By gathering 39 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized in racism and human rights, the fourth edition of the European Islamophobia Report addresses a still timely and politically important issue. All 34 country reports included in this book follow a unique structure that is convenient, first, for comparing country reports and, second, for selected readings on a particular topic such as politics, employment, or education with regards to Islamophobia across Europe.

The present report investigates in detail the underlying dynamics that directly or indirectly support the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Europe. This extends from Islamophobic statements spread in national media to laws and policies that restrain the fundamental rights of European Muslim citizens. As a result, the European Islamophobia Report 2018 discusses the impact of anti-Muslim discourse on human rights, multiculturalism, and the state of law in Europe.

This fourth edition of our report highlights how European societies are challenged by the rise of violent far-right groups that do not only preach hatred of Muslims but also participate in the organization of bloody terror attacks. The rise of far-right terrorist groups such as AFO (Action of Operational Forces) in France or the network Hannibal in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland confirms EUROPOL’s alarming surveys on the growing danger of right-wing terrorism.

This year, SETA worked in cooperation with the Leopold Weiss Institute, an Austrian NGO based in Vienna dedicated to the research of Muslims in Europe. In addition, the European Union has funded the European Islamophobia Report 2018 through the program “Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey (CSD-V)”.

About SETA
Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brainstorming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.
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Executive Summary

Islamophobia kept rising in 2018. According to the Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France (CCIF), 676 Islamophobic incidents were documented in 2018 against 446 in 2017 (increase of 52%). Among these 676 incidents, 20 concern physical attacks (3%), 568 concern discrimination (84%), and 88 concern hate speech (13%).

Islamophobia is not disconnected from the other forms of racism. The CCIF notices that 70% of the victims of Islamophobic acts are women. The National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) in its 2018 report on the state of racism in France also highlights that Islamophobic acts go along with aversion to feminist and secular values. In other words, Islamophobic acts do not only target Muslims but also women, melting pot values, and what is perceived as “the other.” Islamophobia in France relies on nationalistic discourse and far-right imaginary of race, land and culture, not on the defence of freedom and secular values as Islamophobes pretended.

Islamophobia in 2018 was illustrated by violent attacks against Muslim women, the emergence of far-right terror groups, and the deterioration of public discourse against Muslim people. Examples of these three trends are the physical attack on a young woman in the streets of Lille by members of the far-right group Génération Identitaire; the dissolution of the terror group AFO that was planning major terror attacks against Muslim civilians; and the use of violent expressions such as “civil war” by many polemists, journalists, and politicians who aim to point out the supposed polarization of French society between non-Muslims and Muslims.

Last but not least, recurrent terror attacks and the ongoing counterterrorism policy are jeopardizing fundamental rights of Muslim people. In her visit to France in May 2018, Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, claimed “it is very worrying to see that the Muslim minority is perceived in itself as a suspect group.”
Résumé

L’islamophobie continue de croître en France en 2018. Le Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France (CCIF) a rapporté 676 incidents islamophobes en 2018 contre 446 en 2017 (soit une augmentation de 52%). Parmi ces 676 incidents, 20 concernent des attaques physiques (3%), 568 des discriminations (84%) et 88 des discours de haine et insultes (13%).

L’islamophobie n’est pas déconnectée des autres formes de racisme tel que le sexisme. Le CCIF remarque que près de 70% des victimes du racisme antimusulman sont des femmes. Dans son rapport 2018 sur la lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la xénophobie, la Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme (CNCDH) souligne le parallèle entre les actes islamophobes et le rejet des valeurs féministes et laïques. En d’autres termes, l’islamophobie ne concerne pas seulement les musulmans mais aussi les femmes, les valeurs du vivre-ensemble et tout ce qui est perçu comme « l’autre » de façon générale. L’islamophobie en France repose donc avant tout sur une idéologie de rejet et un imaginaire nationaliste d’extrême droite et non sur la défense de liberté et de la laïcité comme le prétendent beaucoup d’islamophobes.

En 2018, l’islamophobie s’est illustrée par des attaques violentes contre des femmes musulmanes, l’émergence de groupes terroristes d’extrême droite et la détérioration du débat public à l’égard des musulmans. En guise d’exemple, il est possible de mentionner l’agression physique d’une jeune musulmane dans les rues de Lille par des membres du groupuscule d’extrême droite Génération Identitaire ; la dissolution du groupe terroriste AFO qui planifiait des attaques de grandes ampleurs contre des civils musulmans ; ou encore l’utilisation de l’expression « guerre civile » par de nombreux polémistes dans des débat ayant pour sujet l’islam et les musulmans en France.

Enfin, les attaques récurrentes sur le territoire français de la part de terroristes se réclamant de l’islam ainsi que les politiques de contre-terrorisme remettent en cause les droits fondamentaux des musulmans. En visite en France en mai 2018, la rapporteuse spéciale pour la promotion et la protection des droits de l’homme et des droits fondamentaux, Fionnuala D. Ni Aoláin, s’inquiétait « de voir la minorité musulmane être perçue en tant que telle comme un groupe suspect. »
Country Profile

Country: France
Type of Regime: Democratic Republic
Form of Government: Semi-Presidential System
Ruling Parties: La République En Marche (Right-Wing Liberal)
Opposition Parties: Le Rassemblement National, Les Républicains, La France Insoumise

Last Elections: 2017 Presidential Election (Emmanuel Macron won 66.1% of the vote against 33.9% of far-right leader Marine Le Pen); 2017 Legislative Election (Macron’s party: 350 seats; Center-Right: 136 seats; Center-Left: 45 seats; Far-Left: 27 seats; Far-Right: 8 seats)

Total Population: 66.3 million (in 2015)

Major Languages: French

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France (CCIF), 676 Islamophobic incidents were documented in 2018 against 446 in 2017 (increase of 52%). Among these 676 incidents, 20 concern physical attacks (3%), 568 concern discrimination (84%), and 88 concern hate speech (13%).

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018, the police reported 5,170 offenses committed because of origin, ethnicity, alleged race, or religion on the whole French territory. According to this figure, racist acts declined for the third time in a row (-4% between 2017 and 2018, -11% between 2016 and 2017, and -20% between 2015 and 2016). As in previous years, the majority of racist offenses involve provocation, insults, or defamation (up to 78%). Then, come threats and blackmail (11%), individual attacks (4%), discrimination (3%), and property damages (2%). Yet, it is difficult to monitor racism in France. In 2017, 1.1 million people claimed to have been victims of racist acts, leading to only 6,122 prosecutions and 561 convictions.

Major Religions (% of Population): The compilation of official statistics based on religious beliefs is not permitted by French law. Yet, according to different and contradictory surveys, 64% of French people are Catholic (among them 7% regularly go to Sunday Mass); 63% have no religion; 8.8% are Muslims; and 0.8% are Jewish. (See “Statistiques sur la pratique religieuse en France”, GéoConfluences, December 2016.)

Muslim Population (% of Population): The compilation of official statistics based on religious beliefs is not permitted by French law. Yet, Muslim population represents between 5 and 6 million people (8.8%) according to the Pew Research Center.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: CFCM (Conseil français du culte musulman), UMF (Union des mosquées de France), Islam de France, DITIB, Milli Görüş, L.E.S Musulmans
Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: CCIF (Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France), CRI (Coordination contre le racisme et l’islamophobie), CJL (Comité Justice et Libertés pour tous)

Far-Right Parties: The National Rally (Rassemblement national, RN), France Arise (Debout la France), The Patriots (Les Patriotes)

Far-Right Movements: Génération identitaire, Réseau Remora, Volontaire pour la France (VPF), Soldats d’Odin Breizh

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: AFO (Action of Operational Forces)

Limitations to Islamic Practices
- Hijab Ban: Ban of religious symbols including Muslim headscarf from schools [2004]; “Chatel circular” that prohibits parents who accompany children on school trips to display religious symbols [2013]. Moreover, on 18 August, 2016, France’s Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, defended municipal bans of body-covering burkini swimwear designed for Muslim women after several mayors had imposed burkini bans in several seaside towns including Cannes, Ville-neuve-Loubet, and Sisc on the island of Corsica.
- Halal Slaughter Ban: No
- Minaret Ban: No (depends on local decisions)
- Circumcision Ban: No
- Burka Ban: (11 April, 2011) Under a decree issued by French Prime Minister François Fillon women are banned from wearing the niqab in any public place.
- Prayer Ban: No (depends on local decisions since the European Court of Justice ruled in March 2017 that employers can ban staff from manifesting visible religious expressions, including prayers).
Introduction

Islamophobia in France takes place in a context of social, spatial, and symbolic discriminations towards Muslims and people perceived as Muslims. It is crucial to have in mind this general context before analyzing the state of Islamophobia in 2018.

Historically, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism take their modern roots in the French colonization of Muslim lands from the conquest of Algiers in 1830. The representation of Muslim populations as barbaric and backward kept spreading with labor immigration from North Africa in the 1950s, organized by the French state in order to rebuild the country after the massive destructions caused by World War II. Muslim Arab populations, regrouped in slums and then remote banlieues, were highly subjected to social relegation, police violence, daily attacks, and symbolic humiliations. Starting from the 1980s, France assisted the rise of Arab-origin French visibility in the public sphere – illustrated by the “March for equality and against racism” (December 1983) – which also led to the rise of Le Pen’s far-right party in reaction. At the end of the 1980s, most French journalists and policy-makers started to evoke a “Muslim problem” instead of “Arab immigration problem” following the exclusion of three girls wearing headscarves from the secondary school of the French northern city of Creil (October 1989) and the Islamic Salvation Front’s victory in the Algerian elections (1990-1991). Aversion to Muslim people got worse after 9/11, the Islamist terror attacks in Europe in the 2000s, and the consecration of far-right parties. This aversion has been materialized by the rise of laws constraining the daily life of Muslims (see for instance the ban of religious symbols at schools [2004], the ban of niqab [2010], or the “Chatel circular” that prohibits parents who accompany children on school trips to display religious symbols [2013]).

