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## France

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## France

*Anne-Laure Zwillling*<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Muslim population

Figures concerning the numbers of Muslims in France are very difficult to provide. Since 1872, it has been forbidden for a census to identify people according to religious affiliation. Article 8 of the revised law of 6 January 1978 forbids the collection of any data providing personal information on racial or ethnic origin, or philosophical, religious or political belief or affiliation.<sup>2</sup> The French National Institute of Statistical Information (INED) therefore provides no such information and it can only be obtained from surveys carried out by companies such as BVA ([www.bva.fr](http://www.bva.fr)), IFOP ([www.ifop.com/europe](http://www.ifop.com/europe)), CSA ([www.csa-fr.com](http://www.csa-fr.com)), IPSOS ([www.ipsos.fr](http://www.ipsos.fr)) and TNS-Sofres ([www.tns-sofres.com](http://www.tns-sofres.com)) for newspapers or magazines, or from European surveys that include sections on France<sup>3</sup>. Since the methods and techniques used in these surveys are diverse, results can sometimes vary significantly, and are always difficult to compare. It is also a sensitive issue as there are sometimes political, religious or personal motives for exaggerating or downplaying figures about Muslims. For all these reasons, only a general picture of the Muslim presence in France can be given. In 2000, the High Council for Integration estimated the number of Muslims in

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<sup>2</sup> "Il est interdit de collecter des données à caractère personnel qui font apparaître, directement ou indirectement, les origines raciales ou ethniques, les opinions politiques, philosophiques ou religieuses ou l'appartenance syndicale des personnes, ou qui sont relatives à la santé ou à la vie sexuelle de celles-ci."

<sup>3</sup> European Social Survey, <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>, European Values Studies, <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/>, Eurobaromètre, <http://cdsp.sciences-po.fr/enquetes.php?idTheme=2&idRubrique=enquetesINT&lang=ANG>, or Religions Monitor, [http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-0A000F14-340C6D4F/bst/hs.xsl/85217\\_85220.htm?suchrubrik](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-0A000F14-340C6D4F/bst/hs.xsl/85217_85220.htm?suchrubrik), for instance (last access 12 November 2009).

France to be 4 million.<sup>4</sup> Other estimates followed, the figures steadily increasing, up to 6 or 7 million. In 2003, the demographer Michèle Tribalat criticised the lack of serious work in this field, and provided her own result, based on a demographic analysis taking into account the ethnic origins of the population: 3.7 million (or 4.1 million if one includes the *Harkis* – Muslim Algerians who sided with the France during the Algerian war of independence), although she underlines that, like all the other statistics about Muslims in France, this can only suggest the number of ‘possible Muslims’, not of ‘actual Muslims’. The National Institute of Statistics affirms in 2007 that Muslims are 7.1%<sup>5</sup> of a total population of 63,392 Million<sup>6</sup>.

France remains a very Catholic country: 69% of French people aged over fifteen say they have a religious affiliation - 59% claim to be Catholics, 3% Muslims, 2% Protestants, 1% Jews and 1% Buddhists.<sup>7</sup> Muslims in France are predominantly Sunnis. According to a survey led by IFOP in 2009<sup>8</sup>, 5.8% of the population claims to be Muslims. This Muslim population is younger than the average (35% of 15-24 years old against 16% for the population of France in general).

The Muslim presence in metropolitan France is mainly the result of immigration<sup>9</sup>. The starting point for the noticeable presence of Muslims in France is the end of World War I. Men from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia served in the French army and this led to the arrival in France of immigrants from these countries. These immigrants were estimated to number

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<sup>4</sup> *L'islam dans la République* (Islam in the French Republic), November 2000, available at <http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/014000017/0000.pdf>, last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>5</sup> French National Institute of Statistics (INSEE), 2007, available at <http://www.insee.fr/fr/bases-de-donnees/default.asp?page=recensements.htm>, last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>6</sup> INSEE, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> TNS-Sofres survey, “Les enjeux du quotidien”, 2007, available at [http://www.tns-sofres.com/etudes/pol/050407\\_religion.htm](http://www.tns-sofres.com/etudes/pol/050407_religion.htm), last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Enquête sur l’implantation et l’évolution de l’Islam de France, IFOP survey, 2009, [http://www.ifop.fr/media/pressdocument/48-1-document\\_file.pdf](http://www.ifop.fr/media/pressdocument/48-1-document_file.pdf) (last access 12 November 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Godard, Sylvie Taussig, *Les musulmans en France - courants, institutions, communautés : un état des lieux*. Paris, Robert Laffont, 2007, 454 p.

120,000 in 1920, of whom 100,000 were from Algeria, which was then a French colony, Tunisia and Morocco being only French protectorates. From then on, with a marked increase after World War II,<sup>10</sup> Muslim immigrants were mostly men, responding to a French demand for cheap labour. During the Algerian war of independence, up to 160,000 Algerians were soldiers in the French army. When the war ended in 1962, there were widespread reprisals against those who remained in Algeria, and many tried to find refuge in France. It is usually estimated that the number of these ex-soldiers, called *Harkis*, and their families who arrived in France between 1962 and 1968 amounted to 91,000. Unfortunately, not much effort was made to welcome them: they were lodged either in settlements near existing urban centres, in isolated purpose-built hamlets in the rural south, or in so-called temporary camps, some of which had formerly housed refugees and political prisoners.

