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# Living together

Case studies of the extent and ways in which interreligious associations in France  
promote human rights and democracy

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*Words like “freedom,” “justice,” democracy” are not common concepts; on the contrary, they are rare. People are not born knowing what these are. It takes enormous and, above all, individual effort to arrive at the respect for other people that these words imply.*

*James Baldwin*

## ○ Abstract

In multi-religious and multi-cultural modern societies, the interreligious dialogue can be used as an instrument of diplomacy at the international, national and local level, to ensure peace and social cohesion, promote the right of religious minorities and the freedom of thought, conscience and religion but also to transmit the values of democracy in order to strengthen the living together. In France, interreligious associations operate in the framework of *laïcité*<sup>1</sup>, entrenched in the 1905 law that institutionalized the separation of the state and the churches, and under the auspices of religious institutions sometimes criticized for not implementing human rights. This thesis analyses how and to what extent four French interreligious associations promote human rights and democracy.

The first part of the thesis explains how the different historical, political and social contexts, impacts the human right approach of the various interreligious organizations created since the end of the Second World War. From the Philo-Semitism and the Jews-Christians' dialogue established just after the war, to the end of the French decolonization in the 1960's when North African Muslim and Jewish immigrants settled down in France, inaugurating a Christianity/Islam relationship, and the latest development in 1990's when the three Abrahamic religions collaborate, history shows an evolution in the ways human rights are encompassed.

The second part analyses the four case studies. The *Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France* uses interreligious dialogue to reconcile Christians and Jews, fighting against past and present anti-Semitism. The *Fraternité d'Abraham* gathers Christians, Muslims and Jews to promote peace in the Middle East and some economic and social rights. The last case studies are the *Amitié Judéo-Musulmane de France* and C.I.E.U.X. Created in the 2000's, the two associations emphasize the values of democracy and human rights. They address minorities and the youth especially, but use different methods to fight against discrimination and achieve the living together.

Finally, this thesis analyses the outcomes suggesting avenues for future research about how the state of France increasingly supports interreligious initiatives to promote human rights and democracy, thus maybe developing what may be called a new *laïcité*.

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<sup>1</sup> I have chosen to keep the French expression *laïcité* as it refers to specific model of secularism.

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o **Index**

<b>List of Abreviations</b> .....	VII
<b>CHAPTER 1 – Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1.    The central research question.....	8
1.2.    Methodological approach.....	9
1.3.    State of research on human rights and interreligious dialogue.....	10
<b>CHAPTER 2 – Historical evolution of the interreligious dialogue in France</b> .....	12
2.1.    After the holocaust.....	13
2.2.    The North African immigration.....	16
2.3.    The struggle of multi-religions France.....	20
<b>CHAPTER 3 – Analysis of four interreligious associations</b> .....	22
3.1. <i>l’Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France</i> .....	24
3.2. <i>La Fraternité d’Abraham</i> .....	34
3.3. <i>L’Amitié Judéo-Musulmane</i> .....	43
3.4.    C.I.E.U.X.....	52
3.5.    Comparison: Four associations and human rights promotion.....	61
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	64
Bibliography.....	67

○ **List of Abbreviations**

- UN.** - United Nations
- UDHR.** - Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- ECHR.** - European Convention on Human Rights
- ICCPR.** - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- ICESCR.** - International Covenant on Economic, Social and cultural rights
- UNESCO.** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNHRC.** - United Nations Human Rights Council
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- AJCF.** - Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France
- A.J-M.F.** - Amitié Judéo Musulmane de France
- C.I.E.U.X .** - Comité Interreligieux pour une Ethique Universelle et contre la Xénophobie
- ICCJ.** - International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ)

## ○ CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The aim of the thesis is to reveal to what extent four interreligious associations in France promote human rights and democracy using interreligious dialogue as a medium between diverse religious communities, between the secular State and religious institutions, between the citizens and the clergy, between the youth and democracy. The analyse is set in the context of the French *laïcité* and compares the different human rights approaches entrenched in interreligious association various historical, social and political context, from the end of the Second World War until today.

On January 7<sup>th</sup> and November 13<sup>th</sup> 2015, France was rattled by several terrorist attacks, killing 17 persons at *Charlie Hebdo* and the *Hypercashier* followed by the assassinations of 130 people in Paris's streets and *Bataclan* concert hall a few month later. The immediate political response came from president François Hollande declaring the state of emergency<sup>2</sup> few hours after the November 13<sup>th</sup> attacks<sup>3</sup>, applying Article 16 of the French Constitution and according extended powers to the president<sup>4</sup>. During the 24 months that the state of emergency lasted, many human rights observers, including Amnesty International<sup>5</sup>, denounced a security deviance, warning about the instrumentalization of the state of emergency to implement counter-terrorism measures in a discriminatory manner specifically targeting Muslims. It is not the first time France's government is accused of prejudice on the basis of religion. On the 'burqa ban law'<sup>6</sup>, the Constitution Council received a referral, pursuant to paragraph 2 of Article 61 of the Constitution, from the President of the National Assembly and the President of the Senate, pertaining to the Act prohibiting the concealing of the face in public. The Council approved the law defending that it was not made 'on

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<sup>2</sup> State of emergency is provided for by Law no. 55-385 of 3 April 1955 for an initial duration of 12 days

<sup>3</sup> Speech by the president François Hollande before a joint session of the parliament (Versailles, 16 November 2015) < <https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/security-disarmament-and-non-proliferation/events/events-regarding-defence-and-security/article/speech-by-the-president-of-the-republic-before-a-joint-session-of-parliament>> Accessed on 8 July 2019

<sup>4</sup> Article 16 of the French Constitution (4 October 1958)

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty international report, 'Upturned lives, the disproportionate impact of France's State of emergency' (4 February 2016) < <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR2133642016ENGLISH.pdf>> Accessed on 7 March 2019

<sup>6</sup> Loi n°2010-1192 du 11 octobre 2010 interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public [Law No. 2010-1192 of October 11, 2010, Banning Concealment of the Face in Public Places]



the principle of secularism but on public safety and the minimum requirements of life in society'<sup>7</sup>. Following up, some human rights organizations seized the European Court of Human Rights. The ECtHR rejected part of the arguments of the French State, pointing out in particular that, contrary to what it stated, neither respect for equality between men and women nor respect for the dignity of persons can legitimately motivate a ban on the wearing of the full veil in the public space. However, the court considered that 'the full-face veil represented a denial of fraternity, constituting the negation of contact with others and a flagrant infringement of the French principle of living together (*le "vivre ensemble"*)'<sup>8</sup>.

While France and Europe refer to the living together as a democratic principle to defend '*liberté, égalité, fraternité*', the rights of religious minorities are at stake, also impacting social cohesion. At the European level, there is an evolution to appreciate intercultural dialogue, as a medium to 'enhance diversity while sustaining social cohesion'<sup>9</sup> and that includes discussions with religious organisations. The 2010 Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue – 'Living together as equals in dignity', concludes that the intercultural approach 'offers a forward-looking model for the management of cultural diversity, to safeguard and develop human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and to promote mutual understanding and respect'<sup>10</sup>.

In his presentation to the ministries of the Council of Europe, during the European Conference on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue<sup>11</sup>, the French sociologist Jean-Paul Willaime presented the religion matter as a new question of public policy for States. He exposed several European modern issues, notably the resurgence of anti-Semitism, the questions relating to Islam, the management of religious diversity in schools and hospitals due to clothing and food

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<sup>7</sup> Conseil Constitutionnel, decision n° 2010-613 DC (7 Octobre 2010)

<sup>8</sup> S.A.S vs France, ECHR 191 (1 July 2014) 'The Court emphasised that respect for the conditions of "living together" was a legitimate aim for the measure at issue and that, particularly as the State had a lot of room for manoeuvre ("a wide margin of appreciation") as regards this general policy question on which there were significant differences of opinion, the ban imposed by the Law of 11 October 2010 did not breach the Convention.'

<sup>9</sup> Council of Europe, White paper on intercultural dialogue 'Living together as equals in dignity' (2010)

<[https://www.coe.int/en/web/education-and-religious-diversity/resources/-/asset\\_publisher/fQaSCQ5K0u4n/content/white-paper-on-intercultural-dialogue-living-together-as-equals-in-dignity-2010-?inheritRedirect=false](https://www.coe.int/en/web/education-and-religious-diversity/resources/-/asset_publisher/fQaSCQ5K0u4n/content/white-paper-on-intercultural-dialogue-living-together-as-equals-in-dignity-2010-?inheritRedirect=false)> Accessed on 10 July 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, 'la dimension religieuse du dialogue interculturel : quel dialogue entre le Conseil de l'Europe, les communautés religieuses et la société civile ?' (European Conference, 'the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue', SanMarino 23-24 April 2007) <

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32226939\\_La\\_dimension\\_religieuse\\_du\\_dialogue\\_interculturel\\_quel\\_dialogue\\_entre\\_le\\_Conseil\\_de\\_l'Europe\\_les\\_communautes\\_religieuses\\_et\\_la\\_societe\\_civile](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32226939_La_dimension_religieuse_du_dialogue_interculturel_quel_dialogue_entre_le_Conseil_de_l'Europe_les_communautes_religieuses_et_la_societe_civile)> Accessed on 10 July 2019

requirements, ethical questions about child conception, gay marriage and same-sex parenting, the debates, polemics and violence around the caricatures of Muhammad and the question of the balance between freedom of expression and religious freedom<sup>12</sup>. He brought to light the background of the living together, social cohesion, and the adherence to common values beyond an increased cultural and religious pluralism<sup>13</sup>. Jean-Paul Willaime also stressed the need for ecumenical and interreligious actions in a pluralistic society ‘to peacefully manage a diversity that excludes extremism’<sup>14</sup> (my translation).

## **Europe**

To implement the need of modern European pluralistic societies, the member States of the Council of Europe expressed their support for ‘intercultural and interfaith dialogue to prevent conflicts and ensure integration and cohesion in society’<sup>15</sup>, following the 2005 Warsaw Summit<sup>16</sup>. The European States undertook several actions, like annual meetings with the representatives of religious and non-religious groups, debating on issues such as ‘migration and refugees; preventing radicalisation leading to terrorism and violent extremism; the role and place of religion in public space; interaction between culture and religion; freedom of religion in the world; the role of young people in the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue; the role of the media; and education’<sup>17</sup>.

By proposing, in its Article 17-3, to maintain ‘an open, transparent and regular dialogue with churches, the philosophical and non-confessional organizations’ of the member States, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union<sup>18</sup> reflects a secular recognition of the religions adopted by most of the European countries, ‘a model in which religion should not exercise a hold on social

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid 3

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 5

<sup>14</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, *Sociologie des religions* (Que sais-je collection 1995)

<sup>15</sup> European Parliament, ‘Religion and human Rights’ briefing (EPRS December 2018) <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/at-your-service/files/be-heard/religious-and-non-confessional-dialogue/events/en-20181204-eprs-briefing-religion-and-human-rights.pdf>> 3. Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>16</sup> Council of Europe, Warsaw Declaration (Warsaw Summit 16-17 May 2005) <[https://www.coe.int/t/dcr/summit/20050517\\_decl\\_varsovie\\_EN.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dcr/summit/20050517_decl_varsovie_EN.asp)> §6. Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>17</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, ‘la dimension religieuse du dialogue interculturel : quel dialogue entre le Conseil de l’Europe, les communautés religieuses et la société civile ?’ (European Conference, ‘the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue’, SanMarino 23-24 April 2007) <[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32226939\\_La\\_dimension\\_religieuse\\_du\\_dialogue\\_interculturel\\_quel\\_dialogue\\_entre\\_le\\_Conseil\\_de\\_l'Europe\\_les\\_communautes\\_religieuses\\_et\\_la\\_societe\\_civile](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32226939_La_dimension_religieuse_du_dialogue_interculturel_quel_dialogue_entre_le_Conseil_de_l'Europe_les_communautes_religieuses_et_la_societe_civile)> 3. Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>18</sup> Article 17 §3 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (26 October 2012)

life, but can play its full role as a spiritual, ethical, cultural or even political resource in the broadest sense, with respect for individual autonomy and democratic pluralism'<sup>19</sup> (my translation).

