



Genocide Watch
The Alliance Against Genocide

France: Country Report January 2021

In October 2020, French President Emmanuel Macron proposed [a law to "defend France's secular values against "Islamist radicalism."](#) According to Macron, the religion of Islam is ["in crisis" all over the world](#). Three terrorist attacks in 2020 led Macron to announce a government crackdown on 'separatism.' The new law will result in discrimination against France's Muslim minority.

France is home to four million Muslims, 5.8% of France's population, the highest percentage in Western Europe. Macron's new law proposal resulted in anti-French demonstrations in Muslim countries, along with boycotts of French products. As the 2022 French presidential election approaches, French Muslims fear a resurgence of France's far-right anti-Muslim political parties.

Discrimination against Muslims has long been a pattern in France. [In 2012, Human Rights Watch](#) reported that "French police are using overly broad powers to conduct unwarranted and abusive identity checks on black and Arab young men and boys." In May 2020, the Defender of Rights, the official authority in charge of combating discrimination in France, published a report accusing the Paris police of "systematic discrimination." In 2020, [a security bill](#) was introduced to restrict filming and posting images of police on social media. Its goal is to cover up police brutality.

Since 2005, wearing of Muslim headscarves has been prohibited in publicly supported schools. In 2010, in response to the Charlie Hebdo massacre, wearing face-coverings in public was outlawed.

As part of the French government's crackdown on 'separatism,' 76 mosques in France have been investigated for promoting religious extremism, with police patrols around the mosques. The French Interior Minister announced that these mosques may face closure. Over 2,600 Muslim mosques have been identified as possible threats to national security.

In 2021, NGOs, lawyers and religious organizations in 13 countries [submitted a report](#) on France's discrimination against Muslims to the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Genocide Watch considers France to be at Stage 6: Polarization due to the French government's crackdown on 'separatism' that targets France's Muslim minority.

Genocide Watch recommends:

- When the new law against separatism enters into force, it should be challenged in the European Court of Human Rights as a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights due to its legitimization of discrimination and its violation of freedom of religion.
- The UN Human Rights Council should place France's laws that discriminate against Muslims on its agenda for discussion.
- French people of all religions should oppose Islamophobia and the right-wing nationalist political parties that promote intolerance against Muslims.