

FRANCE: MIVILUDES will cease to exist on 1 January 2020

– HRWF (01.10.2019) – *“The European Federation for Research on Sectarianism (FECRIS) assists victims of sectarian discrimination and receives support of our government”*, said the spokesperson of the French delegation at the OSCE/ ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

He was hereby partly using his right of reply against CAP/ Freedom of Conscience, a NGO with ECOSOC status which had criticized the financing by the French state of FECRIS. For years, this anti-cult organization was repeatedly pointed at for defaming minority religious groups in Europe and for supporting its Russian vice-president, who was notorious for his hate speech towards Jehovah’s Witnesses (now banned in Russia since 2017), Mormons, Hare Krishna devotees and other non-Orthodox religions.

In 2017, the Faculty for Comparative Study of Religions and Humanism in Antwerp published a book in French entitled **“Les mouvements antisectes et la laïcité: Le cas de la FECRIS”** (<https://bit.ly/2p2wRu9>) by Patricia Duval and Willy Fautré, which was an updated translation of their book in English **“Anti-sect movements and State Neutrality. A Study Case: The FECRIS”** (<https://bit.ly/2ohDoRo>) published several years ago in the university journal “Staat-Religion-Gesellschaft” by the Technical University of Dresden (Editors: Gerhard Besier and Hubert Seiwert).

Now, the end of the existence of the controversial MIVILUDES which for years had been repeatedly accused of defamation and discrimination by French and foreign NGOs and sometimes sentenced by courts, has been programmed: 31 December 2019.

Today, 1 October, Thomas Mahler said in *Le Point*, in an article entitled "Does the government abandon the fight against the sects?":

Miviludes had no president for a year and the retirement of Serge Blisko. It is now downright threatened with dissolution, as revealed this morning France Inter. Yesterday, Anne Josso, Secretary General of the Interministerial Mission of vigilance and fight against sectarian drifts, announced internally that the structure would be attached to the Ministry of the Interior from 1 January, and therefore no longer depend on Matignon. Anne Josso was received by Marc Guillaume, Secretary General of the Government, who spoke of a "redevelopment" and downsizing. Originally composed of fifteen people with seven specialized advisers and administrative staff, the Miviludes should be limited to three or four civil servants. It should merge with the Interministerial Committee for the Prevention of Delinquency and Radicalization (CIPDR). (...)

For Miviludes officials as well as for activists, there is no doubt: the fight against sectarian aberrations is no longer a government priority. An activist explains us, for example, that each year, the Ministry of the Interior must issue a circular inviting the prefects to organize an information meeting with Miviludes and local associations or social services, "which leads to 40 or 50 meetings a year. But this year, Castaner (Ministry of Interior) did not do it." (Translation by CAP/ Freedom of conscience).

See some articles published in French media:

https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2019/10/01/sectes-la-miviludes-va-t-elle-disparaitre_1754651

<https://www.franceinter.fr/lutte-contre-les-sectes-la-miviludes-va-t-elle-disparaitre>

https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/le-gouvernement-abandonne-t-il-la-lutte-contre-les-sectes-01-10-2019-2338675_23.php

FRANCE: Four churches vandalised over the past week

– In one instance a tabernacle was broken into and its contents strewn on the ground

– Anne-Bénédicte Hoffner

HRWF (12.02.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2WZayC8>– France, over the past week, has witnessed a series of churches being vandalized and in some instances desecrated.

The vandalism took place in Nîmes, Lavaur, Houilles and finally in Dijon on Feb. 9.

In Lavaur and Houilles, the criminals only attacked objects and statues, but in Nimes and Dijon, they opened the tabernacle and threw the eucharist.

On Feb. 9 shortly after its opening, the sexton at Notre Dame Church in Dijon saw the tabernacle and the hosts scattered on the altar, a tablecloth rolled into a corner, a vase broken.

A Mass of reparation was celebrated that afternoon by Bishop Roland Minnerath of Dijon, preceded by a penitential rite, the diocese said in a statement, highlighting the "sadness" of faithful of this parish in the city center.

The series of attacks began Feb. 4 in Houilles, Yvelines. A statue of Mary was found broken in pieces on the ground, in the church of St. Nicholas.

Father Etienne Maroteaux, pastor of the parish of Houilles-Carrières-sur-Seine, again lodged a complaint, having already being subjected to violent attacks during the last two weeks that saw the altar cross thrown to the ground and the chair of the celebrant wrecked.

The next incident took place on Feb. 5 at the Saint-Alain Cathedral in Lavaur, in the Tarn. The secretary of the parish who came to shut the cathedral found the smoking remains of the tablecloth of the altar of a side chapel, as well the nativity scene that was there, the fire had not spread, reports *La Dépêche du Midi*. A cross was also thrown down and the arm of the crucified Christ statue twisted to look like the famous gesture of the footballer Paul Pogba.