Today French Muslims are still overrepresented in the poorest layers of the society, in neighborhoods with high concentrations of violence and drug traffic but also in prisons. In other words, French Muslims face social, spatial, and symbolic discriminations that are grounded in historical trends. This situation pushes Foner...

3. Ibid.
Nancy to compare the situation of Muslims in Europe (including France) with the situation of Afro-Americans in the USA.\(^7\)

Besides this hostile context, Islamist terror attacks that have targeted France these last years and the French state’s counterterrorism policies had a direct impact on the French Muslim community as a whole. Since French policy-makers base their action on a loose understanding of terrorism, political Islam, and radicalization, the whole Muslim community gets criminalized in the name of fighting a few terrorist networks and individuals.\(^8\)

In 2018, the French state played a role in several events related to Islamist terrorism and counterterrorism. On one side, terror attacks have been carried out and planned, and, on the other side, the French state tried to respond to these threats by organizing raids, arrests, and the closing down of religious places.

On 23 March, 2018, Radouane Lakdim, a 26-year-old French citizen who was under surveillance by French intelligence for radicalization and categorized as “fiché S,”\(^9\) killed three and injured many in a terror attack in the south of France.\(^10\) On 12 May 2018, a youth of Chechen origin also categorized as “fiché S” took the life of a person in a knife attack at the Opera district in Paris.\(^11\) On 11 December, 2018, Chérif Chekatt, a 29-year-old French citizen who was also under surveillance by the French intelligence for radicalization and categorized as “fiché S,” killed 5 and injured many in the center of Strasbourg.\(^12\) In addition to these three attacks, Laurent Nunez, the secretary of state for interior affairs, announced that six Islamist terror attacks had been foiled by French police in 2018.\(^13\)

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\(^9\) “fiché S”: this term refers to France’s national security watch list. “Some 20,000 people are categorised as ‘fiché S’ in France, of whom around 4,000 are considered dangerous. The list covers a wide range of individuals it is thought could pose a security risk: from those suspected of plotting terrorist acts to political protesters considered to be violent.” In Alasdair Sandford, “What Is France’s 'Fiche S' National Security Watch List?”, Euronews, 12 December 2018, https://www.euronews.com/2018/05/14/paris-knife-attack-france-s-fiche-s-terror-watch-list-under-scrutiny, (Access date: 1 September 2019).


All these events participated in creating a negative atmosphere surrounding French Muslims. Moreover, this constant terror threat leads the French state to maintain a high level of security policy. The transition of the state of emergency (2015-2017) into common law in October 2017 confirmed the state security approach towards Muslims. In her visit to France in May 2018, Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, warns new anti-terrorism laws risk undermining fundamental rights and freedoms. In 2018, the French administrative authority closed 7 mosques, conducted 93 police raids to private houses, and imposed 106 house arrests. Beyond these figures, counterterrorism has led to the militarization of the French police and the radicalization of their methods especially in popular areas (the so-called banlieues), causing a cycle of blunders and violence.

It is in this context that the number of Islamophobic acts increased in 2018. In 2018, the Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France (CCIF) registered 676 Islamophobic attacks against 446 in 2017 (an increase of 52%).

Attacks are also getting more organized. In June 2018, French police arrested several members of the far-right terrorist group Action of Operational Forces (AFO) that was planning to commit terror attacks against French Muslims such as poisoning halal foods, physical attacks against Muslim women, and the degradation of what they considered as “radical” mosques. This report shows to what extent French intelligence is worried about the rise of such anti-Muslim groups that sometimes include French soldiers and police officers.

Finally, public discourse towards Muslims continued to degrade in 2018. A deprecative newspeak related to Muslims has been adopted by famous polemists, journalists, and politicians including terms such as “reverse colonialism” (colonization à l’envers); “Islamo-Leftism” (islamo-gauchisme); “legal jihad” (djihad judiciaire); “Islamist entryism” (entrisme islamiste); “new anti-Semitism” (nouveau antisemitisme); and “signs of belonging to Islam” (signes d’islamité). Another step has been reached

18. For an introduction to their ideology, see the group’s website “War of France”: http://www.guerredefrance.fr/afo.htm
in hate speech with the tragic use of the expression “civil war” for highlighting the polarization between French Muslims and non-Muslims. All these features are analyzed in detail in this report.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

It is difficult to monitor all Islamophobic attacks since many victims do not report or press charges against their aggressor. Firstly, cognitive biases such as humiliation and assimilation of subaltern conditions often prevent the victims from denouncing Islamophobic attacks. Secondly, the French justice system is not efficient in prosecuting racist acts and this inefficiency also prevents victims from reporting. In its report on the state of racism in France, the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) points out that 1.1 million people have been victims of racist acts in 2017, leading to only 6,122 prosecutions and 561 convictions.

Yet, anti-Muslim racism is monitored in France. Three main institutions publish and analyze annual statistics on Islamophobia, namely the French Ministry of Interior, the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CCIF), and the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH). Depending on their methodology, the figures they present differ from one another.

Firstly, on 12 February, 2019, the French Ministry of Interior published statistics on “anti-Muslim racism” in parallel with anti-Semitic and anti-Christian racism figures. The ministry – through the Inter-ministerial Delegation to the Fight against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Anti-LGBT Hate (DILCRAH) – based its statistics upon complaints against anti-Muslim acts recorded in police stations. According to this report, 100 anti-Muslim acts have been recorded in 2018 against 121 in 2017 (a decrease of 21 acts). From these 100 hatred acts, 43 are physical actions (72 in 2017), 57 threats (49 in 2017), 45 attacks against places of worship (68 in 2017), and 6 against cemeteries (4 in 2017). The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM)


23. The CFCM was created by the French government in 2003 under the vigorous impulsion of Nicolas Sarkozy. It aimed to be the main representative institution of French Muslims vis-à-vis the state. See: Farid Hafez, Enes Bayraklı and Leonard Faytre, “Engineering a European Islam”, Insight Turkey, 20/3 (2018), pp. 131-156.
through its National Observatory against Islamophobia claims these figures do not represent the reality of Islamophobia in France since many victims do not report. Indeed besides general mistrust between French citizens and the French justice system, relations between Muslims and the French police have been deeply damaged by the State of Emergency (2015-2017) that disproportionally targeted Muslims.

Secondly, on 15 March, 2019, the NGO Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France (CCIF) published an annual report on Islamophobia in France. The CCIF does not base its statistics upon complaints made in police stations but upon reports directly made to the CCIF. The figures they present are diametrically different from those of the Ministry of Interior. In 2018, the CCIF registered 676 Islamophobic attacks against 446 in 2017 (increase of 52%). Among these 676 attacks, 20 concern physical attacks (3%), 568 concern discrimination in employment or education (84%), and 88 concern hate speech (13%). From these victims, 70% are women and 30% are men. The CCIF interprets this increase of Islamophobic attacks as the consequence of the normalization of hate speech against Muslim people in the media and the political arena.

Finally, on 23 April, 2019, the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) published the annual report on racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia in France. The CNCDH completes and analyzes reports produced by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and many other institutions and NGOs. The CNCDH’s approach is not only quantitative but also qualitative and provides some clues in understanding the phenomenon of Islamophobia in France. First of all, the CNCDH agrees with the CCIF and highlights the responsibility of politicians and the media in the construction of a dominant and negative narrative towards Muslims.

The CNCDH also argues Islamophobia is related to other forms of racism such as sexism and xenophobia. The report points out the overrepresentation of women

25. See above.
28. Ibid., p.4.
30. Ibid., p. 28.
as victims of Islamophobic acts. For example, the report notices the difficulties for many Muslim women to have access to sports or cultural activities due to discrimination against the way they dress.\(^{31}\) Similarly, in 2018, three out of five French individuals (59\%) do not consider the Islamic headscarf as compatible with French society.\(^{32}\) Moreover, the hate of Islam is highly correlated with the hate of immigrants, perceived as the cause of “cultural insecurity.”\(^{33}\) Finally, the report demonstrates that the “more we hate Islam, the more we hate laïcité.”\(^{34}\) As a result, Islamophobia in France relies on nationalistic discourse and the far-right imaginary of race, land, and culture, not on the defense of freedom and secular values as many Islamophobes pretend.

According to the CNCDH’s “tolerance index,” Muslims (in green) and North Africans (in red) are the least tolerated minorities in 2018. The report nevertheless indicates that “the year 2018 is a record year for the acceptance of Muslims and Islam” compared with previous years.\(^{35}\) (Fig. 1)

Figure 1: Evolution of the “tolerance index” from 1990 to 2018. This index shows how much French people tolerate minorities: black people (in purple); Jewish people (in blue); North African people (in red); Muslim people (in green).\(^{36}\)

33. Ibid., p. 29.
34. Ibid., p. 26.
35. Ibid., p. 9.
36. Ibid., p. 9.
French Muslims have already assimilated this general aversion. The Center for Conflict Studies - Freedom and Security published on 11 October, 2018, the quantitative survey entitled “The Effects of the Fight against Terrorism and Radicalization on Muslim Populations in France.” This survey shows the damages caused by French counterterrorism policies upon the whole Muslim community since 2015. According to the survey,

Muslims feel discriminated against in all the fields covered by this survey (health, school, housing, police, employment, daily life) and this in a much more important way than non-Muslims: 2.2 times more during a search for housing; 3.2 times more at school; 5.3 times more during interactions with the police.

Muslims feel also obliged to censure themselves: “41.7% of Muslims between the ages of 45-64 claim to ask their children to ‘pay attention to what they say at school,’ to avoid being discriminated against.” Similarly, “about one Muslim out of three says that they ‘avoid saying what they think’ about controversial issues related to foreign policy (30.6%) or society (30.5%).”

As mentioned above, the state counterterrorism and security approach towards Muslims strengthen aversion to and discrimination against this religious minority. In order to limit risks of oppression and injustice towards Muslims, Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin calls for more transparency on counterterrorism policy and greater civil awareness of Islamophobia.