### **State-religion relation**

Professor of Law Norman Doe describes religion as a 'transcendent belief in divinity and action based upon it in the world'<sup>20</sup> and specifies that each European country has a different definition influenced by singular histories and socio-political contexts, thus impacting the State-religion relations.

European countries have established different domestic legal frameworks to deal with religions, in compliance to the evolution of international laws, associating religions with a certain number of missions of public interest. Norman Doe emphasizes that 'the most prevalent model in Europe is the so-called hybrid or cooperation model, characterized by a basic separation of State and religion and the secular posture of the State, but where relations with a religious organization and matters of common concern are addressed usually in the form of agreements'<sup>21</sup>. He distinguishes between three models: 'State-Church system (in the Protestant north and Orthodox south-east), separation (in France, Ireland and the Netherland), and the cooperation system (in the Catholic Mediterranean, Baltic and central-eastern Europe)<sup>22</sup>. With a secular constitutional posture, the non-intervention in religious affairs and the promotion of religious freedom for all, the state of France 'is seen as a separation system par excellence'<sup>23</sup>. However, Norman Doe points out that, in the case of France, the separation actually 'generates cooperation between State and religion'. Despite religious groups functioning as 'private law associations'<sup>24</sup>, 'assistance is given to the maintenance of historic places of worship, and funding is available for spiritual assistance in schools, hospitals, prisons, and the armed forces, moreover, the president is consulted about the appointment of Catholic bishops'<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Yves Lambert, 'Le rôle dévolu à la religion par les Européens', in *Sociétés contemporaines*, (2000, N°37) 11-33.

<sup>20</sup> Norman Doe, *Law and Religion in Europe, A comparative introduction* (Oxford University Press 2011) 23

<sup>21</sup> Ibid 35

<sup>22</sup> Ibid 39

<sup>23</sup> Ibid 34

<sup>24</sup> Loi du 1er juillet 1901 relative au contrat d'association

[The Non-Profit Organizations Law of 1901]

<sup>25</sup> Norman Doe, *Law and Religion in Europe, A comparative introduction* (Oxford University Press 2011) 24

## Laïcité

Entrenched in the 1905 *Loi de Séparation des Églises et de l'État*<sup>26</sup> separating the State from the Churches<sup>27</sup>, the French concept of *laïcité* emerged after the 1789 Revolution and tend to be differentiated from secularism by scholars as 'the State plays a more active role by excluding religious symbols from the public domain and thus confines religion to the private domain'<sup>28</sup>. However the two concepts of secularism and laïcism both include the separation of political authority from religious authority, and freedom of religion.

According to the definition given by the sociologist Jean-Paul Willaime, the French *Laïcité* is based on three essential principles:

- 1) the freedom of conscience, thought and religion which includes the freedom to have or not to have a religion, to change one's religion and to practice one's religion (subject only to the respect of laws, democracy and human rights) (my translation);
- 2) the equal rights and duties of all citizens regardless of their religious or philosophical identifications, ie the non-discrimination by the state and the public authorities of persons according to their religious affiliation or philosophical (my translation);
- 3) the respective autonomy of the State and religions, which means both the freedom of the State in relation to religions and the freedom of religions in relation to the State, in respect of laws in a democracy (my translation)<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat (9 December 1905)

<sup>27</sup> The law refers to *Eglises*, which is 'churches' in English. The expression 'Churches' refers to the Duhaime's Law Dictionary definition: 'A charitable association of persons organized for the advancement of religion and for the conduct of religious worship, services or rites, and that is permanently established'.

<sup>28</sup> Gulce Tarhan, 'Roots of the Headscarf Debate: Laicism and Secularism in France and Turkey' in *Journal of political inquiry* (4, 2011) 1

<sup>29</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, 'la dimension religieuse du dialogue interculturel : quel dialogue entre le Conseil de l'Europe, les communautés religieuses et la société civile ?' (European Conference, 'the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue', SanMarino 23-24 April 2007) <

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32226939\\_La\\_dimension\\_religieuse\\_du\\_dialogue\\_interculturel\\_quel\\_dialogue\\_entre\\_le\\_Conseil\\_de\\_l'Europe\\_les\\_communautes\\_religieuses\\_et\\_la\\_societe\\_civile](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32226939_La_dimension_religieuse_du_dialogue_interculturel_quel_dialogue_entre_le_Conseil_de_l'Europe_les_communautes_religieuses_et_la_societe_civile)> 5. Accessed on 10 July 2019

For Jean-Paul Willaime, there is a power struggle encompassed in the French conception, an 'ideological *laïcité* whose antireligious dimensions contrasts with an empirical *laïcité* that respects religious freedom and is capable of recognising the positive contributions of religions to civilisation'<sup>30</sup> (my translation).

The French legislation ensures freedom of conscience and religion while establishing the ideological and philosophical neutrality of the State, public services and its personnel, favouring no worship as all are equal in rights and duties, acknowledging religious pluralism: '*l'Etat ne reconnaît, ne subventionne, ni ne salarie, aucun culte*'<sup>31</sup>. The principles of *laïcité* are reinforced in the Article 1 of the 1958 French Constitution, '*la France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale*'<sup>32</sup>. The *laïcité* has undergone a series of evolutionary stages and have to face new challenges induced in modern religion pluralism<sup>33</sup>.

The Commission established in 2003 by the president Jacques Chirac and led by ombudsman Bernard Stasi was set to reflect upon the application of *laïcité* to bring new perspectives. The report of the Stasi Commission reorganized 'the public sphere in France which qualifies as a move towards multiculturalism'<sup>34</sup>:

*La laïcité distingue la libre expression spirituelle ou religieuse dans l'espace public, légitime et essentielle au débat démocratique, de l'emprise sur celui-ci, qui est illégitime. Les représentants des différentes options spirituelles sont fondés à intervenir à ce titre dans le débat public, comme toute composante de la société*<sup>35</sup>

In light of the latest demonstrations of violence in France, from the riots in France's suburbs in 2005 leading the government to declare the state of emergency, to the 2015 terrorist attacks in

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<sup>30</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, 'The Paradoxes of Laïcité in France', in *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life: Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford* (Eileen Barker ed. 2008) 41–54

<sup>31</sup> Loi du 9 décembre 1905 concernant la séparation des Eglises et de l'Etat (9 December 1905)

<sup>32</sup> Article 1 of the French Constitution : 'La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale'. (4 October 1958)

<sup>33</sup> Elise Roumeas, 'What is religious pluralism' in *Religious pluralism: A resource book* (Sciences Po 2015) 11-17

<sup>34</sup> Murat Akan, 'Laïcité and multiculturalism: The Stasi Report in context' in *The British journal of sociology*, (Volume 60, Issue 2, June 2009) 237-56

<sup>35</sup> Commission de réflexion sur l'application du principe de laïcité dans la République, Rapport au Président de la République (La Documentation Française, 11 December 2003) <<https://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/var/storage/rapports-publics/034000725.pdf>> 33. Accessed on 10 July 2019

Paris and the yellow vest protests ongoing across the country for the past ten months, the State of France has come to realize the depth of social issues rooted in social, cultural and religious long-lasting discriminations. In order to safeguard the living together and rebuild social inclusion, where human rights are implemented equally for all and one's potential is acknowledged by social institutions in the web of social relations in a community, new partnerships with civil society organizations are coordinated. The State notably supports projects where religion and politics collaborate in the framework of the new *laïcité positive*<sup>36</sup>. This new legitimacy is granted by the state more favourably to interreligious association because they are seen as 'religiously correct'<sup>37</sup>.

As the religious communities 'articulate the local and the global, the particular and the universal (...) they contribute to the socialization and moral education of the members, and participate in the formation of individual and collective, social and territorial identity'<sup>38</sup> (my translation). Deeply rooted on the local level, religious communities can promote solidarity, gathering citizens willing to engage in community involvement. While collaborating within the structure of non-profit organizations, religious communities meeting in interreligious associations, together with agnostic and atheists, have the potential to promote democracy and human rights by cause of their essence. Through mutual knowledge and collaborative social actions, the members challenge their different visions of the world, practising interreligious dialogue defined as 'a sustained conversation between parties who are not saying the same thing and who recognize and respect contradictions and mutual exclusions between their various ways of thinking'<sup>39</sup> by the theologian John Taylor.

### **Interreligious association**

The concept of interreligious association refers to a dynamic of cooperation between different religions encompassed in the juridical form of a non-profit organization known in France as

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<sup>36</sup> Discours de Latran, Speech of the French president Nicolas Sarkozy addressed during the visit of the pope and calling for the respect of the *laïcité positive* (12 Septembre 2008) < <http://discours.vie-publique.fr/notices/077003995.html>> Accessed on 4 July 2019

<sup>37</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 289

<sup>38</sup> Jean-Paul Willaime, 'la dimension religieuse du dialogue interculturel : quel dialogue entre le Conseil de l'Europe, les communautés religieuses et la société civile ?' (European Conference, 'the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue', SanMarino 23-24 April 2007) <

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32226939\\_La\\_dimension\\_religieuse\\_du\\_dialogue\\_interculturel\\_quel\\_dialogue\\_entre\\_le\\_Conseil\\_de\\_l'Europe\\_les\\_communautes\\_religieuses\\_et\\_la\\_societe\\_civile](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/32226939_La_dimension_religieuse_du_dialogue_interculturel_quel_dialogue_entre_le_Conseil_de_l'Europe_les_communautes_religieuses_et_la_societe_civile)> 4. Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>39</sup> John V. Taylor, 'The Theological Basis of Interfaith Dialogue' in Gerald Anderson and Thomas Stransky (eds.) *Mission trends No.5, Faith meets Faith*, (Paulist/Eerdmans, 1981) Chapter 1

‘associations’, in accordance with the law 1901<sup>40</sup>. The legislation was established few years before the 1905 law on separation of Churches and State. Interreligious associations are usually registered under the statutes of both the laws of 1901 and 1905, to be able to receive public subsidies and exercise non-cultural activities like humanitarian or social actions, or to be allowed to publish newsletter and editorials. Associations in general and inter-religious ones in particular, focus on creating a space for individuals with similar values to gather and debate in order to understand and learn about each other perspectives.

## 1. The Central Research Question

The overall purpose of the thesis is to observe how the interreligious associations initiatives promote human rights and democracy in France, by studying four cases and compare their different approaches. By analyzing their local, national and, to some extent, international actions, the thesis explores the contributions of the *Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France*, the *Fraternité d’Abraham*, the *Amitié Judéo-Musulmane de France* and C.I.E.U.X. I specifically choose to look into the practices and methods of those four because each association belongs to a different historical, political and social context and demonstrates the evolution of the relationship between religion and State, and religion and human rights, emphasizing the specificities of their interreligious nature where religious communities gather with agnostics and atheist to implement peace and human dignity. According to the professor of human rights and former special rapporteur on freedom of religion, Heiner Bielefeldt:

*Just like respect, human dignity is also an indispensable keyword in the context of human rights. Both of these terms are closely intertwined and, in a way, mutually presuppose each other. Respect for human dignity constitutes the very precondition for any normative interaction, thus having an axiomatic status in all areas of morality and law. (...) The concept of human dignity has a long history and strongly resonates within most different religious, philosophical and cultural traditions,*

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<sup>40</sup> Loi du 1er juillet 1901 relative au contrat d'association  
[The Non-Profit Organizations Law of 1901]

*including the Bible, the Qur'an, the work of Confucius or Stoic philosophy, to mention just a few examples*<sup>41</sup>

Interreligious associations indeed consider the universal values of human rights overlapping their own, 'already embedded into their understandings rather than something separate that needs to be integrated'<sup>42</sup>. The idea of one person's responsibility for satisfaction of another person's needs, acknowledging the claims of the poor, may provide the necessary cultural basis for the struggle for economic, social, and cultural rights<sup>43</sup>.