After France and the Turkish government signed a labour agreement in 1966, a large number of Turks began to migrate to France - 18,000 in 1970, 200,000 in the early 1990s and 450,000 by 2005. Finally, a number of immigrants came from former French colonies and other countries with a Muslim population, such as Senegal and India. After the 1970s, the immigration from Morocco and Turkey began slowly to increase and in 1974 the government passed a law allowing the families of immigrants to join them, so many children and wives moved to France. As a result of all these factors, the Muslim population in France is currently made up predominantly of people from North Africa (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), Turkey, Sub-Saharan Africa and their children born in France. There are also South Asians (Tamuls,

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<sup>10</sup> Blanchard, Pascal, Deroo, Éric, El Yazami, Driss, Fournié, Pierre and Manceron, Gilles, "L'immigration: l'installation en métropole des populations du Maghreb", in Blanchard, Pascal and Lemaire, Sandrine, *Culture impériale 1931-1961* (Paris: Éditions Autrement, 2004).

Gujarati for example<sup>11</sup>) and people from the Middle East and, since the Yugoslav wars (1991-2001), Bosnians and Albanians.

The concentration of the Muslim population is high in socially deprived areas, major urban centres and suburbs. Many are in the region around Paris (Muslims are more than 10% of the population in the departments of Val d'Oise, Seine-Saint-Denis and Val de Marne); they are also found in the region of Lyon and Bouches-du-Rhône and in the Eastern part of France. Because many immigrants came to France for work, the number of Muslims is high in former industrial and mining areas such as the North or Haut-Rhin, as well as along the Mediterranean coast, geographically close to North Africa. Turkish people living in France are mostly concentrated in Paris, Alsace and Lorraine<sup>12</sup> and the region of Nord-Pas de Calais, where they live mainly in the cities of Calais, Lille and Roubaix.<sup>13</sup> Very few Muslims live in rural areas.<sup>14</sup>

The first generation of Muslim immigrants, now retired from the workforce, often applied for French nationality before retiring in France. Many live alone in housing estates, and have lost their ties with their countries of origin. The second generation, and now a third generation, of Muslims find integration difficult, though this may be highly dependent on their family origin.<sup>15</sup> In 1975, the *Harkis* protested publicly against what they described as years of official amnesia, neglect, and marginalisation by the French authorities: in 1974 more than 14,000 *Harkis* were still living in the camps set up as a 'temporary solution' in

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<sup>11</sup> Moliner, Christine, "L'immigration sud-asiatique en France: discrète et exemplaire?", Infos migrations 12, November 2009, [http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/IM\\_12.pdf](http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/IM_12.pdf), last access 9 January 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Akgönül, Samim, Maffessoli, Murielle, Koç, Muharrem, De Tapia, Stéphane, *40 ans de présence turque en Alsace : constats et évolutions*, Strasbourg : Neothèque, 2009, 273 p.

<sup>13</sup> IFOP survey on the geographical repartition of religions in France, 2009, [http://www.ifop.fr/media/pressdocument/48-1-document\\_file.pdf](http://www.ifop.fr/media/pressdocument/48-1-document_file.pdf), last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Cartographie des musulmans et des sans religions en France, [http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/infographie/2007/03/02/l-islam-affiche-une-presence-moyenne-de-3-dans-de-nombreux-departements\\_878171\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/infographie/2007/03/02/l-islam-affiche-une-presence-moyenne-de-3-dans-de-nombreux-departements_878171_3224.html), last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Alba, Richard and Silberman, Roxane, "Decolonization immigrations and the social origins of the second generation: the case of North Africans in France", *International Migration Review*, vol. 36, no. 4 (2002), pp.1169-1193.

the 1960s. The second generation, being born in France, are French citizens, but a reform of the nationality laws in 1992 delayed the granting of French nationality until it was applied for in adulthood (where previously it was automatically granted).

According to the 2005 data from the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies<sup>16</sup>, unemployment among people of French origin was then 9.2%, while for those of foreign backgrounds the rate was 14% (statistics adjusted to take account of educational qualifications). Furthermore, there was a 5% overall unemployment rate for graduates of French origin, but 26.5% of university graduates of Northern African origins were unemployed. All this has led to growing dissatisfaction among second and third generation Muslims.<sup>17</sup> Muslims account for an estimated 50% of the population of detainees in France (some jails in the region of Paris and Marseille reach up to 80 percent)<sup>18</sup>.