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2018, beyond individuals we could observe attacks from organized anti-Muslim groups. On 10 January, 2018, three members of the far-right group Generation Identity (Génération Identitaire) physically attacked a young woman by using tear gas and punching her four times. The scene was filmed by a reporter and broadcasted on Al-Jazeera English TV channel in December 2018. In the program entitled “Gen-

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38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
eration Hate” we hear one of the aggressors using a French pejorative term for “Arab” (rebou) before punching the woman. An investigation has been opened and the three people prosecuted for aggravated violence.43 (Fig. 2)44

This event took place in a context of a resurgence of violent far-right groups. On 27 April, 2018, the newspaper Libération revealed two notes from French intelligence reporting the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab groups. The notes state that “Islamist attacks in France since January 2015 have been interpreted by radical far-right milieux as a legitimization of their theses on the threat of immigrants [...] and of the bankruptcy of a multicultural society.” The notes also claim many former soldiers and police officers are among those groups along with diasporas of former Yugoslavia. They underline the risk of attacks against Muslims.46 In a recent article, the web media Mediapart revealed that French intelligence is actually following around 350 radicalized far-right members who have one or several firearms.47 Among them, 147 are categorized as “fiché S” (against 11,152 individuals monitored for Islamist radicalization).48 The same media had already disclosed on 9 April, 2018, that

Figure 2: Screenshot of the documentary “Generation Hate” broadcasted by Al Jazeera English, where three men are seen attacking a Muslim woman.46

French intelligence was following around 50 police officers, soldiers, and gendarmes in connection with violent and anti-Muslim far-right networks. Among them are former soldiers who fought in Afghanistan and Iraq.49

A few months later, in June 2018, French police arrested several members of the far-right terrorist group Action of Operational Forces (AFO) that was planning to commit terror attacks against French Muslims such as poisoning halal foods, killing of hundreds of imams, physical attacks against Muslim women, and degradation of what they considered “radical” mosques.50 Ten people were arrested, all huntsmen or sport shooters. Police also found in different locations weapon facilities such as explosive-manufacturing laboratories. They seized 15 handguns, some legally owned by their respective owners. According to police, the AFO is a network of around 100 members that planned terror attacks and training sessions to “resist Islam.”51 On its website entitled “War of France” (Guerre de France) the group calls for getting ready for a civil war52 through “preparation of French citizen-soldiers for fighting on the national territory” against the “Islamist threat.”53 According to Mediapart, the AFO is linked to “Volunteers for France” (VPF), a far-right political group of 800 members created after the 2015 terror attack. The VPF’s website indicates that the group aims at “defending the French identity” and “fighting the Islamization of the country.”54

On 23 July, 2018, French police arrested three more people suspected of belonging to the AFO.55 One of them was a former member of the group Volunteers for France (VPF), and the other two were women who attended all the meetings of

this far-right terrorist group. They were planning to assassinate the singer Medine and Islamist Djamel Beghal after his release from jail. A few weeks later, French intelligence warned Medine that a terror attack had been planned against his future concert in Bataclan Concert Hall.\(^{56}\) The French singer announced the cancellation of this concert on Twitter on 21 September, 2018.\(^{57}\)

Finally, it is important to notice that the newspaper *Le Parisien* published an interview with the leader of the terrorist group AFO Guy Sibra on 31 July, 2018 giving him space to justify his actions and normalize his ideas.\(^{58}\) (Fig. 3)

Alongside with anti-Muslim terror groups, attacks have also been planned by individuals mostly targeting women. The *Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France* (CCIF) registered a verbal attack against women wearing a hijab. In January 2018, two young women wearing headscarves were attacked by a local resident because of their real or supposed belonging to Islam. The aggressor was found guilty on 9 January, 2019 at the Criminal Court of Meaux.\(^{60}\)

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The NGO Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI) also registered two attacks against Muslim women. At the end of 2017 and beginning of 2018, a sexagenarian French woman physically attacked and repeatedly threatened Muslim mothers while they were bringing their children to school at Perpignan. All these mothers were wearing headscarves. On 22 March, 2018, a doctor at the hospital of Perpignan (South France) verbally attacked a young Muslim woman because of her headscarf. The doctor told his patient that wearing the hijab in the hospital and in public space was prohibited by French law. The patient, thus, suffered non-material damage.

Moreover, in September and October 2018, a woman entered the swimming pool of Rennes (west France) while wearing a burkini (a covered swimsuit) provoking a fierce debate among other swimmers as well as in the city council. The right-wing opposition condemned a “very retrograde standard of Islam” while the socialist majority responded that “the law of 1905 does not establish the police of clothing.”

**Employment**

In March 2018, the Institute of Labor Economics published the “Anti-Muslim Discrimination in France: Evidence from a Field Experiment.” This survey that has been conducted in France before the 2015 attacks – and thus before the state of emergency – demonstrates discrimination against Muslim in the marketplace. The paper “compares the callback rates of immigrants of Muslim and Christian culture who originate from the same country and whose religiosity varies from non-religious to religious.”

Based on responses to over 6,200 job ads, the results reveal an insignificant disadvantage for Muslims when they are not religious. However, Muslims lost further ground when they are religious, while the reverse occurs for Christians. Consequently, religious Muslims must submit twice as many applications as religious Christians before being called back by the recruiters.

Here religion is the criterion of discrimination. Interestingly enough, men are more affected by this discrimination than women. The callback rate of applicants of

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Muslim culture is 11.7% against 18.4% for Christians. Yet, the callback rate of male applicants of Muslim culture is 4.7% against 17.9% for Christian men. According to Marie-Anne Valfort, the author of the survey, there is a distinctive “Muslim effect” since this discrimination is not found for persons identified as Jewish.65

Anti-Muslim racism also occurs in companies. In 2018, a Muslim HR consultant was fired from her company after she had denounced her director for repeated sexist and Islamophobic insults.66

The Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France (CCIF) reported two cases of discrimination in the marketplace. In November 2018, a director of a training center requested a trainee to remove her headscarf in order for her to continue the program.67 On 30 November, 2018, an exhibitor at the Saint-Gratien Christmas market (North Paris) was summoned by the city mayor to leave her stand, for the sole reason that she was wearing a headscarf. Accompanied by the CCIF, the victim filed a complaint and brought an action against the mayor Julien Bachard (Republican party, right-wing).68

Education
Islamophobia in education targeted mostly signs of belonging to Islam such as headscarf, halal meat, and the Arabic language. Certain French politicians requested the hijab ban in French universities (the hijab was already banned from primary school up to high school in 2004), such as the deputy of the Republicans party Julien Aubert in November 2018.69 Similarly in September 2018, some Muslim students of the Nursing Education Institute (IFSI) complained about the management that was “checking the size of their headbands” as well as “forbidding them religious headscarves.” The co-intervention of the CCIF and the Ombudsman allowed the modification of the institute’s rules of procedure.70

In September 2018, some parents complained against the kindergarten of Vénissieux enrolling their children because the management changed the rules of procedure and imposed nursery staff to serve the entire meal to children, even though it

68. Ibid.
contains meat and the parents oppose it. On 17 October, 2018, the president of the Court of First Instance suspended this regulation in the absence of any technical or financial constraint justifying the amendment of the rules of procedure.\footnote{“Crèche: Victoire Des Vénissians, La Municipalité Sommée De Respecter La Loi”, Collectif Contre L’islamophobie en France, 18 October 2018, https://www.islamophobic.net/2018/10/18/creche-victoire-des-venissians-la-municipalite-somme-de-respecter-la-loi/, (Access date: 3 September 2019).}

On 10 September, 2018, the Minister of Education Jean-Michel Blanquer proposed to increase Arabic teaching in French public schools, alongside with Russian and Chinese. His proposal followed the publication of Karim El Karoui’s report on Islamic fundamentalism, which recommended organizing Arabic teaching at school instead of at mosques as a track to fight against Islamism.\footnote{This report entitled “Islamism Factory” is analyzed in detail in the Politics section.} Beyond this bold conflation of Arabic language and radicalization, this proposal triggered hard criticism from right-conservative and far-right parties. Former Minister of Education Luc Ferry even said he feared a “risk of bringing Islamism into public education.”\footnote{“Enseigner L’arabe À L’école: ‘Une Fausse Bonne Idée’, Estime Luc Ferry”, Europe 1, 11 September 2018, https://www.europe1.fr/societe/enseigner-larabe-a-lecole-une-fausse-bonne-idee-pour-luc-ferry-3752588, (Access date: 3 September 2019).} Yet, only one out of a thousand children studies Arabic in primary school, and two out of a thousand in middle school.\footnote{Nafa Yafi, “Pourquoi L’enseignement De L’arabe En France Suscite-T-Il La Polémique?”, Orient XXI, 25 September 2018, https://orientxxi.info/va-comprendre/pourquoi-l-enseignement-de-l-arabe-en-france-suscite-t-il-la-polémique,2645, (Access date: 3 September 2019).}

\section*{Politics}

Like previous years, 2018 was a year of disputes over Islam both between and within political parties. This part first analyzes the way main political parties used Islamophobic ideas in 2018. Secondly, it shows how the debate over the organization of French Islam involved Islamophobic rhetoric.

2017 has been widely implemented throughout the year 2018. The United Nations, the Human Right League, and the French Supreme Court (Conseil Constitutionnel) raised concerns about the consequences of this law on Muslim people.

Certain ministers also participated in spreading an Islamophobic atmosphere in French society. On 3 October, 2018, former French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb claimed in his resignation speech, “Today we live side-by-side… I am afraid that tomorrow we will live face-to-face”. He, thus, implicitly portrayed French Muslims and French non-Muslims as enemies. The same month, Macron nominated Christophe Castaner as new interior minister who claimed on 9 December, 2017, that parents who accompany children on school trips must not be allowed to display religious symbols (i.e. veil). Similarly, many deputies of Macron’s party explicitly manifested their aversion to the hijab and associate the headscarf with radicalization and political Islam.

