a long time to train them. Under RIVE, each person must report to eight case workers once released from prison. It requires an enormous amount of resources, but it works! We have to start from scratch.

70,000 law enforcement forces for the protection of places of worship at Easter

HRWF (02.04.2018) - 41,000 policemen and 29,000 gendarmes were mobilized by the Ministry of the Interior to protect Christian and Jewish places of worship during the religious celebrations of Easter and until 7 April, according to a press release published by the Ministry on 30 March (<https://bit.ly/2pVGGHY>).

State of emergency

In 2017, 20 terrorist attempts were foiled, according to Gérard Collomb, Minister of the Interior. During the state of emergency from November 2015 to 1 November 2017, 32 attempts were foiled, 4457 administrative searches were carried out at the address of individuals having relations with jihadist movements, 625 weapons were discovered (including 78 war weapons: Kalashnikovs, assault rifles and rocket launchers). This led to 998 criminal investigations, 646 custody cases. 752 individuals were put under house arrest and 41 still are. When suspects were under house arrest, they had to stay at home from 8pm to 6am, report to the police or the gendarmerie two or three times per day, and were not allowed to leave their city without the authorization of the mayor or the prefect. During the state of emergency, 19 Muslim places of worship suspected of hosting preachers spreading hate speeches were closed and as of 1 April 11 were still closed. Their situation is still under investigation, minister Collomb said.

Anti-terrorist law

After 1 November 2017, the lawmakers passed an anti-terrorist law meant to replace the legislation in force during the state of emergency. Under the new law, the prefect is still allowed to order administrative searches but only after consulting a prosecutor and after the decision has been validated by a judge.

The prefect is still authorized to close places of worship if they propagate ideas, theories, oral statements and printed material inciting to violence, hatred, discrimination, terrorism or apology of terrorism. However, France has decided that the closure of places of worship was not a priority in its fight against Islamist terrorism because what was pointed at was the lack of a global strategy of prevention involving local actors - associative, social, educational, cultural and police - to put on the radar all weak signals of radicalization.

House arrests are replaced by "individual measures of surveillance". Freedom of movement is extended from the place of residence to the commune and it can be extended to the *département* if the suspect accepts to wear an electronic bracelet.

Controls of personal identification documents are possible without prior authorization of a judicial authority at the border, near and in train stations, within a 20-km radius from international ports and airports.

Deportation of foreign dangerous Islamists remains possible. According to governmental sources, more than 60 people have been deported since 2012.

Protection of places of worship during the state of emergency

According to statistics from the Interior Ministry, published on 1 February 2017, 4,320 places of worship and religious community buildings were under surveillance and protection of mobile (non-static) patrols by law enforcement and military forces in 2016:

- 2,400 out of 45,000 Christian sites (5%)
- 1,100 out of 2500 Muslim sites (44%)
- 820 Jewish synagogues, schools and community centers (100%)

Moreover, in the last two years, a budget of 12.5 million EUR was approved to purchase security and video-protection material for the most sensitive religious sites.

Noteworthy is the fact that soldiers who were protecting religious buildings were targets of physical attacks. On 3rd February 2015, three soldiers guarding a Jewish community center were targeted in a knife attack in Nice, and on 1st January 2016, a man tried to run down troops guarding a mosque in Valence.

In 2016, incidents targeting Jewish and Muslim community buildings respectively decreased by 54% and 37.5% in comparison with 2015 while there was an increase of 17.4% concerning Christian (Catholic) places of worship[1]: 949 according to the Ministry of the Interior, including 399 acts of vandalism and 191 cases of theft of worship items.[2]

The Ministry of the Interior also notes that 14 incidents were satanist motivated, and in 25 cases there was an anarchist connotation, but most of the time the perpetrators and their motivations are unknown.

These statistical ups and downs follow the same trend as the global statistics about anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Christian incidents.

Decrease of racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents in 2016 and 2017

After a continuous increase from 2008 to 2015, the number of vandalism incidents targeting Christian and Muslim graves and places of worship decreased in 2016 and in 2017 but violent acts against Jews were on the rise and vandalism cases against Jewish sites increased by 22% in comparison with 2016, according to the Ministry of the Interior.

The global statistics in 2017 are clear: 950 racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents in 2017 v. 1128 in 2016 (-16%).

The number of anti-Muslim incidents (121) dramatically decreased by 34.5%.

The number of racist incidents (518) dropped by 14.8%.

The number of anti-Semitic incidents (311) diminished by 7.2%.

However, the number of acts of violence against Jews has dramatically increased: 97 in 2017 v. 77 in 2016.

