

## **Table of Contents**

- ***Anti-Semitism in France up 69 percent***
- ***Anti-Semitic acts up 69 percent in France in 2018, prime minister says***
- ***Op-ed: Islamization of French society or Salafization of Muslims? Which phenomenon? Which terminology?***
- ***A Canadian-Indian citizen wrongly detained for 2 months under suspicion of being a guru***
- ***Banning the niqab violated two Muslim women's freedom of religion - UN experts***
- ***France: Is the ban on hijab, niqab, burqa... Islamophobia?***
- ***MIVILUDES, a State institution, repeatedly condemned for defamation and stigmatization***
- ***Should assimilation be a requirement for citizenship?***
- ***French politicians, celebrities condemn 'new anti-Semitism'***
- ***France 'expels' controversial Salafist preacher to Algeria***
- ***Hate speech: An Algerian imam faces deportation***
- ***To the caliphate and back: French women under the Islamic State group***
- ***70,000 law enforcement forces for the protection of places of worship at Easter***
- ***Paris murder of woman, 85, investigated as 'anti-Semitic'***
- ***Decrease of racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim incidents in 2017***
- ***Will France hand over Chinese religious refugees to their persecutors? Appeal to President Macron***
- ***Muslim leader urges Macron not to meddle too much in French Islam***
- ***Morocco leads foreign funding for French mosques***
- ***Jewish boy, 8, beaten in Paris suburb in anti-Semitic attack***
- ***Girl's face cut near Paris in suspected anti-Semitic assault***
- ***Hate crime charges dropped in Paris trial of Muslim accused of killing Jewish neighbor***
- ***Laïcité and religious freedom: A coalition of NGOs questions France at the United Nations***

---

## **Anti-Semitism in France up 69 percent**

***French PM says anti-Semitic acts in the country rose by 69 percent in the first nine months of 2018.***

Israel National News (09.11.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2T8ZXCZ> - Anti-Semitic acts in France rose by 69 percent in the first nine months of 2018, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said

on Friday, as Jews in Europe and around the world marked the 80th anniversary of the infamous "Kristallnacht" Nazi pogrom against Jews.

"Every aggression perpetrated against one of our citizens because they are Jewish echoes like the breaking of new crystal," Philippe wrote on Facebook, referring to the start of the Nazi drive to wipe out Jews on November 9, 1938, also known as the Night of Broken Glass, according to AFP.

"Why recall, in 2018, such a painful memory? Because we are very far from being finished with anti-Semitism," he said, calling the number of acts "relentless".

After a record year in 2015, anti-Semitic acts fell by 58 percent in 2016 and went down a further seven percent last year, however there was an increase in violent acts targeting Jews.

In his Facebook post, Philippe quoted Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel as saying that "the real danger, my son, is indifference", pledging that the French government would not be indifferent.

The government plans to toughen rules on hate speech online next year, pressuring social media giants to do more to remove racist and anti-Semitic content.

Philippe said it would also "experiment with a network of investigators and magistrates specially trained in the fight against acts of hate", which could be extended nation-wide.

Starting mid-November, he added, a national team would be mobilized to intervene in schools to support teachers facing anti-Semitism.

In recent years, France has seen several cases of extreme violence against Jewish victims whose attackers singled them out for robbery, rape and murder because they were Jewish.

In March, 85-year-old French Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll was murdered in her apartment in Paris.

Prosecutors later indicted two defendants in connection with what is being tried as a murder with aggravated circumstances of a hate crime. They are also charged with robbery.

One of the suspects in custody, a 29-year-old Muslim man, was a neighbor of Knoll. Prosecutors investigating the murder have confirmed the two suspects in custody targeted her because she was Jewish.

Several days after Knoll's murder, the office of the French Jewish Students Union at the University of Paris was broken into and vandalized with anti-Israel and anti-Semitic graffiti.

The same week, the French Jewish student union reported that a room that it used at the Sorbonne university in Paris had been completely defaced.

This past week, two Jews were assaulted in two separate incidents on the streets of Paris, in what police said may have been hate crimes.

In addition, worshipers last Saturday discovered graffiti about Jews and "Palestine" written on the wall of a synagogue in Les Lilas, an eastern suburb of Paris bordering on the 19th District.