The central question in this study is: *To what extent and in what ways do some interreligious associations in France promote human rights and democracy?*

The research aims to include both economic, social and cultural rights as well as civil and political rights, while the focus is put on the freedom of thought, conscience and religion (UDHR, ICCPR, Article 18).

## **2. Methodological approach**

In order to explicate to what extent, how and why the four interreligious associations selected, promote human rights and democracy, this thesis will give a brief outline of the historical background and then describe and analyse empirical data collected online for each association. Special attention is paid to the aims said to be pursued, especially those found stated in the statutes; the members' identities, and the actions stipulated as well as actually conducted in the context of the associations' work.

I organize the case studies chapter following the different categories of the interreligious associations' activities: conferences; local meetings; cultural animations; publications; programs

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<sup>41</sup> Heiner Bielefeldt, Freedom of Religion or Belief—A Human Right under Pressure in *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* (Volume 1, Issue 1, April 2012) 15–35

<sup>42</sup> Tanya B. Schwarz, *Faith-based organizations in transnational peacebuilding* (Rowman&Littlefield 2018) 5

<sup>43</sup> Bas de Gaay Fortman, 'Religion and Human Rights: A Dialectical Relationship' in *E-International Relations*, 5 December 2011) < <https://www.e-ir.info/2011/12/05/religion-and-human-rights-a-dialectical-relationship/>> Accessed on 10 July 2019



targeting youth etc. In addition, in order to observe their abilities to defend human rights in the modern context, I will also look at the demonstrations and reactions to events that impacted French society as a whole such as the ‘*mariage pour tous*’ regarding same the sex marriage law voted in 2013<sup>44</sup>, the January and November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, the so-called refugees’ crisis, or the latest racist and anti-Semitic crimes committed in France.

As the time and the resources are limited to conduct the thesis, I constrict the research to desktop study and literaturerights. No fieldwork and no interviews with actors.

### **3. State of research on human rights and interreligious associations**

The abundant academic literature on the relations between religions and human rights led me to look into the particular case of how interreligious dialogue can be a tool for the promotion of human rights and democracy when applied to the context of national non-profit organizations. As the thesis is not limited to consider exclusively the promotion of the freedom of thought, belief and religion, but encompasses the promotion of all human rights, I had to carefully select academic resources. In addition, interreligious initiatives multiplied since the end of the Second World War, simultaneously to the institutionalisation of human rights, both at the national and international level, driving many scholars to produce hundreds of articles related to the topic. Considering this thesis narrowed research question, I choose to focus on few academic resources exactly addressing the core of my study.

The French sociologist Anne-Sophie Lamine’s book, *La cohabitation des Dieux*<sup>45</sup>, greatly supports the development of the thesis, especially on the historical overview chapter, while she goes through the creation and development of interreligious movements in France since the early 1930’s. Her work is the first survey conducted on interreligious organizations and actors in France. Anne-Sophie Lamine in-dept study brings to light the impact of international and national politics on interreligious initiatives and thus on how they promote democracy and human rights according to the historical and social context. By demonstrating how secularism and religious identities are

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<sup>44</sup> Gouvernement de la République Française, ‘Faire progresser l’égalité des droits: Le mariage pour tous’ (updated on 15 May 2017) <<https://www.gouvernement.fr/action/le-mariage-pour-tous>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>45</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004)

challenged by the modern religious pluralism and oscillate between fear, misunderstanding and recognition, she also seizes the evolution of the relation between the State and interreligious associations toward more collaboration. The book was published in 2004 and thus, allowed me to update some of her findings, in order to remain accurate to the present situation.

On the case of France, I used Cambridge professor Samuel Sami Everett's article on *Interfaith dialogue and faith based social activism in a state of emergency: Laïcité and the crisis of Religion in France*, published in 2018<sup>46</sup>. He conducted a 20 months ethnographic research in Paris, Lyon and Marseilles over a period of three years, collecting multiple interviews of members in grassroots interfaith initiative and faith-based social action organisations. Samuel Sami Everett's article is particularly relevant to understand the French political context of the post 2015 terrorist attacks and thus emphasizes both the evolution of the interreligious associations discourse toward the promotion of human rights and democracy to rebuild the living together principle; and the growing collaboration between the State and those civil society organisations.

A part from those two major contributors to the study, I have consulted many other articles written by French and European academics, specialized in religion and human rights, as well as video material in reference to religious minorities discriminations. To keep track of the latest reports and declarations from the United Nations Human Right Council, the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the government of France, I have consulted human rights related documentations.

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<sup>46</sup> Samuel Sami Everett, 'Inter-faith dialogue and faith-based social activism in a state of emergency: Laicite and the crisis of religion in France', in *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (June 2018)

## ○ CHAPTER 2

### **Historical evolution of the interreligious movements in France**

This chapter presents, based upon Anne-Sophie Lamine research<sup>47</sup>, the emergence and development of the interreligious movements in France, and how the different historical, political and social contexts impact the human right approach of the various interreligious organizations created since the end of the Second World War.

In their quest for mutual knowledge and recognition, Jews, Christians, Muslims and more recently Buddhists, have developed relationships according to their own specificity, history and size. From being constricted to the effort of few pioneers, belonging to the political, intellectual and clerical elites, to addressing a broader audience, interreligious movements have evolved through the French society's changes, taking part in the fight against discrimination, the promotion of equality between religious' communities and the advancement of human dignity. Considering sociologist Anne-Sophie Lamine's perspective<sup>48</sup>, this chapter will follow her categorizations of the development of interreligious movements through three main stages:

1. The beginnings of interreligious relations are motivated by philo-Semitism with the Jews-Christians dialogue, particularly in reaction to the holocaust and Orientalism<sup>49</sup> with the initiation of the Muslims-Christians dialogue.
2. The second stage is the period of decolonization with the Algerian war and until the installation of Muslims in France.
3. The third stage begins with the first Gulf War, during which multi-religious declarations for peace have sometimes led to the creation of associations. At the same period, the social exclusion affecting immigrant populations in France and the repercussions of the conflict in the Middle East, give further motivation to create many local associations in order to build the living together.

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<sup>47</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004)

<sup>48</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 16

<sup>49</sup> Quoting Edward W. Said definition of Orientalism as 'A western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient', Desmond Hosford and Chong J. Wojtkowski, *French Orientalism: Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2010) 1-11

## 1. After the holocaust

Before the Second World War, Jews were victims of discrimination and racism was widespread in the French society. Anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism<sup>50</sup> were embedded in the hearts and minds of many Catholics throughout history, accusing the Jews of deicide although it was never an official doctrine of Catholicism. In reaction, some interreligious movements were created in the 1930's. *L'Union civique des croyants*, founded in 1934, brought together Catholic, Protestant and Jewish writers, philosophers and clerics, to organize conferences against racism, anti-Semitism and anticlericalism. In 1936, the Ukrainian Jewish intellectual, Elizabeth Belenson initiated *le foyer Judéo-Chrétien*, setting up monthly conferences to alternately study the Jewish Torah and the Christian Bible. In 1941, *l'Amitié Chrétienne*, was founded in Lyon, to help Jews to escape France during the Nazi occupation. During this period before the war, the attitude of Christians towards the Jews began to change and the mission gradually transformed into solidarity<sup>51</sup>.

After the holocaust, many returning survivors were blamed for their 'passivity' while imprisoned, 'the murdered Jewish masses were posthumously reproached to have surrendered to death "like sheep going to slaughter"'<sup>52</sup>. This 'secondary victimization'<sup>53</sup> adds to the trauma of the Shoah, creating the conditions for the emergence of new Judeo-Christian relations in reaction to the remaining of anti-Semitism even after the war. Some Christians realized that active or passive collaborations with the collaborationist Vichy regime had been facilitated by a catechism strongly tinged with anti-Judaism. This led to the creation of *l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France* in 1948, with some of the same people who participated in pre-war Jewish-Christian groups.

In his book, *Jésus et Israël*<sup>54</sup>, the French historian Jules Isaac demonstrates that anti-Semitism has developed especially in Christian culture countries, challenging the accusation of deicide and

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<sup>50</sup> Anti-Semitism refers to the aversion toward the Jews as a racial group, while anti-Judaism is the aversion toward the Jewish religion

<sup>51</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 20

<sup>52</sup> Jean-Michel Chaumont 'Du culte des héros à la concurrence des victimes' in *La victimologie : quelques enjeux* (Volume 33, numéro 1, spring 2000) 175

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Jules Isaac, *Jésus et Israël* (Albin Michel, 1948)

recalling the Jewish origins of Jesus. Jules Isaac's 'Eighteen Proposals', to be found in the conclusions of the book, constitutes a central working document and largely inspired the 'Ten-points of Seelisberg'<sup>55</sup> on Jewish-Christian relations adopted at the Seelisberg international conference in Switzerland in 1947. At the initiative of British and American Judeo-Christian organizations, the conference brought together 70 participants from 19 countries to combat anti-Semitism and initiated a new era in the Jewish-Christian dialogue<sup>56</sup>. A year later, Jules Isaac founded *l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France* (AJCF) together with a small group of Protestants, Catholics, Orthodox and Jews. Apart from the Paris office, local sections were created in Nice, Lyon, Montpellier, Nîmes and Lille.

### **The Second Vatican Council**

On 13 June 1960, Jules Isaac presents the 'Ten-points of Seelisberg' to the Catholic Pope John XXIII, asking him to take the text into consideration while preparing the second Vatican Council that took place between 1962 and 1965<sup>57</sup>, a major turning point in the recognition of other religions by the Catholic Church, thus impacting interreligious movements development.

In his encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, translated as 'Peace on Earth', John XXIII publicly acknowledged for the first time and in the name of the Catholic Church, the UN and its achievements, urging 'may the day be not long delayed when every human being can find in this organization an effective safeguard of his personal rights; those rights, that is, which derive directly from his dignity as a human person, and which are therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable'<sup>58</sup>. This encyclical, was followed by the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, radically affecting Catholics' vision of the world, considering non-Christian religions as equals, especially in the two paragraphs dedicated to Judaism and Islam.

*The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life,*

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<sup>55</sup> The Ten Points of Seelisberg issued by the International Council of Christians and Jews on August 5, 1947 <[https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research\\_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/Seelisberg.htm](https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/cjl/texts/cjrelations/resources/documents/interreligious/Seelisberg.htm)> accessed on 14 June 2019.

<sup>56</sup> Christian Rutishauser, 'The 1947 Seelisberg Conference: The Foundation of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue' (Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College 2007)

<sup>57</sup> John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, MA Belknap/Harvard University Press 2008)

<sup>58</sup> Pope John XXIII 'Pacem in Terris, on establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity and liberty' (11 April 1963) § 145 <[http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-xxiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem.html)> accessed on 14 June 2019

*they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men*<sup>59</sup>

The declaration greatly impacted interreligious movements, emphasizing the importance of the dialogue between Christians and other religions, acknowledging religious pluralism and leading to the multiplication of peace organizations where different religious communities collaborate<sup>60</sup>.

### **Orientalism and the Muslims-Christians dialogue**

As per Desmond Hosford and Chong J. Wojtkowski's book on French Orientalism<sup>61</sup>, 'in canonic nineteenth-century French Orientalism, Europe, although recognizing the origins of its civilizations in the East, nonetheless presumes itself to have surpassed them'. This supremacist attitude of the Arab world in general and the French colonies in particular, could partly explain the struggle of the French Muslims for the recognition of their religion until recently. The interest for Eastern religions and for Islam first manifested among some intellectuals and clerics that decided to overcome stereotypes through dialogue and mutual knowledge<sup>62</sup>.