Concerning acts of vandalism against religious sites and graves, Christian sites were less targeted: 878 in 2017 v. 949 in 2016, and Muslim sites were also less targeted: 72 in 2017 v. 85 in 2016.

Paris murder of woman, 85, investigated as 'anti-Semitic'



The attack took place in Mireille Knoll's home in a block of flats in the 11th arrondissement of Paris (photo credit: AFP)

BBC News (27.03.2018) - <https://bbc.in/2IamkBG> - French prosecutors are treating the murder of an 85-year-old Jewish woman, whose body was found in her burned-out Paris flat, as an anti-Semitic attack.

Mireille Knoll was stabbed several times before Friday's blaze.

In 1942, she escaped the notorious Vel d'Hiv round up of some 13,000 Jews in Paris, who were then deported to Nazi death camps.

Two men, aged 22 and 29, have been arrested and placed under formal investigation over the murder.

A police source told French media that one of them had previously been convicted of molesting a 12-year-old girl who had been staying at Mireille Knoll's flat.

She had also complained to police that a neighbour had threatened to set fire to her home, according to reports.

"We are really in shock. I don't understand how someone could kill a woman who has no money and who lives in a social housing complex," her son, who was not named, told AFP news agency.

On Sunday, investigators said they were "not excluding any hypothesis" as to the motive for the attack.

But a day later the Paris prosecutor said it was believed to be anti-Semitic.

French lawmaker Meyer Habib wrote on Facebook that the pensioner had escaped Vel d'Hiv in 1942 thanks to her mother's Brazilian passport.

In a statement (in French), France's Jewish umbrella organisation Crif expressed "anger and concern" at the attack.

It urged "the fullest transparency" by the authorities "so that the motive of this barbaric crime is known as quickly as possible".

France's Jewish community has voiced increasing concern over a rise in violent anti-Semitic acts in the country.

Last month, a judge confirmed that the murder last year of Sarah Halimi, a 65-year-old Orthodox Jewish woman who was beaten and thrown out of her window, was driven by anti-Semitism.

Decrease of racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents in 2017

HRWF (13.03.2018) - After a continuous increase from 2008 to 2016, the number of vandalism incidents targeting Christian and Muslim graves and places of worship decreased in 2017 but violent acts against Jews were on the rise and vandalism cases

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Will France hand over Chinese religious refugees to their persecutors? Appeal to President Macron

Mr President,

In France, 335 Chinese citizens who are members of The Church of Almighty God (CAG), one of the largest new religious movements in China, have been denied asylum. 156 of them have received a departure order and are now under threat of deportation. Only six applications for asylum have been accepted.

We have been studying the situation of the CAG for several years and we are morally sure that once they are extradited back to China, the CAG members living currently in France will be immediately arrested, tortured and detained for several years. *

The Chinese government considers the CAG « an heterodox belief system » (xie jiao), and article 300 of the Chinese Criminal Code provides prison terms of three to seven years or more for those who "use" a xie jiao – the jurisprudence interprets this as active membership in such movements. The CAG also denounced cases of torture and suspicious deaths in prisons.

The Chinese government accuses the CAG of several crimes but the scholars who have studied these issues have concluded that it is pure propaganda. A French brochure published by the DIDR (the Research and Documentation Branch of the Refugee Office) in 2016 echoed one of these accusations. Four well-known scholars wrote to the DIDR in February to ask for an update of this brochure, published before the CAG started being the object of significant scientific research.

The issue is not purely academic but it is a human rights issue. It is about the protection of the freedom and the life of people who have already suffered a lot and who expect from France the protection they are entitled to.

We call upon you, Mr President, upon the relevant French authorities and upon all the friends of human rights to prohibit the handing over of victims to their persecutors.

Paris, 10 March 2018

Associations

CAP-LC Coordination des associations et des particuliers pour la liberté de conscience

HRWF Human Rights Without Frontiers/ Droits de l'homme sans frontières (Brussels)

EIFRF European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom

CESNUR Center for Studies on New Religions

ORLIR International Observatory of Religious Freedom of Refugees

Scholars

Marie Holzman – Sinologist, president of the « Association Solidarité Chine »

Bernadette Rigal-Cellard – University Bordeaux Montaigne

Massimo Introvigne – Center for Studies on New Religions, Torino, Italy

Holly Folk – Western Washington University

Susan Palmer – University Concordia and McGill University, Montreal

Jean-Luc Marin-Lagardette – Journalist and essayist

Press Release

CAP CL (12.03.2018) – On 9 March 2018, *CAP Liberté de Conscience* held a press conference in Paris about France's rejection of applications for asylum filed by Chinese refugees belonging to the Church of Almighty God.

