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## **France: 857 acts against Christians in 2021**

***A report shows that there were also 589 against Jews, and 213 to Muslims .  
"Physical violence is on the increase", said an evangelical leader.***

Evangelical Focus (22.02.2022) - <https://bit.ly/3M05Y0d> - Hate towards people because of their faith is increasing in **France**, according to the initial findings of the investigation carried out by two MPs, ordered by French Prime Minister Jean Castex.

*La République En Marche* (the Republic on the Move, LERM) and *MoDem* (democratic movement) MPs, Ludovic Mendes and Isabelle Florennes, presented their report in a press conference on 10 February, after **over thirty interviews with religious representatives, police and judicial authorities**, and four trips to Strasbourg, Sarcelles, Lyon and Nantes.

They counted **1659 anti-religious acts in 2021: 857 acts were against Christians, 589 against Jews, and 213 attacks against Muslims**. The latter have grown by 38% compared to 2019. Those data consolidate the provisional assessment presented in December by the Minister of the Interior, Gérald Darmanin.

### **"A rise in hatred over the past ten years"**

"There has been **a rise in hatred over the past ten years**, which is **getting worse** both face to face and online", Mendes pointed out.

The two MPs explained that "every denomination that was interviewed described a **society that is becoming more and more hateful and violent**" towards them.

Furthermore, "the **small daily aggressions are more and more frequent**."

Unfortunately, many seem to be getting used to it, or rather learning to live with it", added Mendes.

They underlined that this rise in hatred and violence "is **fuelled by political discourse**, with a speech that no longer has any limits", and advocated for "a better education about religions".

**Romain Choynet**, communications director of the [National Council of Evangelicals in France](#) (CNEF) commented on the study on twitter, stressing that "for a long time, anti-Christian acts consisted of **damage** to or theft from places of worship, which still account for most of the incidents, but **physical violence is on the increase**".

### **"Secularism is not about hiding religion"**

Amid a country divided over the **recent and controversial appointment of the Christian philosopher Mark Sherringham as the head of the Higher Council for School Programmes (CSP)**, the French MPs "hope that the debate on religions in schools will not be refused, because **secularism is not about hiding religion**".

Ludovic Mendes and Isabelle Florennes will deliver their final report in early March.

*Note: This article has been corrected - the growth of 38% compared to 2019 was not related to general anti-religious attacks but to anti-Muslim attacks.*

*Photo : The windows of the store were full of anti-Christian offensive graffiti. / @comcnef.*

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## **French religious associations must sign a Republican Commitment Contract to access subsidies**

***Evangelicals say the new contract "contains guarantees for freedom of religion" but also warn about its application, because "certain terms could be misinterpreted".***

**Evangelical Focus (01.02.2022) - <https://bit.ly/3uuQjzk> - [French](#) associations, including "religious associations", wishing to receive public subsidies or approval as of 1 January have to sign the Republican Commitment Contract (CER).**

The CER is **one of the key measures of the "Law to reinforce the respect of republican principles"**, also known as "**anti-separatism law**", approved last year by the French Assembly after a **controversial discussion**.

It states that **associations must "accept seven commitments**: respect for the laws of the Republic; **freedom of conscience**, freedom of the members of the association; equality and non-discrimination; fraternity and prevention of violence; respect for the dignity of the person; and respect for the symbols of the Republic".

## **“CER contains guarantees for freedom of religion”**

The **National Council of Evangelicals in France (CNEF)**, along with the **Protestant Evangelical Committee for Human Dignity (CPDH)**, issued a statement on the issue, pointing out that **“in general, the terms of the CER contain guarantees for freedom of association and freedom of conscience, thought and religion”**.

“As it stands, the text thus **allows so-called denominational associations**, which pursue the general or local interest, to enter the scheme, while **affirming a religious identity** and foundations linked to their action”, add the entities.

The evangelical representatives also **“welcome commitments to fraternity and the fight against violence**, as they constitute the basis of any associative contribution to the common good”.