According to a CSA survey in 2006, 88% of people claiming to be Muslims fast during Ramadan; 43% pray five times a day; 20% read the Qur'an at least once a week; 17% go to the mosque at least once a week, and 8% at least once a month.<sup>19</sup> Religious practice seems to be on the increase: a different survey published in 2009 by IFOP shows that attendance to the mosque is on the increase: 23% of Muslims claimed to attend the mosque regularly, compared with 16% in 1989; 70% said they observed fast during Ramadan, compared with 60% in 1989; and 6% had performed the pilgrimage to the Mecca, compared with 4% in 1989.<sup>20</sup> And 70% observe fast during Ramadan (60% in 1994, but 70% already in 2001).

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs\\_ffc/IP1042.pdf](http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs_ffc/IP1042.pdf), last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Lopez, Alberto, and Thomas, Gwénaëlle, "L'insertion des jeunes sur le marché du travail : le poids des origines socioculturelles", in *Données sociales - la société française*, Paris: INSEE, 2006, pp. 293-305.

<sup>18</sup> Beckford, James A., Joly, Danièle, Khorsokhavar, Farhad, *Muslims in Prison, Challenge and Change in Britain and France* (Presses universitaires de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2007), p. 276-279.

<sup>19</sup> "Portrait des musulmans (Portrait of Muslims)", available at <http://www.csa-fr.com/dataset/data2006/opi20060823b.htm>, last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Enquête sur l'implantation et l'évolution de l'Islam de France, IFOP survey, 2009, [http://www.ifop.fr/media/pressdocument/48-1-document\\_file.pdf](http://www.ifop.fr/media/pressdocument/48-1-document_file.pdf) (last access 12 November 2009).

Religious practice, however, remains more a concern for older generation: 28% of young people (18-24 years old) claim to pray once a day, 35% of the 40-50 years old, and 64% of over 55 years old. Also, when 41% of men over 55 years old attend the mosque on Fridays, they are only 23% of 18-25 years old.

According to a survey of the Interior Ministry, more than a thousand men are currently working as imams in France<sup>21</sup>. Only 9% of them are French. 40% are Morroccans, 24% Algerians, 13% Turks, 5% are Tunisians, the others being from various origins (Africa, the Middle-East... ).<sup>22</sup>

## **2 Islam and the state**

The main religious regime in France is the separation between religion and the state. It is defined by the law of 9 December 1905,<sup>23</sup> which stipulates that the French Republic “guarantees freedom of conscience” and “the free exercise of religion”. Nevertheless, the State “does not recognise, pay a wage to or subsidize any religious denomination”. This law did not establish any kind of religious status or regime, but does provide for support mechanisms such as the possibility of creating religious associations, tax exemptions, chaplaincies in the army, financial support for the maintenance of places of worship.<sup>24</sup> These were to be granted to churches and religions that requested them. Because of their previous legal status as “recognised religions”, Catholic dioceses and, to a lesser extent, Protestants and Jews, automatically enjoyed the advantages provided for in this law. This regime does not apply in the Rhine and Moselle departments (Alsace and Moselle), which were part of Germany in 1905, and in which recognised denominations are organised within the framework of public law and financed by the State and the towns. Non-recognised

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<sup>21</sup> HAUT CONSEIL À L'INTÉGRATION, *L'islam dans la République*, 2000, <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/014000017/index.shtml> (last access 12 November 2009).

<sup>22</sup> See Mondot, Jean-François, *Imams de France*, Paris, Stock, 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Text available at: <http://legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070169&dateTexte=20090401>, last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>24</sup> Frégosi, Franck, *Penser l'islam dans la laïcité*, Editions Fayard, 2008, 504 pages.

religious groups are organised within the framework of private law. Local law also applies to the organisation of religion in the overseas territories and one of the overseas departments<sup>25</sup>.

In March 2005, the *Fondation pour les Œuvres de l'Islam de France* (Foundation for the Works of Islam in France) was established to be responsible for collecting all donations and distributing funds for the construction and renovation of places of worship and to support the training of imams, as well as for financing the CFCM.

Two official reports provide information on the legal situation of Islam in France. One specifically concerns the French Muslims and was issued in 2000<sup>26</sup>. The second one is a full report issued in 2006 by the Ministry of Interior, providing up to date information on the relation between religious groups and the authorities in France<sup>27</sup>. Islamic finance (banking products and services compatible with the Qur'anic prescriptions) is nowadays gaining importance in France, and an official report was issued in 2008 on this question by the Commission of Finances<sup>28</sup>. An "Institut français de finance islamique" was created in December 2009, in partnership with the Islamic Bank of Development. However, Islamic financial products are still not allowed in France, and the Conseil constitutionnel has banned a law destined to authorise sukuks in France (14 October 2009), several deputies believe that such a law is not compatible with the principles of *laïcité*.

### 3 Main Muslim organisations

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<sup>25</sup> Curtit, Françoise, Messner, Francis, *Droit des religions en France et en Europe : Recueil de textes*, éditions Bruylant, 2008.

<sup>26</sup> Haut Conseil à l'intégration, *L'islam dans la République*, 2000, <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/014000017/index.shtml> (access 12 November 2009).

