

Tearing down the Muslim 5th column

How Islamophobic paranoia suffocates French Muslims

In 2025, President Emmanuel Macron placed particular emphasis on addressing the alleged issue of the Muslim Brotherhood's "entryism" in France, which he described as "a threat to national cohesion." Following the publication in May 2025 of a 73-page government report analysing the movement's presence in the country — which served as an artificial institutional incentive — a Defence Council was held on 21 May, during which Macron asked the government to propose "new measures" to be reviewed at an upcoming meeting in early June.

A new piece of legislation

On 7 July, at a new National Defence and Security Council meeting, he announced his intention to adopt legislation "by the end of summer" to be implemented "by the end of the year." This bill aims to establish "more effective blocking measures," including freezing monetary and financial contributions to targeted associations — extending tools already in use against terrorism. It also foresees widening the scope of administrative dissolution, currently limited to legal entities, to include endowment funds, as well as introducing a coercive regime for the liquidation of the assets of dissolved associations. Furthermore, the Élysée stated that the legislative framework would be reinforced by expanded financial sanctions: prefects could reverse subsidies granted to associations failing to comply with the laws of the Republic, through registration in the national database of public subsidies. Finally, the president announced that representatives of Islam in France, notably through the Forum of Islam of France (Forif), would be convened in the autumn to promote enhanced institutional dialogue.

These initiatives reflect an approach combining legislative, administrative, and financial instruments to contain the political growth of the Muslim community. Adopting the conspiracy theory according to which Muslims are conspirators on the verge of seizing power and subverting the Republic's foundations, the State seeks to develop its already large capacity to discipline Muslims' political aspirations. Islamophobic paranoia — symptom of a vulnerable white supremacist feeling — now fully pervades French governance and its "Muslim policies". As second class citizens, they are meant to remain docile, silently accepting a status quo which severely curtails their most fundamental rights. As the Bill is currently being written by legislators, the State prepares the political terrain to safeguard its legitimacy. Governmental instability and an imminent social uprising fostered by the unprecedented austerity measures announced by the State, might delay the final adoption of the text and are not expected to completely cancel the current Islamophobic agenda. In the last few weeks, it decided to target key members of the community — publishers, writers, community leaders and organisers — freezing their assets and closing down their accounts. The European Institute of Human Sciences (IESH), a higher education center specializing in

Islamic studies, languages, and humanities, offering programs in theology, law, history, and Arabic since 1991, was closed down as a result of this umpteenth Islamophobic assault.

Islamophobia, genocide and faith

An examination of the financial-freezing orders reveals that three principal criteria underpin the administration's assessment of "sufficient suspicion": opposition to French Islamophobia, support for Palestine, and adherence to a traditional Islamic identity. The first is interpreted as an endorsement of "incitement to hatred," while the latter two are construed as constituting "advocacy of armed jihad."

State authorities classify opposition to the dissolution of Muslim organizations — such as the Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCIF), BarakaCity, and Nawa Editions — as implicit support for "incitement to hatred." The jurisprudence established in the CCIF case continues to shape administrative reasoning. In that instance, the Conseil d'État upheld the dissolution of the anti-Islamophobia association on the grounds that asserting "without nuance" that France is "a country hostile to Muslims" amounted to incitement to discrimination, hatred, or violence. This precedent now enables the financial targeting of individuals contesting the existence of French Islamophobia.

The second pillar of the accusation highlights the centrality of the question of genocide. Any expression of support for Palestinian resistance articulated in religious terms is labelled "advocacy of armed jihad." Similarly, statements contextualising Palestinian political violence or underscoring the fundamentally colonial nature of what is termed a genocidal state are subject to administrative sanction. This dynamic substantiates Joseph Massad's thesis that anti-Palestinian racism has become a primary driver of contemporary Islamophobia. The current phase marks a significant conceptual shift: genocidal Islamophobia in the Western context cannot be fully understood without recognising this interconnection. The nexus between Islamophobia, counterterrorism, and anti-Palestinianism is not new. In the United States, counterterrorism policy has long been structurally anti-Palestinian, emerging in the late 1980s as a mechanism to suppress Palestinian political expression across criminal, immigration, financial, and civil legal frameworks through the deployment of the "terrorist" designation. Between 1992 and 2001, 63% of prosecutions under the U.S. Anti-Terrorism Act targeted Palestine supporters. This pre-existing hostility subsequently facilitated the expansion of Islamophobic counterterrorism measures during the War on Terror.

Finally, adherence to a traditional Islamic identity—manifested through expressions of admiration for historical Muslim figures—completes the indictment framework. Declaring esteem for a companion of the Prophet, an Andalusian emir, or an Ottoman corsair who resisted the Spanish Reconquista is construed as incontrovertible evidence of violent intent.