## **“We call for a society of trust and not of mistrust”**

However, the CNEF and the CPDH say they **“must remain vigilant about the conditions of application and interpretation of these new measures** by public authorities or administrations”.

**“Certain terms** such as abusive proselytism or arbitrary exclusion **could be misinterpreted**. The possibility of administrative appeal is not excluded if the public authorities refuse to provide financial support”, warns the statement.

That is why the evangelical entities **“urge the state to pay particular attention to respecting the freedoms** cherished by associations when applying this new control mechanism”.

**“We call for a society of trust and not of mistrust”**, the French evangelicals conclude in the statement.

*Photo : A view of the French Assembly. / Photo: Chris Waits, CC BY 2.0*

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## **500 « sectes », 500 000 « victimes » en France ? La MIVILUDES avoue ne pas disposer de données récentes**

***La mission gouvernementale française avoue aujourd'hui s'être appuyée sur des chiffres vieux de dix ans (et controversés).***

[Lire le texte original en anglais.](#)

*Par Massimo Introvigne*

Bitter Winter (05.01.2022) - Si vous suivez la presse française, vous avez probablement lu qu'à cause de COVID-19, les « sectes », une vieille obsession en France, prolifèrent plus que jamais. En fait, il y a maintenant 500 « sectes », avec 500 000 « victimes »,

dont 50 000 à 90 000 sont des « enfants ». Ces chiffres invraisemblables ont été repris par les médias français, et même mentionnés au niveau international.

Les vérificateurs de faits (fact-checkers) des médias fiables les ont probablement considérés à première vue comme légèrement étranges. Pourtant, ils ont été certifiés par une institution gouvernementale, la MIVILUDES, la Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires. Grâce à ce cachet gouvernemental, ceux qui ont repris ces chiffres dans les médias se sont fourvoyés.

Malheureusement pour ces médias et la MIVILUDES, il existe en France des lois similaires au FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) américain permettant aux citoyens d'accéder aux documents du gouvernement sous certaines conditions. L'ONG CAP-LC (Coordination des associations et des particuliers pour la liberté de conscience) dotée d'un statut consultatif spécial auprès de l'ECOSOC (Conseil économique et social) des Nations Unies a utilisé ces lois pour demander à la MIVILUDES d'où provenaient ces statistiques.

Le 19 juillet 2021, la MIVILUDES a répondu, et la lettre a maintenant été publiée par le [magazine français Rebelle\[S\]](#). Il s'agit d'une lettre très surprenante dans laquelle la MIVILUDES admet qu'elle ne dispose pas de statistiques récentes et qu'elle ne s'appuie que sur des documents anciens, datant parfois de 25 ans.

Pour les « 500 sectes », la MIVILUDES affirme que le chiffre est tiré du rapport controversé de 1995 établi par une Commission parlementaire française sur les « sectes ». En réalité, ce rapport recense 173 « sectes » et, comme l'explique la lettre, le chiffre de 500 inclut les « filiales ». Inclure les « filiales » reviendrait à prétendre qu'il existe en France des dizaines de milliers de religions en considérant chaque paroisse catholique comme une religion. Plus important encore, la liste de 1995 a été tellement critiquée et même ridiculisée que la MIVILUDES elle-même a déclaré à plusieurs reprises qu'elle ne s'y référait plus. Mais, elle l'a fait pour créer l'alarme par des statistiques bidon.

Le nombre de 500 000 « victimes » des « sectes », dit la lettre, arrondit le nombre de 460 000, qui proviendrait du [rapport annuel d'activité de la MIVILUDES de 2010](#), c'est-à-dire d'il y a 11 ans. En fait, ce commentaire montre que la MIVILUDES lit mal ses propres documents.

Dans le rapport 2010, page 253, on lit, dans une séance consacrée à la Nouvelle-Calédonie, qu'on y a trouvé « 60 000 adeptes des groupes sectaires », ce qui signifie que la Nouvelle-Calédonie, alors qu'elle représente moins de 4 % de la population nationale française, concentre 20 % du nombre total des membres de sectes en France, évalué entre « 300 000 et 400 000 sur l'ensemble du territoire français ».