The Republicans (Les Républicains, center-right) is the second party in France according to the number of seats in the French Assembly. With Laurent Wauquiez at its head the former center-right party has been radicalized with far-right ideology. In April 2018, the newspaper L’Opinion even asked whether “the Republicans became a far-right party,” since the difference between this party and Le Pen’s National Rally became very thin on immigration, Islam, and counterterrorism issues. An ex-member of the party condemned this strategy in the book He Is Dangerous (Le Dangereux), referring to Laurent Wauquiez, published in January 2018. In March 2018, Laurent Wauquiez accused Macron of “naivety against terrorism” after a terror attack in the south of France. In June 2018, he attempted to form an alliance between his party

80. See examples in Media and Internet sections below in this report.
and Sens Commun, a far-right think tank. In June 2018, he supervised the spread of political tracts that used anti-Muslim and xenophobic rhetoric. (Fig. 4)

The National Rally (Le Rassemblement National, far-right), ex-National Front, is historically the party that spreads the most racist and Islamophobic propaganda. It is also the party that benefitted the most from the Yellow Vest Movement according to opinion polls in December 2018 (i.e. when the movement was at its peak). In 2018, the party continued to spread Islamophobic ideology as usual, with, for instance, the party’s attempt to close the mosque of Souillac in January 2018. Moreover, the National Rally tried to strengthen the Islamophobia network on a Eu-

85. Sens Commun (common sense) is a think tank created during the anti-gay marriage protests Manif pour tous in 2013. This group of reflection aims at imposing its Catholic-inspired values upon public opinion, especially on topics such as family, identity, and immigration. In 2017, Christophe Billan, the former president of Sens Commun, explicitly called for the unification of all right-wing movements (including far-right and Le Pen’s National Rally) around “Christian identity.” See: Lucie Delaporte, “La vidéo vérité qui révèle les ambitions de Sens commun”, Medipart, 13 October 2017, https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/131017/la-video-verite-qui-revele-les-ambitions-de-sens-commun, (Access date: 4 September 2019).


88. Ibid.


On 1 May, 2018, Marine Le Pen gathered Europe’s most famous Islamophobes at a meeting in Nice people like Harald Vilimsky (Austria), Geert Wilders (Netherlands), or Matteo Salvini (Italy) who previously demanded the closing of mosques, or compared the Qur’an to Mein Kampf. Similarly on 28 December, 2018, Marine Le Pen in an article targeted the European Union and the Council of Europe as “Trojan Horses” of the Islamization of Europe, warning that the European Court of Human Rights started to integrate Sharia principles in its jurisprudence.

Following Macron’s election to the presidency in 2016, the Socialist Party (Parti Socialiste) drastically lost its influence on national politics. For this reason, Socialist politicians did not particularly make headlines in 2018 on any issue including Islam. Yet, the spread of Islamophobic discourse is such that the Socialist Party’s leaders also used anti-Muslim rhetoric. On October 2018, in the most followed morning radio show program, Olivier Faure, the Socialist Party general coordinator, claimed,

There is a deep identity crisis shared by many citizens [...] there are places where not being an immigrant can be a problem for people who live in these neighborhoods and who may feel excluded. There are places where groupings have been made, generation after generation, that give the feeling that we are in a form of reverse colonization. [...] One local citizen told me that she had long voted for left-wing parties and that she did not want to do it anymore because she had the feeling of being colonized.

This speech uses xenophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Great Replacement theory. Leaders of the Republicans and National Rally parties unsurprisingly applauded this speech.

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95. The Great Replacement is “a racist conspiracy theory [...] which was popularized by right-wing French philosopher Renaud Camus. An extension of colonialist theory, it is predicated on the notion that white women are not having enough children and that falling birthrates will lead to white people around the world being replaced by nonwhite people.” In Nellie Bowles, “Replacement Theory’, a Racist, Sexist Doctrine, Spreads in Far-Right Circles”, The New York Times, 18 March 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/18/technology/replacement-theory.html, (Access date: 4 September 2019)
Unsubmissive France (France Insoumise, far-left wing) is a party that traditionally embraces minorities’ demands. Yet the party is split between those who support an “intersectionality struggle,” including gender and minorities demands, and those who adopt a Jacobin and strictly secular approach to social struggle (i.e. the classical Marxist understanding of society). This tension was illustrated in November 2018, when a Paris Support Group of the party (JR Hébert group) organized a meeting on “Islamist entryism in labor unions.” A few days later, the group was excluded from the movement triggering tough debates within the party.

In addition to these general trends, some politicians individually participated in Islamophobic polemics. Eric Ciotti (who said in 2016 that François Hollande had been elected because of political Islam) is a good example of French politicians who attempt to become popular by using Islamophobic discourse. On 17 July, 2018, he claimed in the newspaper Le Figaro that Macron “gives credit to Islamo-leftists who defend a multicultural and dangerous vision of society.” On 12 July, 2018, he proposed at the French Assembly to ban exterior religious signs for workers in public companies as well as for users of public services (today there is only a ban for workers in public services). On 15 November, 2018, he claimed that “some French areas are in the hands of Islamists.” Similarly, on 15 December, 2018, in the regional newspaper Corse Matin, Eric Diard, rapporteur of the mission on radicalization in public services for the French Assembly (LR), claimed among other things that the terrorist of the Strasbourg attack could have been detected due to the “mark on his front,” referring to the Muslim prayer mark (what Arabs call zabiba). This comment – coming from a French deputy responsible for counterterrorism – dangerously assimilates terrorism with a mere physical mark that many Muslims share regardless of the nature of their faith or religiosity.

Debates about the Organization of a “French Islam”

For nearly three decades, French governments, regardless of their positions on the political spectrum, have attempted to design a “French Islam” resorting

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to top-down policies while neglecting the needs and opinions of the main group of people involved: French Muslim communities. Mostly motivated by security reasons, these governments have tried to assume the official representation of French Muslims; an “obedient” kind of representation that is fully in line with the state’s directives.

As for Emmanuel Macron, he has repeatedly postponed his project of reform on the organization of Islam in France since it is a highly contentious issue. Yet, in February 2018, he repeated the objectives of security, control, and integration, which are the main elements of the French official approach to Muslims. He announced that the two main axes of his future reform were “to reduce the influence of Arab countries, which prevents French Islam from entering into modernity” and to reorganize the way mosques are funded and imams are educated. This vision is said to be the fruit of Macron’s close consultant on Islam, Hakim El Karoui. This “expert of Islam” has already published many books and reports on the issue, especially *A French Islam Is Possible* in 2016 and *Islam, A French Religion* in 2018. While he explicitly advocates for reorganizing Islam in France through the creation of an independent structure, some scholars criticized his ideas for promoting a top-down state control over Muslims like the “French Islam policy” (*politique musulmane de la France*) during the colonial period.

In September 2018, Hakim El Karoui together with the right-wing think tank *Institut Montaigne* published a new report that calls again for a stronger regulation of Muslim religious practices by the state in order to better counter “Islamism.”

105. Ibid.
In this report, El Karoui repeats his propositions, i.e. new taxes on halal food, pilgrimage, and a number of other Muslim activities as well as the creation of a new independent institution responsible of managing these funds.\textsuperscript{111} The French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb officially praised the report.\textsuperscript{112} Yet the report entitled “Islamism Factory” triggered turmoil among French Muslim communities since under the single term “Islamism” it includes a great diversity of Muslim movements, and thus conflates regular Muslim practices, such as wearing the headscarf, with Islamism and extremism threats.\textsuperscript{113}

While leaders of the Republicans party were split within the party over the approach they should adopt on this issue,\textsuperscript{114} the Deputy Julien Aubert in \textit{Tricolor Booklet on French Islam(s)} (November 2018) exposed a series of proposals to reorganize the Muslim religion in France.\textsuperscript{115} Designed within the framework of the Great Replacement theory,\textsuperscript{116} this report makes a list of Islamophobic measures aiming at restricting Muslims’ freedom such as “sanctioning women who do not want to withdraw their headscarves after a police request” or “de-Islamizing certain neighborhoods.” The author justifies these measures by “civil order” rhetoric, a supposedly “risk of secession” and the danger of “French imamah.”\textsuperscript{117} Under the appearances of rational analysis,\textsuperscript{118} this book recycles far-right rhetoric on values, nation, minorities and Islam. It is not a coincidence that Marine Le Pen applauded his proposal of adding a “French name” for naturalized citizens.\textsuperscript{119}


\textsuperscript{117} An expression that confuses a supposedly threat of autonomous Muslim political organization in France and the Shia doctrine of imams.

\textsuperscript{118} For instance, the author mentions a study published in the \textit{European Journal of Clinical Nutrition} (2012) that claims that wearing a headscarf may have a serious impact on the vitamin D sufficiency and the hair wealth of young Jordanian women. The author mentions this study as evidence of the intrinsic danger of wearing a hijab.

Many other so-called experts of Islam disclosed their “solutions” to reorganize Islam in France in 2018. In his *Releasing Islam from Islamism* (January 2018), Mohamed Louizi warns against a “Islamist narrative that has kidnapped the Muslim faith since the death of the Prophet Muhammed,” i.e. the Islamic political project – represented today by the Muslim Brotherhood – that aims to conquer the world and to destroy Western democracies. As a result, the measures he recommends are a focus on security and state top-down control of Muslim people.

In reaction to all these attempts to restrict Muslims’ freedom of conscience and civil rights, some Muslim activists launched a new movement for Muslim self-organization. In spring 2018, Marwan Muhammad and a group of scholars - among them French sociologists, anthropologists, and activists – organized a tour of the mosques in France and Muslim organizations in order to assess Muslims’ needs and to federate French Muslim communities from the bottom. This wide consultation led, on 30 September, 2018, to the creation of the national platform *L.E.S Musulmans*, which is already able to bring together hundreds of local mosques and organizations under its roof.

