

# Macron Tries to Harden His Stance on an “Islam of France” (Part 1)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



A Turkish writer at *Hüriyet* reports [here](#) on the speech of French President Macron about “Islamist separatism”:

*“Islamist separatism is incompatible with the indivisibility of the republic and the necessary unity of the nation,” French President Emmanuel Macron said in a Feb. 18 speech, explaining his strategy to combat political Islam.*

*“While one part of Macron’s strategy aims to combat violence in impoverished, crime-ridden neighborhoods, the rest is directed at nonviolent Islamist groups, which largely operate within the boundaries of the law but are criticized for an*

*interpretation of Islam that pushes members of local Muslim communities to detach themselves from mainstream society.*

What the author describes as merely an “interpretation of Islam” that causes “Islamist separatism” is Islam itself. President Macron does not realize that what he continues to call “Islamist separatism” is simply mainstream Islam. It is the Qur’an which commands Muslims not to take Christians or Jews as friends, “for they are friends only with each other.” (5:51) It is the Qur’an which describes Muslims as “the best of peoples” (3:110) and non-Muslims as “the most vile of created beings.” (98:6) Why would the best of peoples wish to become part of a society constructed over the centuries by, and still dominated by the most vile of created beings? Why would Muslims feel that the laws and customs of the “most vile” Infidels are deserving of respect? Muslims may live in France, but they should not become “French” in any way except that of holding a French passport and accepting the many benefits that a generous welfare state lavishes upon them.

*“In the republic, we cannot accept that we refuse to shake hands with a woman because she is a woman. In the republic, we cannot accept that someone refuses to be treated or educated by someone because she is a woman,” said Macron.*

How does Macron plan to enforce what is not a law but a custom? Though it is unpleasant, when a Muslim refuses to shake hands with a woman, it is not illegal. Will there be a kind of semi-police force, “gardiens des moeurs,” who will roam around, checking out whether Muslim men are shaking hands with women, as Frenchmen do, or violating the custom? And if they are refusing, what can be done about it? However, societal disapproval can take other forms: employers may be less inclined to hire those who refuse to treat women as equals. Students who refuse to treat their female teachers with respect can be disciplined within the school itself.

Muslim patients who refuse to be treated by female doctors can be read the riot act: they must take the doctor they are assigned, or go to the back of a very long queue, or even, be told they will not be treated if they continue to refuse treatment from a female doctor. Legislation may be required – stiff fines for those who refuse to shake hands with women, a custom that thus becomes enshrined in law. That law could be based on the argument that those men who refuse to shake hands with women are violating the legal equality of the sexes. Students who do not respect female teachers may be expelled from schools, until they agree to treat male and female teachers equally. Patients who refuse female doctors could also face the prospect of not being seen at all, or being put at the back of the queue for an appointment. There is still the problem of enforcement: there are six million Muslims in France, of which roughly, three million, are men. How could their refusal to shake hands be adequately monitored? How would the classrooms be monitored for signs of Muslim disrespect of female teachers? Does the French state really want to be involved formally in such matters, meting out punishments, or does it want simply to encourage – without punishment – changes of behavior commensurate with the legal equality of the sexes?

*Migrant communities are expected not just to respect the law but to respect and adapt to the norms of society, while the “civil and religious leaders” of these communities are expected to encourage their members to act in such a fashion.*

How many “civil and religious leaders” of the Muslim community will agree to endorse and promote among their followers the customary behavior of the French Infidels as to hand-shaking? Will they be willing to offer counseling that goes against the practices of Muslims, and that contradicts the spirit of the many Qur’anic verses that instruct them not to take non-Muslims as friends, but instead regard them as “the most vile of created beings,” and in more than 100 verses commands them

to fight, to kill, to strike at the necks of, to strike terror in the hearts of, Infidels? How will they explain in sermons that now they must, because the French insist, to follow such customs as shaking the hands of women – as if they were equal to me?. Must they really adopt that French, most un-Islamic view, of the sexes? The task of transforming Muslim attitudes will not be easy, for Islam has always promoted a misogynistic view. A man is entitled to up to four wives, which cheapens the perceived worth of the woman. A Muslim husband can divorce a wife merely by repeating the word “talaq” three times, while a wife who wishes to divorce her husband has to meet a series of requirements, including the return of her mahr or bride-price. A Muslim daughter inherits only half what a male inherits. A Muslim woman’s testimony is worth only half that of a man, because – as Muhammad says in a hadith – “it is because of the deficiency of her intelligence.” Given all this, will it be possible to change the attitudes of Muslim male patients toward female doctors, of Muslim students toward female teachers, of Muslim males who are forced to shake the hands of females, and Infidels to boot?