The Catholic scholar of Islam Louis Massignon, is one of the key personality of the 20<sup>th</sup> century interreligious movement's development, and he played a central role in spreading knowledge on Islam. He believed 'the Qur'an, Muhammad, the Arabic language, and Sufism, could be sources of inspiration even for the Church'<sup>63</sup>. In 1954, he initiated the Christian and Muslim pilgrimage of the 'Forgiveness of the Seven Sleepers'<sup>64</sup>. Every year until today, hundreds of pilgrims meet at the

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<sup>59</sup> Pope Paul VI, 'Nostra Aetate, Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions' (28 October 1965) §2 <[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html)> accessed on 14 June 2019

<sup>60</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 29

<sup>61</sup> Desmond Hosford and Chong J. Wojtkowski, *French Orientalism: Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2010) 3

<sup>62</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 28

<sup>63</sup> Christian S.Krokus and Sidney H. Griffith, *The Theology of Louis Massignon: Islam, Christ, and the Church*, (Catholic University of America Press, Washington, D.C., 2017) 1–17

<sup>64</sup> Manoël Pénicaud, 'L'«hétérotopie» des Sept Dormants en Bretagne' in *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* n° 155, (2011) 131-148 <<https://www.cairn.info/revue-archives-de-sciences-sociales-des-religions-2011-3-page-131.htm>> accessed on 14 June 2019

ancient chapel of the Seven Sleepers in the hamlet close to the village of Old Market in Brittany. This is the oldest organized Islamic-Christian activity in France<sup>65</sup>.

## 2. The North African immigration

The second stage of the development of interreligious movements, as per Anne-Sophie Lamine's book<sup>66</sup>, happened in the context of the Algerian war and later on, when North African Muslims and Jewish families settled down in France and sometimes struggled to have their religion recognized. Yet, some intellectuals and clerics demonstrated the wish to expand knowledge on Islam, especially Christians, greatly influenced by the Second Vatican Council declaration, acknowledging the rights of religious minorities.

### 1960's

Some of the leaders of the interreligious dialogue were born in Algeria or have a link with the Algerian war as soldiers or human rights' defenders, like the writers Pierre-Henri Simon<sup>67</sup> and Yvonne Chauffin<sup>68</sup> who denounced the torture committed by the French army. Believing in vulgarizing mutual knowledge and recognition between Christians and Muslims, and capitalizing on their experiences of the Arab World, they founded the first Muslim-Christian association, *l'Amitie Islamo-Chretienne* in 1966. They organized monthly meetings where Christian and Muslim speakers elaborated on different subjects, before an audience of a hundred people, including writers, academics, ambassadors, and some students. The group ceased its activities in the mid-1980s.

Anne-Sophie Lamine<sup>69</sup> presents the 1967 Six Days' war between Israel and several Arab's countries over Palestine, as a schism in the Judeo-Christian and Muslim-Christian relations. Some Jews blamed the Christians for supporting the Palestinians and at the same time, the rapprochement between Christians and Muslims intensified over the Middle East's conflict. The French Muslims and Jews of France related to the pain of the Palestinian and the Israelis for different reasons. Being

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<sup>65</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 27

<sup>66</sup> Ibid 29

<sup>67</sup> Pierre-Henri Simon, *Contre la torture* (Editions du Seuil 1957)

<sup>68</sup> Yvonne Chauffin, *La Marion du Faouët* (first published by editions La Table Ronde 1960)

<sup>69</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 31

already discriminated against socially and economically, the Muslims identified with the Palestinians cause, while the Jews were defending their sacred land. Yet, in this geopolitically troubled context, some personalities, already involved in interreligious movements, founded *la Fraternité d'Abraham* to open the dialogue between Jews, Christian and Muslims of France. Anne-Sophie Lamine<sup>70</sup> reveals that two of the founders, the Jew André Chouraqui and the Catholic priest Jean Danielou both attended the conclusions of the Second Vatican Council in Rome and were inspired by the *Nostra Aetate* declaration on the need of a dialogue between Christians and non-Christians. Soon joined by the Jesuit Michel Riquet, the writer Jacques Nantet, and the rector of the Great Paris Mosque Si Hamza Boubakeur, *la Fraternité d'Abraham's* first collective action was to raise funds to be shared between the victims of both sides of the Six Days' war.

### 1970's

Anne-Sophie Lamine explains that, due to the end of the Algerian' war and the decolonization in Morocco and Tunisia, successive waves of Jewish and Muslim immigrants arrived and settled down in France, challenging the authorities in its duty to respect and promote religious pluralism. Christian institutions got involved, offering 'literacy classes and support Maghreb's immigrants facing expulsion or lend them places of prayer'<sup>71</sup>. The Protestant Federation of France created two commissions: 'Church and People of Israel' in 1968 and 'Church-Islam' in 1971, while the Catholics established the *Comité épiscopal pour les relations avec le judaïsme* in 1969 and the *Secrétariat épiscopal pour les relations avec l'islam* in 1973. The new entities participated in changing the view of the Christians towards Muslims, not only considering them as an act of charity, as they were seen as the poorest workers at the time.

On the international level, the first international Muslims-Christians meeting, the *Séminaire du dialogue Islamo-Chrétien*, was held in Tripoli in 1976, organized by the Holy See and the Libyan's authorities<sup>72</sup>. Following this reunion, a small group of Christians and Muslims intellectuals and academics launched the *Groupe de recherches islamo-chrétien* (GRIC). They are dedicated to 'the

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid 32

<sup>71</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 35

<sup>72</sup> Jean-Paul Charnay, 'Le dialogue Islamo-Chrétien, Essai d'interprétation psycho-stratégique' in *Politique étrangère*, n°3 (1976) 219



search for the truth, the mutual understanding and the joint work, in the service of the men in our time'<sup>73</sup>.

### The 1980's

According to Lamine<sup>74</sup>, in the context of the Iranian revolution, the riots happening in Algeria and the series of terrorist attacks in Paris in 1986, the 1980's marked a turning point in the perception of Islam in France. Debates related to integration, including the first case on the headscarf<sup>75</sup> created a schism in French society. In reaction to the rise of racism, religious institutions joined forces with human rights organizations such as the *Ligue des droits de l'homme* and the *Ligue internationale contre le racisme et l'antisemitisme* to publish *l'Appel Commun à la Fraternité*<sup>76</sup> in 1985, a statement against racism calling to:

*affirm the respect of others, stand in solidarity with people and minorities who are victims of discrimination, to give them the same rights to justice, freedom and equality and promoting the living together in tolerance of difference and mutual enrichment for a better society from which immigrants cannot be excluded*

At the international level, 1986 is the International Year of Peace, and Pope John Paul II held the 'World Day of Prayer for Peace of Assisi', attended by more than 130 religious representatives including major religious leaders, calling for peace, unity and interreligious understanding. The joint prayer meeting became a model for many Catholics who developed local replicas in their own countries.

### 1990's

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<sup>73</sup> *Groupe de recherches islamo-chrétien*, Article 2 of the statutes < <https://gric-international.org/les-statuts/> >

<sup>74</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 39

<sup>75</sup> In October 1989, two Muslim students are excluded from a college in the Paris region because they refused to remove their veil in class. Avis n° 346.893 of the Conseil d'Etat, Assemblée générale (27 November 1989), 'Il est interdit conformément aux principes rappelés par les mêmes textes et les engagements internationaux de la France toute discrimination dans l'accès à l'enseignement qui serait fondée sur les convictions ou croyances religieuses des élèves' §1.2

<sup>76</sup> Kay Chadwick, *Catholicism, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century France* (Liverpool University Press 2017) 186

Lamine continues the historical study, explaining that in France, the *Conférence mondiale des religions pour la paix* (CMRP) was founded as part of the World Conference on Religion and Peace<sup>77</sup>. They collaborate with various United Nations' agencies on human rights, cultural pluralism, migration, economy, environment or spirituality. Its members are lawyers, political scientists, economists or theologians. During the 1990s, CMRP envisioned interfaith activities from a social perspective and organized two symposiums on AIDS and development.

The ADIC, *Association pour le dialogue islamo-chrétien et les rencontres interreligieuses*, is created in 1989, and considers that 'all religions, spiritual groups and cultures share (the values of) compassion, forgiveness, justice, charity and peace'<sup>78</sup>. Some of its members founded the *Groupe d'Amitié Islamo-Chrétien* (GAIC). They pledge to 'promote ethical and spiritual values common to Islam and Christianity within the framework of an open secularism'<sup>79</sup>. The inauguration took place in the French Senate in front of politicians, ambassadors and governments' representatives, gathered to discuss the question: 'Can France be a privileged meeting place between Islam and Christianity?'<sup>80</sup>. Yearly, the GAIC federates the *Semaine des rencontres islamo-chrétiennes* (SERIC), where interreligious' initiatives are organized across France during a week to engage in a dialogue for 'constructing a world of peace and justice'<sup>81</sup>.

Lamine concludes, resuming the history from the end of the Second World War to the late 1980's, where the members of interreligious associations were mostly Catholic and educated, except for the local groups, where participation is much more diverse in religions, ages and social backgrounds<sup>82</sup>. The founders are intellectuals, clerics and theologians, who have often been involved in the Second World War or the Algerian war, acting as human rights defenders for freedom and against torture, engaged for peace and promoting the rights of religious minorities<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>77</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 41

<sup>78</sup> ADIC's Objectives < <http://www.adicinterfaith.org/mission---values---goals---objectives.html#>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>79</sup> GAIC's presentation < <https://www.legaic.org/contact.php3>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>80</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 45

<sup>81</sup> *Semaine des rencontres islamo-chrétiennes* (SERIC) < <http://www.semaineseric.eu/spip.php?rubrique5&lang=en>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>82</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 48

<sup>83</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 77

They sometimes influenced religious' institutions at the highest level, like during the preparation of the Second Vatican Council, supporting religious pluralism and impacting politics<sup>84</sup>.

### 3. The struggle of multi-religion France

The third stage or generation of interreligious movements in France, according to Anne-Sophie Lamine, is characterized of hundreds of local associations<sup>85</sup> promoting peace and the living together against the rise of racism. The contexts are these:

In 1991, the Gulf war raised fears that Arab solidarity might provoke intercommunal clashes in France. The interreligious dialogue is not only about mutual knowledge anymore, it is seen as a medium to reassure and prevent the risk of tensions between communities as 'ethnic conflict is less common or more easily contained where there are strong civil society groups bringing together people from different communities (...) forming bridges across ethnic and cultural divisions'<sup>86</sup>. The *Charte du culte musulman en France* was proclaimed in 1995 by the Rector of the Great Mosque of Paris:

*The social cohesion and the national unity of France are not based on an ethnic group or a religion, but on a will, that of living together and sharing the principles of the Declaration of Human and Citizen Rights and republican values<sup>87</sup>*

From the two Gulf wars in 1991 and 2003, the assassination of monks during the civil war in Algeria<sup>88</sup>, the rise of violence in Palestine, the attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York, and the most recent terrorist attacks in France, those events reinforce the domestic issues especially in

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<sup>84</sup> John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, MA Belknap/Harvard University Press 2008)

<sup>85</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 2

<sup>86</sup> Report of the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe, 'Living together, combining diversity and freedom in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Europe' (2011) 41

<sup>87</sup> Article 4 of the 'Charte du culte musulman en France' by the Conseil Représentatif des Musulmans de France (10 December 1994) < <https://www.mosqueedeparis.net/lacharte/>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>88</sup> On the night of March 26-27, 1996, seven monks of the Trappist Order of Tibhirine Atlas Abbey near Medea, Algeria, were abducted during the Algerian civil war. They were detained for two months and found dead at the end of May 1996.

relation to Islam. Muslims integration is publicly debated, like in the case of the headscarf issues, pointing out to the state difficulties to fulfil its duty in regards to religion pluralism, safeguarding the freedom of thought, conscience and religion<sup>89</sup>.

