French Actions Against the Muslim Brotherhood: Background, Motives, and Consequences



Situation Assessment Summary

Day after day, France is reshaping its stance toward the Muslim minority and the political Islamist movements active within its borders, most notably the Muslim Brotherhood.

In July 2025, French President Emmanuel Macron announced a package of strict measures against the Muslim Brotherhood, aimed at weakening the group's resources and limiting its activities within France. These measures include tight regulations on funds and donations, dissolving associations, and reducing dependence on imams from outside France.

Macron based his decision on a government report, which stated that the Brotherhood poses a subversive threat to the values of the Republic and is pursuing a strategy of gradual infiltration of French society by influencing local institutions while adopting a conservative religious discourse that opposes the principles of secularism. The report also considered that the group seeks to create a parallel space through legal and regulatory tools, without resorting to violence, making it a "quiet" threat to national harmony.

Government measures cannot be separated from the historical background of the tense relationship between France and Islamist movements, nor from the rapid changes in the European environment, where Islamophobic rhetoric is increasing and the far-right is gaining strength, prompting governments to adopt more stringent policies toward political Islam. These measures also intersect with regional and international contexts related to the Muslim Brotherhood's role in supporting the Palestinian resistance and its rejection of normalization. Additionally, the group's transnational nature, which Paris considers a threat, intersects with its role in transnational affairs.

Background and Introduction

The French hardline stance toward the Muslim Brotherhood can be described as "normal" and "expected," given a long history of warnings against Islam and restrictions on movements working for it.

Muslims make up roughly 10 percent of France's population, with the Muslim Brotherhood being a significant influence among them through its advocacy and cultural organizations.

Despite the group's moderate rhetoric, French authorities consider it a security threat rather than a social element. They have increased their actions against it since the September 11 attacks in the United States, culminating in the 2020 passing of the "Republican Principles Reinforcement Act," which was used to dissolve associations and organizations linked to or associated with it.

Meanwhile, Islamophobia has grown, fueled by far-right rhetoric. This has marginalized Muslims, excluded them from public office, and led to physical harm to some, prompting thousands of skilled workers to emigrate from France.

The Internal Context of the Actions

The French government took action against the Brotherhood in a domestic environment that favors marginalizing Islam in France overall and confronting groups supporting the Muslim minority, especially the Brotherhood.

The French government adopts a strict secular approach that keeps religion out of public life. However, it specifically targets Islam and the activities of groups like the Brotherhood, which the government sees as a threat to this secular approach.

The government also justifies its strict actions against the Brotherhood by citing security concerns that have grown after terrorist attacks blamed on Muslims, even though the Brotherhood has no links to these attacks.

Additionally, the Brotherhood is seen as a cultural threat to France's secular Christian identity.

Attacking the Brotherhood is also seen as a winning strategy for French politicians, who exploit Islamophobia to attract voters, especially with the rise of populist and far-right groups.

The External Context of the Actions

French actions against the Muslim Brotherhood cannot be discussed in isolation from their external context, given that the group crosses borders, engages in numerous regional and international issues, and has a presence in many countries where French interests are found.

After Operation Protective Edge, the group became a target for the West because it is the main supporter and intellectual incubator of Hamas. France took the lead in efforts to cut off resistance sources by combating the Brotherhood.

Additionally, France is among the countries supporting the creation of a "New Middle East" led by Israel, a concept the Brotherhood opposes.

France's actions against the Brotherhood are part of security and political cooperation with Arab countries that oppose the group. These countries seize every chance to push Western governments against the Brotherhood and back French research centers and media outlets that spread anti-Brotherhood rhetoric.

Positions of the Concerned Forces

The positions of the involved forces regarding the measures taken against the Muslim Brotherhood in France varied, ranging from justifying to opposing to rejecting.

The French government tried to present the issue as unrelated to Islam as a religion. However, the selective use of defending secularism only against Muslims, without including Catholics or Jews, shows that the restrictions go beyond the Brotherhood and target Islam itself.

The far-right, on the other hand, surpassed the government's stance by accusing it of being too lenient with political Islam and calling for additional measures, including a complete ban on the Brotherhood.

The French left, for its part, took positions aligned with its core principles of opposing discrimination against Muslims and characterized the restrictions on the Brotherhood as an effort to deepen Islamophobia.

If we look at the Muslim Brotherhood, its stance is mostly defensive, emphasizing its rejection of the harsh descriptions and actions taken against it, while promoting dialogue.

Effects and Consequences

There is no doubt that the French government's actions against the Muslim Brotherhood will negatively affect the group in France. However, this effect will extend beyond France and will impact the Brotherhood in the West as well as in Arab and Islamic countries.

These measures move the group closer to being classified as a terrorist organization in any future escalation by the French government. They will subject it to restrictions on its associations and institutions, tighter funding for its activities, and the persecution of its members and supporters. This reality weakens its social and cultural presence, diminishes its representation of Muslims, and increases the trust gap between its members and the state. It also fosters a growing sense of persecution, especially among young people, and worsens the identity crisis, which may lead some toward isolation or joining alternative movements.

At the European level, these measures undermine the group's position because they might motivate other governments to adopt the French method.

In the Arab and Islamic world, these measures could bolster the position of regimes hostile to the Brotherhood and give them international backing to expand their campaigns against them.

Handling the Measures

There are two approaches to handling the French measures against the Brotherhood. These approaches are based on the need for deep self-reflection to evaluate and understand the Brotherhood's experience in France, recognize the motivations behind French fears and accusations, and address them earnestly, rather than ignoring or denying

them.

The first path involves self‑reflection and self‑criticism, which require examining weaknesses in performance and addressing them. It includes identifying valid accusations, or those that contain some truth, and working to eliminate their causes—thus preventing others from using them against the Brotherhood. Recognizing genuinely problematic issues that raise concerns among the French authorities calls for new interpretations and clear positions that consider Islamic principles, the Brotherhood's values, and the unique circumstances and constraints of the French environment.

Regarding false accusations, the approach to addressing them is the second method: resistance and confrontation. This method encompasses many different sub‑paths, such as political, media, intellectual, organizational, advocacy, judicial, legal, and societal. All these options are available but need to be activated, coordinated, and properly utilized.