France recently increased vigilance at places of Jewish worship around the country following the massacre at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

---

## **Anti-Semitic acts up 69 percent in France in 2018, prime minister says**

***Anti-Semitic acts in France rose by 69 percent in the first nine months of 2018, Prime Minister Édouard Philippe said Friday, on the 80th anniversary of the infamous "Kristallnacht" attacks on Jews in Nazi Germany.***

France 24 (09.11.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2Dj2WmS> - Kristallnacht (also known as the Night of Broken Glass) refers to the smashed windows of Jewish shops and homes that happened in Nazi Germany during a heightened wave of violent anti-Jewish pogroms that took place on November 9-10, 1938. At least 91 Jewish people were killed and up to 30,000 men were rounded up and taken to concentration camps.

"Every aggression perpetrated against one of our citizens because they are Jewish echoes like the breaking of new crystal," Prime Minister Édouard Philippe wrote in the statement on Facebook, referring to Kristallnacht.

"Why recall, in 2018, such a painful memory? Because we are very far from being finished with anti-Semitism," he said, calling the number of acts "relentless".

After a record high in 2015, anti-Semitic acts fell by 58 percent in 2016 and went down a further 7 percent last year.

France has the largest Jewish population in Europe and the third-largest Jewish population in the world. However, despite Jewish people making up less than 1 percent of the French population, they were the targets of nearly 40 percent of the violent acts in France classified as racially or religiously motivated in 2017.

And according to Phillippe, there has been a 69 percent rise in anti-Semitic acts in the first nine months of this year.

Günther Jikeli, a German historian at Indiana University who conducted a significant study of Muslim anti-Semitism in Europe, said the causes of this dramatic spike are difficult to identify. "The only two countries with reliable data on anti-Semitism are the UK and France," he said. "Rises in anti-Semitism often happen in correlated waves in the two countries, and last year there was a major wave in the UK."

### ***'Unite and speak out'***

"Anti-Semitism is often in the minds of many people, but we need to discover what triggers this into action," said Jikeli. "Sometimes people feel emboldened in the wake of another anti-Semitic act, like the Pittsburgh attack" on a Jewish synagogue that killed 11 people in October.

The murder of an 85-year-old Jewish woman in her home last spring left many in France aghast.

"The murder of Mireille Knoll in March shocked and outraged so many people, but maybe it also activated others. We know that anti-Semites feel encouraged to take action for many reasons. But, crucially, they can also be discouraged – and international leaders must unite and speak out."

Philippe quoted Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel as saying that "the real danger, my son, is indifference", pledging that the French government would not be indifferent.

The government plans to toughen rules on hate speech online next year, pressuring social media giants to do more to remove racist and anti-Semitic content.

Philippe said it would also "experiment with a network of investigators and magistrates who are specially trained in the fight against acts of hate", which could be extended nationwide.

He added that from mid-November a national team would be mobilised to intervene in schools to support teachers dealing with anti-Semitism in their classrooms.

---

## **Op-ed: Islamization of French society or Salafization of Muslims? Which phenomenon? Which terminology?**

**By Willy Fautré, *Human Rights Without Frontiers***

HRWF (04.11.2018) - The recent publication in France of the book « Inch'Allah, l'islamisation à visage découvert » by Gérard Davet and David Lhomme, two major journalists of the famous daily center-left paper "Le Monde", has sparked vivid and interesting debates in French media.

The book is based on a field investigation carried out by five journalism students under the guidance of two professors in the *departement* of Seine-St-Denis (north of Paris), which has a population of about 1.5 million inhabitants, including 700,000 Muslims. Around 200 people, including Muslims, were interviewed and about 20 testimonies were published after the facts were rigorously checked. The authors of this well documented book stress that the way of life in that *departement* now increasingly follows religious standards and is more and more imposed upon the diverse local population.

For several years, many media in Western Europe have been raising the prospect of the "Islamization" of France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Germany... all countries with Christian majorities and a history shaped by Christianity.

But is the use of the word Islamization of our Western European societies appropriate? There are about 5 million Muslims in France out of a total population of around 67 million. There is no evidence that non-Muslims have been Islamized or are massively becoming Muslims. At the same time, it is a fact that a number of French and foreign Muslims are becoming Salafists.

### **What is Salafism? What is Islamization?**

Salafists are compelled by their faith to promote it, and to impose their rigorist religious standards on other Muslims and beyond, and to seek political control in "territories of the (French) Republic", as well as in civil institutions.

'Historical' Muslims in France deplore and complain about the progress of the Salafist ideology, the standards and teachings of which are in breach of 'the laws of the Republic' and international human rights standards.

