

In the second week of December, news appeared in the French and international media of some restrictions by the French government on Islamic schools with a stop to funding for Muslim high schools. The information, worthy of further study, refers to a more complex affair which concerns more generally the relationship between the assimilationist conception of the principle of secularism expressed in France and the consequent state attitude towards the religious dimension in public spaces, in particular, in reference to the Muslim religion.

The news concern in particular the Averroès high school located in Lille, whose educational offer includes, in addition to the ordinary curricular subjects of the French school curriculum, also Islamic subjects such as the teaching of the Muslim religion and Arabic language courses. This private school, opened in 2003 and which has accessed state funding since 2008, with its 800 students, represents the largest private religious education institution in the country. The high school is located in the Northern Prefecture, on the borders of Belgium, in a region characterized by a high density of Muslim population, resident in the Western European state with the highest presence of Muslims, estimated by accredited demographic institutes at 10% of the total population (Pew Research Center).

It should be highlighted that accessing a contract with the State by private educational institutions, as happened with the Averroès institute, means obtaining advantages, above all of a financial nature. In fact, the salaries of teachers, selected on the basis of national competitions similar to those of their colleagues who teach in the public sector, are paid entirely by the Ministry of Education, while local administrations are responsible for the management and maintenance of school buildings. On the other hand, the managements of educational institutions must respect the state programs and the school calendar established at central level and must follow ministerial directives.

In this complex scenario, a ministerial inspection of the Averroès high school takes place, which at the beginning of the 23/24 school year found some educational, administrative and financial irregularities, such as the adoption of extremist texts, financing operations that are not very transparent if not illicit activities and some management irregularities, also indicating that the pedagogical contents of the institute do not reflect republican values. Indeed, the high school had already had a dispute with the administration during 2019, after the disbursement of subsidies was blocked due to non-transparent financial transactions with Qatari funds, a situation later unblocked by the administrative judiciary.

Therefore, based on the report of the commission, which suggested by a large majority (with the consent of 16 members and the abstention of 9) to terminate the agreement, the Prefect decided to terminate the contract by also closing the credit line.

The inspection, seen by some as a simple routine, was considered by others to be the expression of a particular intention to withdraw from relations.

It should in fact be noted that the number of private Muslim institutes under state contract is small, with 4 schools and a total of 74 teachers compared to the approximately 9000 Catholic institutes and 130 joint Jewish schools contracted by the State. Nonetheless, this inconsistent reality is indeed particularly problematic.

As is known, in France the relationship with Islam and Muslims is a sensitive area, also by virtue of the national "de combat" characterization of secularism, which seeks the neutralization of common spaces through an invisibility of religion in the public dimension , which is cyclically punctuated by exercises of force and consequent controversies and protests, especially regarding the display of religious symbols. In fact, the teaching segment does not escape this particularly heavy climate, as the affair of the Averroès high school clearly indicates, a sector which has already received attention several times due to the work of discouraging people from wearing "Islamic" veils, and in particular from the ban on abayas and qamis introduced at the beginning of the 23/24 school year by a ministerial circular, then confirmed by the Council of State.

Vasco Fronzoni



COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE DES AVOCATS



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AVOCATS

COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE DES AVOCATS DE L'ASSOCIATION AVERROËS

L'association saisira la justice en référé dès réception du courrier de résiliation et saisit déjà le défenseur des droits.

Les avocats et l'association tiendront une conférence de presse mercredi 13 décembre à 11h30 à l'étude Bourdon & associés
156, rue de Rivoli – 75001 PARIS

Paris, le 11 décembre 2023

Les avocats soussignés déplorent la divulgation par la presse de la résiliation du contrat d'association qui lie le lycée AVERROËS à l'Etat alors même que ce courrier de résiliation, à la date de ce communiqué, ne leur est pas parvenu.

La méthode qui a été ici voulue est tout à fait détestable.

Elle s'inscrit dans le prolongement de l'attitude absolument partisane dont a fait preuve le Préfet lors de la réunion de la commission de concertation pour l'enseignement privé qui s'est tenue le 27 novembre.

Le lycée Averroès est aujourd'hui la cible de multiples propos et rumeurs, malheureusement relayés par les pouvoirs publics, totalement diffamatoires et mensongers qui visent à occulter la réalité d'un lycée républicain, musulman, d'excellence, de surcroît le plus contrôlé de France.

Devant cette chronique annoncée d'une résiliation qui était d'ores et déjà décidée, les avocats soussignés ont reçu pour instruction d'introduire tous les recours qui s'imposent, y compris en urgence afin de voir suspendue puis annulée la décision du Préfet,

Ils annoncent également avoir saisi, dès le 6 décembre 2023, le Défenseur des droits concernant le traitement administratif inique dont fait l'objet le lycée AVERROËS de Lille.

Une conférence de presse des avocats et de l'association AVERROËS se tiendra au Cabinet BOURDON & ASSOCIES ce mercredi 13 décembre 2023 à 11h30.

William Bourdon et Vincent Brengarth
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