<sup>27</sup> Machelon, Jean-Pierre, *Les relations des cultes avec les pouvoirs publics : rapport au ministre de l'Intérieur et de l'Aménagement du territoire*, 2006, <http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/BRP/064000727/0000.pdf> (access 12 November 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Arthuis, Jean, *Rapport d'information fait au nom de la Commission des finances, du contrôle budgétaire et des comptes économiques de la nation sur la finance islamique*, 2008. <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r07-329/r07-3291.pdf> (access 12 November 2009).



Muslim groups and associations are organised according to the law of associations (1901) and a large number of Muslim associations are therefore registered. The majority of them are small and only of local interest, but a few associations are of national importance. The *Union des Organisations Islamiques de France* (UOIF, [www.uoif-online.com](http://www.uoif-online.com)), often said to have links with the Muslim Brotherhood, aims at bringing together all French Muslims, but many of the main Muslim organisations in France reflect countries of origin: Algerian Islam is represented by the *Grande Mosquée de Paris* (GMP, [www.mosquee-de-paris.org](http://www.mosquee-de-paris.org)), and the *Fédération Nationale des Musulmans de France* (FNMF) is the organisation of Moroccan Islam. After an internal dispute, the FNMF split in 2007 and a second organisation of Moroccan Islam, the *Rassemblement des Musulmans de France* (RMF), was then created. Turks are grouped in the *Comité de Coordination des Musulmans Turcs de France* (CCFTF), *Millî Görüş* is also represented<sup>29</sup>. The *Fédération française des associations islamiques d'Afrique, des Comores et des Antilles* (FFAIACA), created in 1989, brings together Muslims of Africa and Antilles. The group "Foi et pratique", created in 1972, (Faith and practice, <http://www.foietpratique.org/>) is the French Jama'a at-tabligh. There are also substantial numbers of Sufi orders in France, including groups such as the Murid tariqas<sup>30</sup> or the Tijiyana from Senegal and Mali, the Naqshbandis ([www.naqshbandi.fr](http://www.naqshbandi.fr), mostly Turkish) and the 'Alawiyya tariqa, which is of Algerian origin.

One can also find several youth associations, the main one being *Jeunes Musulmans de France* (Young Muslims of France, [www.jmf.asso.fr](http://www.jmf.asso.fr)), founded in July 1993 with the support of the UOIF. The French Muslim Scouts group (Scouts musulmans de France), created in 1991, have been integrated in the official association Scoutisme français in 1994.

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<sup>29</sup> CIMG FRANCE - Communauté Islamique du Milli Gorus de France [www.cimgfrance.com](http://www.cimgfrance.com), last access 15/12/2009.

<sup>30</sup> [http://toubas-aix-marseille.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=48](http://toubas-aix-marseille.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=51&Itemid=48), last access 08/01/2010.

The *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman* (French Council of the Muslim Religion, (CFCM, [www.cfcmtv.fr](http://www.cfcmtv.fr)) was founded in 2002 at the request of the French authorities as a body whose aim is to represent Muslims to the government and communicate the views of the state to Muslims. It has concerns regarding issues such as the construction of mosques, sections for Muslim burial in cemeteries, halal slaughter, nomination of chaplains and the training of imams, but it has neither real prerogatives nor any executive power. It was set up to represent Islam on a national level and is recognised by the French government,<sup>31</sup> but its real capacity to represent French Muslims has often been questioned by Muslims themselves.

The main challenge is that seats on the Council are granted according to the ground area of each mosque, which benefits affluent groups and is therefore not viewed as very democratic. The last elections took place in 2008, when 43 delegates elected Mohammed Moussaoui, vice-president of the *Rassemblement des Musulmans de France*, as president of the CFCM. He decided to re-organise the CFCM in order to provide a better representation of all the different groups. Out of 17 members, 3 are RMF, 2 CCMTF, 2 UOIF, 2 GMP (fédération de la Grande Mosquée de Paris), 1 FFAIACA (*Fédération des associations islamiques d'Afrique, des Comores et des Antilles*), 1 "Foi et Pratique" group, 1 FNMF (*Fédération nationale des musulmans de France*) et 5 represent the important mosques. The FNMF, however, refused the offered position.

Some tensions exist between different confessional trends: media reported in May 2009 a conflict between the vice-président of the CFCM and the general secretary of the FFAIACA.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See the report of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the Muslim faith in France, September 2007, available at [http://www.ambafrance-pk.org/france\\_pakistan/IMG/pdf/muslim\\_faith.pdf](http://www.ambafrance-pk.org/france_pakistan/IMG/pdf/muslim_faith.pdf), last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>32</sup> See "Le CFCM excuse Hortefeux et se déchire en coulisse", Claire Chartier, *l'Express*, 15 September 2009, [http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/religion/le-cfcmtv-excuse-hortefeux-et-se-dechire-en-coulisse\\_786846.html](http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/religion/le-cfcmtv-excuse-hortefeux-et-se-dechire-en-coulisse_786846.html) (last access 12 November 2009).