'Historical' Muslims in France have been abiding by the French rule of law since they first settled in the country of Clovis, the first king of the Franks, who through his conversion and his baptism in 496 introduced Christianity in his kingdom, and of the Enlightenment.

'Historical' Muslims in France disagree with Salafist/ Wahhabi forms of Islam that damage the image of their communities, tear families apart, alienate their children from the French way of life and from their parents, and 'steal' them to send them to theatres of war in Syria and Iraq. The testimonies of Muslims in the book of Gérard Davet and David Lhomme stress this dimension of this issue.

The same phenomenon affects Muslim majority countries such as Bosnia, Tunisia, Morocco, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan... but the terminology "Islamization" would be totally inappropriate in this context.

Hence, for this global phenomenon, the necessity to find a common and non-stigmatizing term that is applicable to any country : the Salafization of Muslims.

---

## **A Canadian-Indian citizen wrongly detained for 2 months under suspicion of being a guru**

***In September, Jean-Luc Martin-Lagardette published an article about Neelam Makhija, 71, a retired Indo-Canadian engineer, who spent two months in prison and was held against his will in France for two and a half years under suspicion for being a 'guru'. HRWF has summarized this article, the full French version of it can be found [here](#).***

CAP/Liberte de Conscience (09.10.2018) - Neelam Makhija, 71, is a Canadian citizen of Indian origin. As an engineer in third cycle electronics (MSEE) and holder of a master of business administration (MBA), he founded and directed for 23 years a company specialized in high-tech electronic projects in Canada. He retired in 2006, and has since spent his time between Toronto and Mumbai where his two daughters and grand-children live.

Between 2010 and 2014, he made several visits to France to see his Canadian friend Cécile Tousignant, whom he has known since 2007. She is a life coach and meditation teacher inspired by an Indian master (in France and Quebec). She invited him to participate in three of her meditation courses lasting 2, 4 and 7 days respectively.

### ***Gendarmerie raid***

On November 24, 2014, Mr. Makhija was in Fontainebleau with a small group of 6-7 people, when a squad of gendarmerie arrived at 7 am at the private house where Cécile Tousignant was leading a meditation session. They arrested Ms. Tousignant and Mr. Makhija together with two other participants. They intervened following a notification to the Center against Mental Manipulation (CCMM) by the father of one of her former students.

The gendarmes, about twenty, were all armed and behaved as if they had come to save the participants from a serious and imminent danger.

Ms. Tousignant and Mr. Makhija were separated for one year without the right to any contact between each other.

After a few hours of interrogation without the presence of a lawyer, the designated translator explained briefly the accusations to Mr. Makhija. They claimed that he had allegedly «used fraudulent means to manipulate people's minds in a state of psychological subjection and to scam them. He had allegedly used mental techniques and created a mysterious Indian atmosphere to influence these people who were in a situation of weakness.» And he allegedly belonged to «the cult» of the guru (Indian spiritual master) Osho.<sup>1</sup>

The defendants were kept in jail separately for eight weeks «because we were foreigners and the investigating judge was too busy to meet us,» says Neelam Makhija. «The gendarmes who arrested us told the prison authorities that we were part of the cult of Osho, the sex guru.» «Then the judge met me: she wanted to know everything about me, my life, Osho, the Indian gurus and the Indian spirituality. For me, it was a shock because I was just a visitor! I did not have a client or work here. I do not even speak the French language. They said they had pages of criminal charges against me. But I was just a tourist for three weeks in France, with a return ticket to Bombay. I did not understand why they were criticizing my culture!»

Makhija was expected to return to his family in India within ten days. During his detention, he asked his assigned lawyer to contact his family, but his request was turned down. Once in prison, he had to wait for over two weeks before he could call his daughter: «My children and grandchildren were very worried about what could have happened to their 70-year old father. As I could not communicate with them, they thought I was sick or ...dead».

After spending nearly two months in prison, without due process before a court, where he could have defended himself, and after paying a deposit of 50,000 euros, Mr. Makhija was released but forbidden to leave the territory of France for two and a half years.

During this period, the investigating judge met him only once, on January 15, 2015. On January 26, he was out of prison. In March, the investigating judge questioned all the clients of Ms. Cécile Tousignant. They all declared that they had no problems with Neelam Makhija, and most of them said that they did not know him and did not give him any money.