**Media**

In 2018, Islamophobic controversies often started from social media before being debated in mainstream media and triggering reactions among French politicians. It is not always easy to untangle these three spheres. Yet, mainstream media (i.e. books, TV, radio, and newspapers) greatly participated in creating a negative newspeak related to Islam and Muslims. This part firstly analyzes the way this newspeak manifested throughout the year 2018. Secondly, it provides three examples of controversies widely disputed in mainstream media in 2018.

The negative newspeak that targeted Muslims is not a new phenomenon in France. Yet the process of keeping French Muslims within a degrading linguistic framework increased in 2018 in addition to being normalized.

**Islamophobia Newspeak in French Media**

Because they offer tools for minorities intellectual independence, postcolonialism theories have been perceived by right and far-right media as “Islamism’s Trojan horse.” This concept comes from the journalist Ivan Rioufol’s book *The Coming Civil War* (*La guerre civile qui vient*, 2016) in which he denounced “multiculturalism as...
Islamism’s Trojan horse.”123 In 2018, this idea kept being spread. On 28 November, 2018, 80 thinkers, scholars, and artists published a “call against postcolonialism” in the weekly Le Point. They condemned an “intellectual terrorism” that uses the threat of “racism” and “Islamophobia” in order to “diabolize” their opponents.124 Many of the signatories are well-known for their Islamophobic comments (such as Waleed Al-Husseini, Alain Finkielkraut, Elisabeth Badinter, or Zineb El Rhazoui). Laurent Bouvet, the leader of Printemps Republicain, a group that constantly triggers Islamophobic polemics, made a similar criticism in an interview for Le Figaro on 13 December, 2018.125

The same accusation also contains the expression “Islamo-leftism” (islamo-gauchisme) referring to politicians or parties that are supposedly compromised with Islamist networks and demands. In October 2018, the journal Revue des Deux Mondes published a special edition entitled “Islamo-Leftism, Story of a Downward Spiral.”126 (Fig. 5) The articles refer to “Islamo-leftists” as “traitors of French identity”, “collaborators”, and “neo-Vichysm.”127 Similarly, leaders of La France Insoumise have been depicted as “Islamo-leftist” when the party decided to revoke from its movement a group that organized a meeting on “Islamist entryism in labor unions.” This is the idea that the former journalist at Le Monde and Libération128 Yves Mamou developed in his book The Great Desertion – French Elites and Islamism (September 2018), in which he accused French elites of having allowed the constitution of an “Islamist nation” in France.129

127. Expressions such as “collaborators” and “neo-Vichysm” refer to French alliance to Nazi Germany during World War II.
128. Both newspapers are generally considered to follow social-democratic standpoints.
• “Islamisation” as “Reverse Colonisation” of France

In 2018, many books promoted the idea that France had been colonized by Muslims or what they commonly call “Islamism.” On 17 October, 2018, Gérard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme, both well-known and respected journalists at Le Monde, published the book Insh’Allah! Islamization Disclosed (Inch’Allah ! L’islamisation à visage découvert). (Fig. 7) The book lists a series of local events that occurred in North Paris which supposedly demonstrate the rise of a counter Islamist society. The authors benefited from a great coverage by mainstream media and were invited to many TV and radio shows. This publicity was an occasion for regular Islamophobes to normalize their theories about the Islamization of France such as Gilles William Goldnadel and journalists of Figaro Vox, who congratulated the two journalists for having finally “opened

132. Among them are LCP TV channel (“La plume dans la plaie” program), France Inter, Arte, BFM TV, France Bleu, Paris Match, Le Monde, Le Point, etc.
the eyes” on this “reality” (“better late than never,” as they said).133 Other books published in 2018 intertwined Islamization, reverse colonization, and Great Replacement rhetoric. On 27 September, Laurent Obertone published *The Forbidden France. Truth about Immigration*; on 24 October, Phillipe Lobjois and Michel Olivier published *The Secret War. Radical Islam in the World of Work*; and in November Jean-Frédéric Poisson published *Islam Conquers the West. The Strategy Unveiled*.134 But it is *French Destiny (Destin français)* of the Islamophobe Eric Zemmour that attracted the media’s attention the most. A favorite in libraries, this book rewrites the history of France in the light of an essential representation of the French nation. The depiction of France as “homogeneous” and “eternal” allows Eric Zemmour to categorize Muslims as an “exterior threat.” This connection between nationalism and Islamophobia is at the heart of Zemmour’s work: in his book, he rehabilitates the memory of Petain, the leader of the Vichy collaborationist government during World War II.135 Last but not least, the promotion of his book led to several Islamophobic scandals. For instance on 15 December, while attending a popular TV show, he verbally attacked the columnist Hapsatou Sy about her name.136 Similarly, on 20 November, Pascal Prau, the speaker of a popular talk show, explicitly supported Zemmour’s theory of “reverse colonialism” by interrupting another journalist shocked by these xenophobic ideas.137

In response, certain academic studies attempted to deconstruct this Great Replacement ideology. This is the case of *Communautarisme?* written by sociologists Marwan Mohammed and Julien Talpin.138 The book shows how the French expression “communautarisme”139 serves as an injunction to maintain minorities in their subaltern status. (Fig. 8) Yet this kind of work never benefits from the same publicity as Islamophobic essays. This double standard clearly reflects the domination of Islamophobic discourse in French media and its normalization.

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135. Ibid.


• Pejorative Prefixes and Suffixes Related to Muslims: “Legal Jihad” and “Islamo-Organized Crime”

On 8 March, 2018, the newspaper Marianne published a call to support Mohamed Louizi, accused for defamation by some members of the organization Musulmans de France, which is close to the Muslim Brotherhood. The article entitled “We Must Defend Mohamed Louizi, Victim of ‘Legal Jihad’” (jihad judiciaire), accuses the Muslim Brotherhood organization of pressing charges against Mohammed Louizi in order to silence him and his research against “political Islam.” The article denounces the strategy of “jihad of the courts” supposedly used by the NGO Musulmans de France as a means to “convert our Western democracies to their ideology.” This call was signed by people well-known for their Islamophobic comments such as Waleed al-Husseini, Laurent Bouvet, and Pascal Bruckner. Similarly, on 30 March, 2018, the same newspaper published an article by the journalist Martine Gozlan in which she presents the trial of Georges Bensoussan for racist speech as a “harassment.” She accuses the CCIF – one of the complainants – of making “legal jihad.” In both articles, the right to open


141. The plaintiffs complained against following Bensoussan’s words; he said on French radio France Culture, “Today, there is another people [the people of Arab-Muslim culture] in the French nation that leads to the regression of a number of democratic values. […] It turns out that an Algerian sociologist, Smaïn Laacher, with great courage, just said in the film that will be broadcast on France 3 TV channel: ‘it is a shame to keep secret as a taboo that in Arab families in France - and everyone knows it but no one wants to say it - anti-Semitism, we suck it with the mother’s milk.’

a case and to complain against someone – i.e. the bases of a state of law – are denied to Muslim people and delegitimized under the negative term “jihad.”

Similarly, after the terror attack at Strasbourg on 14 December, George Brenier, security expert for the TV channel TF1, claimed the terrorist’s profile reflected “Islamo-organized crime” (Islamo-banditisme). The expert wanted to highlight the ambiguous profile of the terrorist who had also been condemned for a common crime in the past. Yet, by using this term he assimilated “organized crime” with Islam, as if Islam intrinsically leads to crime.143

- **Muslims as the Source of a “New Anti-Semitism”**

In 2018, Muslims have also been accused of being the source of a “New anti-Semitism.” On 12 January, 2018, Antoine Gallimard, president of the famous Gallimard publishing house, did not want to give up publishing the anti-Semitic writings of Louis-Ferdinand Céline while, according to him, “Today, anti-Semitism is no longer on the side of Christians but of Muslims, and they are not going to read Céline’s texts.”144 The murder on 23 March, 2018 of an elderly Jewish woman, Mireille Knoll, by a Muslim triggered a debate about Muslim anti-Semitism despite the fact that the motive of the crime has not been established yet.145 It is in this context that the popular Le Parisien newspaper, published on 22 April, 2018, the “Call against New Anti-Semitism” (l’Appel des 300 contre le nouvel antisémitisme) denouncing a new Muslim-rooted anti-Semitism in France. This call claims current anti-Semitism is due to Islam and the Muslim community and not to French traditional far-right groups. They make a clear distinction between French people, on one side, and Muslims (as a whole) on the other. In this call, Muslims are indirectly depicted as the French “inner enemy,” since Islam is supposed to be intrinsically anti-Semitic. According to the article, this new anti-Semitism constitutes an “ethnical cleansing.” It also denounces far-left parties for leading anti-Zionist campaigns that are the “acceptable” face of anti-Semitism. Three-hundred people signed the call, among them famous intellectuals, artists, politicians, and three former presidents. Among them are also figures of French Islamophobia such as Pascal Bruckner, Alain Finkielkraut, and Pierre-André Taguieff.146

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• “Face-to-Face”, “Armed Conflict against Islam”, and “Civil War”

This strict distinction between non-Muslims and Muslims in the public discourse constitutes a great threat for French society. It is also the result of constant Islamophobic propaganda. On 15 September, 2018, the polemician Eric Zemmour warned France of a coming “civil war against Islam and its French collaborators” on the public radio station France Inter. On 27 September, 2018, journalists Zineb El Rhazoui and Jean-Claude Dassier respectively claimed, “Women wearing headscarves belong to and manifest an ideology of radical Islam that leads to terrorism” and “we are in armed conflict against Islam,” on the popular C News TV channel. On 3 October, 2018, former French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb claimed in his resignation speech, “Today we live side-by-side... I am afraid that tomorrow we will live face-to-face,” implicitly portraying French Muslims and French non-Muslims as enemies. Facing much criticism for his booklet on French Islam, Deputy Julien Aubert claimed on 22 November, 2018, “the verbal violence my book triggered reflects a divided society. By not allowing the Republicans to talk about this theme [i.e. Islam], is the physical confrontation which, I fear, will one day end this quarrel.”

These allusions to civil war do not only represent the normalization of anti-Muslim discourse but also the legitimization of hate attacks toward individuals. In other words, they promote the worst-case scenario: confrontation.