#### **4 Mosques and prayer houses**

There were around 2,150 places of Muslim worship in France in 2006, about twenty of which can accommodate more than 1,000 people<sup>33</sup>. There are also some twenty mosques with minarets, the eldest being the Grande Mosquée de Paris. Some 120 buildings are dedicated solely to Muslim practice and activities, but most are not, being either private houses or sometimes former factories and the like, often a simple garage, that are used for worship.<sup>34</sup> The number of building projects is on the increase and important mosques are being built in Marseille, Strasbourg, Nantes, Paris, Tours, Villeneuve d'Ascq for instance. The mosque in Créteil, which can accommodate 2,000 people, was inaugurated in December 2008. The mosque in Gennevilliers opened its doors for Ramadan (August 2009); it can host 2,500 people and is now the biggest mosque in the Paris region.

Cultural centres, which can also host meetings and worship, are also to be built. It is impossible for the State, due to the law of *laïcité*, to fund the construction. These projects rest mainly on the involvement of the members of the community. Help can sometimes be obtained by generous donors from other countries. However, some financial mechanisms do exist, allowing for instance, the local authorities to provide very low rental fees for instance, or reduce the taxes. Religious groups sometimes manage to benefit from these structures.

#### **5. Children's education**

State education, which in France means all public schools, does not include the teaching of Islam. This is because the French school system, with the principle of separation, does not allow any religious instruction in state schools. Generally speaking, there are three kinds of

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<sup>33</sup> See Frégosi, Franck (dir.) *Les conditions d'exercice du culte musulman en France*, Contrat FASILD, 2003.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.la-croix.com/illustrations/Multimedia/Actu/2006/10/25/carte1.jpg>, last access 12 November 2009.

school in France:<sup>35</sup> private schools without contract with the state (*écoles privées hors contrat*), private schools with a contract with the state (*écoles privées sous contrat d'association avec l'Etat*), public school (*écoles publiques*).

Private schools without contract receive no financial assistance from the state and they are free to organise as they wish (law Debré of 31 December 1959; code of education L 442).

When private schools do have a contract with the state, they can receive public funding to cover up to a tenth of their costs, and possible official recognition of their curriculum and diplomas. They then have to comply with the Code of Education, Article L141-3 and Article R442-36, which states that religious education can be given either outside normal hours of schooling, or else as the first or last hour(s) of teaching of the day. Religious education must remain optional, and the school cannot discriminate about which students it accepts. Nearly all these private schools (90%) are Catholic schools. The same rules apply to primary and secondary education. Chaplaincies can be created at secondary level (*collèges* and *lycées*), but not in primary schools.

In Alsace and Moselle, where the legal status of religions is different, state primary schools and secondary and technical education establishments are secular, but all must include religious instruction in their curriculum. Students' parents can have their children exempted from these classes upon request and, in primary schools, such pupils must classes in ethics. The content of religious instruction is left to the discretion of the relevant religious authorities. In reality, however, Christianity and Judaism are almost always the only possibilities, although the Archbishop of Strasbourg stressed in an interview with the Christian journal *La*

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<sup>35</sup> For more detail, see Peiser, Gustave, "Ecole publique, Ecole privée et Laïcité en France", *Cemoti*, no.19 - Laïcité(s) en France et en Turquie, available at <http://cemoti.revues.org/document1699.html>, last access 12 November 2009.

*Croix* (12 December 2003), the necessity of allowing Islam to be taught in public schools along with the two other major religions.

Three private Muslim secondary schools (receiving no public funding) have opened in France in the recent years: Aubervilliers (called La Réussite (success), it is nowadays encountering important financial difficulties), Lille (2003), and Lyon (2008). A private Muslim school with a contract with the state has existed since 1990 in La Réunion (French overseas department). On 10 March 2008, the Muslim private school *Éducation et Savoir* opened its doors in Vitry-sur-Seine (Val-de-Marne, Paris suburban region), the private lycée Averroes opened in Lille in 2006, the Al Kindi lycée opened near Lyon in 2007.

Muslim children often attend Christian private schools to receive religious instruction, and some of these schools allow Muslim teachers for their Muslim pupils. In 2006, 317,000 pupils attended private schools for kindergarten, 565,000 at primary level, 655,000 in the first years of secondary school (collège) and 410,000 in the second part of secondary school (*lycée*).<sup>36</sup>

Outside school, Muslim religious education in France is delivered in mosque associations and is therefore very much connected to the country of origin.

## **6 Higher and professional education**

Muslim higher education and imam training is currently organised in France only by private institutions: *l'Institut Français des Etudes et Sciences Islamiques* (Ile de France, [www.ifesi.fr](http://www.ifesi.fr)); *l'Institut Avicenne des Sciences Humaines* (Lille, [www.avicenne.eu](http://www.avicenne.eu)); and *l'Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines* (close to Nevers, [www.iesh.fr](http://www.iesh.fr)). A specific

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<sup>36</sup> See the budget of the Ministry of National Education, available at <http://www.performance-publique.gouv.fr/farandole/2007/pap/html/DBGPGMPRESPGMACTPGM139.htm>, last access 12 November 2009.

programme for imams opened in September 2008 in the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences at the *Institut Catholique de Paris*, a private Catholic faculty. It is a *Diplôme Universitaire* course, meaning a two-year study programme at higher education level, with the course title: *Interculturalité, Laïcité et Religions* (Interculturalism, Secularism and Religions). Although the Grande Mosquée de Paris is sending its imams there for further training, not all Muslim institutions find this situation acceptable. A Masters in Law and Religious Studies with a specialisation in Islamic studies has started at the Faculty of Law of the University of Strasbourg, in September 2009<sup>37</sup>. This is the first degree programme in Islamic studies to be offered in a state university in France.