This context encourages civil society to take actions. It reinforces the need for promoting tolerance and interreligious dialogue, acknowledging the multi-religious society and taking into consideration the needs of minorities. The rejection of terrorism and its amalgamation with Islam boosts the necessity to show a possible understanding. In that regard, interreligious associations are increasingly used as a medium between the secular state of France and the citizens to maintain social cohesion<sup>90</sup>. This tendency is enhanced after the 2015 terrorist attacks where the state actively promotes the living together principle, especially encouraging interreligious actions in schools<sup>91</sup>. The idea of justice and human dignity has led to relations of solidarity.

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<sup>89</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 80

<sup>90</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, 'Mise en scène de la « bonne entente » interreligieuse et reconnaissance' in *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 129 (2005) 83-96.

<sup>91</sup> Since 2015, interreligious associations like C.I.E.U.X. and *Amitié Judéo Musulmane de France*, have established partnerships with the French ministry of Education notably to organize workshops to combat prejudices.

## ○ CHAPTER 3

### **Analysis of four French interreligious associations**

Both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and cultural rights, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights, recognize universal 'rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person'<sup>92</sup>. Recalling the words of professor Heiner Bielefeldt, 'the concept of human dignity has a long history and strongly resonates within most different religious, philosophical and cultural traditions, including the Bible, the Qur'an, the work of Confucius or Stoic philosophy, to mention just a few examples'<sup>93</sup>. Considering that interreligious associations and human rights principles share the same core values, the four non-profit organizations selected as case studies, can act upon the promotion of several human rights.

The non-discrimination on the basis of religion as stated by Article 2 of both Covenants, and Article 14 of the ECHR, interreligious dialogue can promote tolerance and support the state's positive obligation to respect and protect religious pluralism as mentioned in Article 18 of the ICCPR and Article 9 of the ECHR<sup>94</sup>.

By creating a space where the members can freely meet, debate and express ideas and convictions, interreligious associations practice the right of peaceful assembly as per Article 21 of the ICCPR and Article 11 of the ECHR, and the right of freedom of expression content in Article 19 of the ICCPR and Article 10 of the ECHR. This participates to the 'meeting of the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society' as per Article 21 of the ICCPR mirroring the living together principle.

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<sup>92</sup> UN General Assembly, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, and *International Covenant on Economic, Social and cultural Rights*' preambles (16 December 1966). Council of Europe, *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, as amended by Protocols Nos. 11 and 14 (4 November 1950)

<sup>93</sup> Heiner Bielefeldt, 'Freedom of Religion or Belief—A Human Right under Pressure' in *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* (Volume 1, Issue 1, April 2012) 15–35

<sup>94</sup> Council of the European Union, EU Guideline on the promotion and protection of the freedom of religion or belief. 'Religious tolerance as well as inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue must be promoted in a human rights perspective, ensuring respect of freedom of religion or belief, freedom of expression and other human rights and fundamental freedoms'. (Foreign Affairs Council meeting Luxembourg, 24 June 2013) <<https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/137585.pdf>> §61. Accessed on 10 July 2019

In the context of the recent terrorist attacks in France, perpetuated in the name of religious dogma, the right to life, liberty and security of the Article 6 of the ICCPR and Article 2 of the ECHR can similarly be considered as entrenched in the non-violence core of interreligious non-profit organizations' actions.

Among their community of members, interreligious associations exercise fundamental right as well as they challenge their own religion limitations when using 'a shared public language' that 'provides a medium to clarify agreements and differences on important moral issues, serving as a basis for cooperative actions'<sup>95</sup>.

Considering the hundreds of interreligious associations existing in France today<sup>96</sup>, attesting a significant re-engagement of faith-based civil society initiatives since 2015<sup>97</sup>, this research analyses the human rights approach of four case studies, namely, the *Amitié Judeo-Chrétienne de France* (AJCF), the *Fraternité d'Abraham*, the *Amitié Judeo Musulmane de France* (AJMF), and the *Comité Interreligieux pour une Ethique Universelle et contre la Xénophobie* alias C.I.E.U.X.

In order to determine to what extent, how and why those associations promote human rights and democracy, this analysis is conducted through a human rights-based approach, through the observance of the history of each association; the aims pursued, especially those found in the statutes; the members' identities; and the actions conducted in the context of the work of the association. I classify the different activities under the category of conferences, local meetings, cultural animations, publications,; programs targeting the youth, and, in order to illustrate how the four associations demonstrate their engagement in the promotion of human rights and democracy, I observe the reactions to the latest headlines where French society was impacted as a whole, namely the '*mariage pour tous*', regarding the same sex marriage law voted in 2013<sup>98</sup>, the January and November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, the so-called refugees' crisis, and the recent racist and anti-Semitic crimes committed in France. Following the analysis of each association, a comparative section illuminates to what extent their different approaches contribute to the promotion of human rights and democracy.

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<sup>95</sup> William Vendley, quoted by Tanya B.Schwarz in *Faith-based organizations in transnational peacebuilding* (Rowman&Littlefield 2018)141

<sup>96</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 2

<sup>97</sup> Samuel Sami Everett, 'Inter-faith dialogue and faith-based social activism in a state of emergency: Laicite and the crisis of religion in France', in *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (June 2018) 438

<sup>98</sup> Gouvernement de la République Française, 'Faire progresser l'égalité des droits: Le mariage pour tous' (updated on 15 May 2017) <<https://www.gouvernement.fr/action/le-mariage-pour-tous>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

## *Amitié Judeo-Chrétienne de France*

### **Historical background**

After the end of the Second World War and the acknowledgment of the genocide committed against the Jewish people, the association *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France* (AJCF) was created in 1948 by Catholics, Protestants and Jews already involved in interreligious dialogue before the war started. One of the key members and founders was the French historian, Jules Isaac. In his book *Jésus et Israël*<sup>99</sup>, he concluded with ‘Eighteen points’<sup>100101</sup> to serve ‘as a basis for correcting Christian teaching about Jews’ (my translation).

### **Aims**

Inspired by Jules Isaac’s work, AJCF’s statutes refers to his proposals in the second article of its ‘principles and goals’<sup>102</sup> (my translation), defining AJCF’s essential task as to ‘ensure that between Judaism and Christianity knowledge, understanding, respect and friendship are substituted for age-old misunderstandings and traditions of hostility’ (my translation). However, the aims of the association go beyond mutual knowledge, pledging ‘to fight against past, present and future anti-Semitism’ and to ‘help modern society to orient itself’ through a ‘civic and spiritual’ assistance<sup>103</sup> (my translation). By referring to the word *civic* (AJCF Statutes, Article 2 §1) AJCF places itself in the context of *laïcité* and ensures that its activities respect the 1905 law stating the independence of the state from religion<sup>104</sup>. Furthermore, the association asserts, both in its statutes<sup>105</sup> and on the page related to its creation<sup>106</sup>, rejecting ‘any tendency to syncretism and every kind of proselytism’ (my translation), complying with the French Republic democratic’s principles entrenched in the law and

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<sup>99</sup> Jules Isaac, *Jésus et Israël* (Albin Michel, 1948)

<sup>100</sup> AJCF, ‘Aout 1947, les 18 propositions de Jules Isaac’ < <https://www.ajcf.fr/les-18-propositions-de-jules-isaac.html> > Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>101</sup> Those proposals constitute a central working document and largely inspired the ‘Ten-points of Seelisberg’ on Jewish-Christian relations adopted at the Seelisberg international conference held in Switzerland in 1947, also inspiring the Catholic Pope John XXIII while he was preparing the Second Vatican Council in 1960.

<sup>102</sup> AJCF, Statutes, (27 May 2007) < <https://www.ajcf.fr/IMG/pdf/Statuts2.pdf> > Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid*, Article 2 §1

<sup>104</sup> Law on the separation of the State from the Church (9 December 1905. updated 20 June 2019) <

<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT00000508749> > Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>105</sup> AJCF’s statutes, (27 May 2007) Article 2 §3 < <https://www.ajcf.fr/IMG/pdf/Statuts2.pdf> > Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>106</sup> Florence Taubmann, ‘Une petite histoire de l’Amitié judéo-chrétienne de France’ < <https://www.ajcf.fr/Une-petite-histoire-de-l-Amitie-judeo-chretienne-de-France.html> > Accessed on 15 June 2019

reflected in the Constitution<sup>107</sup>. AJCF engages its activities to ‘combat anti-Semitism, racism and all hatred of other cultures and religions’<sup>108</sup> (my translation), thus supporting some of the anti-discrimination principles of human rights.

AJCF is part of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) network with 40 national offices worldwide. Each branch has a specific history and belongs to a different political and historical context. In the light of the information collected, AJCF’s objectives don’t appear to embrace as much human rights as the ICCJ’s.

The international organization directly refers to human rights multiple times especially in the 1965 Declaration *Nostra Aetate* where it says that ‘the Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men<sup>109</sup> or harassment of them because of their race, skin colour, social status, or religion’<sup>110</sup>; and in the ‘Twelve points of Berlin’<sup>111</sup> declaration signed in 2009 which serves as the backbone of the ICCJ. Acknowledging the prejudices contained in the bible against the Jews, the International Council agrees on ‘cleansing Christian liturgies of anti-Jewish perspectives’<sup>112</sup>. Similarly, in the part of the text dedicated to the Jews and the Jewish communities, the ICCJ asks for ‘grappling with Jewish texts that appear xenophobic or racist’<sup>113</sup> and demands ‘equality of rights for all minorities including the Christians living in Israel’<sup>114</sup>. In the context of the Israel-Palestine war, they ask for ‘peace’ and ‘respect of the international law and the human rights’<sup>115</sup>. Further down, they integrate ‘Asia, Africa and Latin America, and feminist, liberationist or other approaches’<sup>116</sup> in their commitment to theological discourses accuracy. The ICCJ invites the members of the Christians and Jews communities worldwide to defend ‘social justice’, promoting ‘everyone’s political, economic and social well-being’ and ‘striving for equal rights for

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<sup>107</sup> French Constitution, ‘La France est une République indivisible, laïque, démocratique et sociale. Elle assure l’égalité devant la loi de tous les citoyens sans distinction d’origine, de race ou de religion. Elle respecte toutes les croyances’. Article 1 (4 October 1958) < <https://www.conseil-constitutionnel.fr/le-bloc-de-constitutionnalite/texte-integral-de-la-constitution-du-4-octobre-1958-en-vigueur#article-premier-591> > Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>108</sup> AJCF’s statutes, Article 2 §2 (27 May 2007) < <https://www.ajcf.fr/IMG/pdf/Statuts2.pdf> > Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>109</sup> At the time the word ‘men’ included both gender

<sup>110</sup> Declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religion *Nostra Aetate* proclaimed by the pope Paul VI (28 October 1965) §5

<sup>111</sup> International Council of Christians and Jews, ‘The Twelve Points of Berlin’ (5 July 2009) < [http://iccj.org/fileadmin/ICCJ/pdf-Dateien/A\\_Time\\_for\\_Recommitment\\_engl.pdf](http://iccj.org/fileadmin/ICCJ/pdf-Dateien/A_Time_for_Recommitment_engl.pdf) > Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, Point 1

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. Point 6

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. Point 8

<sup>115</sup> International Council of Christians and Jews, ‘The “Twelve Points” of Berlin (2009) Point 4’ < [http://iccj.org/fileadmin/ICCJ/pdf-Dateien/A\\_Time\\_for\\_Recommitment\\_engl.pdf](http://iccj.org/fileadmin/ICCJ/pdf-Dateien/A_Time_for_Recommitment_engl.pdf) > Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Point 3



all people, regardless of their religion, gender or sexual orientation'<sup>117</sup>. The Committee also pledges to 'enhance dialogue with political and economic bodies' and therefore presents the association as a political and diplomatic force acting to support the 'urgent need for justice in the global community'<sup>118</sup>. Finally, the ICCJ engages in the battle for ecological rights when it stands that 'every human being is involved in the preservation of the Planet', and thus shall 'bring it to bear in public discourse and action'<sup>119</sup>.

