



Dr. & Imam
Ludovic-Mohamed Zahed

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN FRANCE (2020 REPORT)

CALEM Institute in collaboration with
GIN-SSOGIE, for the United Nations

Sociological facts

Over the past fifteen years in France, and especially since the 2015 attacks in Paris, the image of Muslims and Islam has deteriorated. Thus, even though for a large majority of French people, Islam does not carry with it the seeds of violence but, on the contrary, would be a religion as pacifist as the others.

Moreover, although nearly two-thirds of French people say they do not know the Islamic religion well, a majority of them believe that "Muslims highlight the fact that they are Muslims as much as possible". But neither left-wing sympathizers, nor people who know Muslims well, share this view. Furthermore, French believe that Islamophobia, like anti-Semitism, is on the rise in France. A majority of them feel that it has been more difficult to be a Muslim in France, in recent yearsⁱ.

As a result, acts qualified as Islamophobic, racist or anti-Muslim, have progressed in connection with these tense identity representations: the mainstream media have seized on this issue to make it a favorite, redundant, sometimes omnipresent topic; intersectional discrimination, towards Muslim homosexuals for example, or Muslim women wearing a headscarf, has increased in the public sphere, which has contributed, indirectly, to their community and socio-political exclusionⁱⁱ. More generally, injunctions of justification and identity assignments are now common, towards Muslims, who are supposed to be more committed than the rest of the population against terrorist violenceⁱⁱⁱ.

This has led many French intellectuals, mostly from the left, to engage in this field of the fight against Islamophobia and anti-Muslim acts^{iv}. However, according to the French government, in 2019, openly islamophobic acts would have fallen again, reaching their lowest level since 2010^v.


Political perspectives

In this tense identity and socio-political context, the French government has just ordered the administrative dissolution of two controversial organisations, for inciting communitarian hatred^{vi}. They had made the fight against state Islamophobia their hobbyhorse. These two organisations have also been accused, for several years, of being, respectively, in the hands of Salafists and Muslim Brothers. These accusations would be defamatory, even dangerous, according to some senior French state servants^{vii}.


Added to this, there is the fight against so-called "Islamic" terrorism^{viii}, which further muddies the waters of discrimination against the vast majority of Muslims in France, who live their spirituality in peace^x. The CCIF concluded its 2020 report by highlighting "*the negative impact of anti-terrorism policies by participating in the construction of a suspicious Muslim identity, by disseminating a logic of suspicion against Muslims*", and the role of the French State in these socio-political, first, then identity dynamics.

Today, it remains a difficult task to sort out racial from religious, real or perceived, discriminations. However, it seems clear that for more than fifteen years in France, political but also theological institutions, in the eyes of a majority of young Muslims especially^x, have no longer succeeded in fulfilling their role of integrating all, including Muslims, within a republican, secular, so-called "universalist" system^{xi}, which in theory neither recognizes nor discriminates any spiritual tradition, while contributing, at least indirectly, to the fabrication of subjective and, consequently, discriminatory identities.

PRESS REVIEW



CALEM RUMI's
Isiphephelo



Inclusive Mosque, refugees' Shelter
& progressive imam-es training Institute

On November 10, in Paris, we will say STOP to Islamophobia!^{xii}

More than fifty personalities call for demonstrations on November 10 in Paris against the stigmatisation of Muslims in France.

Statement. For far too long, Muslims in France have been the target of hatred speech, invective and polemics, sometimes coming from political "officials", relayed by certain media, thus contributing to their growing stigmatisation.

For years, the dignity of Muslims has been thrown to the ground, offered to the most racist groups' retort, which now occupy French political and media space, without taking into account the gravity of the situation.

For years, acts which target them have intensified: whether it is about discrimination, liberticide projects or laws, physical attacks on women wearing headscarves, attacks on mosques or imams, ranging from even up to the attempted murder.

The attack on the Bayonne mosque, on October 28, is the most recent manifestation of this, and state services know that the terrorist threat against Muslim places of worship is great.

This violence had to spring up in the eyes of all, through the humiliation of a mother and her child by an elected RN^{xiii} at the Burgundy-Franche-Comté general council, for everyone to realize what organisations, academics, personalities, unions, activists and beyond, residents, have rightly denounced for years: Islamophobia in France is a reality. Whatever name you give it, it is no longer about debates or religions critic, but it is a form of explicit racism which targets people because of their faith. Today we must unite and give ourselves the means to fight it, so that Muslims can never again be subjected to such treatment.

