

## France briefing: August 2022

*Reporting period: August 15th 2022 - September 12th 2022*

### French Political Developments

French Supreme Court rubber stamps Imam's expulsion order, setting dangerous precedent

- [The Council of State - France's Supreme Court - has validated the expulsion order](#) of French Imam Hassan Iquioussen, setting a damaging legal precedent for the use of this draconian power.
- On the very day the ruling was unveiled, the Ministry sent police officers to expel Imam Iquioussen. To their dismay he had already left his house and could not be found.
- The subsequent manhunt was covered live on national news, and according to the Ministry of the Interior, Iquioussen was believed to be in Belgium.
- A European warrant arrest has been issued: if found, he will be brought back to France, tried for his escape, and then expelled to Morocco.

French Interior Minister boasts of expelling 734 individuals from French territory, signals his intention to continue

- Following the Council of State ruling on Imam Iquioussen, Interior Minister [Gerald Darmanin celebrated that the decision](#) *"makes it possible to say that someone who has children, who is married in France, who was born in France can still be expelled 58 years later"*.
- According to Darmanin, he has overseen the expulsion of [734 individuals from French territory](#), on the basis of being "religious extremists" - indicating that they were very likely applied to Muslims.  
  
Darmanin also declared that *"a little less than a hundred individuals"* [were expected to be expelled in the near future](#).
- The French government's open promotion of such draconian powers mirrors the British government's staunch defence of deportations and executive powers such as citizenship deprivation, and is a chilling indication of the tenor of French politics.

## Major reforms to French diplomatic structure threatens to erode its soft power projection

- The French diplomatic service is currently undergoing a major structural reform which will lead to the appointment of non-professional and untrained diplomats to its forces.
- While ostensibly being carried out as part of a modernising drive, this effectively amounts to a politicisation of the diplomatic service, turning them from professionals into partisans of the government.

President Macron has previously made clear his displeasure with the independence of diplomats.

- The French diplomatic network is currently the 3rd largest in the world and is regarded as the main factor in maintaining France's international influence, despite its average economic and military strength for a western nation.

The shift towards including untrained diplomats is expected to erode France's capacity to protect its interests and project its influence and policies in the world.

- The state's committee on foreign affairs, defence and armed forces published [a report highly critical of the reform](#) :

*"The French diplomatic and consular apparatus guarantees that France today holds a rank congruent with its seat in the United Nations Security Council."*

*"It is necessary to suspend the reform until the Estates General or conference on diplomacy...can be held...Similarly, it is essential to open an in-depth dialogue with the competent committees of the Parliament, so that a constructive debate can be held on these issues."*

- Nonetheless the reform - strongly desired by Macron - is underway and will be fully implemented by January 2023.

## Islamophobia

### Muslim sports club manager fired for expressing his faith, following pressure by local authorities and former government minister

- Taqwa Pinero was appointed as a general manager for an important French Basketball club.

After sharing a post on Facebook - *"I am a living product of what Allah can do for someone with unrelenting faith"* - local authorities including pressurised the club into



firing Taqwa Pinero, claiming that the roots of the club were “Catholic” while simultaneously invoking the principle of laïcité (French secularism).

François Bayrou - founder and President of the centrist political party MoDem, ex-government minister and longterm supporter of President Macron - was among those pressuring the club to fire Pinero.

- As a result, Taqwa Pinero was fired and the American owners sold the team.

## Mosque burnt down in arson attack

- [The mosque of the small city of Rambouillet](#) was burnt down to the ground in an arson attack.
- Muslims in Rambouillet have been unsuccessfully trying to acquire land to build a permanent mosque for years - with obstruction by local authorities suspected as being a cause.