

# **BELGIUM: Parliamentary Report on Islamic radicalism: Findings about the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism**

By Willy Fautre, Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (30.10.2017) – On 23 October 2017, Belgium's House of Representatives published the fourth intermediary report of its Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on radicalism and terrorism (\*). The 205-page report comprises of an introduction, six chapters, and annexes:

Chapter I: Radical Islam and Islamic radicalism in Belgium

Chapter II: The case of the Grand Mosque of Brussels

Chapter III: Radicalism/ violent radicalism, prisons and imprisonment

Chapter IV: Radicalism/ violent radicalism and new technologies

Chapter V: Reception, integration, employment and radicalism/ violent radicalism

Chapter VI: Radicalism/ violent radicalism, local approach, prevention, school, recommendations

Here is a summary of the findings that emerged from the hearing of experts, witnesses and various other actors about the Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabism.

## ***Muslim Brotherhood***

The Muslim Brotherhood is not a homogeneous and monolithic entity as there is no official structure of this movement. It

is characterized by heterogeneous political undercurrents and ideologies in its midst but they are united around a common doctrinal corpus composed of a number of founding texts. Moreover, the Muslim Brotherhood is also linked to a network of religious and cultural associations, such as the controversial League of the Muslims of Belgium, which plays a key role in the functioning of the Muslim community in the country. The worldview promoted by the Muslim Brotherhood aims at subjecting all the aspects of human life to religion: at the individual level (food, clothing, marriage, etc.), the societal level (human relations) and the political level (functioning of the State). Noteworthy is the fact that they do not accept questioning or criticism of their founding texts.

The philosophy of the Muslim Brotherhood, which can be labeled "conservative", may cause some problems if there is any attempt to impose it on a society that is not historically Muslim and not homogeneous, as is the case in Belgium. At this stage, the parliamentary commission of enquiry is not able to assess the magnitude of the propagation of their worldviews in Belgium. However, it seems, according to the commission that many Muslims are open to their messages and find them sensible without being aware that they are linked to this movement. What is an undisputable fact is that a number of mosques in Belgium clearly adhere to the Muslim Brotherhood's worldview and their ideology.

The question of possible closeness between the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and the use of violence is delicate and could not be settled by the parliamentary commission of inquiry after hearing several experts.

Some contend that they do not directly and openly incite violence. Others point at their logo: a Qu'ran, two swords and the first words of a surah saying "Prepare yourself" as a sign of violence. The full text of this surah is "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of

war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged” (Surah Al Anfal-8-60, Al Qu’ran al-Kareem). The Muslim Brotherhood is also accused of regularly using a double-discourse: What they say publicly, in sermons and in conferences is sometimes far away from what they say internally.

Several witnesses heard by the parliamentary commission stressed that the promotion of the principles and values of the Muslim Brotherhood lead to individual and collective self-isolation, marginalization and ghettoization. By systematically criticizing the surrounding society, the Muslim Brotherhood contributes to the polarization of society instead of contributing to social inclusion and cohesion. This sort of polarization, which is now identified as a key component of the process leading to violent radicalization, is not new in the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood. The concepts of “takfirs” (mécréants) and “crusaders” were already used in their narratives in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

### ***Wahhabism***

The Wahhabi doctrine is well-established in Belgium. From a historical point of view, the public powers and the Muslim community and their leaders are responsible for this situation. Its rise is to be attributed to their failure to promote an Islam that is different from the Islamist radicalism.

Wahhabism proposes a radical view of Islam concerning the outside world and “the others” who do not share Wahhabi ideas and conceptions. Its radical nature is characterized by the refusal of any negotiations concerning the achievement of its objectives (everything or nothing) and by its perception of different attitudes as illegitimate. This vision of Islam, and the ensuing religious practice, can lead to self-exclusion

from and negative perception of society.

The doctrinal corpus comprises of the use of "victimhood" discourse, the exploitation of a perceived humiliation and Manichean representations of society. A potential consequence of such rhetoric is that through repetition the adherents interiorize a different identity. The permanent confrontation between Wahhabism and the worldviews of "the others", which are sometimes very divergent and sometimes fundamentally conflicting, is said to aggravate social divisions.

A number of issues which are presented as almost timeless by Wahhabism fail to pass the test of rigorous scholarly studies. There are often errors and/or deceptions about the historicity of some behaviors on sensitive issues such as the wearing of the veil. For example, some try nowadays to mislead people into thinking that the wearing of the veil has always been widespread and constant on "Muslim lands." This teaching cannot withstand serious analysis as this practice has historically been fluctuating and presenting it as a return to a practice that was abandoned, or even corrupted, is fallacious. Additionally, some ideas spread by Wahhabism can be compared to viruses introduced in a software that can be reactivated at any time in the future. For example, in the "Voix du Musulman" (The Muslim's Voice) which was distributed for free in the 1980s and 1990s, it said that homosexuals should be thrown down from the top of buildings, which Daesh did.

The experts heard by the parliamentary commission on the fight against radicalism and the terrorist threat in Belgium are unanimous in saying that Wahhabism has acquired a huge outreach power thanks to the almost unlimited financial means put at its disposal by political regimes promoting this doctrine, such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, as well as by private philanthropists close to these states. This financial power has led to the control of religious practices in other countries. In Belgium, the Grand Mosque of Brussels

is spreading Wahhabi teachings and is a case study in itself. Wahhabism has hereby become the vector of a dominant worldview that is omnipresent in communication supports, teaching and training materials. The collateral consequence of this quasi-monopoly is that the teachings of alternative, reformist and progressive voices cannot be heard and cannot reach the minds and the souls of the Muslim audience. Concretely, a Muslim in Belgium who questions Islam and his relation to this religion only finds Wahhabi-Salafist answers on the market of Muslim worldviews.

(\*) Full report in French/ Dutch at

<http://www.dekamer.be/FLWB/PDF/54/1752/54K1752009.pdf>

.....

**If you want to be regularly informed about different violations of human rights in the world, click here for a free subscription to our newsletters!**

***Also:***

**HRWF database of news and information on over 70 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/newsletters/forb/>**

**List of hundreds of documented cases of believers of various faiths in 20 countries: <http://hrwf.eu/forb/forb-and-blasphemy-prisoners-list/>**