Si 60 000 est présenté comme un pourcentage du total, cela signifie que le chiffre est *inclus* dans le total. 60 000, c'est 20% de 300 000, ce qui signifie que le rédacteur de la partie du rapport consacrée à la Nouvelle-Calédonie a considéré le chiffre le plus bas comme moins incroyable que le chiffre le plus élevé, 400 000.

Cherchant un moyen de justifier son chiffre actuel de 500 000, la MIVILUDES en 2021 a pris le chiffre le plus élevé de 2010 (400 000) et a ajouté les 60 000 de Nouvelle-Calédonie (qui en fait étaient déjà comptés comme faisant partie des 300 000 ou 400 000), en prétendant inexactement que le rapport de 2010 parlait de 460 000 « membres des sectes », et a arrondi le chiffre à 500 000. Les médias aiment les chiffres ronds après tout. Comme dans des cas similaires, la section sur la Nouvelle-Calédonie du rapport 2010 ne fournit aucune source ni preuve pour le chiffre de la Nouvelle-Calédonie et pour le chiffre national.

Enfin, la lettre indique que le chiffre de 50 000 à 90 000 mineurs « victimes » de « sectes » ajuste le chiffre de « 35 000 à 100 000 » [d'un rapport publié il y a 15 ans](#), en 2006, sur l'influence des « sectes » sur la santé physique et mentale des mineurs. Aucun étudiant de premier cycle ne pourrait s'en tirer avec un rapport d'étude « ajustant » de manière créative des statistiques vieilles de dix ans. Le rapport de 2006, en tout cas, présentait ses chiffres comme conjecturaux, déclarant que le nombre réel « reste difficile à évaluer ».

Le document de 2006 précise que « L'évolution même des mouvements à caractère sectaire rend difficile toute appréhension plus précise du nombre de mineurs concernés », pages 21 et 22. Une fourchette « entre 35 000 et 100 000 » montre qu'il ne s'agit même pas d'une véritable statistique, mais qu'elle est fondée sur les déclarations de quelques témoins, qui n'ont pas expliqué leurs sources ni leur méthodologie.

En résumé, nous savons maintenant, non pas grâce aux critiques de la MIVILUDES, mais grâce à la MIVILUDES elle-même, qu'elle ne dispose d'aucune statistique sur les « sectes », et que les chiffres qu'elle mentionne proviennent de documents de 1995, 2006 et 2010, qui ne sont même pas cités correctement et ne peuvent évidemment rien dire de la situation actuelle. Ces documents ont été largement critiqués par les universitaires lors de leur publication, et proposaient des chiffres incroyables basés sur les déclarations d'un petit nombre de témoins et de sources qui n'étaient pas mentionnées ou qui n'existaient peut-être même pas.

Les fausses statistiques, comme nous l'avons appris lors de la crise du COVID, constituent une part particulièrement dangereuse des informations fallacieuses (fake news). Elles sont intolérables lorsqu'elles sont diffusées par les médias, et deviennent un scandale public lorsque des institutions gouvernementales sont impliquées.

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## **500 "Cults", 500,000 "Victims" in France? MIVILUDES admits it has no recent data**

***The French governmental mission now confesses it relied on decade-old (and controversial) figures.***

*By Massimo Introvigne*

Bitter Winter (05.01.2022) - <https://bit.ly/3HDSkg6> - If you read French, you have probably read that because of COVID-19 "cults," an old obsession in France, are proliferating more than ever. In fact, there are now 500 "cults," with 500,000 "victims," of which from 50,000 to 90,000 are "children." These fantastic figures have been repeated by French media, and even mentioned internationally.

Fact-checkers in reliable media probably at first sight regarded them as slightly strange. However, they were certified by a governmental institution, the MIVILUDES, the Mission

interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires (Interministerial Mission of Vigilance and Combat against Cultic Deviances). Because of this governmental stamp, those who repeated these figures in the media got away with them.

