Chapter Three

Issues and Problems of French Muslim women and the role of European administration and Muslim society

In this chapter of the thesis I have tried to discuss the Issues and problems of Muslim women in France. This chapter includes my field work conducted in France. What are the responsibilities of European administration (French administration) and Muslim society and the role they have played yet, has been debated in this section of the dissertation. Apart from discussing the issues and problems of French Muslim women, I have attempted to trace out several solutions of these problems. The French society is a modern society and encourages dialogues, but the Muslim women in France at times have to face harsh conditions.

3.1 Issues and Problems of French Muslim Women: There are numerous issues and problems Muslim women have to face in France. Islamophobia, Veil issue, lesser chances of getting selection for a job, discrimination at work place, terrorism, media stereotype are such problems I would like to discuss.

3.1.1 Islamophobia: First of all the question arises what is Islamophobia? What is the origin of this term? Since when has it appeared first? And where did it appeared first? Marc Helbling defines Islamophobia in the following words

“Islamophobia is defined as the fear of or aversion to Islam and Muslims.”

If we go to a broader definition then the Janice Joseph’s explanation is vital. According to him

“Islamophobia is an exaggerated fear, hatred, and hostility towards Islam and Muslims that is perpetuated by negative stereotypes

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resulting in bias, discrimination, and the marginalization and exclusion of Muslims from social, political and civic life”.2


Historical background of Islamophobia in France: The starting point of modern Islamophobia in France goes back to 1980’s. Since then Muslims are seen as a ‘problem’ for the western law, culture and values. Major reason were the strikes in car factories. In fact, in 1982 with the incidents of strikes Islam came in forefront of French Public life. Immigrant workers initiated a major industrial onflict when they occupied the Citroën and Talbot factories in Aulnary and Poissy. There were works unions backing behind these incidents. According to factory owners, the immigrant workers were being manipulated by unions. Among the workers there were people of Muslim faiths of diverse Arab and African origins. This marked the first time the word ‘Muslim’ entered public discourse as a standard label for a segment of the population, replacing class based descriptors. It’s emergence is sometimes seen as a concomitant with the arrival of neoliberal political ideas in France.3 Gaston Deffere and Pierre Mausroy from the Socialist party tried to frame these strikes as being motivated by these Muslims. Although these strikes were the result of socio-economic reasons. It was the first instance of political expression of Islamophobia, where politicians found there was a premium associated with stigmatising Muslims on that basis. Since then, it has not stopped.4

Gender based act of Islamophobia: Now the question arises how this ‘Islamophobia’ has created problem for French Muslim women and what is the density of this issue for them.

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The answer is quiet clear. French Muslim women are the greatest victim of the problems faced by their male-counterparts in this country and elsewhere in the Europe. There are statistics and surveys which show that the maximum level of discrimination and violence against Muslims are faced by the Muslimah Collective Against Islamophobia in France 2016 report is an important document in this regard. According to this report Islamophobia is a part of sexism because 3 out of every 4 victims (3/4) are women. The report further reveals that most of the women victims wear veil.

### 3.1.1A Field work on Islamophobia in France:

During my field work in France, I applied interview method in different cities of France majorly focusing upon the suburb areas of Paris. Questionnaires were also distribute among the groups of French Muslim women. The results showed that the Muslim women in France have to face Islamophobia in the worst senses. 140 out of 150 questionnaires distributed revealed that they were victimised in several ways. 72 percent women faced Islamophobia because of their veil. On the other hand Muslim women wearing western dresses faced lower level of Islamophobia on public places. There were women who use mix costumes. At times they wear western and at times wear veil. Their experience was also interesting and important. When they wear Western dresses and no one could recognize them because of their dresses, they face lesser degree of Islamophobia and when they wear veil at times they face victimization in different ways. During the interviews I could conduct in France, women revealed that people who know them personally, were not among the accused. It means they were victimised by the unknown people. Even women revealed that the French people who know them always say “you people are good and all of us have nothing to do with the politics going on the issues like Islamophobia”.

### 3.1.2 Terrorism:

Muslims have a negative image throughout Europe. Incidents like 9/11, the Madrid train bombings, the assassination of Theo van Gogh⁵ and the London transportation system bombings of 2005 and many more events of violence have created

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⁵ Theo Van Gogh, a Dutch film director was killed by a Dutch-Moroccan Muslim in 2004. He had received a death threat from extremists for his controversial film titled Submission (2004). In this film the treatment of women in Islam was criticized.
this negative image and have made Muslims ultimate outsiders in Europe\textsuperscript{6}. Muslim terrorists were the force behind it. There are Muslim immigrants of different cultural, social and political background residing in different parts of Europe. As mentioned earlier in France, there are Muslims from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Congo, Senegal and from several other African countries with Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and numerous other Asian origins. They are also the victim of terrorism. Whenever there is a terrorist attack in the world, especially in the West, Muslims have to face problems. Obviously, as stated and mentioned above with the help of facts and figures, Muslim women often face the majority of the problems caused by the terrorism. In this way, I would like to treat terrorism as a problem for French society as well as Muslims as a whole and Muslim women in particular.

Whenever there is a terrorist attack conducted by Muslims in any part of the globe especially Europe, Muslim women have to face indecent remarks from the people of European backgrounds. At work place, public places such as bus, tram and train stations, during journey, schools and universities, Muslim women were the easiest target for victimisation by the other people. Although these terrorist attacks claim the life of many Muslims. As in the incident of Nice attack of 2016, French-Moroccan activist and writer Hanane Charihi’s mother also lost her life. The Tunisian origin driver claimed the life of more than 85 people and over 100 were injured.

"They really showed they weren't Muslim because the first person they killed was Muslim. For me, that just confirms their ignorance ... [there's a] difference between the van driver and my mother ... One is a true Muslim and the other talks about Islam, but that's not it. I don't want to have to choose between my nationality and my religion. Both are part of my identity."\textsuperscript{7}


The above description proves that Muslims also lose their lives in the terrorist attacks. But once, these attacks are committed, Muslim community is targeted in general. They have to face suspicion, anti-Muslim remarks, abusive language and many times attacks. According to Nikita Malik, the director of Centre on Radicalisation and Terrorism at the Henry Jackson Society:

“Targeting veiled women is a very common thing that happens when we look at anti-Muslim hatred following an Islamist terror attack”\(^8\).

### 3.1.3 Veil

At this point it is important to understand the meaning of veil, its historical contact of westerns with the veiled Muslim women, its current situation and the law.

**Types of Muslim Female Dresses:**

- **Burqa**: is a loose outer garment that covers the entire face and body, leaving just a mesh screen to see through.
- **Hijab**: hijab is the Arabic word for curtain or cover. It is used to describe the headscarf that covers the hair, ears, and neck, leaving the face uncovered.
- **Jilbab**: which is also known as abaya, has the appearance of a long loosefitting coat that covers the whole body except the face.
- **Niqab**: is a veil that covers a woman’s hair and face, leaving only the eyes clearly visible. There are different ways of wearing the niqab but the great majority of the women interviewed for this thesis wore a black jilbab with a black niqab to cover their face. The niqab can also be worn with a separate eye veil.

**Early Contact of Westerns with veiled Muslim Women:** Before colonial probe Westerns came in contact with veiled Muslim women was rare. Prior to the 17th century, there was no direct contact of Westerns with veiled Muslim women. Colonial perceptions

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of veiled Muslim women were the product of male travellers’ tales and poor translations of Arabic texts. From the late 17th century, colonial interaction with veiled Muslim women remained limited until the next century when colonial expansion began to produce a ‘Western narrative of women in Islam’. In 1978, Edward Said coined the term ‘Orientalism’ to portray the way that Western scholarship reflected a distorted image of the East.

“In particular, the ‘Orientalist framework’ stemmed from ‘an imaginative and yet drastically polarized geography dividing the world into two unequal parts, the larger, ‘different’ one called the Orient, the other, also known as ‘our’ world, called the Occident or the West’ (Said, 1981: 4). This imaginative geography was characterised by the strict binary of ‘us’ and ‘them’ whereby the West was privileged over the Orient. The ideology associated with Orientalism served to construct a Western identity based on opposition to the Orient. From this perspective, the production of knowledge about the colonial ‘Other’ was a simultaneous constitution of the ‘Self’. This framework was also employed in relation to the dress code of women in Islam. Within the Orientalist framework, the veiled female body became the symbol for Islam. Essentially, the wearing of the veil was seen as evidence of the subjugation of women in Islam based on the premise that women were forced to wear the veil by Muslim men. As such, the veil became the symbol of the backwardness of Islam itself”.

The veil in France became an important issue and has grabbed the attention of international community. As stated in previous pages that In 2004, the law of “secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in schools” was passed. Consequently the use of religious symbols in schools was banned. After banning the use of veil in 2004, the authorities officially banned veil in 2008. They claimed that the ban was on the basis of

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9 Eirini-Chrysovalantou Zempi, in Unveiling Islamophobia: The Victimization of Veiled Women.
‘Laïcité’\textsuperscript{10}. After two years in 2010 this issue became political, when a radical French anti-capitalist party New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) led by Trotskyist Postman and Oliver Besancenot revealed that one of its candidate in 2010 regional elections wore an Islamic head scarf. Her name was Ilham Moussaid. Such developments are recent but have not emerged within a few days. These developments are the consequences of different events, which have occurred in the decades of 80’s and 90’s. For example, in October 1989, three Muslim girls in Creil on the outskirts of Paris appeared in headscarves caused public outcry. In this regard the observations of western scholar Neal Robinson are very important.

It is an established fact that there is apprehension and fear among the westerners that Muslims want to Islamize Europe. They relate this fear to the history of attempts of ‘Christianization’ of Europe. They are afraid that similar practices could be adopted by Muslims and thus this continent will be ‘Islamized’. Western scholar Jorgen S. Nielsen has given a very relevant point in his book \textit{Towards A European Islam}. Around a hundred years back, in 1900 Western Churches were dreaming of the ‘Christianization’ of the world and after 100 years some Muslims are talking of the ‘Islamization’ of the world\textsuperscript{11}.

\textbf{3.1.4 Un-Employment:} It is one of the major problem for French Muslim women. Muslims as a whole and women in particular are facing this problem. For immigrants, it is hard to get a job in France. This is the reason for the higher level of un-employment among the immigrants.

\textsuperscript{10} 1905 Law on the Separation of Church and State, which codified the separation of church and state by establishing the principle of \textit{laïcité}.


“The unemployment rate of populations of immigrant origin is generally twice the rate of the overall population, and that rate is even higher among youth of North African origin”.

The terms and conditions of the public and private employers i.e. to come on work without veil has forced many Muslim women to stay at home. Also, there are certain studies conducted on the probability of getting a job with Muslim names. These studies have proven that the chances got diminish for a women with Muslim name. Being a Muslim decreases the chances for a women to get selected for a job. Researches have established the fact that Muslims get less chances of selection for a job. As stated in the previous chapter, correspondence test for French labour job claimed that the probabilities of a French Muslim women for getting a work are as low as 2.5 times in comparison with the women of Christian faith.

3.1.5 Forced to stay at Home: Many French Muslim women who wish to veil have to leave their jobs and are forced to stay at home. As, there is a ban on the veiling practice, several Muslim women have skipped from the jobs.

“Becoming self-employed has been an adventure for Belmokhtar. A languages graduate, she used to work as a secretary in a laboratory. This new job is the only way of not having to take off her hijab on leaving home each morning. With a family to feed, she needs to work, but she became so fed up with having to remove her hijab that she resigned. Two years ago she started selling sweets. It allows her to fulfil the ritual obligations and pray five times a day at the appointed hour, rather than having to catch up in the evening”.

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In this way many women in the most advanced society are directly or indirectly forced to stay at home and work from there. The most progressive and open society of France has pushed some women to work from home.

3.1.6 Education: As the whole incident of veiling got majorly started from schools, Muslim girls are not allowed to cover according to their faith during the school hours. Not only veiling, but because of long skirts school girls are sent back to their homes. Some schools, not all, in France have put the long skirts as a Muslim religious symbol. As, the religious symbols are not allowed to use or apply in the schools, school girls in these institutions are sent back home.

“A teenage Catholic girl who converted to Islam has been banned from attending a school in the eastern Paris suburbs because her skirt is too long. The headteacher of the school in Montereau-Fault-Yonne told the 16-year-old that the length of her skirt meant that it was an “ostentatious religious symbol” – something forbidden in state schools in France since 2004”.¹⁴

Such are the conditions for young Muslim girls to get educated in France. Muslim girls in the school also complain about the discrimination during the school hours. There are voices in favour and against the ban of veil in schools.

“Defenders of the French prohibition of the veil in public schools perceive it as a beginning to free the women from social pressures and obligations, just as those who oppose this vie and an excuse to consider it a violation of freedom. In both cases, the veil is an issue of culture and civilization. Therefore a society that expels young girls from schools merely because of their modest dress code is simply harming itself. The same headscarf revered as a sign of ‘holiness’ when worn by Catholic nuns, is reviled as a sign of

‘oppression’ when worn for the purpose of protection by Muslim women”.  

The above discussion proves that there is a problem for education for the young Muslim girls in France. Their freedom of choice is at stake. In other words, while wearing skirts they also have to see the norms of the government. Girls with long skirts, in some of the cases were refused to attend classes. Such type of discrimination is almost a type of injustice and insecurity for these young Muslim women.

3.1.7 Lesser Wages than Men for Similar Work: It is a fact that women are paid lesser amount than men for a similar job. These variations are because of the key positions held by men and determination of the wages by them. The top managerial positions such as of Chief Executive Officer’s (CEO) are held by men. Only around 6% of the total CEOs posts are held by women.

“Management and supervisory positions are overwhelmingly held by men. Within each sector men are more often promoted than women, and paid better as a consequence. This trend culminates as the very top, where amongst CEOs less than 6% are women”.  

Also, women spend hours on unpaid household works. Many a times these un- paid household works are too high that women quit from a paid job or go for a part time paid assignment. According to a survey men spend around 9 hours per week for their household work while women spend around 22 hours per week. In such situations it is surely hard for women to engage themselves for a full time paid assignment. One third of the working women reduced their working hours and opted for a part time job, while only 1/10 of the men could do so. Such figures prove that women have to sacrifice their paid working

15 Aref Abu Rabia in the Anthropology in the Middle East. 
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233560167_The_Veil_and_Muslim_Women_in_France_Religious_and_Political_Aspects
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
hours due to house-hold work. In this way women are under paid then their male counterparts.

3.1.8 Health: Overall France is a health conscious country. The life expectancy is also high in France. But, Muslim women have some issues related to health. The vital one is the male doctor. For all those Muslim women who wish to veil and do not want a contact of any kind with the stranger males, this is a problem for them. In public hospitals women could demand for a female doctor. Many a times their The French law in state hospitals is clear. Women can request for a female doctor and most probably get it. Many a times their request is accepted, but if there is no availability of female doctor then they have to go treatment with the available doctor, be it male. But many a times their family members do not understand the situation and demand for a female doctors. As in case of a pregnant women from Bourg-en-Bresse. The couple rushed to a hospital and a midwife examined her. She recognised a complication and called the doctor, but the husband physically blocked him for half an hour because he did not want a strange man touching his wife. By the time he gave in, it was too late for a caesarean and the baby had to be delivered by forceps. Little Mohammed is now 100% handicapped. Such incidents are miserable.

3.2 Role of European administration Towards Integration of Minorities: European administration is committed towards the integration of minorities and gender equality. The question arises what are the models of integration and how is it possible to integrate minorities with majorities.

Two major models of integration.

When it comes to integration, then one should know about its types. There are two models of integration. The two models are 1. Assimilation (republican model), 2. Multiculturalism. It seems necessary to have an idea of these two above mentioned models.

Assimilation: According to the oxford dictionary assimilation is defined as

“The absorption and integration of people, ideas, or culture into a wider society or culture.”
The assimilation does not recognize the culture and religion. In other words it claims blindness in cultural and religious differences. It claims equality for all its citizens. It follows Universalist policy and favors same rights. Contrary to this, the second model of integration i.e. multiculturalism is based on the policy of difference. This model of integration allows all citizen a right to live according to their culture and their religion. Whether it is assimilation or multiculturalism, their aim is similar: to ensure the equality of all citizens. The only difference is the way these two models promote the equality of citizens. In assimilation equality is guaranteed by severe identical treatment without differences, but in multiculturalism individuals are guaranteed freedom according to their culture or religion.

In the first case equality is guaranteed by rigorous identical treatment, independent of differences. In multiculturalism, equality refers to the equality of individual opportunities. Individuals must all be treated fairly, which means the consideration of their respective differences.

**Model of Integration Adopted by France:** In his first speech as Prime Minister of United Kingdom, David Camron declared ‘Multiculturalism failed’. Soon after that German chancellor Angela Markel and President of France Nicolas Sarkozy proclaimed that they also share the same position. It means, they also consider multiculturalism a failure. Basically, France follow the assimilation model of integration. The current president of France Emanuel Macron is in favour of a ‘French Islam’. The position is clear indication of assimilation.

Now, at this point it seems necessary to discuss the role of European administration towards the integration of minorities. Which organization/agency is there, which
guarantees for the fundamental rights to its citizens? What is the role of European Parliament?

3.2.1 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights: This is an independent EU body. This agency was established in 2007. It’s a 90 member staff team. All its members are experts of different fields such as politics, statistics, social sciences, communication and networking, management etc. The main objective of its formation is to provide independent, evidence-based assistance and expertise on fundamental rights to EU institutions and member states.

Limitations of Fundamental Rights Agency: It does not have decision-making powers in the area of regulation and it does not have the power to monitor fundamental rights in the Member States in accordance with Article 7 of the TEU. A five-year multiannual framework sets out the areas in which it may act. Its tasks include, in particular, the collection, analysis, dissemination and evaluation of relevant information and data, conducting research and scientific surveys, drawing up preparatory and feasibility studies, and the publication of thematic reports and an annual report on fundamental rights.

3.2.2 Role of The European Parliament: In 1977, Parliament, the Council and the Commission adopted a ‘Joint Declaration on Fundamental Rights’. This is one of the most important documents. In the joint declaration they committed to respect fundamental rights in the exercise of their powers. Moreover, in 1979 Parliament adopted a resolution suggesting that the European Community should accede to the European Commission on Human Rights (ECHR). The 1984 draft Treaty establishing the European Union specified that the Union must protect the dignity of the individual and grant everyone coming within its jurisdiction the fundamental rights and freedoms derived from the common principles.

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23 Ibid

of the national constitutions and the ECHR.\(^\text{25}\) It also envisaged accession of the Union to the ECHR. In April 1989, Parliament proclaimed the Declaration of fundamental rights and freedoms.\(^\text{26}\) Subsequent attempts to grant this declaration the status of a legally binding document were, however, unsuccessful. Every year since 1993, Parliament has held a debate and adopted a resolution on this issue on the basis of a report produced by its Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Council Regulation. In addition, it has adopted several resolutions addressing specific issues concerning the protection of fundamental rights in the Member States. In 1997, after the adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty\(^\text{27}\), Parliament again called for the adoption of a binding Charter of Fundamental Rights. During the drafting process that led to the adoption of the Charter, Parliament adopted several resolutions insisting that this instrument be given legally binding force by incorporating it into the Treaties. After the Charter was solemnly declared, Parliament expressed its disappointment at its nonbinding nature and again called for it to be incorporated in the Treaties in a legally binding manner. Specific actions Parliament has focused in particular on the issue of codifying fundamental rights in a legally binding document. It signed a joint declaration with the Commission and the Council on 5 April 1977 in which it committed to upholding fundamental rights, and adopted its own declaration on the subject in 1989.\(^\text{28}\)

In 1994, it drew up a list of the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Union. It placed special emphasis on the drafting of the Charter by making it ‘one of its constitutional priorities and stipulating the requirements to be met. In particular The Charter needed to be given fully binding legal status by incorporating it into the TEU constituting merely a non-binding declaration and doing no more than merely listing existing rights would disappoint citizens’ legitimate expectations. Parliament thus called for the Charter to be incorporated into the Treaty of Nice and the new Constitutional Treaty; Fundamental rights needed to be recognised as indivisible, by making the Charter applicable to all the


\(^{28}\) Ibid.
institutions, bodies and policies of the EU, including those under the second and third pillars, in the context of the powers and functions conferred upon it by the Treaties. Finally, Parliament has regularly called for the EU to accede to the ECHR, stressing that this would not duplicate the role of the now binding Charter. It called several times for the establishment of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Although the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union set out the values on which the EU is founded. But in practice not all people living in the EU benefit fully from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, especially women belonging to ethnic minority groups. Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union prohibits any discrimination based on membership of a national minority. Numerous ethnic minority communities living in the EU are still victims of discrimination, social exclusion and segregation. Women belonging to minority are disadvantaged not only in comparison with majority women, but also in comparison with the same group.

**Role of the French Administration:** French administration has almost zero tolerance policy regarding the ‘laïcité’. The governments in the 21st century have tried to create an Islam of France with to implement assimilation. Although, governments have nominated/appointed some individuals to claim that they wish to liberate French Muslim women. As the appointment of a Muslim women as minister of Justice. It was during the President ship of Nicolas Sarkozy, Rachida Dati was appointed as the first Muslim women minister of Justice. The statements of Dati were not favourable for French Muslim women rather they were the mouth pieces of French Government. Also, Fadela Amara was appointed as undersecretary of housing affairs. Such appointments and the efforts of such appointees are done just for name

“Amara, 43, known as the ghetto warrior, organized the first town hall meeting in this desolate, graffiti-laced project. Facing a mostly

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30 Ibid
female audience, Amara lashed out at sexiest patriarchal cultures
that, she says, harm young women”.

The current President of France Emmanuel Macron is also in favour of creating an ‘Islam of France’. Further he wishes to disintegrate the French Muslim organizations from other countries. He has plans to discourage foreign funding of these organizations. A report was submitted to French President titled “The Fabric of Islam”, in which it was suggested to discourage the foreign influence over French Muslims.

“The 617 page report, “The Fabric of Islam”, presents a comprehensive plan for reform of Islamic institutions in France following a call from Macron to bring them under the aegis of the state. During a July address to lawmakers at the Palace of Versailles, Macron committed to giving Islam “a framework and rules” by the fall. His goals: discouraging insular Muslim communities and combating extremist stands of the religion.”

3.3 Role of Muslim Organizations

French Council for Muslim Faith (CFCM)
Since Islam has become the second largest religion in France, the State required a discusser representing the different Islamic communities present on its territory. This brought to the 1989 initiative of Minister Pierre Joxe, then Minister of Internal Affairs and Faith, promoting the birth of a Muslim Council to dialogue with the State.
Ten years later, in 1999, Minister Chevenament prepared an inventory of all organizations responsible for the Islamic faith and invited them to dialogue with the Minister to define the form the council should have. Four main organizations were singled out:
1. The mosque of Paris and its network of Imams nominated by the Algerian government.

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2. The Union of Islamic Organizations in France. It is a well-structured organisation and its influence stretches beyond the network of mosques officially affiliated to it.

3. The National Federation of French Muslims, which has become mainly a Moroccan reality.

4. The Tabligh movement.

Later, Turks and Sub-Saharan Africans also joined the council. After having identified the main organization, the Ministry selected six greater mosques:

- The mosque of Evry,
- 2. The Mosque of Mantes-la-Jolie,
- 3. The grand mosque of Lyon,
- 4. The grand of Southern France, in Marseille,
- 5. The grand mosque of Saint Denis,

Finally the Ministry elected six representative figures. The debut of the Council was difficult. Since 1999, 63 commissions have worked at the drafting of its Statutes. There are many problems related to the requests each organisation made to have its own representatives. In 2002, under constant pressure of the Minister of Internal Affairs, the Statute of the Commission finally came to life, describing how election of the representatives to the French Council of Muslim Faith would take place. The first elections took place on 6th and 13th April 2003. With the foundation of CFCM, Muslims finally had their own representatives at the table of the Republic. CFCM’s greatest challenge is to operate and create the conditions necessary for a Muslim theology to rise enabling Islam’s harmonious integration within the secular republican State.