Several scholars and representatives of human rights organizations gathered to expose the dramatic situation to which these asylum seekers will be submitted if they are sent back to China.

The well-known Prof. Massimo Introvigne, Director of the *Center for the Studies of New Religions* ([CESNUR](#)) presented the Church of Almighty God from a scholarly perspective, insisting on the fact that several university studies and expertise have demonstrated and confirmed that most of the accusations against this Church were false and were the product of Chinese propaganda.

[See the presentation](#)

Mr Willy Fautré, the director of *Human Rights Without Frontiers International* ([HRWF](#)) presented disturbing statistics about the number of asylum denials concerning members of the Church of Almighty God in European countries, and particularly in France.

[See the presentation](#)

Mrs Marie Holzman, a well-known sinologist, writer and journalist who is a specialist of contemporary China and Chinese dissidence, described the political roots of the persecution of religious minorities in China and explained the socio-psychological context which might have created some misunderstanding between the asylum seekers of this Church and French institutions.

Mr Eric Roux, President of the *European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom*, ([EIFRE](#)) analyzed the difficulties faced by asylum seekers in France and the way French authorities can mistakenly rely on outdated or false information when they take negative decisions.

[See his declaration](#)

The participants have also watched a video in which two members of the Church of Almighty God testified about the persecution, imprisonment and torture they were victims of in China.

Mr Thierry Valle, President of the *Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience, CAP LC*, and organizer of this event, announced that a [Call to President Macron](#) had been launched by a group of human rights organizations, scholars and other personalities to inform him about the tragic consequences entailed by the denial of asylum for the members of this Church in France and to urge him to make sure that they find a safe haven in France.

Muslim leader urges Macron not to meddle too much in French Islam

By Julie Carriat

Reuters (14.02.2018) - <http://reut.rs/2EI6vnu> - A leading representative of French Muslims urged Emmanuel Macron not to meddle in the organization of France's second-largest religion, days after the president said he would try to redefine relations between Islam and the state.

The rebuke came from the leader of an organization set up 15 years ago in a bid to defuse concern about radical preachers and foster a more homegrown form of Islam that would fit better with France's traditional separation of church and state affairs.

"Everyone must stick to their role," Ahmet Ogras, president of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), told Reuters in an interview.

"The Muslim faith is a religion and, as such, takes care of its own household affairs. The last thing you want is the state to act as guardian," said Ogras, a Frenchman of Turkish descent who has led the CFCM since mid-2017.

Macron, elected last May after a runoff victory over far-right leader Marine Le Pen, said in a Feb. 11 newspaper interview he planned to revisit the way Islam was overseen.

“What I’d like to get done in the first half of 2018 is set down markers on the entire way in which Islam is organized in France,” he told the Journal du Dimanche. The priority would be to “bring back what secularism is all about”.

Traditionally Catholic France is home to the largest Jewish and Muslim communities in Europe, with the latter estimated at five million out of a population of 67 million.

The official rule is strict separation between religion and state, with the former considered a strictly private matter. The rule that has been used to justify bans on the wearing of Muslim veils by public service employees as well as any wearing of fully concealing head-to-toe veils in public places.

Macron has been under pressure to deal firmly with radical preachers and mosques since a wave of attacks in which Islamist militants killed more than 230 people in France since 2015.

Emergency search-and-arrest powers introduced in the wake of the November 2015 attacks that killed 130 people in Paris have since been made permanent under tougher security legislation. Several mosques have been shut and imams expelled.

Macron’s declarations in the Feb. 11 newspaper interview suggest he is considering a profound reorganization of the way in which the Islam faith is funded and its preachers schooled.

Back in 2003, Nicolas Sarkozy, interior minister at the time and president from 2007 to 2012, engineered an agreement among the country’s main Islamic groups to create the CFCM.

The idea was to have a council to speak for Muslims similar to the way the French Bishops’ Conference speaks for Catholics or the Consistory speaks for Jews.

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."

Jewish boy, 8, beaten in Paris suburb in anti-Semitic attack

JTA (31.01.2018) — <http://bit.ly/2Gm7dFv> — Two teenagers beat an 8-year-old Jewish boy in suburban Paris in what French prosecutors are calling an anti-Semitic attack.

The boy was wearing a kippah while walking to a tutor on Tuesday afternoon in Sarcelles when the assailants, about 15 years old, knocked him to the ground and beat him, the French news agency AFP reported.

It is the second attack on a Jewish child in the same area this month. On Jan. 10, a 15-year-old Jewish girl was [slashed](#) in the face while walking home from her private Jewish school wearing its uniform.