Since speeches and declarations of intent are no longer enough, because the hour is serious: on November 10 in Paris we will march to say:

- STOP the racist speech that is poured out on our screens all day long, admits general indifference and the complicit silence of State institutions, responsible for combating racism.
- STOP violence and attacks against Muslims, who gradually find themselves dehumanized and stigmatised, making of them potential terrorists or enemies from within.
- STOP abusive denunciation, up to the highest level of the State, against Muslims whose only fault is real or supposed membership to a given religion.
- STOP these mass surveillance devices which lead to outright criminalization of religious practice.

The consequences, especially for dismissed employees and destabilized families, are disastrous and can no longer be tolerated. This criminalization comes at the expense of

fundamental freedoms and the most basic principles of equality, which are supposed to guide our country.

We, Muslims or not, say STOP to Islamophobia and many of us will say it together on November 10 in Paris.

We call on all organisations, all associations, all collectives, all parents' federations, all political parties, all personalities, all media, all people in solidarity, to join this solemn call and respond present at the march on November 10.

The fundamental freedoms of all are at stake. The dignity and integrity of millions of citizens depends on it. It is about the unity of all of us, against racism in all its forms which, today, once again threatens France.

A statement endeavored by: Madjid Messaoudene (élu de Saint-Denis), la Plateforme L.e.s. Musulmans; Le Nouveau Parti anticapitaliste (NPA); le Comité Adama; le Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France (CCIF); l'Union communiste libertaire (UCL); l'Union nationale des étudiants de France (Unef), Taha Bouhafs (journaliste).

First signatories: Action Antifasciste Paris Banlieue (AFA) ; Arié Alimi, avocat ; Pouria Amirshahi , directeur de publication de Politis ; Manon Aubry, eurodéputée ; Etienne Balibar, universitaire ; Ludivine Bantigny, historienne ; Yassine, Belattar, humoriste ; Esther Benbassa, sénatrice EE-LV de Paris ; Olivier Besancenot, NPA ; Saïd Bouamama, sociologue ; Leïla Chaïbi, eurodéputée LFI ; André Chassaigne, député, président du groupe GDR ; David Cormand, secrétaire national d'EE-LV ; Laurence De Cock, enseignante ; Vikash Dhorasoo, ancien de joueur de foot, parrain d'Oxfam et président de Tatane ; Rokhaya Diallo, journaliste et réalisatrice ; Pierre Jacquemain, rédacteur en chef de Regards ; Eric Fassin, sociologue ; Elsa Faucillon, députée PCF ; Fédération syndicale unitaire (FSU) ; Fianso, artiste ; Front uni des immigrations et des quartiers populaires (FUIQP) ; Geneviève Garrigos, féministe, militante des Droits humains ; Vincent Geisser, politologue ; Alain Gresh, journaliste ; Nora Hamadi, journaliste ; Benoît Hamon, Génération.s ; Yannick Jadot (eurodéputé EE-LV) ; Mathilde Larrère, historienne ; Mathieu Longatte (Bonjour Tristesse) ; Philippe Martinez, secrétaire général de la CGT ; Jean-Luc Mélenchon et l'ensemble du groupe parlementaire La France insoumise ; Marwan Muhammad, auteur et statisticien ; Younous Omarjee, eurodéputé ; Stéphane Peu, député PCF ; Edwy Plenel, journaliste ; Maryam Pougetoux et Mélanie Luce, Unef ; Jérôme Rodrigues, gilet jaune ; Julien Salingue, docteur en science politique ; Pierre Serne (porte-parole de Génération.s) ; Michèle Sibony et l'Union juive française pour la paix (UJFP) ; Laura Slimani, élue de Rouen, direction nationale de Génération.s ; Azzédine Taïbi, maire PCF de Stains ; Sylvie Tissot, sociologue ; Aïda Touihri, journaliste ; Assa Traoré, comité Adama ; Aurélie Trouvé, porte-parole d'Attac ; Union syndicale Solidaires ; Dominique Vidal, journaliste et historien.

"This is state racism": CRAN^{xiv} calls into question the French "universalist model"^{xv}

Many French political, media and intellectual figures challenge the parallel between racism in the United States and in France, in the name of French universalism. At Sputnik's microphone, Louis-Georges Tin, honorary president of the *CRAN*, explains why universalism is the tree that hides the forest of racism in France.

Around the world, the death of George Floyd brought the debate on racism to the fore, especially in Western countries. In France, however, we are witnessing an outcry from a part of the political, media and intellectual class, which refuses to consider that there is "systemic racism" and "white privilege" in France. And this [is done] in the name of universalism.