Both the AJCF and the ICCJ affirm their shared goals to increase mutual knowledge and fight anti-Semitism and racism but the international Committee embraces a much broader perspective on human rights compared to the French national branch, whose missions appear to be more limited. However, as a member of ICCJ, AJCF participates to the General Assembly where all the declarations are voted on collectively, including the 'Twelve points of Berlin', and therefore potentially subscribes to the same values, calling for political, humanitarian and social action in order to act towards peace, justice, and human rights.

## Members

Since its creation in 1948, many personalities have assumed the presidency of AJCF and therefore impacted its development. Apart from the founders of AJCF, the two historians Jules Isaac and Jacques Madaule, and the poet Edmond Fleg, the presidents were all men, humanists<sup>120121</sup>, resistance fighters during the Second World War and later on engaged in the denunciation of torture<sup>122</sup> perpetuated during the Algerian war. In 2008, the female pastor Florence Taubmann took over, followed by the current president of AJCF, the theologian Jacqueline Cuche.

Each of the 50 AJCF local offices has its own history and development according to the personalities of its president and members. Some are involved in the defence of human rights<sup>123</sup> and

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid Point 10

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. Point 11

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. Point 12

<sup>120</sup> Jacques Madaule was also a member of the French organization for peace, *le Mouvement de la Paix*.

<sup>121</sup> AJCF president Paul Thibaud was a philosopher and the chief editor of the humanist magazine *Esprit*

<sup>122</sup> See Henri-Irénée Marrou, Paul Teitgen, Pierre Pierrard, Paul Thibaud.

<sup>123</sup> At the 2019 General Assembly, held in Rennes, André Héléard, historian and member of the Human Rights League, was invited to give a lecture about the 120th anniversary of the Dreyfus trial and its impact on the life of Victor Basch, leader of the Rennes' *Dreyfusards* and secretary of the local section of the League of Human Rights at the time.

peace<sup>124</sup>. Others safeguard equality between men and women within religious community, expressing their views in public<sup>125</sup> or during conferences<sup>126</sup>. Numerous AJCF local branches are led by women, sometimes identifying as feminists<sup>127</sup>. A few high ranked clerics who are members of AJCF are also public figure and sometimes intervene in the medias on specific topics. The Archbishop Pierre d'Ornellas, for example, coordinated the reflection of the Catholic Church on the revisions of the 2011 bioethics laws<sup>128</sup>. He published the book on Bioethics<sup>129</sup> and set up a debate within AJCF on Science - Bioethics - Religion, asking: 'does the dignity of man imply limits to scientific research?' (my translation). In 2015, he co-wrote another book to reaffirm the brotherhood between Jews and Christians<sup>130</sup>, in reaction to the increase of anti-Semitic actions and threats recorded in France that doubled between 2013 and 2014<sup>131</sup>.

Throughout the development of AJCF, it seems that the national leadership with president as well as the local offices' representatives are mostly clerics and intellectuals, while the members at large are a mix of clergy and lay people with a majority of educated Christians. Locally, the leaders are often a Christian and a Jew holding the presidency together. In 2004, the number of members was about 3 000 people<sup>132</sup>. Instituted as a democratic organization<sup>133</sup>, where its members come from various background and represent Catholics, Protestants and Jews, AJCF's members demonstrate their engagement for peace, fighting against anti-Semitism and prejudices through interreligious dialogue. Individually, they occasionally manifest their support to different causes.

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<sup>124</sup> Jean-Francois Bensahel, president of AJCF Nantes, launched the 'Prix Copernic' since 2012, rewarding a personality, an association or a project engaged in the fight against prejudice and the reinforcement of social cohesion <<https://copernic.paris/fr/accueillir/prix-copernic/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>125</sup> In 2018, Janine Elkouby, president of ACJF Strasbourg publicly condemned French rabbis who were refusing for Jew women to get a religious divorce, called the *guett*, echoing to the Val-de-Marne office initiative where Nissim Sultan and Rabbi Meir Knafo, posted up a public notice in front of the concerned synagogues and on social media calling the community to ban the Synagogue. Add reference

<sup>126</sup> Conference on 'Women in the religions of the Book?' organized by the Val-de-Marne AJCF in 2019

<sup>127</sup> Françoise Kessler, president of AJCF in Vendée is also member of 'le parlement du féminin', a feminist movement <<http://www.femininbio.com/sites/femininbio.com/files/2017/12/manifeste-parlement-du-feminin.pdf>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>128</sup> Law n° 2011-814 on bioethics (7 July 2011)

<sup>129</sup> Pierre d'Ornellas, *Bioethics, Quelle société voulons-nous pour aujourd'hui et demain?* (Balland Publishing, 2019)

<sup>130</sup> Pierre d'Ornellas and Jean-Francois Bensahel, *Juifs et chrétiens, frères à l'évidence. La paix des religions* (Odile Jacob 2015)

<sup>131</sup> Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme, *La Lutte contre le Racisme, l'Antisemitisme et la xénophobie: les Essentiels* (2015) 3.

<sup>132</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 47

<sup>133</sup> AJCF, 'Comité Directeur de l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France' (General Assembly 30 April 2017) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/Comite-Directeur-de-l-Amitie-Judeo-Chretienne-de-France-AJCF.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

## **Actions**

### Conferences and local meetings

AJCF holds monthly conferences and local meetings in town halls, communal rooms, pastoral centres, churches and synagogues. The main focus is usually on theological debates through the study of the holy scriptures of Christian and Jewish in order to find similarities and to increase the knowledge of each community toward the other. Occasionally, some of those conferences invite the AJCF's members to participate in discussions raising themes such as the place of women in religion<sup>134</sup>, with headlines such as 'is religion misogyny?'<sup>135</sup> (my translation) or 'what is the place for women in Judaism and Christianity?'<sup>136</sup>(my translation), and more political matters like 'Which *laïcité*: France and religions'<sup>137</sup> (my translation) or 'the biblical sources of human rights'<sup>138</sup>(my translation).

### Cultural celebrations

Since its creation in 1948, AJCF built a strong relationship with Israelis, especially those involved into interreligious dialogue<sup>139</sup>. The association has established an annual community trips to Israel where AJCF's members meet with local representatives and learn about the history of the region<sup>140</sup>. Locally, the association gather every month for concerts and/or community dinners.

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<sup>134</sup> ACJF, 'Les femmes et le leadership dans le judaïsme' (19 June 2019) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/Les-femmes-et-le-leadership-dans-le-judaisme.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>135</sup> AJCF, 'La religion est-elle misogynie?' < <https://www.ajcf.fr/la-religion-est-elle-misogyne.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>136</sup> AJCF, Conference on 'Quelle(s) places pour les femmes dans le judaïsme et le christianisme?' (16 October 2018) < <https://www.ajcf.fr/Colmar-Programme-des-activites-2018-2019.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>137</sup> AJCF, Conference on 'Quelle laïcité, la France et les religions' (29 May 2012) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/les-mardis-des-bernardins-quelle-laicite-la-france-et-les-religions.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>138</sup> AJCF, Conference on 'Les sources bibliques des Droits de l'Homme' (13 December 2018) < <https://www.ajcf.fr/Jeudi-13-decembre-2018-Les-sources-bibliques-des-Droits-de-l-Homme.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>139</sup> AJCF Award given to Michel Remaud in 2010 <<https://www.ajcf.fr/prix-ajcf-2010-a-michel-remaud-le-dossier-complet.html>> Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>140</sup> AJCF, 'L'AJCF en Israel pour fêter ses 70 ans' (22 October 2019) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/L-AJCF-en-Israel-pour-feter-ses-70-ans.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

## Education of the youth

For the past five years, AJCF organizes the seminar ‘discover Judaism, the Christians are listening’<sup>141</sup> (my translation) where young Christians and Jews meet for five days, experiencing the *Shabbat* day, and commemorating the Vel’ d’Hiv roundup<sup>142</sup>, a way for the old association to keep up with the youth and increase knowledge about each others religions.

## Publications and awards

AJCF publishes a monthly magazine named ‘SENS’, reporting about the activities and discussing the conferences’ headlines, sometimes related to human rights<sup>143</sup> with a historical or theologian approach<sup>144</sup>. Each month, the rubric *Artisans de Paix*, displays a selection of articles related to national or international peace initiatives and interreligious dialogue.

Each year, the AJCF prize awards a Christian or a Jewish person acting in favour of interreligious dialogue. Among the 30 people honoured throughout the years, there are ten Jews, 17 Catholics et three protestants.

## Reactions to headlines

### *#Mariage pour tous*

The only times AJCF refers to the same sex marriage law<sup>145</sup> and engaged in the raging public debate, was through the publication of two articles exposing the views of one of its prominent member, the Great rabbi of France, Gilles Bernheim. Arguing against the law, he judged it illegitimate to make lawful a ‘marginalized behavior’<sup>146</sup> (my translation), explaining that ‘each religion contributed to the debate with its arguments, references and sensitivity (...) for what it sees as the general interest of the nation - not in opposition to the state, the president, or the

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<sup>141</sup> ‘Survol de l’Histoire de l’AJC par Yves Chevalier’ (10 May 2018) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/Survol-de-l-Histoire-de-l-AJC-par-Yves-Chevalier.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>142</sup> The Vel’ d’Hiv Roundup was a Nazi-directed raid and mass arrest of around 13 000 Jews in Paris by the French police, on 16 and 17 July 1942.

<sup>143</sup> AJCF, SENS N°372 ‘Les 10 commandements et les droits de l’homme’ (September – October 2012) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/sens-no372-september-october-2012-the-ten-commandments-and-human.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>144</sup> AJCF, SENS N°390 ‘Blasphème et liberté d’expression’ (June 2014) <<https://boutique.ajcf.fr/sens/390>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>145</sup> Gouvernement de la République Française, ‘Faire progresser l’égalité des droits: Le mariage pour tous’ (updated on 15 May 2017) <<https://www.gouvernement.fr/action/le-mariage-pour-tous>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>146</sup> AJCF, Martine de Sauto, ‘Gilles Bernheim : « Nous avons perdu la compréhension de ce qu’est le sens moral »’ primarily published in *La Croix* ( 5 January 2013) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/gilles-bernheim-nous-avons-perdu-la-comprehension-de-ce-qu-est-le.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

parliamentary majority'<sup>147</sup>(my translation). A few months before, the Great rabbi detailed his considerations in a 25 pages essay<sup>148</sup> addressed to the President and the Prime Minister of France, highly commented in the media at the time and supported by the Catholic pope Benedict XVI.

### #Charlie Hebdo

After the Charlie Hebdo and the *Hypercacher*'s attacks in January 2015<sup>149</sup>, more than 4 million people gathered for a national peace march<sup>150</sup>. Around fifty heads of state and government held hands with French President François Hollande. In that context, the president of the AJCF, published a message, declaring that Jews and Christians 'are deeply attached to freedom, freedom of conscience, freedom of thought, freedom of expression'<sup>151</sup> (my translation) and calling for 'a fraternal dialogue between all, Jews, Christians, Muslims, believers of all religions, agnostics or atheists, (to) eradicate all the germs of hatred'<sup>152</sup>(my translation).