Neelam's lawyer repeatedly but vainly tried to have the limits to his freedom of movement lifted.

### ***The prosecutor abandons the charges***

The trial finally took place on June 2, 2017, after a long process lasting 30 months. The prosecutor said he would abandon the charge of mentally manipulating people in a state

---

<sup>1</sup> Osho, another name for the late Indian spiritual mystic Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (1931-1990), was the founder of the controversial Rajneesh movement which is still today, under the name Osho, an active spiritual association with meditation centers and organized seminars. For more information about a similar case, see the [case of Leela Förderkreis E.V. and Others v. Germany](#).

of weakness due to the lack of evidence to support such an accusation. He recognized that the investigation judge had acted too zealously and that she used an inordinate amount of time to process the investigation. He also abandoned the money laundering charges due to the lack of evidence to support that Mr. Makhija received funds from Mrs. Tousignant.

The judges were eager to shorten this embarrassing affair. After the deliberation of less than one hour, they "whitewashed" the accused, and just sentenced him to a symbolic fine for giving advice to Cécile Tousignant regarding the the tax administration.

### ***Neelam Makhija lost over € 600,000***

According to Mr. Makhija, the amount of the financial damage due to this abusive prosecution exceeded € 600 000, but there were non-financial consequences as well, such as loss of reputation among his relatives, his community and his business partners.

---

## **Banning the niqab violated two Muslim women's freedom of religion - UN experts**

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (23.10.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2S9ssjr> - In two landmark decisions, the United Nations Human Rights Committee found that France violated the human rights of two women by fining them for wearing the niqab, a full-body Islamic veil.

The two decisions, which were considered concurrently since they posed identical legal questions, are available to read in full (in French): [1](#) and [2](#).

The Human Rights Committee received the two complaints in 2016, after two French women were prosecuted and convicted in 2012 for wearing articles of clothing intended to conceal their faces in public. France in 2010 adopted a law stipulating that "No one may, in a public space, wear any article of clothing intended to conceal the face." The law has the effect of banning the wearing of the full Islamic veil in public, which covers the whole body including the face, leaving just a narrow slit for the eyes.

The Committee found that the general criminal ban on the wearing of the niqab in public introduced by the French law disproportionately harmed the petitioners' right to manifest their religious beliefs, and that France had not adequately explained why it was necessary to prohibit this clothing. In particular, the Committee was not persuaded by France's claim that a ban on face covering was necessary and proportionate from a security standpoint or for attaining the goal of "living together" in society. The Committee acknowledged that States could require that individuals show their faces in specific circumstances for identification purposes, but considered that a general ban on the niqab was too sweeping for this purpose. The Committee also concluded that the ban, rather than protecting fully veiled women, could have the opposite effect of confining them to their homes, impeding their access to public services and marginalizing them.

"The decisions are not directed against the notion of secularity (laïcité), nor are they an endorsement of a custom which many on the Committee, including myself, regard as a form of oppression of women," said Yuval Shany, Chair of the Committee. Rather, he explained, the decisions represented the position of the Committee that a general criminal ban did not allow for a reasonable balance between public interests and individual rights.

The case was the first of its kind to be considered by the Committee. While it regularly receives and rules on the practical application of civil and political rights in individual cases, it had not until now considered the question of laws which had the effect of banning the full Islamic veil.

The next step is for France within 180 days to report to the Committee on the action it has taken to implement the Committee's decision, including compensation of the two petitioners and measures taken to prevent similar violations in the future, including by reviewing the law in question.

---

## **France: Is the ban on hijab, niqab, burqa... Islamophobia?**

By Willy Fautré, Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (18.10.2018) - In September, the French police arrested Raïf Redouane, a dangerous criminal who had escaped from prison in early July and had been on the run for two months. The investigation revealed that he had been able to move unnoticed from one place to another in France. His secret: wearing a full veil... This incident reactivated the debates about the ban on Islamic full-body attire in the country.

In 2010, France, which has the largest population of Muslim culture (about 5 million) in Europe introduced a ban on full-face niqab and burqa veils in public but the law remains widely unimplemented.

Debates in Western Europe, in particular in France, about the ban on various sorts of clothing that do not allow to identify a person, often veer into accusations of alleged islamophobia while lawmakers insist that it is a matter of security, integration and social cohesion. Society in general is also opposed to the wearing of hijab, niqab and burqa in the public space and by staff in public institutions. 'Historical' Muslims in Western Europe also perceive this religious attire negatively.

