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Paris, February 18 (RHC)-- France's National Assembly approved the controversial so-called anti-separatism bill, which the government says will strengthen France's secular principles and help counter the rise of militant Islamist groups.

But critics say the laws unfairly targets Muslim communities and could deprive them of their civil rights. Among other things, the bill strengthens the government's ability to shut down places of worship and religious schools and ban what it deems to be "extremist" religious leaders.

The legislation now heads to the Senate, where it is also expected to pass.

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