

Europe in trouble, blaming Muslims



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OPINION

As protests in France turned violent two weeks ago, the French far right quickly resorted to racist language to blame the Muslim youth for the violence. Weeks earlier, when thousands of migrants tried to enter the Spanish enclave of Ceuta from neighbouring Morocco, the Spanish far right spoke of an organised "invasion" by Moroccans. United States President Donald Trump has also chimed in, claiming that this is about "Islam wanting to take over". While the far right's readiness to exploit crises to fuel Islamophobia is to be expected, the idea that Islam and Muslims are to blame for Europe's growing woes is no longer reserved for that extreme of the European political spectrum. Two weeks ago, while student protests were heating up in France, the European Parliament quietly passed a resolution "on the need for an EU strategy to counter Islamist entryism and the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood network". The text was tabled by the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), the largest group in

the parliament, which European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen hails from. It passed with 381 votes in favour, 167 against and 15 abstentions. Four other groups backed the EPP almost unanimously: the far-right Patriots for Europe and Europe of Sovereign Nations, the liberal Renew Europe, and the European Conservatives and Reformists. The Social Democrats, the Left and the Greens mostly voted against but could not stop it. The resolution, which draws on a highly problematic report by the French government on "political Islamism," makes a number of flawed claims that have wide-ranging implications for Muslim communities.

It defines "Islamist entryism" as "a political strategy of influence, progressive structuring, institutional penetration and ideological legitimisation". It claims that "Islamist influence operates through a broad and fragmented ecosystem of associations, foundations and cultural, educational, religious, charitable, university, youth, anti-discrimination or social action structures". More specifically, it says that "diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-discrimination frameworks may be diverted as vectors of institutional legitimisation, by integrating a politicised religious identity into legitimate causes for the

protection of minorities". In other words, networks like the Muslim Brotherhood "infiltrate" European societies through anti-Islamophobia initiatives.

The resolution is not binding and European Union member states do not have to implement it. Its call to put the Muslim Brotherhood and affiliated individuals and entities on a terror list is unlikely to be implemented across Europe, given the movement's renunciation of violence as a political tool. However, the resolution still gives legitimacy to an ideological framework that can have grave implications for Muslim communities.

It puts under suspicion Muslim institutions and organisations that operate independently of the state and presents the inclusion of Muslim civil society in public activity as a form of infiltration. The resolution names several organisations, including the Brussels-based European Network Against Racism (ENAR), as espousing this type of "Islamist" behaviour, and calls for blocking access to EU funding and restricting any EU-funded entity from working with them. The vague notion of a "Muslim Brotherhood network" can make guilt by association possible for almost anyone.

This can easily be weaponised by outside actors and already

has been. The United Arab Emirates, for example, has funded a wide-ranging campaign in Europe and elsewhere to smear individuals and organisations as Muslim Brotherhood affiliates. Interestingly, a few months before the resolution was tabled, an Emirati ambassador participated in a conference titled "Muslim Brotherhood: A real threat to Europe" held at the European Parliament. While Emirati influence is there, the resolution itself problematises "foreign funding" that allegedly supports "Islamist entryism" from Qatar or Türkiye, another indication of the geopolitics behind the scenes.

Most importantly, the resolution frames defending Muslims against racism as part of an Islamist infiltration plot. This can directly impact initiatives and public debates that seek to address Islamophobia in European societies. Symbolically, the resolution is a major victory for Europe's right-wing anti-Muslim forces. It shows that the European Parliament has started abandoning any firewall against the far right as the centre right draws closer and closer to the far right. The EPP appears to have almost completely absorbed the far-right agenda but seeks to cushion it in the language of national security. The resolution also demonstrates how European Islam-



French police kicks back a tear gas canister at a student protest in Nancy, France, on October 2, 2026.

● MUHAMMED SAID TAKO/
ANADOLU



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Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to European Union Mohamed Ismail Al Sahlawi (back-L) attends a conference titled "Muslim Brotherhood: A real threat to Europe" held at the European Parliament on June 2, 2026.

● WAM

phobia has evolved. The fear is no longer of the immigrants as strangers who fail to "integrate" but of the Muslims who are able to speak for themselves and defend their civil liberties.

For the centre right, this Islamophobic framework comes with political perks. Not only is it able to benefit electorally from anti-Muslim fearmongering, but it is also able to strike at those on the left who choose to reject racism and stand up for Muslim communities.

It is no surprise that the idea of "Islamism" — Islamo-gauchisme in French — is being promoted on the political scene in France. Jean-Luc Melenchon of the left-wing La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) is particularly popular among marginalised communities and a strong contender for the presidency. He is now being accused of encouraging the "rioters," who — it is implied — are Muslim.

This dual attack on the left and on Muslims mirrors the old Judeo-Bolshevik conspiracy theory that blamed Jews for the spread of communism with the aim of destroying Western civilisation.

Today, "Islamism" serves conservatives, liberals and the far right alike as a scapegoat in their effort to complete a counter-revolution against the modest progress the West has made on tackling racism and inequality since the 1960s. Their project appears to be a fortress Europe without Muslims.

However flimsy the basis of the "Islamist entryism" resolution is, we should expect further legally dubious moves by conservative alliances in individual member states to curb Muslim agency outside state control, especially when it defends Muslim civil liberties. Meanwhile, fearmongers will keep blaming Islam for social ills and for legitimate protests against austerity, and politicians will keep directing public anger at Muslim communities to distract from their own governance failures.

What is needed now is a strong response to this conservative counter-revolution through a firm defence of civil liberties for everyone.

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