Three Symptomatic Controversies about the Hijab

As mentioned above, polemics about Islam usually intertwine social media, mainstream media, and the political spheres. In 2018, three polemics were symptomatic of the normalization of Islamophobia in France: Mennel Ibtissem’s participation on TV show The Voice; the interview of UNEF student union leader Maryam Pougetoux; the Gap Kids marketing campaign. All of these controversies implied aversion to women wearing the hijab.

• Mennel Ibtissem’s Participation on the TV show The Voice

On 3 February, 2018, the broadcast of The Voice showed Mennel Ibtissem going on stage to perform Leonard Cohen’s song Hallelujah. While the audience and jury had admired the young woman’s voice, a controversy started on social networks: some blamed Mennel Ibtissem for having sung part of the song in Arabic while oth-

ers accused TF1 of “normalizing” the Islamic veil. The next day, several Internet users actively searched the singer’s previous activities on social media and exhumed a few controversial comments, including conspiracy sayings over the 2016 Nice terror attacks. Far-right accounts immediately shared screenshots revealing these comments. Activists and politicians reacted also on social media: some requested her exclusion from the TV show (such as Philippe Vardon or Laurent Bouvet), and others accused her of being an “Islamist” (Jean Messiha). Similarly many polemics occurred in mainstream media. On CNews, the journalist Ivan Rioufol claimed,

She is wearing a headscarf; she is close to [Tariq] Ramadan […] you do not want to see that she is Islamist. A headscarf today, when it is worn – above all on a TV show – it is a political sign, it is not a religious sign, it is a way to make it clear that she does not want to live with us […] Islam is a totalitarian ideology.

On Friday, 9 February, one week after her first appearance on the show, Mennel Ibtissem announced she was leaving the program. The feminist Rokhaya Diallo noticed on Twitter that people explored only the past of this specific singer-applicant. In other words, Mennel Ibtissem would not have experienced all these problems if she had not worn a headscarf.

- The Interview of UNEF Student Union Leader Maryam Pougetoux

On 12 May, 2018, the TV channel M6 broadcasted a report about protests that took place in many universities in France. Journalists briefly interviewed Maryam Pougetoux, one of the leaders of UNEF student union (left-wing), who was wearing a headscarf. Without listening to what Maryam Pougetoux said about the ongoing protests, several politicians from social democrats to far-rightists accused the student of “promotion of political Islam”, of showing her “difference with French society”.


154. Ibid.


or of being an “Islamist.”¹⁶⁰ Even far-left politicians remained ambiguous in their reactions, hesitating between Jacobin strict secular approach (i.e. condemning the headscarf in union activities) and multicultural liberal approach (i.e. accepting it).¹⁶¹

The UNEF student union issued a statement to defend the young woman. The organization assured that there was no incompatibility between showing one's religious beliefs and the values of unionism.¹⁶² This controversy sparked emotion worldwide and was covered by most respected media outlets.¹⁶³ Yet, this awareness did not prevent the spread of anti-Muslim racist comments such as Charlie Hebdo’s caricature of Maryam Pougetoux. (Fig. 9)

Figure 7: On the right, a screenshot of M6 TV interview of Maryam Pougetoux, one of the leaders of student union UNEF. She is commenting on student protests against the new French university application process; on the right, the caricature of Maryam Pougetoux on the cover of satiric Charlie Hebdo, which states “French University Application Process (Parcoursup) is SH***, They Accepted Me as Leader of UNEF. The cartoon face has been drawn to look like a monkey.”¹⁶⁴

• **Gap Kids Marketing Campaign**

On 31 August, 2018, the company Gap Kids published on social media its last marketing campaign showing children of Harlem, including a young girl wearing a headscarf. Rapidly, many Internet users including journalists, activists, and politicians firmly condemned what they considered as “submission to Islamism” and called on a boycott of the firm. As usual, mainstream media (TV, radio, newspapers) widely publicized this controversy. Gap Kids responded that the advertisement was not designed for the French public. In fact, the newspaper *Libération* noticed that the publication of this same picture on Instagram generated almost only positive comments from the English-speaking world.

**Justice System**

Like media and politics, Islamophobic acts in the justice system mostly concern Muslim women. On 15 January, 2018, a sexagenarian woman was prosecuted at the Court of Appeal of Rouen (Northwest France) for an aggression committed in October 2015 against a veiled woman.

In February 2018, the disciplinary chamber of the Aquitaine Medical Association imposed a six-month ban on a doctor who in 2015 harassed a mother wearing the hijab. While the woman was accompanying her child in the hospital, the doctor told her “we are at war, we must know in which camp you are” and “the headscarf you wear is a sign of non-integration.” The doctor has appealed the decision.

The same month, Christine Tasin, president of the anti-Muslim NGO *Résistance Républicaine*, was sentenced by the Paris Court of Appeal to pay a fine of €1,500 for...
Islamophobic public remarks following the assassination of a policeman and his wife by a jihadist in Magnanville in 2016.\textsuperscript{171}

The CCIF, which provides legal assistance, registered several sentences for Islamophobic acts in 2018. For instance, in June, the French justice sentenced the manager of a tobacco bar and post office in Albi (Southwest France) who refused to offer services to Muslim clients wearing headscarves. The public prosecutor requested €3,000 fine and a conditional sentence of imprisonment of 3 months for religious discrimination. The criminal court finally sentenced her to nearly €9,000, for refusal of goods or services to a person because of her religion.\textsuperscript{172} Similarly, on 21 June, the Administrative Court of Nice sentenced Cannes City Hall to repay a Muslim woman unjustly fined in 2016 because she was wearing burkini on the beach.\textsuperscript{173}

In August 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee criticized French justice for not having condemned the dismissal of an employee wearing the hijab from the private nursery where she was working. The committee considered this dismissal as unfair and as a discrimination based on religion.\textsuperscript{174} Similarly in October 2018, a group of UN experts condemned France for having banned the niqab. The committee considered this law was “marginalizing” these women “by confining them to their homes and by denying them access to public services.”\textsuperscript{175} Yet both opinions are not binding.

Alongside Muslim women and the hijab, judicial events regarding Islamophobia focused on security issues.

On 7 March, 2018, the human rights activist Abdelaziz Chaambi was sentenced to pay €2,000 fine by the Court of Appeal of Grenoble for contempt against the police while protesting in January 2015. Abdelaziz Chaambi was supported by the French Human Rights League that saw in this trial a threat to all activists who defend minorities.\textsuperscript{176}


\textsuperscript{173} Ibid.


In April 2018, a dozen far-right figures held a rally in front of the National School of the Judiciary, among them Renaud Camus, father of the Great Replacement theory, and Pierre Cassen, founder of the Islamophobic website Riposte Laique. Already condemned for Islamophobic remarks, they consider themselves victims of “legal persecution.” The rally was only attended by a few individuals.¹⁷⁷

In May 2018, the administrative court of Cergy-Pontoise sentenced the French state to pay the manager of Pepper Grill, a halal restaurant, €10,000 for moral damages. During the state of emergency on 21 November, 2015, French police made a violent raid against this restaurant while customers were eating. The court considered that the level of violence was unjustified.¹⁷⁸

Finally in December 2018, a preliminary investigation was opened against a private bar linked to far-right group Génération Identitaire in Lille, three days after the broadcast of a documentary on this organization on Al-Jazeera English.¹⁷⁹

**Internet**

Islamophobic activities have three main aspects on the Internet. Firstly, there are accounts on social media launching Islamophobic controversies. As mentioned above, almost every controversy related to Islam starts at Twitter or Facebook. The second aspect concerns websites that publicize Islamophobic contents or at least the fear of an Islamist segregation. These websites are either rooted in the far right or the left. The last aspect concerns paramilitary organizations that share contacts, comments, and techniques on the Internet.

**Islamophobic Accounts on Social Media**

Twitter and Facebook platforms give the floor to left-wing activists, journalists, and politicians who constantly attack the headscarf as well as “Muslim backwardness” in the name of secularism and the French “way of life.” This is the case of activists such as Laurent Bouvet and Gilles Clavreul, co-founders of Printemps Republicains; of polemists such as Zohra Bitan;¹⁸⁰ of journalists such as Zineb El Rhazoui;¹⁸¹ and of politicians such as Manuel Valls¹⁸² and Marlène Schiappa.¹⁸³

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¹⁸⁰. Polemist at the popular “Les Grandes Gueules” Talk Show on BFM TV.

¹⁸¹. Former journalist at Charlie Hebdo.

¹⁸². Ex-Prime Minister (Ex-Socialist Party member).

¹⁸³. State Secretary in charge of equality between women and men and the fight against discrimination (Republic On the Move, presidential party).
On social media there are also Islamophobic accounts that refer to the far-right xenophobic tradition, among them accounts of politicians such as Jean Messiha (National Rally), Patricia Guilbaud (Republic Arise), and Eric Ciotti (The Republicans), but also famous polemists such as Gilles-William Goldanel. In their tweets, anti-Muslim racism is connected to anti-immigration and nationalism discourses.

Finally, there are self-proclaimed ex-Muslim activists such as Majid Oukacha and Waleed Al-Husseini who conflate regular Muslim activities (headscarf, prayer, etc.) and radicalization in their lawful criticism of religion. According to them, any Muslim is intrinsically a potential terrorist, or at least abides by the “barbaric” corpus of Shari’a law.

These accounts are just some (of many) well-known names and widely followed accounts. Their ideas are supported and retweeted by a number of anonymous accounts and common users.

**Islamophobic Websites**

There is a distinction between discourses rooted in the left and the far right regarding websites. In the first case, NGOs such as *Printemps Republicain* (Republican Spring) and *Comité Laïcité République* (Laïcité – Republic Committee) hide their anti-Muslim racism under the veil of secularism, women’s rights, and Jacobin ideology. In the second one, websites such as *FDeSouche*, *Resistance Républicaine*, *Riposte Laïque*, *Boulevard Voltaire*, *TVLibertés*, *Breizh-info*, or *Observatoire de l’Islamisation* openly claim being Islamophobic and base their discourse upon the “clash of civilization”, “Great Replacement”, and “reverse colonialism” theories. Yet, one may keep in mind that this distinction is not always appropriate since all the mentioned discourses can be found in both sides.