## **7 Burial and cemeteries**

Cemeteries, in France (except for the exception of Alsace-Moselle), are lay spaces: the Law of November 14, 1881 forbids the mayors to create in a cemetery separate spaces limited by a wall or a hedge, in order to group tombs according to religious belonging. Circulars issued by the Ministry of the Interior (November 25, 1975; February 14, 1991; and February 19, 2008), recommended, nevertheless, that prefects and mayors should reserve specific areas for Muslims in cemeteries, while avoiding any physical separation of the allocated space. However, it is not up to the mayor to establish the religion of the deceased; only the will of the deceased or his family can be taken into account. Therefore, a mayor could not oppose a Christian asking to be buried in a Muslim section of the cemetery, for instance. This is a problem for the Muslim community in France, though it suits families of mixed religious belongings.

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<sup>37</sup> Master recherche "Sciences et droit des religions", spécialité "islamologie : religion, droit et société", Faculté de droits, sciences économiques et gestion de l'Université de Strasbourg <http://master-islamo.mineurel.info/>, last access 6 January 2010.

Three Muslim cemeteries exist in France (the oldest is in Bobigny, close to Paris; its construction was allowed because it has initially been built for the French-Muslim hospital of Bobigny. It has become a public cemetery only in 1996). Around 70 Muslim sections in cemeteries have, nevertheless, been opened in major cities such as Montpellier and Marseille. 25 of them are located around Paris.

An agreement has been signed in October 2009 for the building of a public-run cemetery in Strasbourg, by the Mayor of Strasbourg (Roland Ries), the president of the CNCM (Mohammed Moussaoui), and the president of the Conseil régional du culte musulman d'Alsace (Driss Ayachour). The cemetery is to open in 2010.

One can only be buried in a Muslim square if one has lived or died in the commune where it is located. Therefore, for 85% of Muslims who die in France, the corpse is sent back to their country of origin for burial. This practice is often encouraged by Arabic countries, such as Tunisia, who financially takes in charge of the repatriation of its citizens.

## **8 'Chaplaincy' in state institutions**

The French law codes of education and health and the penal code permit the provision of chaplains. These people mostly work on a voluntary basis and have no real legal status. The CFCM has nominated head chaplains for hospitals, schools and prisons, but this remains an internal recognition. Chaplaincy has a legal status only in the army. Since March 2005, a Muslim head chaplain has been appointed by the Minister of Defence, along with the three existing head chaplains (Catholic, Protestant and Jewish). The head chaplains nominate and manage the military chaplains of their own religious groups.

## **9 Religious festivals**

Religious festivals or feasts are never organised by the state. Muslim religious holidays are not recognised by the state. Public holidays, given the historical importance of Catholicism in France, follow the Christian calendar (Easter, Christmas, etc.). Official departments and agencies, state schools and employers nevertheless grant leave of absence to Muslims who wish to attend religious ceremonies on occasions such as *'Id al-Adha*, *'Id al-Fitr* and *Mawlid*, and the Discipline générale militaire (internal regulations of the army) now accepts to grant leave of absence for such religious feasts<sup>38</sup>.

## **10 Halal food**

Halal food is nowadays commonly found in supermarkets. Specialist shops also exist and halal business seems to work well (the market maybe represents over 3 billion euros ).

Muslim association, however, often point out that, because there is no legal definition of halal, swindle is quite common. Some claim, for instance, that over 90% of the meat sold under the halal label is not the result of ritual slaughter .

As in most European countries, exceptions for ritual slaughter have been made to the Rural Law Code, and the state has given official consent for this to the Paris Mosque (1994) and Lyon and Evry (1995). The local authorities usually try to facilitate the organisation of halal slaughter. Private associations such as A Votre Service (AVS, [www.halal-avs.com](http://www.halal-avs.com)) make sure that halal processes are properly monitored and provide information concerning halal food.

The UOIF has set up in 2007 a service of control and certification of halal food, "Halal Services".

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[http://www.cofat.terre.defense.gouv.fr/PJ/Documents/VotreEspace/Savoirvivre/references/decret\\_discipline\\_generale\\_militaire.pdf](http://www.cofat.terre.defense.gouv.fr/PJ/Documents/VotreEspace/Savoirvivre/references/decret_discipline_generale_militaire.pdf), last access 5 February 2009.



A survey issued by IFOP in December 2009<sup>39</sup> shows that some 59% of Muslims buy halal meat (the number reaches 71% for migrants of the first generation, while younger people are only 47%). 49% of consumers claim to "buy more halal food than a few years ago".

