

CHAIR JUAN FERNANDO LÓPEZ AGUILAR, LIBE COORDINATORS

[Letter sent via email]

Brussels, 7th June 2021

**Dear Chair Juan Fernando López Aguilar,
dear LIBE Coordinators,**

We are writing, as the leading racial justice organisations working at the European Union level, to request the LIBE Committee to address the situation of fundamental rights in France.

We are extremely concerned by President Macron proposed bill on “Supporting respect for the principles of the Republic.” The bill, as originally proposed or amended currently with increased discriminatory provisions, could have harmful and far- reaching consequences for fundamental rights in France. The bill has been widely criticised by leading anti-racist and human rights groups including the Expert Council of the Council of Europe.

The bill is alarming on three main grounds:

- **Discrimination against Muslims** –The primary intention of the bill is to target communities/groups that allegedly ‘threaten’ the safety of the Republic with the bill being framed as a response to ‘Islamist separatism.’ Provisions in the bill proposed by President Macron on the internal governance of religious communities, wearing of religious symbols and access to employment could disproportionately impact Muslims and expose them to further discrimination and hostility.
- **Freedom of association and religion** – The proposed bill by President Macron will give the public administration a wide range of arbitrary powers to dissolve associations, and places of worship. Under the bill, organisations receiving public funding will also be required to sign a contract stating that their work will support ‘republican values.’ Such a requirement will give the public administration wide discretion in defining republican values as there is no official definition. This provision could result in a chilling effect on organisations that receive public funds, discourage critical organisations from applying for public funds and prevent civil societies from criticising the government.

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- **Foreign funding** - The proposed bill by President Macron will introduce a duty for organisations to disclose foreign income above €10,000 and to provide annual accounts to the government. Potential accusations of foreign control/interference as a result of foreign funding will put many groups at risk and raise harmful questions around 'loyalty.' The discussion on foreign funding is problematic as it gives more credence to the actions of other governments in the EU and some third countries who have labelled civil society groups as national security threats for holding governments to account.

We request the Committee to urgently look into the situation in France as it has done in the past in relation to violation of fundamental rights in other Member States. We believe that the Committee could hold a discussion on the situation in France and propose a LIBE Committee Delegation to France.

It is vital that we act consistently and call out violations wherever they occur in the Union regardless of a Member State's influence and power.

Yours sincerely,