The impact of counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policies on Muslim populations in France

A QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

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Draft Executive Summary in English

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I. Muslims in France : a diverse and discriminated population.

- This study is based on a sample of 927 interviews drawn out of a total pool of 8,300. 426 respondents who self-identified as "Muslim" compose the "Muslim group". 501 respondents representative of the French population compose the "control group".

- The Muslim sample differs from the control group by age (the Muslim sample is younger), occupation (the Muslim group has more children and students, fewer retirees, more employees and more workers) by their religious practice (more practicing) and by their political views (more to the left).

- Muslims show, as a whole, as much (or slightly more) trust in most institutions of the French state and society (army, welfare, school, local authority, justice, etc) as the control group. Similarly to the control group, they place politicians and the media at the bottom of the scale. The police and the media are the institutions which receive a lower score from the Muslim respondents than the control group.

- Muslims feel discriminated against in all the areas covered by this survey (health, school, housing, police, employment, daily life) and in a much larger proportion than the control group : 2.2 times more when searching for a house; 3.2 times more at school; 5.3 times more when interacting with the police.

II. Individual experience: a similar exposure to counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation, but the feeling of being deliberately selected and badly treated by the authorities

- On the whole, the a similar number of respondents from the Muslim group and the control group have declared having been in contact with counter-terrorism (contacts with law enforcement) and counter-radicalisation (contacts youth and social workers).

- The Muslim group reports being even slightly less in contact with the police and the gendarmerie than the control sample. Young Muslim men declare however being twice as much in contact with educators.

- Muslims and non-Muslims consider contact with educators and social workers justified as a whole. Police checks appear however less justified to Muslims, who feel significantly less well treated than the control group.

- A large number of Muslim respondents claim to feel deliberately selected in interactions with antiterrorist officials, most often because of their origin or skin color (2.5 times more than the control group).

III. The perception of being a community targeted by counter-terrorism

- Muslims and non-Muslims do not differ significantly when asked if counter-terrorism policies provide them with a sense of security. Both groups find the policies moderately effective (average score of 5.9 on a scale of 0 to 10).

- Answers, however, vary according to age: young Muslims feel less safe than non-Muslims of the same age, while Muslims aged 45-64 feel more safe than non-Muslims in the same age category.

- Very few Muslims and non-Muslims believe that counter-terrorism has an impact on their privacy. This feeling is more present among young people.

- Two-thirds of Muslims and three-quarters of control group respondents believe that counter-terrorism targets mostly certain groups. Half of the respondents consider that this choice concerns the groups of a particular religion.

- A larger number of Muslim respondents (almost double) find that this targeting is not justified (34.4% Muslim group versus 15.1% control group). Conversely, fewer Muslims find this targeting rather or very justified (31,9% Muslim group against 43.5% control group).

IV. The strong impact of counter-terrorism on behavior

- About one in three respondents of the Muslim group "avoid saying what they think" about controversial issues related to foreign policy (30.6%) or societal issues (30.5%). This response is however similar to that of the control group (respectively 25.9% and 28.7%). Self-censorship is therefore widely diffused, and slightly higher among the Muslim group.

- On the other hand, 79.8% of the Muslim group and 84.4% of the control group have not changed their habits when it comes to online privacy. The minority that claims to be careful is however twice as important among the Muslim group (9.2% against 5%).

- Counter-terrorism has little impact on the more visible aspects of religion such as clothing (traditional dress, veil or headscarf). 86.7% of Muslims declare not having changed the way they dress. However, the minority who responds positively (8.5%) is 5 times larger than the control group (1.6%).

- More than a third of the Muslim group (38.5%) no longer read or watch certain media because of their treatment of Muslims. This concerns young people in particular (41.9%). The figure increases further (43.7%) when it comes to media coverage of terrorism issues.

- About a quarter of respondents (26.1%) say they are careful with what they say to educators and social workers for fear of being discriminated against. This figure is lower for doctors and nurses (19.7%).

- In addition, 41.7% of Muslims between the ages of 45-64 claim to ask their children to "be careful with what they say at school", in order to avoid being discriminated against.

- Finally anti-terrorism has a significant impact on Muslim charities: almost a third of Muslims (36.9%) say "think twice about donating to a charity".

V. Discrimination : a source of withdrawal and loss of trust

- Being discriminated against in the last five years has a negative impact consistently on trust scores in institutions: the more a person has been discriminated against, the less trust they have in institutions - across all institutions.

- Although this general observation concerns both the Muslim group and the control group it is systematically more pronounced among the former.

- It is not religion, age, social class or gender that significantly changes trust scores, but discrimination.

- Muslims who have been discriminated against are more likely to change their behavior in the face of counter-terrorism. The higher propensity of Muslims to change their behavior is explained by the overrepresentation of Muslims among the victims of discrimination in general.

VI. Recommendations

- Muslims in France do not form a homogeneous community. In many respects they are not distinguishable from the control group. On the other hand, they are more widely discriminated against.

- Tackling discrimination appears as priority to establish the legitimacy of an counter-terrorist policy respectful of civil liberties.

- Tackling discrimination appears as priority so as not to squander the "trust capital" of Muslims in France towards political institutions and French society.

- It is necessary to continue reflecting on the modalities of appeased relations between law enforcement and the public.

- The media have a role to play in preventing the discrimination of Muslims in France