Muslim majority countries, such as secular post-Soviet states, impose similar bans and are of course never accused of islamophobia. They view it as an attempt by 'alien' forms of Islam to change their secular way of life as well as their peaceful practice of their religion, and to radicalize their youth. Hence the inappropriate use of the accusation of "islamophobia" in historically Christian majority countries.

In the last resort, the rule of law in France and in Europe is determined by the European Court of Human Rights.

The judgements of the European Court have been very consistent, supporting

- the prohibition for a teacher in an elementary school from wearing a headscarf in her class (*Dahlab v. Switzerland, 2001*)
- restrictions from wearing the veil for university students (*Sahin v. Turkey, 2005*)
- a ban on the face veil in all public spaces (*SAS v. France, 2014*)



- the barring of civil servants from donning the headscarf (*Ebrahimian v. France, 2015*)
- the right of three Belgian municipalities to adopt a by-law banning the wearing in public places of clothing that conceals the face (*Dakir v. Belgium, 2017*).

---

## **MIVILUDES, a State institution, repeatedly condemned for defamation and stigmatization**

### ***Time for PM Edouard Philippe to re-examine the practices and question the usefulness of MIVILUDES***

HRWF (14.05.2108) - On 20 April 2018, the Administrative Court of Paris stated that MIVILUDES, the Inter-ministerial Mission of Vigilance and Fight against Sectarian Deviances created in 2002, had damaged the reputation of the anthroposophic medicine by listing it in its brochure "Health and Cultic Deviances" (Santé et Dérives Sectaires) in 2012 as a potentially dangerous and harmful sectarian practice.

The anthroposophic medicine association CEP MEP SMA had vainly attempted to be removed from MIVILUDES brochure since its publication. The court esteemed unfounded the accusations against the anthroposophic medicine and decided to condemn the State represented by the Prime Minister to whose authority MIVILUDES is subjected

- to pay 2000 EUR to the CEP MEP SMA, the main association of anthroposophic physicians in France for the moral damage caused to them
- to release a press statement publicizing the court decision on MIVILUDES website and any means of communication used by the State to publish the litigious report
- to remove the anthroposophic medicine from the brochure "Health and Sectarian Deviances."

The case had started with the sole complaint recorded by MIVILUDES in 2010 from the father of a girl who claimed she had been a victim of a dental surgeon using anthroposophic medicine.

This sort of medicine is exclusively practiced by medical doctors and is well established in 22 European countries, including in France.

### ***Other court decisions against MIVILUDES***

On 7 December 2017, the Administrative Court of Paris ruled that MIVILUDES had damaged the reputation of the national association of kinesitherapists practicing fasciatherapy and the group Point d'Appui which until 2012 was providing training in this therapy to osteopaths and other professionals.

MIVILUDES had listed fasciatherapy in its brochure "Health and cultic deviations" as a dangerous medical technique. The court ruled that MIVILUDES was to remove it from its report, to pay 1500 EUR to the plaintiffs as moral damage and to publicize the judgment on its website and beyond. Point d'Appui had to put an end to its activities after the controversial publication of MIVILUDES.

On 2 July 2015, the Court of Appeals in Paris upheld an earlier judgement that MIVILUDES be found guilty of defamation against the French Society for the Defence of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP). \*

On 22 February 2013, the Council of State overruled the decision of the Administrative Court of Paris which prevented the French Federation of Jehovah's Witnesses from accessing accusatory documents in possession of MIVILUDES which had justified the previous listing of that religious movement as a harmful sect/cult by the French State. It appeared that the accusations of MIVILUDES were unfounded.

Noteworthy is that the campaign of MIVILUDES and other state institutions in France led to disastrous consequences in the lives of French citizens because of their beliefs: slander, stigmatization broadcasts and articles in the media, victimization at work or at school, attacks on the reputation of ordinary persons, loss of employment or promotions, refusal or limitation of the right to visit or rejection of the right to custody in cases of divorce, impossibility of renting public or private spaces for religious ceremonies or meetings, denial of access to public posting boards, police supervision and interrogation, judicial complaints for supposed illegal practice of medicine, cases of temporary imprisonment, etc.

The publications of MIVILUDES about so-called dangerous cults have been repeatedly criticized by human rights NGOs at the UN, the CoE and the OSCE for defaming and stigmatizing non-traditional religious and other groups and their members.

