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FRANCE

34 imams or Muslim preachers deported since 2001

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34 imams or Muslim preachers deported since 2001

By Willy Fautre, Human Rights Without Frontiers

HRWF (31.01.2012) - Since September 11, 2001, 34 imams or Muslim preachers have been deported on the basis of article L 521-3 of the Code of entry and stay of foreigners and asylum. The text makes reference to "acts of explicit and deliberate provocation to discrimination, hatred or violence against a specific person or group of persons."

Tabligh Imam Mohammed Hammami faces deportation

Mohammed Hammami, a radical imam of a mosque in Paris XI, was informed at mid-January that the deportation commission in Paris would examine his case on 7 February. He is accused of anti-Semitism and of advocating beating to death of adulteresses in his preaching activities.

Some time ago, he got a suspended sentence of 4 months in prison for mauling journalists who had tried to get into the castle of Grisy-Suisnes en Seine-et-Marne in order to enquire about a training center for imams that was being held there.

Mohammed Hammami was born in Tunisia in 1935 and arrived in France in the 1960s. He opened a mosque in Paris XI. For several years, he was the leader of TablighJamaat (Society for spreading faith).

Tabligh Jamaat

Tabligh Jamaat (Society for spreading faith) is a religious movement which was founded in 1926 by Muhammad Ilyas al-Kandhlawi in India. The movement primarily aims at Tablighi spiritual reformation by working at the grass roots level, reaching out to Muslims across all social and economic spectra to bring them closer to Islam.

Tabligh Jamaat came forth as an offshoot of the Sufist Deobandi movement. Its inception is believed to be a response to Hindu reform movements, which were considered a threat to vulnerable and non-practicing Muslims. It gradually expanded from local to national to a transnational movement and now has followers in over 150 countries.

Tabligh Jamaat has largely avoided electronic media and has emphasized a personal communication for proselytizing.

Despite its pacifist and apolitical stance, Tabligh Jamaat has appeared on the fringes of numerous terrorism investigations. Tablighi Jamaat's role as a springboard to terrorist organizations has been questioned several times but there is no evidence that the Tabligh Jamaat deliberately act as a recruiting arm for Islamic militant organizations.

The group began to expand its activities in 1946, and within two decades the group reached Southwest Asia and Southeast Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America. Introduced in France in the 1960s, it grew prominently during the 1970-80s. Tabligh Jamaat declined around 1989, although some members still represent it in the French Council of the Muslim Faith. In the few years before 2006, Tabligh Jamaat's influence has exponentially grown in France, which now has around 100,000 followers. Their

main mosque in France is Al-Rahma in Saint-Denis.

Tabligh Jamaat described as a cult-like movement

In its Africa Report Nr 92 (31 March 2005) entitled "Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?", the International Crisis Group describes the movement as follows:

"Several sources pointed to the cult-like aspects of the Jama'at al-Tabligh. One Malian compared it to brainwashing: 'They take them off to some retreat, and they keep them awake, praying and chanting until they are completely brainwashed. That is the first, short retreat. Then they get longer and longer -- a week, a month, six months, even a year'. An American specialist on the region noted, 'they do not try to convert just any Muslims. They are like cults in that they look for those who are socially and psychologically at sea, those who do not know their religion well, and who might thus be susceptible to a dramatic conversion.

In an article published by Le Figaro on 22 January 2012, Samir Amghar, a researcher and author of a recent book on Salafism, was quoted as saying "When you enter it, you are cut off from society."

Comment

Strangely enough, neither MIVILUDES nor anti-sect movements have denounced the anti-Semitic statements of imam Mohammed Hammami and his call to beat to death adulteresses as well as Tabligh Jamaat. Georges Fenech, head of MIVILUDES, who was born in Tunisia, should have paid a visit with the media to the suspicious training center for imams castle of Grisy-Suisnes en Seine-et-Marne. In 2011, MIVILUDES orchestrated police raids in the premises of a Catholic prayer group and some peaceful movements such as: "Le Moulin des Vallées" (an ecumenical monastery in Ile-et-Vilaine), "Terre du Ciel" in Saône-et-Loire and the "Centre d'enseignement de bio-dynamisme" in Drome.