

Anti-Muslim actions rise sharply in France after Charlie Hebdo shooting

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Since the January 7 *Charlie Hebdo* shootings, the number of acts against Muslims has risen sharply, spurred on by the hysteria of the media and politicians. The official response to the shootings is encouraging the most reactionary forces in society and the state to target and persecute France's Muslim minority.

According to the National Observatory Against Islamophobia, 116 anti-Muslim actions have been reported in France since the beginning of 2015, more than in all of 2014. Muslim religious sites were targeted 28 times and received 88 threats. These statistics are likely underestimations, as many Muslims do not report intimidation or attacks for fear of reprisals.

Many attacks occurred in the days after the Kouachi brothers' terrorist attack. Mosques or prayer rooms in Bayonne, Le Mans, and Port-la-Nouvelle were attacked or sprayed with graffiti. (See: French Muslims targeted by revenge attacks after Charlie Hebdo shootings)

The official stimulation of a climate of fear and suspicion towards Muslims has even led police to investigate schoolchildren denounced by school officials or third persons.

Nice-matin reported that a school in Nice called police after an eight-year-old schoolboy said, "I am not Charlie. I am on the side of the terrorists."

The boy was held for a two-hour interrogation by police on suspicion of the crime of "apologetics for terrorist actions," even though the regional head of public security declared: "The child manifestly did not know what he was saying. We do not know where he got this idea."

According to the lawyer for the boy's family, "The child is under investigation for apologetics for terrorist actions. It is written in black and white on the police documents I had to sign. The police are lying." He added that the boy's father, who went to the school to

try to calm his son, faces charges of "breaking into a public establishment."

He added that the parents had explained to their son that "terrorism is bad," and condemned his remarks.

According to the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), the child has diabetes and complained of "being deprived of his insulin treatments by teaching staff."

The CCIF and the lawyer both state that while the boy was playing in a sandbox, the school's headmaster shouted at him: "Quit digging in that sand, you won't find a machine gun to kill us under there."

A child aged 9 was investigated for shouting, "God is great, long live the Koran."

Prosecutors explained, "Afterwards, another child told his mother, an employee at the cafeteria, about the event, and she told the person overseeing the cafeteria, a report was drawn up. ... Finally, the military police [*gendarmerie*] were notified."

The child facing charges "told investigators that he did not understand, there had been some misunderstanding between the two children." Prosecutors added that "on the basis of the facts, accusations are entirely unfounded."

Exploiting the rise of anti-Muslim prejudices to promote their reactionary agenda, leading politicians are embracing and stimulating anti-Muslim sentiment.

Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, the vice-president of the conservative Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), declared: "I'm going to give you a very concrete example. The mayor of Mulhouse, a friend, tells me that in his city there are dozens of children who arrive late every day because of prayers, their parents take them to prayers. And when their parents are summoned, because they are summoned, they explain that there are religious authorities which are superior to those of the

Republic.”

She said that she supported taking away children and placing them in foster homes. “I want to be very precise,” Kosciusko-Morizet said. “Today, half of all reports to the judicial authorities protecting youth come from the schools. And very often they are on suspicion of violence, of incest or mistreatment.”

The role of the ruling Socialist Party (PS) and its pseudo-left satellites is not substantially different. They supported, under the false guise of defending “secularism,” bans on Islamic headscarves in the schools and on the burqa. The PS invited the neo-fascist National Front (FN), which is notoriously anti-Muslim, to the Elysée after the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings. They exploited anti-Muslim cartoons and sentiment to promote their military interventions in Africa and the Middle East. Such policies create the conditions for the persecution and stigmatizing of the Muslim population.

PS statements addressing the rise of anti-Muslim actions drip with cynicism. President François Hollande declared, “We must abstain from all amalgams and confusions. Frenchmen of the Muslim faith have the same rights and responsibilities as all citizens. They must be protected. Secularism is a part of this, it respects all religions.”

The same day, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said: “In these moments, everyone has his importance, and I want to assure all of my fellow citizens, and especially those of the Muslim faith, that they have the right to the same protection, including of their places of worship.”

In fact, the PS is exploiting both the *Charlie Hebdo* shootings and the anti-Muslim hysteria to bolster the security forces, accelerate the building of a police-state infrastructure, and promote a climate of fear and intimidation against all those who oppose its policies of austerity and war.



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