

France expels controversial Salafist preacher to Algeria

France24 (19.04.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2F7IvpU> – Controversial Salafist preacher, Imam El Hadi Douidi, 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.

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 Douidi'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". Douidi 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)