French President Emmanuel Macron condemned the incident Tuesday night on Twitter.

"An 8-year-old boy was attacked today in Sarcelles. Because he was wearing a kippa. Every time a citizen is attacked because of his age, his appearance or his religion, the whole country is being attacked," Macron [tweeted](#).

He added: "And it is the whole country that stands, especially today, alongside the French Jews to fight each of these despicable acts, with them and for them."

Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said in a statement late Tuesday that investigators suspect the incident was motivated by anti-Semitism.

Earlier in January, two kosher shops in Creteil, another suburb of Paris, were torched two weeks after the same shops were attacked by individuals who painted swastikas on their facades.

Girl's face cut near Paris in suspected anti-Semitic assault

[JTA](#) (12.01.2018) — Days after the suspected torching of two kosher shops near Paris, a Jewish teenager had her face slashed by an unidentified assailant on a street in the suburb of Sarcelles.

François Pupponi, a lawmaker in the lower house of France's parliament and a former mayor of Sarcelles, on Friday called the assault Wednesday on the 15-year-old alleged victim, who complained to police, "a heinous anti-Semitic attack."

The alleged victim was wearing the uniform of her private Jewish school, Merkaz-Hatorah, when the attack happened during lunch break Wednesday. She was able to walk home and arrived bleeding and "shocked," her mother told *Le Parisien*.

The assailant ran away immediately after the assault, the alleged victim said. She did not see his face. The assailant did not say anything before, during or immediately after the assault.

"I have no doubt the perpetrators of this attack had anti-Semitic motives," Pupponi [wrote](#) in a statement Friday. "Faced with these acts, we need to abandon pretense and naiveté. In Sarcelles, everybody knows who is a practicing Jew according to the way they dress. Delinquents know it too. When someone slashes a young girl's face with a utility knife, when she is wearing clothes favored by many women from the Jewish community, then there is no room for doubt."

Citing the torching earlier this week of two kosher shops in Creteil, another suburb of Paris, and the targeting of the same shops last month by individuals who painted swastikas on their facades, Pupponi wrote that the Paris region is seeing in recent weeks "a return of anti-Semitic currents."

Hate crime charges dropped in Paris trial of Muslim accused of killing Jewish neighbor

JTA.org (01.02.2018) - <http://bit.ly/2E47Vte> - A judge in Paris scrapped hate crime charges from the indictment of a murder suspect who confessed to killing his Jewish neighbor.

The move came amid a rise in reported violent anti-Semitic attacks in France.

The Paris Prosecutor's office said it would appeal the dismissal Monday of the aggravated element of a hate crime in the trial of Kobili Traore, a 28-year-old Muslim man who on April 4 threw his neighbor, Sarah Halimi, to her death from the window of her third-story apartment.

The charge of murder aggravated by racial hatred was excluded from what is now the indictment against Traore by the examining magistrate — a function designed to oversee prosecutors and intercept flawed indictments before they form the basis of an active trial.

Francis Kalifat, president of the Jewish umbrella group CRIF, told Le Parisien daily that the examining magistrate's move was "an insult" to Halimi's memory.

Separately, the Interior Ministry of France on Wednesday reported a 7.2 percent decrease in 2017 in the number of anti-Semitic attacks in the country over 2016. The ministry recorded 311 cases. But of those, 97 were classified as violent assaults – a 25 percent increase over 2016, Le Figaro reported.

The SPCJ watchdog unit of French Jewry, which receives and collects reports independently to the Interior Ministry, has not yet published its report for 2017.

In the Halimi case, Traore was heard shouting about Allah and calling her "a devil" in Arabic. Halimi's daughter said he had called the daughter a "dirty Jewess" in the building two years before the murder. But the examining magistrate in Traore's trial, which opened this week, dismissed the aggravated hate crime charge before the trial actually began, Le Parisien reported Wednesday. Traore is pleading temporary insanity, though he has no history of mental illness.

For months after the slaying of the 66-year-old Jewish physician, leaders of French Jewry urged authorities to include the aggravated element of a hate crime in the draft indictment against Traore. They finally agreed in September.

The incident occurred months before France's general election, in which the French political establishment was bracing for unprecedented gains for the far-right National Front party.

Marine Le Pen, the anti-immigration party's leader, received a historic third of the vote in the final round of the presidential elections, which she lost to the centrist candidate, Emmanuel Macron.

Many French Jews believe authorities and the media covered up or ignored the alleged anti-Semitic elements connected to Halimi's suspected murder to prevent it from becoming fodder for Le Pen's divisive campaign.