Unfortunately for these media and the MIVILUDES, in France there are laws similar to the American FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) allowing citizens to access documents of the government under certain conditions. An NGO with special consultative status at the United Nations' ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) called CAP-LC (Coordination des associations et des particuliers pour la liberté de conscience, Coordination of associations and individuals for freedom of conscience) used these laws to ask the MIVILUDES where these statistics came from.

On July 19, 2021, the MIVILUDES answered, and the letter has now been [published by the French magazine Rebelle\[S\]](#). It is a sensational letter, where the MIVILUDES admits that it does not have any recent statistics and it is only relying on old documents, sometimes dating to 25 years ago.

For the "500 cults," the MIVILUDES states the figure is taken from the controversial 1995 report of a French Parliamentary Commission on "cults." In fact, this report listed 173 "cults," and as the letter explains the number of 500 included the "local units" (filiales). Including the "filiales" would be similar to claiming that in France there are tens of thousands of religions considering each Catholic parish as a religion. More importantly, the 1995 list was so much criticized and even ridiculed that the MIVILUDES itself has repeatedly stated that it no longer relies on it. Only, it does when it comes to create alarm through bogus statistics.

The number of 500,000 "victims" of the "cults," the letter says, adjusts the number of 460,000, which allegedly comes from the yearly report of activity of MIVILUDES of 2010, i.e. of 11 years ago. In fact, this comment shows that the MIVILUDES misreads its own documents.

In [the 2010 report](#), page 253, we read in a session about New Caledonia, that there "60,000 adepts of the cultic groups" (adeptes des groupes sectaires) were found, meaning that New Caledonia, while accounting for less than 4% of the national population of France, was plagued by 20% of the whole number of cultists in France, evaluated at "300,000 to 400,000 on the total territory of France" (3 à 400 000 sur l'ensemble du territoire français).

If 60,000 is presented as a percentage of the total, it means that the figure is *included* in the total. 60,000 is 20% of 300,000, meaning that whoever wrote the section on New Caledonia of the report regarded the lower figure as less unbelievable than the higher one of 400,000.

Looking for a way to justify its current figure of 500,000, the MIVILUDES in 2021 took the higher figure of 2010 (400,000) and added the 60,000 in New Caledonia (which in fact were already counted as part of the 300,000 or 400,000), inaccurately claiming that the 2010 report referred to 460,000 "cultists," and adjusted the figure to 500,000. Media likes round figures after all. As in similar cases, the section on New Caledonia of the 2010 report did not supply any source or evidence for both the New Caledonian and the national figure.

Finally, the letter states that the figure of 50,000 to 90,000 minors who are “victims” of “cults” adjusts the figure of “between 35,000 and 100,000” of [a report published 15 years ago, in 2006](#), on the influence on “cults” on the physical and mental health of minors. No undergraduate student could get away with a term paper creatively “adjusting” decade-old statistics. The 2006 report, at any rate, introduced its figures as conjectural, stating that the real number “remains difficult to evaluate” (reste difficile à évaluer).

The 2006 document stated that “the evolution of the movements characterized as cults makes any more precise estimation of the number of the minors involved difficult” (L’évolution même des mouvements à caractère sectaire rend difficile toute appréhension plus précise du nombre de mineurs concernés: pages 21 et 22). A range “between 35,000 and 100,000” shows that this was not even a real statistic, and in fact was based on statements by a few witnesses, who did not explain their sources or methodology.

Summing up, we now know not from critics of the MIVILUDES but from the MIVILUDES itself that it has no statistics on “cults,” and the figures it mentions comes from documents of 1995, 2006, and 2010, which are not even quoted correctly and of course cannot say anything about the situation today. These documents were widely criticized by scholars when they were published, and offered unbelievable figures based on statements by a small number of witnesses and sources that were left unmentioned or perhaps did not even exist.

False statistics, as we learned during the COVID crisis, are a particularly dangerous part of fake news. They are intolerable when they are spread by media and become a public scandal when governmental institutions are involved.

Photo : *MIVILUDES’s letter to CAP-LC.*

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