Human Rights Without Frontiers calls upon PM Edouard Philippe to re-examine the practices and question the usefulness of MIVILUDES in its current mandate.

(\*) <http://www.coordiap.com/press2994-miviludes-diffame-tradition-famille-proprie.htm>

---

## **Should assimilation be a requirement for citizenship?**

### ***A handshake test of French identity and more***

The Economist (30.04.2018) - <https://econ.st/2QalTuP> - In April, when France's highest administrative court upheld a decision to deny citizenship to an Algerian woman because she refused to shake the hand of the presiding official, the ruling barely caused a stir in France. Abroad, though, it raised eyebrows, and the charge from some quarters that the country was infringing on civil and religious liberties. The incident serves as an example of the sort of policy decision taken in a liberal democracy that to some observers amounts to intolerance but to others to a form of vigilance against intolerant values.

The woman, named in the ruling only as Madame B.A., had married a French citizen in the Algerian town of Nédrone in 2010. Five years later she applied for French citizenship through marriage, as she is legally entitled to do. During the naturalisation ceremony, in the town of Grenoble in the foothills of the Alps, she refused to shake the hands of the two officials present, and later explained that this was for religious reasons. The French government ruled that her refusal amounted to a "failure to assimilate", which it is entitled to do under a provision in French law, and therefore denied her French citizenship. When the applicant appealed, on the grounds of her right to religious freedom, the Conseil d'Etat upheld the government's decision.

To outsiders, such a decision may appear absurd, if not deeply illiberal. No mention in the ruling was made of Islam, but this was widely assumed to be the religion she was referring to. Surely a woman's decision to follow her faith in declining to shake a man's hand is her right? The French may argue that religion should be kept out of public life. But when mayors of some French beach resorts in 2016 tried to ban the "burkini", a head-and-body-covering swimsuit, they were overruled in the courts.

In this instance, though, France was applying its secular laws in the context not of beachwear but the right to citizenship. In its ruling, the Conseil d'Etat explicitly referred to a 1905 law which was designed to keep religion out of public affairs after a long anti-clerical battle with the Catholic church. It was on this basis that the French banned the Islamic headscarf and other "conspicuous" religious symbols in state schools in 2004, and the face-covering niqab in all public places in 2010. Such a creed, known as *laïcité*, enjoys cross-party political consensus.

Exactly how to interpret such rules is a matter of ongoing debate in France. President Emmanuel Macron has argued for the need to be less rigid, and likes to remind the French that the 1905 law was passed also to enshrine the right to religious practice. He has said that he is "not personally happy" about French women who wear the veil. But nor does he want to restrict the wearing of it any further, as some politicians would like.

In general, the French regard *laïcité* as a bulwark against the dissemination of hardline religious practices, in particular those that impose conservative social codes on women, which the French consider a greater threat to tolerance and openness than their secular rules.

There may be no simple solution to the contradiction this presents for those who uphold liberal values. France's quest to find a better balance between defending religious freedom on one hand, and individual rights when they are threatened by the consequence of those freedoms on the other, puts a central part of its very identity to the test.

---

## **French politicians, celebrities condemn 'new anti-Semitism'**

France24 (23.04.2018) - <https://bit.ly/2qQPdeZ> - 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 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.**



*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

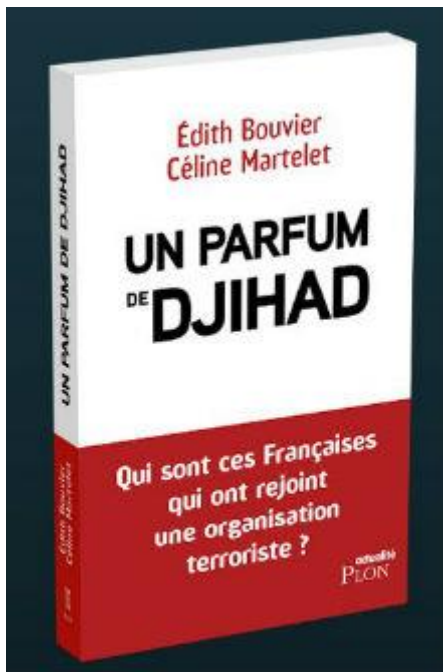


attempt to answer the question in their new book, "A Scent of Jihad", which details the lives of 15 women in Iraq and Syria.

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 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.

---

## **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>