



France:

France and Islam

France's government launched the Forum of Islam in France (FORIF) on 5 February to serve as the official interlocuter between the French state and its Muslim citizens.

The French Interior Ministry has explained that FORIF is intended to mark a "new stage in the dialogue between the public authorities and the Muslim faith", replacing the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM) and correcting some of the defects of CFCM, specifically by broadening the stakeholders involved, rather than having one centralised body.



One-quarter of the representatives will be women, the heads of local Muslim associations will be involved, as well as independent personalities from within the community. It is hoped that this increased diversity will improve the dialogue between state and citizenry on key subjects like training imams who reject radicalism, tackling anti-Muslim crime, security for places of worship, and the transparency of funding for mosques and religious groups. This last concern is one shared by other European governments, notable Austria, and the unspoken concern is the flow of funds from particularly Turkey and Qatar that has supported religious leaders associated with radical groups—such as the Muslim Brotherhood, the Turkish version Mili Gurus, and Tablighi Jamaat—and given

these radicals an outside influence among France's Muslims..

There has been some criticism of the Charter and FORIF as being too paternalistic, and France's treatment of religion would in a number of countries— notably the United States—be unconstitutional. But in the French context, far from being too heavy-handed, the state has so far taken an unusually hands-off approach to Islam in comparison with other faiths.

France is belatedly harmonizing its approach to Islam with the other great religions in the country. There is much work to be done, and as Haoues told EER, FORIF is the "umpteenth attempt" to forge a workable compact between the French state and its Muslim citizens. The criticism about its representativeness is unavoidable given the size and variety of France's Muslim population. Nonetheless, it is a worthy effort to provide an environment where French Muslims can practice and construct their faith in harmony with their country, while having freedom from negative outside influences and a minority of determined radicals.

Germany:

Financial Support for Fighting Islamist Tendencies

In 2020, the German government spent around 13.22 million euros to finance programs and projects to combat Islamism. Around EUR 6.84 million in funding was awarded to combat right-wing extremism and around EUR 1.15 million to combat left-wing extremism. The federal government

announced this in its answer to a parliamentary question.

The government points out that many funded programs and projects are aimed at combating extremism as a whole and cannot be divided into the phenomena of right-wing and left-wing extremism and Islamism. The funds for these programs and projects are therefore not included in the sums mentioned.



First German Biography of the Muslim Brotherhood's Founder Published

In German-speaking countries, the first biography of Hassan al-Banna was published, written by Gudrun Krämer.

There has been no comprehensive biography of the Muslim Brotherhood's founder. With her portrait of this powerful man, the Islamic scholar Gudrun Krämer is not only doing pioneering work with regard to his career and the development of his organization. It also sheds light on the upheavals in Egypt in the first half of the 20th century, which was characterized by particularly strong political and economic turbulence. The reasons for this were not only the two world wars, but also the growing, religiously and nationalistically charged resistance to colonialism and its consequences.

Thanks to the extensive proselytizing trips through the country that al-Banna usually undertook during the school holidays, the brotherhood was able to expand even further after moving to Cairo in 1932. With the continuous growth of the organization,

which as a charity was prohibited from any political activity, the streamlining of its structures went hand in hand. With its own scout organization in particular, the brotherhood participated in the Western-influenced cult of masculinity, but at the same time reinterpreted it in an Islamic way: For al-Banna, the Prophet Muhammad was also a kind of scout.

The Muslim Brotherhood soon also marked - as part of their campaign against the "Zionist world conspiracy" in Palestine and its supposed Helpers - the Egyptian Jews as the enemy. The campaign, which is somewhat neglected in the book, eventually culminated in the sending of volunteer combatants to Palestine in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

Attempts by some of al-Banna's associates to stand as a candidate in parliamentary elections - he himself thought loudly about running, although he advocated the dissolution of all parties in the name of Islamic unity - failed. Although the Muslim Brotherhood experienced a rapid boom during the Second World War thanks to the support of sympathetic politicians and was estimated to already have several hundred thousand members, it also began to crack. The author attributes the "Supreme Leader's" gradual loss of control, against which there was open rebellion internally, to his inconsistent line.



His attitude towards terrorism, to which he eventually fell victim himself, was also ambivalent. Gudrun Krämer's study, which is

saturated with sources, now allows a far more differentiated view than before of the Muslim Brotherhood and its founder.