

France briefing: July 2022

Reporting period: July 13th - August 15th 2022

I. French Political Developments

National Debate on Immigration to be held in autumn

- The French Prime Minister and the Ministry of the Interior have announced that a [national debate on immigration](#) will be held this autumn.
- An “immigration Bill” could be presented in Parliament as a result of the debate. One of the aims of the Bill would be to facilitate the expulsion of non-French imams from national territory for their Islamic teachings - framed by the State as opposed to the “Values of the Republic”.

II. Counter-Terrorism

EU-inspired legislation on managing online content adopted by Parliament

- The legislation grants censorship powers to a state agency, which can request the removal of “terrorist content” to the internet service provider. Once the request is received, removal will have to take place within an hour.

The legal definition of “terrorist content” is broad enough to be abused by the government.

- The Constitutional Council deemed the Bill was [in line with the French Constitution](#).
- The Bill forms part of moves by Western governments to claim greater control over the online space and social media and wrest control from internet service providers.

This includes the EU’s recent [Digital Services Act](#), which directly inspired this Bill, and Britain’s Online Safety Bill currently making its way through Parliament.

BAR KHANE operation : N'Djamena airbase change of command

- Since February 2022 France armies have started to withdraw from the Sahel region - where it has been carrying out its ‘Operation Barkhane’ counter-terror operation since 2014. However, it was announced that some forces would remain to cooperate with local authorities to fight “terrorist armed groups”.



- The N'Djamena airbase in Chad has been home to the French General Staff since the inception of the operation, and was headed by colonel Patrice Trompent.

On the 14th of July, colonel Frédéric Ledoux succeeded him. He will be in charge of overseeing the new role of the base - i.e. the cooperation between the French and Chadian forces in their struggle against "terrorism".

III. Islamophobia

Hassan Iquioussen expulsion case

- Hassan Iquioussen has been an Imam for nearly three decades. He has never been charged or convicted of any crime but is now being targeted by the French State for expulsion and exile from French territory. Here are some of the accusations held against him :
 - Islamic family norms taught by Iquioussen are regarded as clear violations of the principle of equality between men and women and become a justification to his expulsion.
 - His pro-Palestine stances are framed as a form of antisemitism.
 - His passive calls to oppose Islamophobia - namely his call for people to "wake up" - are interpreted as covert exhortations to violence.
 - Iquioussen's criticism of the movie *Scarface* and its influence on young Muslims is regarded as proof of his religious extremism.
- Imam Iquioussen submitted a complaint before a court which suspended the execution of the expulsion order.

However, the Ministry of the Interior appealed the decision and the French Supreme Court - which has a history of setting Islamophobic precedents - is set to rule on the case before the end of August.