

France's far-right leader calls for more mosque closures

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Far-right French politician Marine Le Pen

Paris, October 6 (RHC)-- Far-right French politician Marine Le Pen has called for the closure of more mosques in the country, amid a growing trend of Islamophobia across Europe. Le Pen made the demand in an interview with French TV channel, BFMTV, on Wednesday, despite the closure of more than 20 mosques in France at the behest of Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin in the last two years, Anadolu News Agency reported.

"He (Darmanin) closes a mosque there, a mosque here. He dismisses a preacher once in a while, but he must close all extremist mosques in our lands," she said. Asked about the criteria for the closures, she

said all Muslims who had "radical rhetoric" should be deported.

Last year, the French Interior Ministry claimed that about 100 mosques and Muslim prayer halls had been investigated in earlier months, and 25 mosques had been closed over the alleged spreading of "separatist" ideology.

The crackdown came in the wake of the murder of French teacher Samuel Paty, who provoked anger in the Muslim community by showing his students defamatory cartoons of Islam's Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), earlier published by the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo.

France has ordered the suspension of a mosque for six months over what the government has called inciting "violence" and "hatred." Anti-Muslim sentiments have been on the rise across Europe in recent years in the wake of attacks in the continent. The attacks were carried out by European Daesh sympathizers or the terror group's European members who had returned home following their defeat in Iraq and Syria.

Muslim leaders in Europe and around the world have condemned the terrorist attacks. Moreover, the rise of far-right ideology and the propagation of anti-immigration policies have exacerbated the status of religious minorities in Europe.

In July 2021, the lower house of the French parliament approved a controversial bill targeting religious freedom and stigmatizing Muslims, while tightening rules on the funding of mosques, associations, and non-governmental organizations belonging to Muslims.

With France's presidential election just four months away Europe's largest Muslim community is being scapegoated and targeted by government repression as badly as ever. Months earlier, French President Emmanuel Macron had unveiled a plan to defend what he called France's secular values against "Islamist radicalism" and claimed that the religion was "in crisis." He said "no concessions" would be made in a new drive to eliminate religion from education and the public sector in the country.

Human rights groups have raised deep concern about the law, saying it discriminates and stigmatizes French Muslims. More than 5 million Muslims live in France, who account for the largest Muslim population in Europe, along with German Muslims.

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