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FRANCE

Sectarian deviations of Muslim groups: MIVILUDES & FECRIS keep silent

HRWF (02.04.2012) - Once more, MIVILUDES and FECRIS' affiliates in France have failed to pursue the objective they claim to pursue: the fight against so-called "sectarian deviations" in Muslim groups.

In their eyes, rejecting the laïcité philosophy and conspiring against the Republic and training for armed struggle and aiming to establish a caliphate and to implement the sharia law are not sectarian deviations as they turn a blind eye to these practices and a deaf ear to their interior minister's warnings about Forsane Alizza and other similar Muslim groups.

Would they have been silent and inactive if just one of these charges had been brought against the non-Muslim groups they usually demonize?

These double standards clearly show that MIVILUDES and FECRIS' affiliates in France are umbrella organizations for several groups of interest having each their own agenda. See below the warnings and actions of Claude Guéant, interior minister, in an article of Le Monde that was published on 29 February (Translation by HRWF).

Claude Guéant bans a radical Islamist group

The French interior minister, Claude Guéant, had warned in the past that his fight against radical Islam would at some point lead to the banning of an Islamist group and the deportation of an extremist imam. As predicted, the decree outlawing a group known as Forsane Alizza (Knights of Pride) was to be signed at the Council of Ministers on Wednesday, February 29. The deportation of the imam, on the other hand, was postponed indefinitely.

The decision to ban the group is the first time that such a ruling has been handed down against an Islamist movement. The targeted group, "made up of about a hundred persons," according to the interior minister, is most notably accused of "training for an armed struggle and conspiring to overthrow the republican form of government". The minister specified that "Forsane Alizza is a paramilitary group," adding that, "by its call for the establishment of a caliphate and the implementation of sharia law (Islamic law) in France, the group undermines the democratic regime." Forsane Alizza, which, according to the declarations of its leading official, Mohamed Achamlane, "rejects secularism", became famous for its demonstrations against the law which forbid the wearing of the full veil and, more recently, in support of fundamentalist Catholics who protested theater pieces that they felt were blasphemous. On February 10, Mr. Achamlane was sentenced on appeal to four months suspended sentence for trying to incite others to racial discrimination; he was prosecuted for calling for a boycott against a McDonald's restaurant, accusing the restaurant chain of serving Israel, and for having destroyed and called for the burning of a penal code, in which, according to Mr. Achamlane, "there was not one line which protects Muslims."

The group, which advertises itself through video on its own website, acknowledges that the transition "to armed combat is possible if Islamophobia intensifies." By this proposition, it tries to recruit "soldiers": "If you enjoy combat sports, then you are the type of person we are looking for, inshallah." According to the group's website, Forsane Alizza's leader promises that banning the group will lead to "Muslims separating themselves from the rest of society."

"Old man"

As for Imam Mohammed Hammami, the deportation commission, which was supposed to gather on February 7 to rule on the fate of the 76-year-old Tunisian, will not meet again until May 15, a delay granted due to his request for legal aid. The possible return to Tunisia of this Muslim cleric, accused by public officials of having advocated "death by flogging" for adulterous women and for having given vent to violently anti-Semitic and discriminatory hate-speech, cannot occur during the presidential election campaign, as the interior minister had hoped.

As one of the leading officials of the Faith and Practice Association, a branch of the ultra-orthodox Tabligh movement, Mr. Hammami participated in the creation of the French Council of Muslim Faith (CFCM) in 2003. One of his sons currently holds a post within the CFCM. The CFCM has taken notice of the deportation request, emphasizing that the words attributed to this imam "are in total contradiction to the commitments of the Faith and Practice Association". Some leading Muslims are surprised that such an attack on this "old man" is taking place now, given that his ultra-orthodox approach to Islam has been well known for many years.

The interior minister, it seems, wanted to show that Place Beauveau (the Ministry of the Interior) has, "since the Islamist victory in the Tunisian elections", been monitoring the more radical opinions of certain imams. Experts on Islam have generally noted a cautious tone in the public expressions of religious radicals and stress that many among them are French citizens and cannot therefore be deported. For them, the interior minister pointed out in *Le Monde* on January 3, "it is the penal code that would apply". In the last ten years, 34 imams have been deported.

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