### #13November 2015

Following the attacks in Paris, in the Bataclan concert hall and along several street cafes, as well as at the Saint-Denis football stadium, on the night of 13 November 2015, politicians, religious leaders and human rights organizations unanimously condemned the killings<sup>153</sup>. Like after the Charlie Hebdo deadly events, hundreds of local and national initiatives, meetings and marches<sup>154</sup>, followed

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<sup>147</sup> AJCF, Stéphanie Le Bars, 'Gilles Bernheim : "Benoît XVI a repris à son compte les gestes de Jean Paul II à l'égard du peuple juif"' primarily published in *Le Monde* ( 27 February 2013) < <https://www.ajcf.fr/gilles-bernheim-benoit-xvi-a-repris-a-son.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>148</sup> Gilles Bernheim, 'Mariage homosexuel, homoparentalite, adoption : ce que l'on oublie souvent de dire' (19 October 2012) < <https://www.ajcf.fr/IMG/pdf/Mariage-homosexuel-homoparentalite-et-adoption-Ce-que-l-on-oublie-souvent-de-dire-Essai-de-Gilles-Bernheim-Grand-Rabbin-de-France.pdf>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>149</sup> On 7 January 2015 two gunmen forced their way into the office of the French satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo in Paris, killing 12 people and injured 11 others. Several related attacks followed on 7 – 9 January 2015, including the Hypercacher kosher supermarket siege where a terrorist held 19 hostages, of whom he murdered 4 persons.

<sup>150</sup> 'Contre le terrorisme, la plus grande manifestation jamais recensée en France' in *Le Monde* (11 January 2015) < [https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2015/01/11/la-france-dans-la-rue-pour-defendre-la-liberte\\_4553845\\_3224.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2015/01/11/la-france-dans-la-rue-pour-defendre-la-liberte_4553845_3224.html)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>151</sup> Jacqueline Cuche, 'Communiqué de la présidente de l'AJCF' (8 January 2015) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/communiquede-la-presidente-de-l-a-j-c-f,2218.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>152</sup> 'Attentats à Paris. Communiqué de la Présidente de l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne, Jacqueline Cuche' in *Saint-Mery centre pastoral* (11 January 2015) <<http://saintmerry.org/communiquede-la-presidente-de-lamitie-judeo-chretienne/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>153</sup> On 13 November 2015, a series of co-ordinated terrorist attacks took place in Paris, at the Bataclan concert hall, in the cafés of the neighbourhood and at the football stadium in the northern suburb of Saint Denis. The attackers killed 130 people and injured 413.

<sup>154</sup> Valérie Deymes, 'Marche interreligieuse a Bordeaux, plus de 2000 personnes mobilisées' in *Sud Ouest* (20 November 2015) <<https://www.sudouest.fr/2015/11/20/apres-les-attentats-a-paris-les-images-de-la-marche-inter-religieuse-ce-vendredi-2192367-2780.php>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

the attacks including many interfaith initiatives calling for unity<sup>155</sup>. Numerous mosques<sup>156</sup> and Christian churches also organized ecumenical prayers with local leaders of various convictions to mark the interreligious solidarity with the victims and their families. For the members of interreligious associations, it was also the occasion to demonstrate and explain why their involvement in welding different communities together is crucial to build social cohesion. In that context, the AJCF's president, Jacqueline Cuche, published a message where she pled to preserve humanity, 'avoiding giving way to hatred and fear'<sup>157</sup>(my translation).

### #Refugees

On the issue of the rise of refugees seeking asylum in Europe, the ICCJ President addressed a letter to all the association's national bureaus, to request the members to welcome refugees unreservedly. In France, Jacqueline Cuche, president of AJCF published an article to support solidarity with the refugees<sup>158</sup>. She recalled the words of the Grand Rabbi of France 'the migrants are our brothers in humanity'(my translation), and those of the President of the Lutheran and reformed church institution UEPAL 'with its 510 million inhabitants, Europe will not suffocate under the weight of a few tens of thousands of refugees, but it will suffocate if it is unfaithful to its core values'(my translation). She ended her message by supporting the Pope Francis call, requesting that 'each parish welcomes a family of refugees'(my translation).

### #Racism

AJCF is quite swift to speak up when anti-Semitic acts and crimes are committed. In 2018, together with politicians, artists and other associations, they published a manifesto to condemn the rise of anti-Semitism in France<sup>159</sup>. Sparking a vivid controversy in the media<sup>160</sup>, some French Muslims

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<sup>155</sup> Marie Malzac, 'Attentats de Paris: les initiatives interreligieuses se multiplient pour appeler à l'unité' in *La Croix* (17 November 2015) <<https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Actualite/Attentats-de-Paris-les-initiatives-interreligieuses-se-multiplient-pour-appeler-a-l-unite-2015-11-17-1381449>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>156</sup> 'Veillée interconvictionnelle à la Mosquée Al Mouhssinine' in *l'Echo info* (22 November 2015) <<http://l-echo.info/article/chateauroux/2015-11-22/article-integral-veillee-interconvictionnelle-mosquee-al-mouhssinine>> Accessed on 15 June 2019.

<sup>157</sup> Jacqueline Cuche, 'Communiqué de l'Amitié Judeo Chretienne de France' (15 November 2015) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/Communique-de-l-Amitie-Judeo-2475.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>158</sup> Jacqueline Cuche "' Tu aimeras l'étranger comme toi-même'" <<https://www.ajcf.fr/Tu-aimeras-l-etranger-comme-toi.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>159</sup> Collective authors, *Le Nouvel Antisémisme en France* (Albin Michel 2018)

<sup>160</sup> 'Manifeste contre le « nouvel antisémitisme » : la colère des représentants musulmans' in *Le Monde* (26 April 2018) <[https://www.lemonde.fr/religions/article/2018/04/26/manifeste-contre-le-nouvel-antisemitisme-la-colere-des-representants-musulmans\\_5290949\\_1653130.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/religions/article/2018/04/26/manifeste-contre-le-nouvel-antisemitisme-la-colere-des-representants-musulmans_5290949_1653130.html)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

representatives rejected the accusations made by the co-authors of the book where they imply Islam might feed discrimination against the Jews and therefore support anti-Semitic acts. AJCF did not directly respond to this article but had previously declared rejecting Islamophobia.

AJCF issued many statements<sup>161</sup> each time anti-Semitism hit the headlines in France or abroad, expressing its 'growing concern' and 'horror' and calling on all its members and friends to resist and 'stop the progression of this cancer that is anti-Semitism', claiming that 'the defense of liberty and those of the Jewish community are indissolubly linked' (my translation).

## Conclusion

The *Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France* is one of the oldest interreligious associations in France. Since its creation just after the end of the Second World War, the members have been engaged in the reconciliation process of Christians and Jews, using historical and theological knowledge as a support for interreligious dialogue. Presented as humanists and resistance fighters, the founders defended the right to life against torture.

The fight against anti-Semitism and all forms of racism are the main objectives of the association. While participating to meetings and conferences, members are invited to learn about each other through the study of religious books belonging to Christianity and Judaism tradition. High ranked clergy members and intellectuals usually led the discussions, while debating on religion modern challenges such as the place of women or bioethics.

The local offices compose a solid network where the 3000 members are mostly educated Christians, but, on occasion, they welcome Muslim participants, notably through the allocation of the AJCF yearly prize, rewarding the effort of interreligious dialogue actors across the world.

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<sup>161</sup> Jacqueline Cuhe, 'l'heure est grave' (13 February 2019) <<https://www.ajcf-lyon.org/l-heure-est-grave>> Jacqueline Cuhe, 'Trop c'est trop!' <<https://www.ajcf.fr/Communique-de-l-Amitie-Judeo-Chretienne-de-France.html>> Jacqueline Cuhe, (15 January 2016) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/Communique-du-15-janvier-2016.html>> Jacqueline Cuhe (16 February 2015) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/communique-de-jacqueline-cuhe-presidente-de-l-ajcf.html>> Jacqueline Cuhe (24 July 2014) <<https://www.ajcf.fr/Communique-de-l-Amitie-Judeo-Chretienne-de-France-du-24-juillet-2014.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

While the association works in the framework of *laïcité*, where they shall not intervene in governmental and political issues, the participants do sometimes engage to support or protest when societal matters are rising up in the French society. On the same sex marriage, the *Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France* complied to the official discourse of the Catholic church and the Jewish clergy members, judging the law ‘illegitimate’. After the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, the association pledged for the respect of freedom of conscience, thoughts and expression, supporting the core values of the French democracy. Recalling the words of the Pope, AJCF pled to welcome the refugees arriving in Europe, demonstrating their attachment to the Christian value of charity, de facto defending the right to liberty and security. Finally, the association has been quite swift to speak up when anti-Semite acts and crimes are committed, manifesting its determination to act upon discrimination on the basis of religion and race.

The Christian/Jew interreligious association *Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France* does not promote all the human rights in general but de facto collaborates to the promotion of human dignity by emphasizing on peace and respect beyond the two communities. They refer to the living together when there is a need for national cohesion after traumatic event and thus collaborate to the affirmation of the French democratic values.



## *La Fraternité d'Abraham*

### **Historical background**

The *Fraternité d'Abraham* was officially launched in 1967 at the Great Mosque of Paris on the initiative of the Jewish writer André Chouraqui, the Catholic priests Jean Danielou and Michel Riquet, the imam Si Hamza Boubakeur and the diplomat Jacques Nantet. The project started a few years prior, when André Chouraqui was sent by René Cassin, president of the *Alliance Israélite Universelle*<sup>162</sup> and co-editor of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as an observer to the Second Vatican Council convened in Rome by Pope John XXIII in 1962. While attending the meetings, he met with the Catholic priest Jean Danielou, to establish an organization that would promote reciprocal understanding between the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims of France.

### **Aims**

Quoting the bible Genesis 22, 'and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed' (my translation), the founder manifesto expresses the aspiration of the *Fraternité d'Abraham*'s members to 'unite in a fraternal and peaceful line all those who, at least, share the faith of Abraham'(my translation), in the context of 'a divided world, constantly threatened, too often torn by the rivalry and enmity of the peoples'<sup>163</sup>(my translation). The interreligious association's ambitions to 'deepen mutual understanding', 'promote social justice and moral values, peace and freedom together for all men'<sup>164</sup>(my translation). The founders want Jews, Christians and Muslims to work hand and hand, to issue a 'better answer to those who denounce their religion as an opium of the people', therefore demonstrating their 'sincere and true' faith in god (my translation)<sup>165</sup>. The manifesto ends by recalling the shared 'spiritual and cultural' heritage of the three Abrahamic religions and demands to work toward their 'effective reconciliation' (my translation). The

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<sup>162</sup> The *Alliance israélite universelle* is a Paris-based international Jewish organization founded in 1860 to safeguard the human rights of Jews around the world. The organization promotes the ideals of Jewish self-defense and self-sufficiency through education and professional development < <https://www.aiu.org/en/alliance-israelite-universelle>> Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>163</sup> La Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Le manifeste fondateur' (1967) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/lassociation/le-manifeste-fondateur/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>164</sup> Ibid

<sup>165</sup> Ibid

Knowledge of the ‘authentic and divine sources of fraternal humanism’ (my translation) is the base of their actions.

The founding manifesto reflects the *Fraternité d’Abraham*’s objectives, using a theologian and historical approach to acknowledge and understand the common heritage of the three religions in order to found the Abrahamic brotherhood and act toward social justice and peace.

The statutes specify that the association aims at ‘bringing together anyone committed to the spiritual, moral and cultural values stemming from the Abrahamic tradition’<sup>166</sup> (my translation) which seems to open the interreligious dialogue to non-Abrahamic religion members and non-believers as long as they subscribe to the same principles. In the past 50 years, the association has evolved to become more political, and more open to ‘others, who do not share our common origins, but are men and women of peace and goodwill’<sup>167</sup> (my translation).