*FigaroVox* is an influential platform that uses its reputation of respectful mainstream media for spreading Islamophobic and nationalistic contents. Websites of far-right parties such as National Rally, *Debout la France*, *Parti de la France* are also active voices of Islamophobia online.

**Paramilitary Groups’ Websites**

It is less known by the general public that Islamophobia is also the leitmotiv of some paramilitary groups that convene online. The white supremacist platform *reseaulibre.org* gathered around 3,000 users and debates the ways to physically attack Muslims and to commit terror attacks. In a recent article, the online media *Mediapart* expressed its suspicion that the director of *reseaulibre.org* is a former French

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184. Lawyer and polemist who attends many TV shows such as “Les Terriens Dimanche” on C8 or “Les Grandes Gueules” on BFM TV. He also writes articles in the famous right-wing *Le Figaro* newspaper.

185. *Le Figaro* is a famous historical right-wing newspaper.

spy, who is an expat in Russia since 1998. The website closed on 20 October, 2018, but redirected its users towards another platform, namely LeonFrance.fr. The anti-Muslim terrorist group AFO also spread its propaganda on a website entitled Guerre de France (War of France). This website is still available online. (Fig. 10)

![Image](https://example.com/guerredefrance.png)

**Figure 8: Screenshot of the AFO’s website still available online as of the beginning of 2019. We can see well-armed soldiers involved in destructive warfare in the streets of Paris.**

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Previous parts of this report already given a picture of political, media, and Internet figures involved in the Islamophobia network. The interactions between those mentioned politicians, journalists, activists, thinkers, newspapers, and NGOs form an “Islamophobic cloud” that contests the freedom of conscience and basic rights for Muslim people, especially Muslim women. For instance, it prevents Muslim women from activities, jobs, accommodation, or representations in the public sphere outside the scope of the law. In 2018, the pressure imposed by this “Islamophobia cloud” tended to be normalized (see the cases of Mennel Ibtissem and Maryam Poutignoux for example). Therefore, it became more and more difficult for Muslim individuals to face this general normative discourse.

Since the causes of Islamophobic actors are intertwined with each other, it is not easy to determine which figures played the most powerful role in this general “Islamophobia cloud.” Yet, it is possible to make the distinction between, first, those who participate in this “cloud” by spreading Islamophobic rhetoric and ideas and, second, those who participate in this same “cloud” by planning or calling on terror attacks against Muslims. Again the boundary between the two categories is not impermeable.

1. Among the central figures of the first category there are those who take advantage of their social reputation and respectability to spread a normalized

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187. Ibid.
188. Ibid.
form of Islamophobia. Likewise, leftist and self-proclaimed “anti-racist” NGOs such as *Printemps Republicain*, *Comité Laïcité et République*, and LICRA actively militate in mainstream and social media for a hard interpretation of *laïcité* that would exclude any exterior expression of religion. For them, visible expressions of Islam are not compatible with French secular order. This position leads them to spread Islamophobic rhetoric regarding Muslim people, intrinsically perceived as a threat. For instance, Laurent Jouvet, co-founder of *Printemps Republicain*, wrote a book on “cultural insecurity” and often stigmatizes headscarf and halal food. Mainstream newspapers such as *Le Figaro*, * Causeur*, and *Valeurs Actuelles* share this hard vision of *laïcité* while promoting at the same time rightist rhetoric focused on French nation, cultural identity, authority, and civilization. On a regular basis, they interview conservative thinkers such as Eric Zemmour, Alain Finkielkraut, Ivan Rioufol, and Gilles-William Goldnadel who advocate fighting against “growing Islamist segregation” and “parallel society.” This kind of polemists are also regularly invited on popular TV talk shows such as “Les Grandes Gueules” on BFM TV, “L’Heure des Pros” on CNews and “Les Terriens Dimanche” on C8. Finally, all these ideas are recycled by politicians such as Marine Le Pen, Laurent Wauquiez, and Eric Ciotti who are above all seeking electoral success. These Islamophobia figures are now normalized in French society. Yet they compete with even more radicalized figures. Ideologues such as Renaud Camus, considered as father of the “Great Replacement” theory in France, Pierre Cassen, and Christine Tasin, founders of openly Islamophobic *Riposte laïque* and *Résistance Républicaine* respectively, constantly attack Muslim people verbally and promote the implementation of racist policies against Muslims and immigrants. These figures criticized “mainstream Islamophobes” for being too shy in their “denunciation of Muslims” but at the same time provide them with intellectual tools.  

2. Among the groups who are planning or call for planning terror attacks against Muslim people, is the AFO (Action of Operational Forces) that was going to physically attack hundreds of imams, women, and Muslim mosques in summer 2018. French police partly dismantled the group between June and August 2018 (see above). The AFO was linked to Voluntaries for France (VPF) that also calls for “defending French identity” and “fighting against the Islamization in France.” The group registers between


191. The idea of the Great Replacement for example.
200 and 800 members including many retired soldiers and French generals and officers. Meanwhile, Remora Network openly attempts to organize “civil resistance” and paramilitary operations against Muslims in France. The group split the French map in 15 areas, all supervised by “former experimented army officers.” Other groups such Soldiers of Odin Breizh, a French version of a Finish far-right group, and Generation Identity aim to fight against the “Great Replacement” by organizing actions such as patrols in French cities or national borders.

**Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives**

In 2018, Muslim activists and entrepreneurs repeatedly organized counter-discourses and initiatives against this “Islamophobia cloud.” Ironically enough, endless debates about the organization of a “French Islam” have been an opportunity for reshaping the relations between French Muslim communities at a grassroots level. Supported by French sociologists, demographists, journalists, and activists, Marwan Muhammad coordinated the France-wide survey “Consultation of Muslims” between 10 May and 20 June, 2018. In addition to conducting debates in 57 mosques, they gathered answers from 24,029 individuals who were questioned online about the situation of Muslims in France. The results show that a large majority of French Muslims who attended the survey want a national institution representing Muslims (85%) independent from the state (70%). Organizers of the survey founded L.E.S Musulmans in order to pursue this bottom-up building process and to put pressure on public authorities regarding Muslim concerns.

Inquiries and investigations about anti-Muslim racism have had an important impact on countering Islamophobia in 2018. The NGO Committee Justice and Liberties (CJL) conducted several actions and studies analyzing the relations

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193. See the far-right website Minurne Résistance, [https://www.minurne.org/billets/tag/remora](https://www.minurne.org/billets/tag/remora).


195. Among them the sociologists Fatiha Ajbli, Valérie Amiraux, Said Bouamama, Moussa Bourekba, Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, Julien Talpin, and statisticians Reda Choukour and demographer Patrick Simon.


197. Ibid.

198. See the organization’s website: [https://lesmusulmans.fr/](https://lesmusulmans.fr/).
between terrorism, counterterrorism, and Islamophobia in France.199 Similarly, in spring 2018, Hassina Mechaï and Sihem Zine published *L’État d’urgence (permanent)* (Permanent State of Emergency), a book that discusses experiences of the French Muslims who unjustly suffered from the French State of Emergency between 2015 and 2017. This is a precious study since French media mainly silenced misuses and security excesses during this period.200

Academic studies fighting Islamophobic rhetoric have also played an important role in 2018. Already mentioned in this report, the sociological analysis *Communautarisme?* of Marwan Mohammed and Julien Talpin (September 2018) meticulously deconstructs Islamophobic ideas of “Islamist segregation” and “parallel society.”201 In the same way, the heads of the state-funded Observatory of Laïcité Jean-Louis Bianco and Nicolas Cadène continued to promote a liberal understanding of French secular order which does not discriminate against Muslim people, especially women.

Finally, some NGOs monitor Islamophobic acts and provide legal assistance to victims. The most famous, Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF),202 published the most reliable records on Islamophobia in France. The organization also assists victims in their cases and regularly organizes workshops and training on French legal procedures. Alongside the CCIF, Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI)203 and Action for Muslim Rights (ADM)204 worked significantly towards assisting victims and denouncing anti-Muslim racism in the public sphere.

**Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

Islamist terrorists and anti-Muslim extremists would like to see France enter into a civil war with non-Muslims on one side and Muslims on the other. Islamophobia is thus a source of great disorder. Its consequences do not only undermine the life of Muslims but also the cohesion of the French nation as a whole. In order to prevent this worst-case scenario, the French state must “reassert its authority and commitment to the founding principles of the French Republic in the face of continuous ideological

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203. See CRI’s website: https://crifrance.com/.
204. See ADM’s website: https://adm-musulmans.com/.
assaults.” In other words, the state must rebuild a relation of trust between its institutions, French Muslim communities, and the French people by fighting discourses, actions, and policies that participate in ostracizing the Muslim minorities in French society. Recommendations regarding trust building, security policy, and hate discourse follow below. Some of them are directly taken from last year’s report:

**Regarding Trust Building**
- Abandon top-down policy-making aiming at engineering “French Islam” irrespective of civil society initiatives and network.
- Support the bottom-up building project such as *L.E.S Musulmans*, which benefits from popular recognition and a wide network of mosques and civil organizations.
- Promote in education, media, and state institutions a liberal and inclusive understanding of laïcité such as defined by Observatory of Laïcité.
- Launch a nationwide assessment on the effects of the 2004 ban on headscarves in public schools.

**Regarding Security Policy**
- Involve grassroots organizations, legitimate community leaders, and education personnel to elaborate more effective counterterrorism.
- Publicize this cooperation with grassroots organizations in order to deconstruct negative stereotypes that depict Muslims as supporters of terrorism.
- Abolish the use of “white notes” by intelligence services and rely on investigation and proof rather than mere suspicion to prosecute individuals.
- Abolish the newly adopted measure in the 2017 antiterrorism law that allows arbitrary closing down of places of worship unless a clear definition of radicalization is adopted and alternatives are offered to affected communities. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right even in places of worship, as long there is no disruption of public safety.