## **11 Dress codes**

The head scarf issue suddenly emerged in the public arena during the 1980s with the increased use - or at least increased visibility - of different types of head coverings worn by young Muslim girls in public places. Because of some local difficulties, the French President set up an investigative committee known as the Commission Stasi in July 2003. This Commission released a report on 11 December 2003, stating that wearing conspicuous religious symbols violated the secular principle of the French school system. On this basis, the law on secularism and religious symbols in state schools was passed in February 2004.

Article 1 of the law states: "The wearing of symbols and apparel by which a student conspicuously expresses religious affiliation in public schools is prohibited. The rules of procedure provide for conciliatory dialogue before disciplinary action is taken against an offending student." This decision was followed by extensive debate as to its interpretation and application, but passions have nowadays settled. Another report was issued in 2004, on the manifestations of religious affiliation in schools.<sup>40</sup>

New regulations concerning photos used for passports and national identity cards required that the head must appear without any kind of cover, decoration or scarf; there are no exceptions. There were some protests, arguing that a woman wearing a veil should not appear without it, even on a photo, but this did not really lead to an intense public debate.

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<sup>39</sup> [http://www.ifop.com/media/poll/1045-1-study\\_file.pdf](http://www.ifop.com/media/poll/1045-1-study_file.pdf), last access 05 February 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Obin, Jean-Pierre, "Les signes et manifestations d'appartenance religieuse dans les établissements scolaires", Rapport au ministre de l'éducation nationale, 2004, juin 2004 (2004-115) [ftp://trf.education.gouv.fr/pub/edutel/syst/igen/rapports/rapport\\_obin.pdf](ftp://trf.education.gouv.fr/pub/edutel/syst/igen/rapports/rapport_obin.pdf), last access 12 November 2009.

In 2008 and 2009, after the head scarf, the veil (burka or niqab) became the object of public debate. An investigative committee on the wearing of the veil in France was set up in June 2008<sup>41</sup>. The French Senate issued in September 2009 a report on "le port de la burqa dans les lieux publics"<sup>42</sup>. The Ministry of Interior tried to estimate the number of women wearing a burka; two information notes give the numbers 367 (Direction centrale du renseignement intérieur) and 2000 (Sous-direction de l'information générale).

## 12 Publication and media

The broadcasting of religious programmes on public television stations is covered by the law on the freedom of communication No. 86-1067 of 30 September 1986, article 56:

France 2 shall schedule religious programmes devoted to the main religions practised in France on Sunday mornings. Said programmes shall be produced under the responsibility of the representatives of said religions and be presented in the form of the live transmission of cultural ceremonies or religious comments.

The company shall bear the costs of production within the limit of a maximum amount set in the annual provisions of the terms of reference.

A 30-minute programme on Islam, *Connaître l'islam* (Knowing Islam) (France 2, 7 Esplanade Henri de France, 75907 Paris cedex 15), is broadcast every Sunday. A very large number of Muslim television channels are accessible by satellite.

A number of print publications concerning Islam have existed in France for some time: *La Médina*, *Hawwa-Magazine*, *Réflexions-Reflets de l'Islam en France*, *Colombus*, *Actualis* (UOIF), *Sézame*, *Islam de France*. They all closed down for financial reasons. One

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<sup>41</sup> Mission d'information sur la pratique du port du voile intégral sur le territoire national, [http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/dossiers/voile\\_integral.asp](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/13/dossiers/voile_integral.asp), last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>42</sup> Wearing the burka in public spaces, <http://www.senat.fr/lc/lc201/lc201.pdf>, last access 12 November 2009.

could have thought the future was in electronic publications, but a blog such as *Hanut-ul-muslim* closed after less than a year of existence.

### **13 Family law**

The French legal system is an entirely secular one, and religious affiliation is not relevant in legal matters. However, jurisprudence does sometimes take into account questions of religious affiliation and practice (in matters such as holidays for religious festivals, for example). In 2005, the French government raised the legal age of marriage for girls to 18 (it had been 15 for nearly 200 years). This was to counter the practice of arranged marriage. Chantal Brunel, a right-wing deputy (UMP – *Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*), proposed a law against polygamy in June 2004,<sup>43</sup> and the issue regularly arises in public debate. This question will certainly have to be dealt with when Mayotte, which recognises polygamy since Muslim family law applies there, eventually will become a French department (this is scheduled for 2011).

### **14. Interreligious relations**

In June 2009, the *Conference of French imams* was officially set up. Its president is the imam of Drancy, Hassan Chalghoumi. This group brings together some 40 imams of the region of Paris, and promotes interreligious dialogue and "an open Islam".

Many initiatives of religious dialogue exist, of national or local interest. There are far too many to provide a list here. On the national level, one can for instance name the Islamo-Christian research group (<http://www.gric.asso.fr>), or the journal *Chemins de dialogue* (paths of dialogue)<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/12/propositions/pion1645.asp>, last access 12 November 2009.

<sup>44</sup> <http://istr-marseille.cef.fr/pages/chemins-de-dialogue.htm>, last access 15 January 2010.