This is the case with political and cultural life leaders who are, nevertheless, politically poles apart. Thus, in the name of universalism, personalities such as Caroline Fourest or Nicolas Dupont-Aignan, who embody opposing currents of thought, believe that the notion of "white privilege", imported from American campuses, is a communitarian trap which has no place in France.

Corinne Narassiguin, national secretary for the PS^{xvi} coordination, has also written a platform in *Le Monde*, in which she vigorously refutes the importation of the expression "white privilege". For her, it's about "wanting to tackle the history of the United States on the history of France, without respecting either one".

For Louis-Georges Tin, Honorary President of the Representative Council of Black Associations in France (CRAN) and founder of the World Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (*IDAHOT*), this is a way for these elites to avoid a very real problem. At the microphone of Sputnik France, he explains why.

Sputnik France: Would you say that certain political, media and intellectual leaders are hiding behind French universalism, so as not to face the problem of racism in France?

Louis-Georges Tin: "Absolutely. I am a universalist, but the universalism that some people talk about is more like a form of uniformism. That is to say, it's mostly white, bourgeois, Catholic, heterosexual elites who are basically saying "universalism is me. You have to assimilate to my role model and if you are not like me, you are a communitarian". This is the social discourse that we have heard in this country for 30 years. It's almost funny to me, and if it weren't so bad, we'd be laughing about it more".

Sputnik France: Can we in France today speak of systemic or systematic racism?

Louis-Georges Tin: "We have to talk about systemic and unsystematic racism. We don't say that all police are racist, so it's not systematic. It's systemic in the sense that there are policies which push them to hunt immigrants, especially black immigrants. And those who denounce institutional racism are sidelined and those who are racist are protected. We can see it clearly in the masquerade of the *IGPN* (National Police General Inspectorate). This is what makes this racism a system.

This is what the Court of Cassation said in rendering a very important judgment, a few years ago, saying that there was gross State negligence in the case of facies control. It is not only police officers who are implicated, but also the hierarchy, because the Court of Cassation has condemned the police and the State itself for gross negligence. The Court understood that there was a system in which the State was involved, so it was State racism, since facies offense is racism. This racism is therefore established and protected by the State. That does not mean that all public servants, including myself, are racist. However, it does mean that there is a system which protects those who are racist.

Article 40 of the Code of Criminal Procedure constrains all officials to denounce an offense of which he or she is a victim or witness. Some don't, so they're also guilty”.

Sputnik France: What do you think is the best model for combating racism? French universalism or the more American-style communitarian model, which recognizes ethnic differences?

Louis-Georges Tin: "This story of a universalist model in France is a huge masquerade, there is no universalist model in France. Universalism is hyperbole. All the people who say they are universalists think they are the navel of the world. No one represents the universe on their own. Universalism without women, without blacks, without foreigners, without people with disabilities, without the poor, this is not universalism. We like to think that we are the best in France, but we have to stop believing that we are better than the others”.

Sputnik France: What about the American model?

Louis-Georges Tin: “We don't think the United States is a model for France either. What we are basically asking for is equality. The one quoted in our Republican motto and in Article 1 of our Constitution. There is no need to look elsewhere for models. Basically, we do not respect our values, we are below ourselves. We are in perpetual denial and at one point we have to realize that there is a problem in France, and it does not only concern blacks. On violence against women, it's the same, on pedophilia too... We always say to those who are victims “shut up”, “hide yourself”, because we need to keep our national illusion”.

Sputnik France: How do you assess the political response in France to the issues raised around the world by the death of George Floyd?

Louis-Georges Tin: “We have noticed a change in the speech, but will this be followed by a change in the actions? Very smart who can say it. There is an optimistic reading, which consists in saying that things will change for the better, but there is also a pessimistic reading, which consists in saying that it is simply a hypocritical speech and that Mr. Macron changes his mind every day.

My personal feeling is that I wouldn't bet that Mr. Macron's politics will improve overnight. I trust popular mobilisations more than politicians, especially in the case of someone who has already lied several times, on several subjects”.

Edwy Plenel gives an "alarm cry" for Muslims^{xvii}

The journalist and essayist Edwy Plenel publishes Thursday a plea book "*Pour les Musulmans*"^{xviii}, in the form of a pamphlet against those who, in his eyes, stigmatise them.

It is a short sentence from the philosopher, Alain Finkielkraut, which aroused the ire of the information website's founder, *Mediapart*, and led him to write this short essay "against the tide", drawn with a lively and committed pen: "There is a problem with Islam in France".