**Regarding Hate Speech**
- Protect freedom of speech by pressing state-owned media to adhere to a charter of plurality and promote Muslim visibility to normalize their presence.
- Cancel state subsidies to media outlets that promote individuals condemned of incitement of hatred, calling for discrimination, violence against individuals, or who were proven guilty of promoting racism.
- Facilitate the right of reply to individuals or organizations when attacked on media platforms.
- Train top management of state-owned media on Islamophobia, its consequences, and on how they can protect social cohesion by combating it.

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• Include discrimination cases in official statistics of anti-Muslim racism.
• Apply existing laws against discrimination at work and increase fines for companies.
• Grant freedom of religion and thought in workplaces.
• Train school teachers on Islamophobia, strengthen an anti-racism approach in education programs, and promote a liberal and inclusive understanding of laïcité.

Chronology

• **10.01.2018**: Three members of the far-right group Generation Identity (Génération Identitaire) physically attack a young woman by using tear gas and punching her four times. The scene was filmed by a reporter and broadcasted on Al-Jazeera English TV channel in December 2018.
• **January 2018**: Two young women wearing headscarves are attacked by a local resident because of their real or supposed belonging to Islam. The aggressor was condemned on 9 January, 2019 at the Criminal Court of Meaux.
• **January 2018**: National Rally Party attempts to close the mosque of Souillac.
• **January-February 2018**: A six-year-old French woman repeatedly physically attacks and threatens Muslim mothers while they were bringing their children to school at Perpignan.
• **03.02.2018**: The TV broadcast of “The Voice” shows Mennel Ibtissem going on stage to perform Leonard Cohen’s song *Hallelujah*, triggering an Islamophobic controversy on social networks: some blame Mennel Ibtissem for singing part of the song in Arabic while others accuse TF1 of “normalizing” the Islamic veil. A week after her first appearance on the show, Mennel Ibtissem announces she is leaving the program.
• **08.03.2018**: The newspaper *Marianne* publishes a call to support Mohamed Louizi, accused of defamation by members of the organization Musulmans de France, which is close to the Muslim Brotherhood. The article entitled “We Must Defend Mohamed Louizi, Victim of ‘Legal Jihad’” (jihad judiciaire), accuses the Muslim Brotherhood organization of pressing charges against Mohammed Louizi in order to silent him and his research against “political Islam.” In the article, the right to open a case and to complain against someone – i.e. the basics of a state of law – are denied to Muslim people and delegitimized under the negative term “jihad.”
• **22.03.2018**: A doctor of the hospital of Perpignan (South France) verbally attacks a Muslim young woman because of her headscarf. The doctor tells his patient that wearing the hijab in the hospital and in public space is prohibited by French law. The patient suffers from non-material damage.
• **23.03.2018**: Radouane Lakdim, a 26-year-old French citizen who was under surveillance of French intelligence for radicalization killed three and injured many in a terror attack in the south of France.

• **March 2018**: The Institute of Labor Economics publishes the survey “Anti-Muslim Discrimination in France: Evidence from a Field Experiment.” The survey that has been conducted in France before the 2015 attacks — before the state of emergency — demonstrates discrimination against Muslim in the marketplace.


• **22.04.2018**: The newspaper *Le Parisien* publishes the “Call against New Anti-Semitism” (*l’Appel des 300 contre le nouvel antisémitisme*) denouncing a new Muslim-rooted anti-Semitism in France. In the call, Muslims are indirectly depicted as the French “inner enemy,” since Islam is supposed to be intrinsically anti-Semitic.

• **27.04.2018**: The newspaper *Libération* reveals two notes from French intelligence reporting the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab groups. These notes proclaim, “Islamist attacks in France since January 2015 have been interpreted by radical far-right milieus as a legitimization of their theses on the threat of immigrants [...] and the bankruptcy of a multicultural society.”

• **12.05.2018**: Khamzat Azimov, a youth of Chechen origin who was under surveillance of French intelligence for radicalization, took a person’s life in a knife attack at the Opera district in Paris.

• **12.05.2018**: The TV channel M6 broadcasts a report about protests that took place in many universities in France. Journalists briefly interview Maryam Pougetoux, one of the leaders of UNEF student union (left-wing), who wears a headscarf. Without listening to what Maryam Pougetoux has to say about the ongoing protests, several politicians from social democrats to far-rightists accuse the student of “promotion of political Islam”, of showing her “difference with French society” or of being an “Islamist.”

• **14.05.2018**: In her visit to France Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, warns new anti-terrorism laws risk undermining fundamental rights and freedoms.

• **08.06.2018**: Laurent Wauquiez, leader of the Republicans party (right-wing conservative), supervises the spread of political tracts that used anti-Muslim and xenophobic rhetoric.
• **18.06.2018**: Laurent Wauquiez attempts to form an alliance between his party and *Sens Commun*, a far-right think tank.
• **24.06.2018**: French police arrest ten members of the far-right terrorist group Action of Operational Forces (AFO) that was planning to commit terror attacks against French Muslims such as poisoning halal foods, physical attacks against Muslim women, and degradation of what they considered “radical” mosques.
• **12.07.2018**: Eric Ciotti (The Republicans party) proposes at the French Assembly to ban exterior religious signs for workers in public companies and for users of public services (today there is only a ban for workers in public services).
• **23.07.2018**: French police arrest three more people suspected of belonging to the AFO. One of them was a former member of the group Volunteers for France (VPF), the two others were women who attended all the meetings of this far-right terrorist group.
• **26.08.2018**: The UN Human Rights Committee criticizes French justice for not having condemned the dismissal of an employee wearing the hijab from the private nursery where she was working. The committee considers this dismissal as unfair and as a discrimination based on religion.
• **31.08.2018**: The company Gap Kids publishes on social media its last marketing campaign showing children of Harlem, including a young girl wearing a headscarf. Rapidly, many Internet users including journalists, activists, and politicians firmly condemn what they consider as “submission to Islamism” and call to boycott the firm.
• **15.09.2018**: The polemicist Eric Zemmour warns France of a coming “civil war against Islam and its French collaborators” on the public radio station France Inter.
• **20.09.2018**: Hakim El Karoui publishes with the right-wing think tank *Institut Montaigne* a new report that calls for a stronger regulation of Muslim religious practices by the state in order to better counter “Islamism.”
• **21.09.2018**: The French singer Medine announces the cancellation of a concert on Twitter due to terrorist threats.
• **26.09.2018**: French sociologists Marwan Mohammed and Julien Talpin meticulously deconstruct Islamophobic ideas of “Islamist segregation” and “parallel society” in their book *Communautarisme*.
• **26.09.2018**: A woman enters the swimming pool of Rennes (West France) while wearing a burkini (a covered swimsuit) provoking a fierce debate among other swimmers and the city council.
• **27.09.2018**: Journalists Zineb El Rhazoui and Jean-Claude Dassier respectively claim, “Women wearing headscarves belong to and manifest an ideol-
ogy of radical Islam that leads to terrorism” and “We are in armed conflict against Islam,” on the popular CNews TV channel.


- **30.09.2018**: The creation of the national platform *L.E.S Musulmans* brings together hundreds of local mosques and organizations under its roof. The organization aims to coordinate Muslims representation from the bottom up.

- **September 2018**: Several Muslim students of the Nursing Education Institute (IFSI) complain about the management that is “checking the size of their headbands” as well as “forbidding them religious headscarves.”

- **September 2018**: Several parents complain against the kindergarten of Vénissieux enrolling their children because the management changed the rules of procedure and imposed nursery staff to serve the entire meal to children, even though it contains meat and the parents oppose it.

- **03.10.2018**: Former French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb claims in his resignation speech, “Today we live side-by-side... I am afraid that tomorrow we will live face-to-face,” implicitly portraying French Muslims and French non-Muslims as enemies.

- **11.10.2018**: The Centre for Conflict Studies - Freedom and Security publishes the quantitative survey “The Effects of the Fight against Terrorism and Radicalization on Muslim Populations in France.” This survey shows the damages caused by French counterterrorism policies on the whole Muslim community since 2015.

- **17.10.2018**: Gérard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme, both well-known and respected journalists at *Le Monde*, publish the book *Insh’Allah! Islamization Disclosed* (*Inch’Allah! L’islamisation à visage découvert*). The book lists a series of local events that occurred in North Paris which supposedly demonstrate the rise of a counter Islamist society.

- **October 2018**: A group of UN experts condemns France for having banned the niqab.

- **09.11.2018**: A support group of the left-wing party *La France Insoumise* organizes a meeting on “Islamist entryism in labour unions.” The group is excluded from the movement a few days later, triggering tough debates within the party.

- **10.11.2018**: Laurent Nunez, the secretary of state for interior affairs, announces that six Islamist terror attacks have been foiled by French police in 2018.
• **16.11.2018**: Deputy Julien Aubert in his *Tricolor Booklet on French Islam(s)* exposes a series of proposals to reorganize the Muslim religion in France. Designed within the framework of the Great Replacement theory, this report makes a list of Islamophobic measures aiming at restricting Muslims’ freedom such as “sanctioning women who do not want to withdraw their headscarf after police request” or “de-Islamizing some neighborhoods.”

• **28.11.2018**: Eighty thinkers, scholars, and artists publish a “call against postcolonialism” in the weekly *Le Point*. They condemn an “intellectual terrorism” that uses the threat of “racism” and “Islamophobia” in order to “diabolize” their opponents.

• **30.11.2018**: An exhibitor at the Saint-Gratien Christmas market (North Paris) is summoned by the city mayor to leave her stand, for the sole reason that she is wearing a headscarf.

• **11.12.2018**: Chérif Chekatt, a 29-year-old French citizen who was under surveillance by French intelligence for radicalization, killed 5 and injured many in the center of Strasbourg.