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La France à la loupe

The Muslim faith in France

Islam is the **second largest religion in France**. While it is not possible to quantify exactly the size of the Muslim faith community because French law prohibits the keeping of statistics based on religious affiliation, the number is estimated at around 5 million. It is a community characterised by **diversity**.

According to a recent CSA survey carried out in August 2006, 88% of French Muslims fast during Ramadan, 43% pray the required 5 times a day, 20% read the Koran, 17% go to the Mosque at least once a week and 8% at least once a month, and 4% have already been to Mecca.

Muslim religious observance, like that of other religions, is governed by the [Law of 9 December 1905](#), which stipulates that the Republic “guarantees freedom of conscience” and “the free exercise of religion” but “does not recognize, pay a wage to or subsidise any religious denomination”. This is the context in which the body representing the Muslim faith and arrangements for funding for places of Muslim worship operate.

Faith-related issues, irrespective of the religion involved, fall within the remit of the [Minister of the Interior](#).

THE MAIN MUSLIM FEDERATIONS IN FRANCE

•*Institut Musulman de la Mosquée de Paris*

Attached to the Paris Mosque, the Muslim Institute of the Paris Mosque was formed in 1916 during World War I. It has historical links to Algeria.

•*Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF)*

Formed in 1983, the Union of Islamic Organisations of France is the biggest of the Muslim federations in France. It is close to the Muslim Brotherhood.

•*Fédération Nationale des Musulmans de France (FNMF)*

Formed in 1985, the National Federation of Muslims in France is supported by Morocco.

•*Tabligh – French chapter of Jama'at al Tabligh*

This organisation represents a pietistic movement founded in India in 1927.

•*Fédération française des Associations islamiques d'Afrique, des Comores et des Antilles*

The French federation of Islamic associations of Africa, the Comoros and the French Antilles was formed in 1989 as an umbrella organisation for Muslims who adhere to a traditional form of Islam rooted in African and French West Indian culture.

•*Comité de Coordination des Musulmans Turcs de France*

The coordination committee for Turkish Muslims in France (CCMTF) is linked to Turkey.

•*Fédération Invitation et Mission pour la Foi et la Pratique*

THE CREATION OF THE *CONSEIL FRANÇAIS DU CULTE MUSULMAN* IN 2003

Since the early 1990s, the French authorities have devoted their efforts to the **creation of a body to represent the Muslim faith to engage in dialogue with the French State and local government authorities on issues linked to Muslim religious observance** such as the construction of cemeteries, the appointment of almoners in schools, hospitals and prisons, the training of imams, and so on.

In 1997, a wide-ranging national consultation of French Muslims was conducted with seven Muslim federations, five great mosques and twenty or so leading individuals with relevant experience. This led to the setting up of the ***Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (CFCM)*** [French Council for the Muslim Faith], **which officially came into being on 3 May 2003**. The first elections were held from April to June 2003, and the second and most recent from 19 to 26 June 2005, for the period 2005-2008.

The CFCM, whose remit is national, acts at local level through the ***Conseils Régionaux du Culte Musulman (CRCMs)*** [Regional Councils for the Muslim Faith] whose **remit is regional** and which engage in dialogue with Prefectures and local elected representatives.

The CFCM represents the Muslim faith community; its role is to settle questions

arising from religious observance but it has no spiritual authority insofar as it is not a theological body issuing opinions on religious matters. Its **missions** are:

- to defend the dignity and the **interests of the Muslim faith** in France
- to foster and to organise **the sharing of information and services** between places of religious worship,
- to encourage **dialogue between faith communities**,
- to provide **representation for places of Muslim worship** in dealings with the official authorities.

Since its creation, the CFCM has acted in particular to facilitate the implementation of the law of 15 March 2004 banning the wearing in schools of insignia or clothing conspicuously displaying a religious affiliation.

THE MAKE-UP OF THE CFCM

The CFCM comprises an executive committee, a board of management, a general assembly and a general secretariat.

The **executive committee** has between 11 and 17 members. The CFCM is chaired at the present time by the rector of the Paris Mosque, Dalil Boubakeur. He is assisted by two deputy chairs whose task is to coordinate the actions of the CFCM with the CRCMs.

The CFCM's **board of management** has a membership of 65, two-thirds elected. Since the elections in 2005 the elected members break down as follows (*source: Ministry of the Interior*):

- FNMF: 19 seats - 10 regions
- UOIF: 10 seats - 7 regions
- Paris Mosque: 10 seats - 1 region
- CCMTF: 1 seat - 4 regions
- Independents: 3 seats

Unelected members of the board of management fall into the following categories:

- 12 representatives of the Consultation's 7 member federations
- 5 representatives of the five great mosques¹ with Consultation membership
- 5 leading figures with relevant experience.

