

Anti-France protests grow in Muslim world

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An effigy depicting French President Emmanuel Macron is seen as Muslims chant slogans calling for the boycott of French products in Dhaka, Bangladesh. (Photo: Reuters)

Dhaka, October 31 (RHC)-- Thousands of Muslims have staged rallies in different countries across the world, including Bangladesh, Pakistan, Lebanon, Palestine, and India, to condemn France's anti-Islam stance.

French President Emmanuel Macron publicly attacked Islam in defense of the publication of derogatory cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by the magazine Charlie Hebdo. He made the remarks at a national memorial for a French school teacher who had been murdered by a teenager of Chechen origin after he showed his students the caricatures of the Prophet (PBUH) earlier published by Charlie Hebdo.

About 50,000 protesters took to the streets of Bangladesh's capital of Dhaka on Friday, chanting "Boycott French products!" and holding banners calling Macron "the world's biggest terrorist."

"Macron is leading Islamophobia," said Dhaka demonstrator Akramul Haq. "He doesn't know the power of Islam. The Muslim world will not let this go in vain. We'll rise and stand in solidarity against him."

The demonstrators also burned effigies of Macron and carried signs that read "Stop racism!" "France is insulting the world's two billion Muslims. President Macron must apologize for his crimes," said Gazi Ataur Rahman, a senior leader of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, one of the political parties that called the demonstrations.

In Pakistan's Islamabad, some 2,000 protesters tried to march toward the French Embassy, shouting "Expel the French dog!" but were prevented by police forces, who used teargas and batons to block and disperse them.

Protests were not limited to the Pakistani capital and took place elsewhere in the country as well. About 10,000 people marched through Pakistan's biggest city, Karachi, after Friday prayers in what was organized as a procession to mark the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), also filled with anti-France outrage.

Anti-France slogans were also chanted by thousands of worshipers who took to the streets of the city of Lahore to celebrate the occasion. Thousands more set an effigy of Macron ablaze in the city of Multan, in Pakistan's Punjab Province, and called on the Islamabad government to sever ties with France and boycott French products.

Palestinians also staged protests against the French president outside the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem al-Quds. "We hold the French president responsible for acts of chaos and violence that are taking place in France because of his comments against Islam and against Muslims," said Ikrima Sabri, the preacher who delivered the sermon at al-Aqsa.

Israeli forces attacked the protesters as they exited the esplanade into the Old City of Jerusalem al-Quds, and detained a number of them.

Palestinians also trampled on a large French flag and burned French flags in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah.

Hundreds of protesters also chanted "With our souls and blood, we will redeem the Prophet" during anti-France rallies in the besieged Gaza Strip.

In Lebanon, hundreds of protesters also marched in the capital, Beirut, but they were blocked by police forces from advancing toward the official residence of the French ambassador.

In Afghanistan, protesters burned the French flag. The leader of the Hezb-i-Islami Party, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, warned Macron that if he didn't "control the situation, we are going to a third world war and Europe will be responsible."

Meanwhile, some 100 posters showing Macron with a footprint on his face and calling him a "demon" were pasted on pavements and roads in a Muslim-majority district of India's Mumbai.

In Somalia, the Friday prayer sermons were dominated by condemnation of Macron and his government.

An unofficial boycott of French goods apparently began with a shopkeeper in Mogadishu, Abdirahman Hussein Mohamed, setting aside all French products, including face wash, creams, perfumes, and other cosmetics, with a large sign reading, "NOT FOR SALE."

"I will never sell those products... as long as France does not apologize. France insulted our Prophet," he told Reuters.

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