



**Comittee against Islamophobia in France
December 6, 2011**

Mr. Richard, member of the Senate

I have read, carefully, the legislative bill that you have introduced, which is nothing but yet another tool for exclusion. I have also monitored all the discussion surrounding its introduction to the Senate.

Under the pretext of “living together” and a so-called mandatory neutrality, you are trying to institutionalize discrimination against Muslim women, discrimination that would not be out of context in an apartheid regime.

My words might sound extreme to you but it is to emphasize the gravity of the situations you will create if this law shall be voted into action. In order to prove to you how discriminatory this bill is, I will examine each measure you propose to implement, highlighting the dangerous ideological rhetoric that you use to validate and justify all of these amendments.

In your bill, you would like to re-introduce the concept of “proper character” in order to differentiate the surroundings in which the interdiction of religious signs would apply, from those where it would not. This choice is a glaring misinterpretation: indeed, the proper character of an educational framework, as a confessional school is, will always be about the school program or/and an educational project and not, as you seem to believe, about religion and the religious affiliations of the personnel.

Even more problematic, your recommendations are contributing to the stigmatisation of Muslims and could be seen as equivalent as putting a green star on them, as has been done in other historical situations. Indeed, you dare to require from all childcare providers that they specify, prior to any contract, their religious affiliation and the intensity of their practice. However, what would be an “acceptable” visibility to be considered as a normal childcare provider? Would you also be willing to give the right to any given employer to choose and specify the religion of their future employees in their job advertisements?

We thought that these dark times were over, but they seem to have been restored under the influence of men and women like you, who dare to hide such regression under the false pretext of progress.

Although I will certainly agree with you on the necessity of protecting children from any given proselytizing, allow me to ask you the following questions. I would appreciate that you take the time to answer them, instead of sending us a simplistic copy/paste answer that seems to be circulating since citizens from all political affiliations started to question the pertinence of your project.

If the goal of this bill is to protect children from any bad influence that a childcare provider (Muslim, veiled and ill-intentioned) could have, would the simple act of taking off her headscarf be enough to make the child safe?

Are there any specific legal cases where a childcare provider (again, Muslim, veiled and ill-intentioned) was violently imposing her religious beliefs to children? In those cases, if you found some, was the problem solved by making the childcare provider take off her headscarf?

Would you also require that at home, in order to secure religious neutrality, childcare providers should hide Christmas trees, kippas, crucifixes, or even religious and political books? Should they also be asked to break their fast while at work? Would you also be willing to ban the use of expressions that could indicate a religious belief?

If your answer to any of these three questions is not a firm yes, then you should not be considering voting your bill into action.

Finally, allow me to suggest that you again read the laws and texts that made the history of this country, in order to remind you what words like “freedom”, “laïcité” or “respect” meant, before some political men and women like yourself dispossess them of their original meaning.

If these words had a voice, they would bring you to your senses.