Macron will find it is going to be very difficult to persuade Muslims to violate both the spirit and the letter of Islam.

*Macron believes this is not the case in France due to “foreign influence.” That’s why he announced an end to a program that allowed foreign countries to send imams and teachers.*

Macron believes this is not the case in France – that is, there is scant respect for, and little willingness by Muslims to adapt to the norms of French society. He attributes this to “foreign influence.” He means foreign imams, trained abroad, who are sent to France to run mosques and preach sermons. His solution is to end the program by which these foreign imams were allowed in. From 2020 on, he has announced that there will be an end to the program that allowed foreign countries

to send imams and teachers.

For the past two years, Macron has been talking about an “Islam of France.” He never quite explains how this “Islam of France” is supposed to work. Would there be a different Qur’an, different Hadith, a different Sira for Muslims in France, quite unlike the Qur’an, Hadith, and Sira read in Muslim countries? Of course that is impossible. He has convinced himself that it is “foreign influence” – that is, imams and teachers from abroad who come to France spreading their malign and, implicitly, incorrect interpretations of Islam. They are spreading, in fact, in perfectly straightforward fashion, the Islam of 1.5 billion people, not a strained interpretation of the faith but the faith itself.

*Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Turkey send teachers to France to provide foreign-language and culture classes that are not subjected to scrutiny from French authorities. This part of the program, which has reached 80,000 students a year, will end this September.*

It is right and proper to end a program which serves to connect Muslims in France to their countries of origin, by offering language study in Arabic and Turkish, for those from the Maghreb and from Turkey and “culture classes” which are inevitably imbued with Islamic doctrine. It is especially important to end them because these teachers are not “subject to scrutiny” by the French authorities, and some may include in their language-and-culture lessons their negative observations on the French and their ways, that can only hinder attempts at integrating the Muslim population.

*In addition, France will gradually stop welcoming “detached imams” – who number around 300 (150 of whom are from Turkey) – from these countries.*

*The program will be replaced with bilateral agreements, which France has concluded with Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia – but*

*not yet Turkey.*

Those imams who are not attached to any particular mosque or other Muslim institution, but are described as “detached imams,” are likely, the French believe, to emphasize those aspects of the faith that concern relations – hostile relations – between Muslims and Unbelievers. These “detached imams” without a fixed base in a particular mosque, who are peripatetic preachers moving about the country, have been found to be particularly hard to monitor because of their constant movement. By banning the teachers of language (Arabic, Turkish) and culture (Arabic, Turkish, both Islam-infused) President Macron may think he is doing something of great value, something that will change the nature of Islam. He flatters himself. Will the teaching of Islam, without these foreign imams, be more accommodating to French laws and customs? Why wouldn't imams trained in France, spending their entire lives in France, be just as dangerous in their promotion of Muslim “separatism” that arises from the Qur'an itself? They read and believe the same Qur'an. Why should the problems that have arisen, not just in France but throughout Europe, of an unintegrated and hostile Muslim population, either disappear or decrease? So far, there is no evidence that it makes much of a difference where the imams are from. That is not something Macron wishes to hear, for it would eventually lead either to a conclusion of despair or to a conclusion that the only way to “solve the Muslim problem” requires drastic measures that Macron could not at this point bear to contemplate – that is, both an end to further Muslim migrants, and repatriation of Muslims already in France who show no signs of being willing or able to integrate. as many as possible from among those who are already in France. How many European leaders would dare, at this point, to suggest such a solution?

First published in