

France Briefing: November 2024

Reporting period: 1st November - 30th November 2024

I. Political Developments

A new round of government instability begins with a budget crisis:

Eric Coquerel, head of the finance committee, established an enquiry commission to investigate how the previous government mismanaged the State's budget.

The previous government's economic predictions and policies are now under scrutiny, as France faces a probable unprecedented economic crisis.

Parliament is now called to adopt next year's budget which has been severely affected by economic austerity. The government prepared a first proposal. The majority of the Parliament - including the leftist bloc and the far-right - announced they wouldn't adopt it as it is and threatened to support a motion of no confidence.

This political maneuver is meant to evade responsibility over the probable severe economic downgrade France will undergo. As a result, new snap elections could be called in a few months.

II. Islamophobic developments

Abdelhakim Sefrioui's Trial:

The trial of Samuel Paty's murder began this month. In October 2020, Abdelhakim attempted to intervene and facilitate constructive discussion between Paty's school and Muslim parents. Professor Samuel Paty had shown his students, many of whom were Muslim, a defamatory, inappropriate and insulting image claiming to be of prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him).

Abdelhakim's offer to mediate between the Muslim parents and the school was turned down by the school. As a result Abdelhakim recorded a video testimony of his attempts. Following the rejection from the school, Abdelhakim published a video on his social media where he outlined his attempts to defuse the situation and peacefully criticised the act of blasphemy that took place in a public secondary school. Speaking to the parents in the video, Abdelhakim asked them to take an active interest in what their children are being taught. He also called upon the school to suspend Samuel Paty. He also made mention of wider repression of Muslims in France and how this all fits together.

The murder of Samuel Paty on the 16th October 2020 by an individual actor, who was neither a parent or a student at the school, caused nationwide horror. The government seized on this moment to punish those who spoke out against Paty's actions. Abdelhakim was arrested the next day, on 17th October 2020 under the allegation of 'complicity to a terrorist murder'. He and 15 others were arrested and detained without charge, including some children. Abdelhakim was detained for 4 years, most of which spent in solitary confinement.