

## France Proves Yet Again the Fascist Nature of its Secular Rule

### News:

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, the UK Telegraph paper reported that a halal supermarket in the Paris suburb of Colombes had been told by the local authority that it would be shut down unless it started to sell alcohol and pork. Colombes local authority claimed that all members of the local community would not be served properly if there were no alcohol or pork products in the store. It also argued absurdly that the shop breaks French republican principles by prioritizing a certain group within society rather than catering to all categories of people. Such was the gravity by which French officials regarded the shop's so-called violation of 'French secular principles' and 'community rights', that the Mayor of Colombes herself, Nicole Goneta, visited the supermarket to ask the owner to add alcohol and non-halal meats to the range of products it sold. The Mayor's chief of staff, Jerome Besnard commented regarding the issue, *"We want a social mix. We don't want any area that is only Muslim or any area where there are no Muslims."* The local authority, from which the store rents its premises, stated that it would take legal action to end the lease.

### Comment:

This is just France's latest secular-invoked paranoia towards Islam and its beliefs and yet further proof that secular rule is not fit for purpose when it comes to accommodating the rights of religious minorities. French authorities have proved yet again secularism's lack of universality in serving the needs of all, and demonstrated once again that the peddling of intolerance and creation of community division is ingrained within the fabric of the ideology. Furthermore, what does it say about the strength of any system that feels its foundation is threatened by a few harmless religious practices and resorts to forced assimilation (or rather conversion) as the means of dealing with religious minorities? What does it say about the credibility of any ideology which feels that the only way to protect its principles is to suppress the right of individuals to practice their religious beliefs? And what does it say about the soundness of any political model which believes that community cohesion and harmony is created by stigmatizing, discriminating against and even criminalizing religious communities for their beliefs, which breeds nothing but resentment and anger? William Connolly, a political theorist in a book titled, 'Why I am Not a Secularist' writes, *"Democratic governance readily degenerates into the organization of unity through the demoralization of otherness."*

This latest hysteria over the basic Islamic ruling that prohibits a Muslim from selling alcohol and non-halal meats, including pork, follows the same absurd trend of thinking that led to hijab and niqab bans in France and other European countries and minaret bans in Switzerland. It is based upon the ludicrous belief that the public expression of religious differences leads to division, segregation, or lack of community cohesion within a society. Such is the extent of secularism's irrational fear of religious differences that in this latest attack on Islam in France, not-selling alcohol or pork in

order to simply cater to the religious beliefs of a Muslim minority community is interpreted as ‘prioritising’ a certain group over another and potentially laying the path to community division. How absurd! Barriers between communities are not caused by refusing to sell non-halal products, or by religious dress-codes or mosque minarets or indeed any Islamic belief or practice. It is caused by the relentless demonization of religious communities, the stoking of hysteria about their culture, and bans against their religious beliefs – all of which stigmatizes and marginalizes individuals and fuels suspicion and hatred towards them. Indeed, it is secularism’s irrational fear of religious differences which racial prejudice also thrives upon.

All this highlights the unpredictability of the secular system with regards to guaranteeing people’s rights – where national political realities dictate whether individuals are able to practice their religious beliefs or not. And this is not just demonstrated by France but by secular states the world over which have also enforced their own bans against various Islamic beliefs or have associated those beliefs with extremism or terrorism in order to coerce Muslims to leave them. Secularism was established to protect society from the oppressive aspects of the Christian religion; however now, it is religion which is having to protect itself from the oppressive forces of secularist states. Surely, such an unjust, unpredictable, irrational system which has proved time again its inability to secure respect and rights for its minorities, cannot be championed as the best way to govern societies.

It is the Islamic system, the Khilafah based upon the method of the Prophethood which stands as the ultimate model by which to secure respect and rights for those of all faiths under its rule and to create community cohesion and harmony. Not only does it prohibit the demonization or insulting of the religious beliefs of Christians, Jews, and those of other faiths but the Shariah laws establish that non-Muslim citizens should be permitted to pursue their own religious rules in relation to diet, adornment, marriage, divorce and other matters without interference or harassment from the state or any individual. The state will for example appoint a judge from their own people to settle their disputes based on their religion in courts belonging to the State. The Islamic system even allows those of other faiths to be elected as representatives of their people into the Majlis Al Ummah to represent the needs of their people and speak out against any violation of their rights. The unrivalled manner by which the Khilafah protected the rights of its non-Muslim citizens has been expressed by many non-Muslim historians, such as the American writer Will Durant who wrote in his book, ‘The Story of Civilisation’, *“At the time of the Umayyad caliphate, the people of the covenant, Christians, Zoroastrians, Jews and Sabians, all enjoyed a degree of tolerance that we do not find even today in Christian countries. They were free to practice the rituals of their religion and their churches and temples were preserved.”*

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by**

**Dr. Nazreen Nawaz**

**Director of the Women’s Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir**