

French Mayor Says Islam Will Be Banned in France by 2027

Robert Chardon, mayor of the town of Venelles in southern France, is in hot water with his own political party after predicting the end of Islam in his country.

"The religion of Islam will be banned in France on Oct. 18, 2027," Chardon tweeted on May 14, adding that any adherents of the religion should be "immediately escorted to the border."

He also argued for the abolishment of France's law on secularism, a tenet that has its roots in the anti-establishment ideals of the French Revolution. In keeping with the country's longer history of religious roots, Chardon advocated an amendment to the nation's constitution specifically stating that "the republic favors the practice of the Christian faith."

For his comments, Chardon is likely to be expelled from his party, the Union for a Popular Movement, France's main conservative opposition party.

"I have called for the expulsion procedure to be started for these absurd statements that in no way reflect the values and program of the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP)," said the party's vice president, Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, to L'Agence France Presse (AFP).

France is home to the largest population of Muslims in western Europe, according to the *Express Tribune*. The country's 7 million Muslims also make up the largest religious minority in the nation.

Fresh on the minds of many French citizens is the January terrorist attack on the Paris headquarters of *Charlie Hebdo*, a satirical magazine. The attack, which was perpetrated by a

pair of Muslim brothers upset over a cartoon in the magazine, killed 12 and injured a further 11.

Since the attacks, "Islamophobic" actions have soared, according to the National Observatory Against Islamophobia. Meanwhile, the continual spread and brutality of ISIS throughout the Middle East, North Africa and beyond, has raised the specter of fear across the country.

Some Muslims in France see Chardon's remarks as an opportunity to leverage more power for themselves.

"We are interpreting this as a great thing," said Mehdi Meftah, founder of Parti des Indigènes de la République (PIR), a political party focused on the interests of Muslims, said of the comments. "We, [French Muslims] are more and more visible. We have our mobilizations. We have our visions of what France should be."

Doubling down on their growing influence in France, Meftah claims that Chardon's comments are indicative of politicians feeling threatened by Muslims' increasing strength in the country.

"We are here to stay," Meftah said. "Nothing can change that reality."