Marseille-espérance (which means Marseille-Hope, [http://www.marseille.fr/sitevdm/jsp/site/Portal.jsp?page\\_id=689](http://www.marseille.fr/sitevdm/jsp/site/Portal.jsp?page_id=689)) is an interesting local initiative. All the leaders of the different religious groups of the city of Marseille have come together in this committee, providing the mayor with a structure allowing dialogue with all religions at once. Officially, there are no tensions between the religious communities in France. Difficulties certainly exist at the local level, but the official motto seems to be for all to "live together in peace and dialogue".

The Palestinian conflict, nevertheless, did raise some tensions between Jews and Muslims. All religious national leaders, however, including the Grand Rabbi of France (Gilles Berheim), took part in the supper organised by the CFCM for the end of Ramadan together with the President of the Bishops' Conference Monseigneur André Vingt-Trois and the president of the Fédération protestante de France, Reverend Claude Baty.

## **15. Public opinion and debate**

Public opinion has mostly focused on the question of religious symbols, specifically clothing. For example, the Haute Autorité de Lutte contre les Discriminations et pour l'Égalité (High Authority against Discrimination and for Equality - HALDE), recently had to deal with questions of wearing the burka, and of some pupils' parents wearing a headscarf when taking part in school outings. Issues related to gender always lead to discussion (special opening hours in swimming pools for women or men only, for example). The question of religious practice regarding food is also an issue, especially in schools, but the debate is not very intense. However, signs tension between Muslims and non Muslims are

noticeable. In a 2007 poll, 57% of French people said they would rather “not have a Muslim as neighbour”.<sup>45</sup>

Very recently, the debate on the building of minarets in Switzerland has set fire to some passions in France. Several surveys were issued<sup>46</sup>, mostly showing that French are divided on the question, 46% opposing construction of mosques and 40% accepting them, while 14% do not answer. The tensions are seemingly on the increase, 19% of people only saying that mosques are to be built if the Muslim community asks for them, while 33% were of this opinion in 1989; during the same time, opposants were 38% in 1989, 31% in 1994, 22% in 2001 but are 41% in 2009.

Given that Islam is very much connected to immigration, Muslims in France face some difficulties<sup>47</sup>. Social and educational inequalities remain for young people originated from Northern or Sub-saharan Africa, and their level of unemployment is high<sup>48</sup> - higher even for immigrants who do not acquire French nationality.<sup>49</sup>

The Swiss debate on minarets generated some ripples in France. Minarets raise more passions than mosques: 46% would agree to ban their construction, while only 41% are against the building of a mosque.<sup>50</sup> The public visibility of Islam seems to challenge the French more than Islam itself.

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<sup>45</sup> Borooh, V.K., K. Vani, and Mangan, J., “Love thy neighbour: how much bigotry is there in western countries ?”, *Kyklos, International Review for Social Sciences*, vol.60, no.3 (August 2007), pp.295-317.

<sup>46</sup> IFOP survey on the French and building minarets in France, [les Français et la construction des mosquées et des minarets en France](#), [http://www.ifop.fr/?option=com\\_publication&type=poll&id=1000&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.ifop.fr/?option=com_publication&type=poll&id=1000&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email), last access 15 December 2009.

<sup>47</sup> See the report of the Ministry of labour, *Le vécu des attitudes intolérantes ou discriminatoires par les personnes immigrées et issues de l'immigration*, September 2005, <http://www.travail-solidarite.gouv.fr/etudes-recherche-statistiques-drees/publications/etudes-resultats/no-424-vecu-attitudes-intolerantes-ou-discriminatoires-par-personnes-immigrees-issues-immigration.html>, last access 10 January 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Dupray Arnaud, Moullet Stéphanie, "L'insertion des jeunes d'origine maghrébine en France. Des différences plus marquées dans l'accès à l'emploi qu'en matière salariale", Marseille, Céreq, 2004, <http://www.cereq.fr/cereq/Net-Doc-6.pdf>, last access 6 January 2010.

<sup>49</sup> [http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/IM\\_7\\_ENL2.pdf](http://www.immigration.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/IM_7_ENL2.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> IFOP survey, December 2009, [http://www.ifop.fr/?option=com\\_publication&type=poll&id=1000&utm\\_source=feedburner&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.ifop.fr/?option=com_publication&type=poll&id=1000&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email), last access 7 December 2009.

## 15 Major cultural events

The UOIF organises an annual meeting of French Muslims (*Rencontre Annuelle des Musulmans de France*). The 26<sup>th</sup> meeting took place in April 2009 in Le Bourget and gathered around 150,000 people. Some 115,000 people participated in 2008.

In Marseille, the Muslim community organises regularly a festival, *l'Aïd dans la Cité* ('Id in the city) just before 'Id. The 6<sup>th</sup> meeting will take place in November 2009 and will propose concerts, art exhibitions, conferences, theatre, and many other cultural or artistic events<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> <http://www.ufm13.org/accueil.html>, last access 12 November 2009.