Laïcité and religious freedom: A coalition of NGOs questions France at the United Nations

CAP/ LC HRWF (15.01.2018) - In a side-event following the Universal Periodic Review of France in Geneva this Monday 15th January, several NGOs and an international law expert have called upon President Emmanuel Macron and his Prime Minister to revise the financing of FECRIS (European Federation of Centers of Research and Information on Cults and Sects) and its member organizations. Under the predecessors of President Macron, FECRIS has benefitted from abusive grants that they have used to disseminate hate speech targeting some minority religious groups in the countries of the European Union and beyond.

The representative of the French NGO **CAP/LC (Coordination des Associations et des Individus pour la Liberté de Conscience)**, **Mr. Thierry Valle**, highlighted the French policy stigmatizing religious minorities and the human consequences which are often dramatic for the members of these minorities. By financing FECRIS, France contributes to the expansion of this phenomenon in Europe.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, France has to reconsider its policy about religious minorities, he added.

Attorney Patricia Duval, an international law expert, drew attention to the ideological roots of FECRIS.

FECRIS is a French legal association that was created by UNADFI (a French anti-sect organization) in 1994. Its objective is to bring together anti-sect groups across Europe which claim to defend families and individuals against 'harmless sectarian organizations' and to represent them in the EU institutions. Although this goal may look laudable, a deep analysis reveals that FECRIS member associations in France

- call sects any religious minority or spiritual movement the beliefs of which are described by FECRIS as deviant from what is "usually considered a religion",
- view the conversion to such beliefs as a psychological subjection, a 'capture of souls' and a violation of human dignity;
- collect testimonies of families or parents of converts to new religious movements who disagree with their choice to accuse such groups of destroying families,
- compile data based on rumors, prejudices and suspicion that they use to stigmatize the concerned groups,
- have continuously received funding from various French public powers that they use to carry out an ideological crusade.

The lawyer concluded that it was urgent for France to stop sponsoring this sort of activities and indicated that the United Nations Special Rapporteur for freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir, after her visit to France on 18 to 29 September 2005 also made specific recommendations in this sense.

Her report of 6 March 2006 provided:

112. The Special Rapporteur urges the Government to ensure that its mechanisms for dealing with these religious groups or communities of belief deliver a message based on tolerance, freedom of religion or belief and on the principle that no one can be judged for his actions other than through the appropriate judicial channels.

113. Moreover, she recommends that the Government monitor more closely preventive actions and campaigns that are conducted throughout the country by private initiatives or **Government-sponsored organizations**, in particular within the school system in order to avoid children of members of these groups being negatively affected. [emphasis added]

114. She urges judicial and conflict resolution mechanisms to no longer refer to, or use, the list published by Parliament in 1996.

The representative of **Human Rights Without Frontiers (Brussels), Mr. Willy Fautré**, denounced the dangerous liaisons between the (Russian) vice-president of FECRIS, Alexander Dvorkin, and the most radical circles of the Russian Orthodox Church. Whilst France, a secular country, finances FECRIS, its branch in Russia heavily persecutes non-Orthodox religions and carries out missionary activities aiming at bringing 'back home' Orthodox people who converted to other religions.

FECRIS member association in Russia hereby implements Vladimir Putin's ultranationalist policy which under the guise of "spiritual security" aims at eradicating any religion of foreign origin from the "Russian Orthodox Lands". The ban of Jehovah's Witnesses and peaceful apolitical Muslim movements as well as the imprisonment of several Scientologists are part of this religious purification strategy.

Alexander Dvorkin, in Russia, enjoys disseminating inflammatory narratives and hate speech about Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Baptists, Adventists, the Salvation Army, Mormons, Falun Gong practitioners and even Hindus. Last year, in the capital city of India, Hindus have held a demonstration outside the Russian embassy to protest against the persecution of their religion and burnt an effigy of Dvorkin.

The representative of the **European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom (EIFRF), Mr Eric Roux**, declared: "When a country like France adopts a specific but controversial policy, other countries in the world may think that it is therefore legitimate to follow suit and they usually do worse.

By financing groups like FECRIS, France sends the following message to the rest of the world: 'You can discriminate and persecute religious minorities because it is what we, the cradle of human rights, do'.

Under its newly elected government which seems willing to reform society by focusing on real priorities, France should stop financing and supporting such associations

France should apply its principles of laïcité and human rights, protect religious freedom for all, and particularly members of religious minorities.

Version in French of this press release: <http://www.coordiap.com/press3061-Laicite-et-liberte-religieuse-Une-coalition-d-ONGs-interpelle-la-France-a-l-ONU.htm>