

France briefing: October 2022

Reporting period: 14th October - 1st November

Systematic Obstruction updates

Muslim school principal convicted after “systematic obstruction” judicial procedure

- MHS was a private high school targeted by the “systematic obstruction” pressure strategy.

A minor safety breach was used by authorities to justify the most extreme sanction: a permanent closure of the school.

- Consequently, through a judicial process, [the school principal was](#) convicted and cannot open nor direct any school, or teach any minor.
- Despite no remedial work being undertaken to address the supposed safety issues, the school building is now home to a Jewish private school - further proof that the closure of the school is rooted in the state’s anti-Muslim persecution, first and foremost.

French Political Developments

Belgian authorities refuse French extradition request, release Hassan Iquioussen from prison

- French imam Hassan [Iquioussen was released from prison](#) in Belgium where he was held after fleeing from France, where he is subject to an expulsion order.

He has to remain in Belgium and has been placed under electronic monitoring.

- French courts placed a European arrest warrant on Iquioussen after he left France, and had been expecting Belgian authorities to extradite him to France.

They have thus far not complied with the order, with Tournai council in Belgium deciding against it on the grounds that the offence concerned is not recognised in

Belgium.

- Iquioussen is subject to an expulsion order issued by the French government, after being accused of politicised charges for pronouncements he made - including pro-Palestine stances, and opposition to Islamophobia.

Local intelligence produce documents linking religious attire to “Islamist offensive”

- Since the start of the academic year, French media alongside major political figures have stirred a controversy over the wearing of alleged “religious clothing” in public schools.

Local intelligence have produced [a secret note according to which “an Islamist offensive” - i.e. students wearing “Islamic clothes”- was unfolding.](#)

This refers to the wearing of

- Abayas
 - Qamis
 - Long and/or large dresses
- The French Minister of the Interior and Minister of Education have publicly acknowledged this “threat”, fuelling the controversy.
The [Minister of the Interior went as far as sending an order to the prefects demanding them to support the schools in their monitoring and sanctioning of Muslim students.](#)
 - It was reported that a school principal asked the supervisors to draft a list of Muslims wearing hijab outside of the school so as to double check their attire, once in school, wasn’t “religious” (long dresses etc.).
 - The 2004 French law on secularism and conspicuous religious symbols in schools prohibits the wearing of “ostentatious religious signs”.

Despite the intentionally broad and generic language used in the law - in order to avoid being accused of overt discrimination - it was adopted fundamentally to oppose the wearing of hijab.

However, this broadness now allows the state to potentially target other items of clothing beyond the hijab.

Immigration Bill continues to be delayed

- The new Immigration Bill is constantly being delayed.

First announced for fall 2022, President [Macron declared in an interview that it will be discussed in Parliament during 2023’s first semester.](#)



- The Bill is designed to facilitate the expulsion of 'illegal foreigners', and should be seen as the government conceding to and reinforcing anti-migrant agitation whipped up by Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally party.

Far-right mobilise in Lyon following murder

- [A massive far-right led protest](#) - called after the murder of a girl by an Algerian woman - was organised in Lyon.
- The local prefect - who holds the authority to oppose any protest if deemed dangerous to public order - didn't use his powers to prevent it.

The mayor of Lyon has appealed to President Macron to act against instigators of the protest, and an investigation was subsequently opened into "incitement to racial hatred".