"God will forgive. Not me," said the city's mayor Bernard Carayon, whose town hall had just contributed to expensive renovations of the church building.

"I strongly condemn the vandalism of Lavaur Cathedral and I share the outrage aroused by this intolerable act," said Jean Terlier, deputy of the district, while assuring the Catholic community of his support.

On Feb. 6, the police were called to the church in Nîmes.

The tabernacle was broken into and its contents strewn on the ground. Religious objects were vandalized and a cross was drawn on the wall with excrement, reports the local press.

Investigations are underway to try to find the wrongdoers.

See video on TV Channel France 2:

https://www.francetvinfo.fr/france/vandalisme-plusieurs-eglises-visees-par-des-profanations_3187009.html

Anti-Semitic acts surged by 74 percent from 311 in 2017 to 541 in 2018

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvuY0TJBPeM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHx6ukPzb3g>

European Parliament: HRWF debate on child marriage on EU REPORTER TV

– Watch the video here: https://youtu.be/wg0K0_XA6Vg

Panelists

Elisa Van Ruiten, a Gender Specialist at Human Rights Without Frontiers International;

Mohinder Watson, a researcher and activist against child marriage, who escaped a forced marriage of her own as a teenager;

Emilio Puccio, the Coordinator of the European Parliament

Intergroup on Children's Rights, which is a cross-party and cross-national group comprising over 90 MEPs and 25 child-focused organizations.

The presenter was EU Reporter's Jim Gibbons.

"Every day somewhere in the world, 39,000 young girls are married before they reach the age of majority; more than a third of them are younger than 15, according to the Council of Europe. We may be well into the 21st century but too many girls are still forced to live in a bygone age of male dominance. Human Rights Without Frontiers has just produced a report on women's rights and the Abrahamic faiths of Christianity, Islam and Judaism."

EU Reporter – <https://bit.ly/2CTvNPh>

Next Programme about North Korea (November) –

IF YOU WANT TO BE A PARTNER OF HUMAN RIGHTS WITHOUT FRONTIERS IN AN EU REPORTER TV PROGRAM OF YOUR CHOICE, SEND AN EMAIL TO

w.fautre@hrwf.org

FRANCE: An Algerian imam faces deportation

HRWF (15.04.2018) – The French government is trying to expel El Hadi Douadi, 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.”

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.

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-terrorism 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.

FRANCE: THE CROSS OF A STATUE OF LATE POPE MUST BE REMOVED, A FRENCH COURT SAYS

EURACTIV/ AFP (03.11.2017) – <http://bit.ly/2ytNaUX> – More than 38,000 people signed an online petition as of Thursday protesting against a French court order to remove a cross from a statue of the late Polish-born Pope John Paul II in Brittany, western France.

The petition, launched on the CitizenGo website four days ago, “opposes the removal of the cross from a public space and emphasises the Christian roots of Europe”.

It is addressed to the European Parliament, the centre-right European People’s Party and the European Court of Human Rights.

Controversy erupted last week when France’s top administrative court gave the town of Ploermel six months to remove the cross above a papal statue in a public square in a bid to comply with laws enforcing the secular nature of public spaces.

Although the statue of the late pontiff itself is not in question, the court’s move drew ire in heavily Roman Catholic Poland where the Polish-born saint is widely revered and religious symbols are not restricted by law.

Rightwing Prime Minister Beata Szydlo offered last weekend to move the statue to Poland to “save it from censorship”, calling John Paul II “a great European” symbolising a “united Christian Europe”.

Szydlo added that “the dictate of the political correctness – the secularisation of the state – opens the door to values that are culturally alien to us and that lead to Europeans

being terrorised in their daily lives”.

Gifted to Ploermel by the Georgian-born Russian artist Zourab Tseretel, the statue which features a cross on the arch framing it, was installed in a public square in October 2006.

A local citizens group then launched a legal drive to remove the cross citing a century-old French law on the separation of church and state, but the town’s mayor refused.

After years of legal wrangling, France’s top administrative court ruled last Wednesday that the cross must go in line with the 1905 law that rules out “raising or affixing any religious sign or emblem” in a “public place”.

The court’s decision also drew protests from representatives of the Roman Catholic church in France while conservative French lawmaker Nadine Morano said Wednesday she was launching a separate petition “to include the Christian roots of France in the constitution”.

In a twist, Budapest on Thursday also offered to take the statue and cover all transport costs.

The foreign ministry said its French envoy contacted authorities in Brittany but had not yet received a response.

“From the point of view of Europe’s future, any decision that aims at restricting Christianity and the removal of Christian symbols by referring in a hypocritical way to tolerance is incredibly damaging,” Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto told the MTI state news agency.