"My book is caused by the fact that in the media system, in intellectual circles, among academics, it is accepted to target Islam and Muslims in general as our civilization problem", explains Edwy Plenel. The author continues, with his vindictiveness, against the former Minister of Interior, Claude Guéant, who had considered to be a problem "the increase in the number of faithful" Muslims - they would be 3.5 to 5 millions in France, according to estimates. Or Manuel Valls who, before joining Matignon, had according to Edwy Plenel asked the question about "the compatibility of Islam with democracy".

"For minorities"

"From Claude Guéant to Manuel Valls, under the partisan dissimilarity, from an extreme right to a right-wing left, we are therefore confronted with the continuity of xenophobic and, particularly, anti-Muslim obsessions", writes the pamphleteer. The title of his work refers to "*Pour les Juifs*", an article that Emile Zola wrote in 1896, twenty months before his famous "*J'accuse*" in defense of Captain Dreyfus. "Today, and this has been won with a hard fight, we cannot say, without causing a reaction, that there is a civilization issue with Judaism, with Jews in France. Well, I demand the same for these compatriots, [Muslims] who are at the heart of what our people are", says Edwy Plenel, specifying that his book could have been entitled "For minorities", or "For France".

"I do not defend those who betray their religion by committing crimes, I defend our compatriots who have nothing to do with it and who are at the same time stigmatised or forgotten", confides the essayist. While dreaming of a return to "original secularism", registered in the law of 1905 which, "far from a tension in the face of the affirmation of minority cults, signified their recognition", he writes.

-
- ⁱ Odoxa - <http://www.odoxa.fr/sondage/limage-musulmans-de-lislam-aupres-francais/>
- ⁱⁱ Libération - https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/11/01/le-10-novembre-a-paris-nous-dirons-stop-a-l-islamophobie_1760768
- ⁱⁱⁱ CCIF - <http://www.islamophobie.net/rapport-2020/>
- ^{iv} Edwy Plenel - <https://www.midilibre.fr/2014/09/16/edwy-plenel-pousse-un-cri-d-alarme-pour-les-musulmans,1051631.php>
- ^v DILCRAH - <https://www.gouvernement.fr/bilan-2018-des-actes-racistes-antisemites-antimusulmans-et-antichretiens>
- ^{vi} *Barakacity and the CCIF (collectif contre l'islamophobie en France).*
https://www.liberation.fr/france/2020/11/25/le-ccif-en-ordre-de-bataille-contre-sa-dissolution_1806590
- ^{vii} <http://www.regards.fr/politique/article/pourquoi-il-est-faux-de-dire-que-les-freres-musulmans-sont-derriere-le-ccif>
- ^{viii} https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2020/11/14/les-musulmans-de-france-ordinaires-ceux-qui-sont-amarres-a-la-republique-en-prennent-plein-la-figure-alors-qu-il-faudrait-les-conforter_6059703_3232.html
- ^{ix} <https://www.cairn.info/revue-francaise-de-sociologie-1-2010-2-page-219.htm>
- ^x <https://www.ifop.com/publication/droit-au-blaspheme-caricatures-liberte-dexpression-les-francais-sont-ils-encore-charlie/>
- ^{xi} <https://fr.sputniknews.com/france/202006101043929829-il-sagit-dun-racisme-detat-le-cran-remet-en-cause-le-modele-universaliste-francais/>
- ^{xii} November 1, 2019 at 12:44 pm. Available online on the *Liberation* newspaper's website - https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/11/01/le-10-novembre-a-paris-nous-dirons-stop-a-l-islamophobie_17607688
- ^{xiii} *Rassemblement National*, extreme right wing political party, previously called *Front National* and founded by Jean-Marie Le Pen in 1972.
- ^{xiv} French *Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires*, black organisations federation.
- ^{xv} By Hakim Saleck - article available on the *Sputnik France* website - <https://fr.sputniknews.com/france/202006101043929829-il-sagit-dun-racisme-detat-le-cran-remet-en-cause-le-modele-universaliste-francais/>
- ^{xvi} Socialist party.
- ^{xvii} Posted on 09/22/2014 at 10:46, updated on 09/16/2014 at 9:52 a.m. Available online on the *Midi Libre* newspaper's website - <https://www.midilibre.fr/2014/09/16/edwy-plenel-pousse-un-cri-d-alarme-pour-les-musulmans,1051631.php>
- ^{xviii} *"Pour les Musulmans"* (2016). La Découverte, 144 p., € 12.