The **general assembly** comprises 194 individuals, three-quarters of whom are elected.

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PLACES OF WORSHIP AND THEIR FUNDING

France has approximately 2,000 places of Muslim worship and more than a dozen great mosques.

In compliance with the 9 December 1905 Law on separation of Churches and State, which safeguards the neutrality of State with regard to religious observance, **the State does not finance places of worship directly**. The construction of certain buildings used for religious worship may however benefit from public grants and receive assistance from local government authorities through the financing of cultural organisations formed as associations under the 1901 Law on not-for-profit entities, making land available on long-term lease at a modest cost, or possibly by allowing the territorial *département* or the municipality to stand as guarantors for building loans. Most finance continues to come from Muslims, Muslim associations and foreign donations.

The *Fondation des Œuvres de l’Islam de France* is endeavouring to set itself up over time in order to allow French Muslims to procure the financial resources needed to build places of worship. This foundation, which has been officially recognised as a public interest organisation and whose Statutes were formally approved on 25 July 2005 in a government decree, is responsible for **raising funds to build or refurbish places of worship, train imams and provide the means to allow the CFCM to function**, a body from which it is separate in law. The funds involved, which come from donations and include no public monies, are managed in accordance with three imperative criteria:

- **Independence** of decision-making by what is a private organisation,
- **Rigour** in the application of funds in accordance with the laws of the Republic and the Statutes of the Foundation,
- **Financial transparency** on the basis of management by the *Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations*.

To find out more

LEGAL TEXTS

☞ **The 9 December 1905 Law on separation of Churches and State.** – [in French] published in the *Journal Officiel* on 11 December 1905.

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/texteconsolide/MCEBW.htm>

☞ **French Code of Administrative Law:** see the section on religious observance.

WEBSITES AND WEB PAGES

☞ **Islam in France: the 1905 Law allows for a “fair balance”** [In French] – Prime Minister’s Website.

<http://www.premier->

ministre.gouv.fr/information/actualites_20/islam_france_loi_1905_51738.html

☞ **A portrait of France's Muslims** [In French]: CSA survey published 21 September 2006
<http://www.csa-fr.com/dataset/data2006/opi20060823b.htm>

REPORTS

☞ **Rapport au politique des Français issus de l'immigration** / Sylvain Brouard et Vincent Tibertj, CEVIPOF – Sciences Po, juin 2005,- Voir la partie II : Religion et laïcité : les appartenances confessionnelles, la pratique religieuse, les prescriptions islamiques et l'inscription dans la société française, l'évolution du rapport à l'Islam, l'évaluation de la situation des musulmans en France et de la laïcité, les rapports entre l'Etat et l'Islam.

http://www.cevipof.msh-paris.fr/publications/enquetes/rapp_fi.pdf

☞ **Relations between faith communities and official authorities** [in French]: Report to the Minister of State for the Interior and Regional Development / Jean-Pierre Machelon, December 2006

<http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/rapports-publics/064000727/>

☞ **Islam in the Republic** [in French]: Report from the High Council on Integration, 2001.

<http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/brp/notices/014000017.shtml>

A presentation of the principles of the 1905 Law on freedom of conscience and separation of Churches and State; a portrait of the Muslim communities in France and their representation; plus a survey of the issues arising from religious observance, food, the school environment and the status of individuals.

ARTICLES

☞ **État et religions** [State and Religion] / Xavier Ternisien.- *Débat public*, La Documentation française, Odile Jacob, January 2007.

☞ **Religions et territoires: quelle gestion locale des cultes?** [Religion and the regions – what should be the local administration for faith communities?],- *Pouvoirs locaux: les cahiers de la décentralisation*, 69-II, May 2006

☞ **Laïcité: culture, religion et politique: Le Conseil français du culte musulman à l'épreuve du temps** [Secularism: culture, religion and politics: how the French Council for the Muslim Faith has performed over time] / Antoine Sfeir, Julie Coste.- *Hommes et migrations*, 1259, January-February 2006.

☞ **La gestion locale de l'Islam.** [Islam's local administration] - *Les Cahiers de la sécurité*, INHES, 62, troisième trimestre 2006.

☞ **L'Islam dans la République: le CFCM** [Islam in the Republic] / Vianney Sevaistre.- *Regards sur l'Actualité*, 298, February 2004,

☞ **La consultation des Musulmans de France** [Consultation of the Muslims of France] / Alain Boyer.- *Regards sur l'actualité*, 279, March 2002.