

France briefing - May

I. Recent Political Developments

Emmanuel Macron announces new government

- Emmanuel Macron announced the members of his new government on 21st May.

Gérald Moussa Darmanin remains Minister of the Interior, in charge of national security and therefore of the implementation of France's Islamophobic security policies.

The retention of Darmanin in the government should be seen as a message of intimidation and warning directed towards the Muslim community by the Macron government.

This government is subject to change based on the outcome of the legislative elections in June.

Developments in the 'Republican Spring' movement

- The Islamophobic and ultra-secularist ideological movement "Republican Spring" has clearly voiced its support for Macron. Nonetheless, and despite their political ambition, [almost no members of the movement were endorsed](#) by Macron's party to run for a seat in Parliament for the legislative elections.

Despite the strong feeling of disappointment, their support of Marcon remains intact and their influence is expected to increase in the years to come, bolstering the sharply repressive moves undertaken by the Macron government.

Despite some of their recent public statement, it has been revealed that they are [actively advocating for a complete hijab ban](#), for example.

Supreme Court overturns dissolution order

- The French supreme court has overturned the government's decision to dissolve the leftwing organisation "GALE". [The court considered the evidence put forward by the government did not prove the GALE encouraged violence or troubled public order.](#)

II. Islamophobia

Beauvais mosque wins case against closure, but sets dangerous precedent

- The mosque of Beauvais [won its case](#) before a French Administrative Court. A few months ago, it was closed down because its Imam held a dars on the lessons of the battle of Uhud .

While constituting a legal victory, the political precedent that it represents is rather more limited.

- The Court decided to reopen the masjid only after its board conceded to pressure and:
 - Expelled the imam
 - Deleted the videos of his statements
 - Included in its legal status their attachment to the “Republican values” of the State
 - A member of the board who shared the video on social media stepped down from his position
- This means there is now a clear jurisprudence which outlines the path *any* masjid needs to engage in in case of a forced closure :
 - Expelling the imam who voiced religious beliefs or opinions the State deems illegal - and any key member of the masjid who supported or shared them publicly.
 - Deleting any reference or recording of the statements
 - Include a clear allegiance to the values of the State

Supreme Court to rule on ‘Burkinis’

- The use of “Burkini” - initially allowed in the communal swimming pools of the city of Grenoble - [has been opposed by the Ministry of Interior and prohibited by a local court](#). The French Supreme Court will rule on its permissibility in the next few weeks in June.
In the city of Fréjus [the “burkini” has already been prohibited](#) by the far-right mayor.

Attacks on mosques in Southern France

- A mosque in the South-West of France and another one in the South-East were vandalised, calling for the removal of Islam from France.

III. On the “[Systematic Obstruction](#)”

National training on the “struggle against separatism”

- SG-CIPDR (General Secretariat of the *Comité Interministériel de Prévention de la Délinquance et de la Radicalisation*) - official governmental body overseeing the implementation of the Islamophobic “Systematic Obstruction” policy - [delivered a national training session on the “struggle against separatism”](#) to the members of the “departmental cells”.

These cells are the organs in charge of gathering and sharing informations on the Muslim population, information which is then used by local authorities to justify investigations and closures of Muslim establishments.

French intelligence mapping exercise revealed

- It has been discovered that the French Intelligence Services - the “DGSI” - [produced a map of 150 neighbourhoods or “micro-territories”](#) in 2020, a few months after the Systematic Obstruction’s scope was broadened to the national level.

This document is classified and cannot be accessible to the public. The map was shared with the Ministry of the Interior and it is highly probable that it was used to target these areas.