The President of the council and the rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris, Dalil Boubakeur is in favour of the veil ban. According to him the ‘hijab’ is a practice even before the advent of Islam. It is a cultural practice and not a religious one. It should not be connected with the religion.

“The burqa and niqab existed much before the advent of Islam. It is an archaism that has nothing to do with Islam. The practice of wearing them is simply a tradition upheld for generations and has no connection with religion. Moreover, the niqab originally was a piece of clothing designed to protect oneself from the sun. Therefore, criticizing this law on absolute religious grounds is not
a substantial argument and embellishes a wrong perception that the French government is hurting Muslim sentiments by prohibiting the right to freedom of religion.”

**L’Union des Organisations Islamiques de France:** It was founded in 1983 by Abdallah Beri Mansour of Tunisia and Mahmoud Zouheir of Iraq. It was founded in Meurthe-et-Moselle, of Grand Est region of France. At present it is the association of more than 250 organization spreading across France. According to the official website of the organization. It is committed to create awareness among Muslims.

“UOIF participates with Muslims in France in an individual and collective awareness of the need for responsible and active citizenship. Its action extends throughout France and its primary purpose is to help Muslims in France to live and practice their religion in serenity, dignity and in harmony with their environment. Since the 1980s, UOIF has worked for the Muslim community by taking into account two main needs: on the one hand, to promote the understanding of Islam through trained religious leaders and worthy places of worship; on the other hand, to unite community actors. The UOIF has therefore worked on the issue of training imams and participated in the creation of the first dedicated training Institute in France. UOIF has also committed to open dignified places of worship and thus allow a serene religious practice. At the same time, the UOIF decided to bring together the Muslim community actors by participating in all the initiatives or by stimulating meeting and reconciliations”.  

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Political Parties of Muslims

The Union Democrats Frenchs Muslims (UDMF):

The Union Democrats Frenchs Muslims (UDMF) was founded in 2012. The reason for the foundation of this party was to provide a political voice to the French Muslims. According to the official website of this political organization

“Following the tragic conclusion that the “Muslims had become a major recurrent political argument in our country. Economic crisis, increase in public Debt, unemployment increase, relocation, fiscal exiles precariousness housing insecurity. Here are the basic issues that affect us all, and much should be the first concerns of our leaders. However, the Muslim remains the sole subjects, both economic and societal, of the French Political calss. The FN made it its sole battleground by selling to the highest bidder, the fear and the danger of the Muslims. He has Islamized all subjects.”

The party claims that there is an injustice prevailing in the society against Muslims and this organization is against such discriminations. This particular party urges Muslims of France to join it

“To protect the most fragile, fight rejection, fight injustice, preserve our ecosystem, prepare the future of our children and safeguard the central role of the family.”

Forty years old Nagib Azergui, a technical consultant is the founder of this party. The party is comparatively small with only around one thousand members. The concentration of the members of this party is a Paris suburb area ‘Bobigny’. The party claims to overturn

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36 Ibid
the ‘veil ban’. It has put its candidates in the local elections but could not get success. It succeeded in taking many votes from the Green Party.

The Equality and Justice Party (PEJ) is the first political organization of Turkish origin Muslims in France. The party claims to be concerned with the rights of discriminated people in France. It contested its candidates in 2015 Provincial General Assembly elections. The party could not get success in these elections. According to the President of the Party Sakir Colak the party is committed to defend the rights of Muslims discriminated in France.

One can conclude that the situation for Muslim women in France is not as good as the condition of Catholic women. The efforts of European Union for gender equality and for integration of minorities are on their way. The role of Muslim organisations is also not too significant to make the circumstances better for this section of society.