When the new president of the association, the protestant economist Edmond Lisle, took over in 2008, he emphasized the ‘moral and spiritual authority’ of the *Fraternité d’Abraham* while developing a ‘program of actions’. The peace in the Israel/Palestine war was set as the first goal<sup>168</sup>, enclosed in the global European Union for the Mediterranean<sup>169</sup> project. To explain his view, he recalled the historical events that led to the construction of Europe. He evoked the duty of the former colonial powers, the responsibility of Europe regarding Israel, in memory of the holocaust, the decalogue as the primary source of inspiration for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>170</sup>. By exposing Europe’s Mediterranean roots, Edmond Lisle justified the need for a ‘development’ assistance and ‘the creation in the region of a multi-ethnic and multi-denominational community, to demonstrate the "living together"’ (my translation). He also reaffirmed the importance of enhancing mutual knowledge and appreciate the differences among communities.

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<sup>166</sup> Article 2 of the statutes to be found at the beginning of ‘La revue de La Fraternité d’Abraham’ <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/revue-172-decembre-2016/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>167</sup> La Fraternité d’Abraham, ‘Présentation’, Edmond Lisle’s speech (9 December 2008) <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/lassociation/presentation/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>168</sup> Ibid

<sup>169</sup> Founded in 2008, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) is an intergovernmental organization that brings together 43 countries, including the 28 member states of the European Union. Based on a joint co-presidency between the two southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, the UfM aims to promote dialogue and cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

<sup>170</sup> La Fraternité d’Abraham, ‘Présentation’, Edmond Lisle’s speech (9 December 2008) <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/lassociation/presentation/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

The *Fraternité d'Abraham*'s action plan is entrenched in the European modern context, demonstrating an original political and social perspective, considering the interreligious dialogue as a medium for diplomacy. The association speaks as an international organization, calling other European NGO to join<sup>171</sup>, campaigning for peace and social justice but also for an 'ethical economy' (my translation).

The words of the president Edmond Lisle reflect an ambition to be recognized as a partner in the elaboration of new business ethics, mentioning 'management by objectives', 'timetable' and 'obligation of results'<sup>172</sup> (my translation). Furthermore, in 2013, the interreligious association created the *Fondation Ethique et Economie* teaming up with the democratic institution the *Académie des sciences morales et politiques*<sup>173</sup> 'to discuss the applications of ethics carried by the spiritualities of humanity - of which the mono-theisms from Abraham - to the current economic environment'<sup>174</sup> (my translation). Actively advocating for economic and social rights, the *Fraternité d'Abraham*, demonstrates a global vision of the modern world where interreligious actors can act beyond the framework of *laïcité*, collaborating with politics.

## Members

The founders of the *Fraternité d'Abraham* were eminent personalities, already involved in the interreligious dialogue through other national organizations or acting as independent emissary to promote knowledge and recognition of one of the three Abrahamic religion in relation to the others. The French Algerian born, writer, historian and politician, André Chouraqui was one of the key figures of the Islamic-Judeo-Christian dialogue. Writer of *The Ten Commandments Today: Ten Words to Reconcile the Man with the Human*<sup>175</sup>, he was among those who argued that the decalogue was the main inspiration for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Defender of the State of Israel. He was adviser to the Prime Minister David Ben Gurion and later on became Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem. Another key founder was the Sufi Master and theologian Si Hamza Boubakeur,

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> 'l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques' is a French institution created in 2018 under the patronage of the Institut de France

<sup>174</sup> Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Fondation Ethique et Economie' (16 June 2015) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/la-fondation-ethique-et-economie-2/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>175</sup> André Chouraqui, *Les dix commandements aujourd'hui: Dix paroles pour réconcilier l'homme avec l'humain* (Editions Laffont 2009)

former Rector of Great Paris' Mosque and former French deputy. In 1984, he prefaced the book *Islam and human rights*<sup>176</sup> written by the president of the International Academy of Human Rights<sup>177</sup>, Marc Agi.

Father Michel Ricquet was a French resistant, Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor, and vice-President of the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (LICRA).

With the support of the French state and the religious authorities, the founders of the *Fraternité d'Abraham* participated to the institutionalisation of the interreligious dialogue as an instrument of diplomacy, at a time, in the 1960's, where Europe was building up a new multi-religious identity. The post Second World War period was also the moment where the state of Israel became a new political power in the Middle East, mirroring tensions between communities living in France and therefore increasing the need for clerics and academics to pacify the dialogue.

Throughout the last 50 years, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* evolved but its members still act as peace diplomats, spreading the Abrahamic message 'to bring about solidarity fraternity throughout the world'<sup>178</sup> (my translation), promoting mutual knowledge and engaging in social justice through research and debate with experts and politicians. The members work closely with the state<sup>179</sup> and under the auspices of the Christian, Jews and Muslims institutions<sup>180</sup>, organizing joint conferences or publishing statements from one or the other community into the quarterly newsletter. The position of the current president, Edmond Lisle, reflects this attitude of 'love and solidarity with our neighbour, (...) justice and peace in our societies, with respect for human rights'<sup>181</sup> (my translation), and underlines the special emphasize of the association in building an ethical economy, thus promoting social and economic rights for all. However, as the majority of the *Fraternité d'Abraham's* members are Christians, and despite the fact that all the conferences organized are led

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<sup>176</sup> Marc Agi, *Islam et droits de l'Homme*, (Les Librairies des libertés, 1984)

<sup>177</sup> The International Academy of Human Rights was an association promoting education in human rights dissolved in 2013.

<sup>178</sup> Interview by Matthieu Stricot 'Emile Moatti, une vie de dialogue entre religions' in *Le Monde* (20 June 2014) <[http://www.lemondedesreligions.fr/entretiens/emile-moatti-une-vie-de-dialogue-entre-religions-20-06-2014-4044\\_111.php](http://www.lemondedesreligions.fr/entretiens/emile-moatti-une-vie-de-dialogue-entre-religions-20-06-2014-4044_111.php)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>179</sup> The French-Algerian Muslim theologian Abderrhamane Belmadi, member of the *Fraternité d'Abraham*, participated to the 'Mission d'information sur l'organisation, la place et le financement de l'Islam en France et de ses lieux de culte' held by the French Senate in 2016.

<sup>180</sup> *Fraternité d'Abraham*, 'Comité de parrainage' <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/lassociation/comite-de-parrainage/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>181</sup> *Fraternité d'Abraham*, 'Edito printemps 2017' <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/edito-printemps-2017/>> Accessed 15 June 2019

by a representative of the three Abrahamic religion, Muslims and Jews are not equally represented<sup>182</sup>.

## **Actions**

### Conferences and local meetings

The conferences are held together with representatives of the three Abrahamic religions, in partnership with religious institutions specialized in theology such as the institute Al-Ghazali<sup>183</sup> which educated imams and teach them the values of the French *laïcité*.

In 2015 and 2017, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* organized a series of monthly lectures at the *Académie des sciences morales et politiques*, where French and international experts, researchers, diplomats and religious representatives debated about finance, business and economy<sup>184</sup>.

### Cultural celebrations

The activities of the association are concentrated on holding conferences and publishing the newsletter. There is no local network developed and cultural celebrations are not mentioned.

### Education

Even if the *Fraternité d'Abraham* does not intervene directly in schools or universities, the members are involved in education through the publication of articles. In 2013, in collaboration with the youth interreligious association *Coexister*, they published an in-dept special edition of 128 pages<sup>185</sup>. In this addition, young generations were addressed in order to teach them on 'how imams, priests and rabbis are trained and what values they teach' and explain 'what values are taught in religious schools, where students of other religions are mixed, learning to live together in ethnic and cultural diversity' (my translation).

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<sup>182</sup> Fraternité d'Abraham, radio show aired on *Judaique FM* with Edmond Lisle, part 2. 6'00 (13 January 2019) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/rencontre-une-interview-dedmond-lisle-par-jean-corcoc/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>183</sup> Dr Dalil Boubakeur, Insitut Al-Ghazali, 'Le mot du recteur': 'We set up partnerships to achieve two objectives: teaching about the doctrine of Islam for Muslims who wish to become imams and chaplains; and educate non-Muslims about the Islamic civilization'. (2017) < <http://institut-al-ghazali.fr/le-mot-du-recteur/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>184</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Bilan 2018' N°180 (December 2018) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/4244-2/>> 5. Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>185</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Education, religion, société' N°159 (October 2013) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/n-159-octobre-2013/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

### Publications and awards

The quarterly newsletter, *la revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham*, is a pillar of the association and reflects its views by publishing articles after each conference, highlighting political, social and religious headlines linking these to the latest national and international developments. It is also a platform for the Christians, Jews and Muslims religious leaders, with the publication of their latest statements. In March 2019, the Catholic Pope co-signed with the Great Egyptian Imam of Al-Azhar, one of the highest Sunni authority, a message calling for world peace and human fraternity<sup>187</sup>. In respect to the association's aim to promote social justice, there is a special emphasize on economy and finance with articles written by lay European academics and experts on topic such as 'the impact of Brexit in Europe', 'Ethic and liberalism' and 'Ethics and Economy'<sup>188</sup> (my translation).

Calling for peace when addressing international conflicts or after a religious crime or terrorist attack, the *revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham* spreads out the idea that 'humanity is one and human beings are bound to the duty of brotherhood and solidarity'<sup>189</sup> (my translation).

### Reaction to headlines

#### *#Mariage pour tous*

The *revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham* devoted a special edition to 'mariage, family, society', 'not to take sides, for or against the law', but reaffirming the 'fact that almost all of these texts (religious) are concerned about the moral, societal and anthropological extensions of the Bill', also pointing out that those texts 'all condemn discrimination, a fortiori including, of homosexuality'<sup>190</sup> (my translation). The association declares its intentions of remaining neutral in order to respect the framework of the French *laïcité*. However, by publishing articles that reflects the point of views of religious leaders opposed to the same sex marriage law, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* takes side and

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<sup>187</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'L'appel d'Abraham' N°181 (March 2019) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/n-181-mars-2019/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>188</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Bilan 2018' N°180 (December 2018) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/4244-2/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>189</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Mondialisation, conflicts, solutions, Esperance' N°171 (October 2016) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/revue-171-octobre-2016/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>190</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Mariage, famille et société' (March 2013) <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/n-157-mars-2013/>> 2. Accessed on 15 June 2019

once again engages as a political force in the public debate. In doing so, the association denies the institutionalization of equality of rights for all.

### #Charlie Hebdo

Few days after the *Charlie Hebdo* and *Hypercashier* attacks in January 2015, the *Fraternité d'Abraham*'s president and other interreligious associations' representatives, co-signed a public statement published in the press. They reaffirmed the 'republican values and rights - secularism, living together, equality', and their engagement in fulfilling 'civic duty' (my translation). They declared: 'we, citizens of Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, agnostic, atheist and other cultures, work daily to honour the republican values, human, spiritual and universal. which we are so strongly attached to'<sup>191</sup> (my translation). Six months after the attacks, they issued another special edition of the newsletter where they published the message of Shawky Allam, Great mufti of Egypt, pleading for peace together with 175 Muslims personalities from all over the world, and Anouar Kbibeche, head of the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*, calling the new generation of French of Muslim to 'reform and renew Islam of France'<sup>192</sup> (my translation).

### #13 November 2015

In reaction to the terrorist attacks of the 13 Novembers 2015, the president of the *Fraternité d'Abraham* asserted his intention 'to fight for freedom, democracy, human rights, respect for life and respect for others'<sup>193</sup> (my translation) and published the Abrahamic religious institutions' messages in response of the deadly events. One month later, in the context of the 50 anniversary of the *Nostra Aetate* declaration, a message of 'reconciliation, respect and recognition of the Other, a condition of an organized "living together", tolerant and fraternal' (my translation) was published

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<sup>191</sup> Mehdi Thomas Allal, Asif Arif, Aïssata Ba, Mohamed Bajrafil, Naila Banian, Soeur Béatrix Dagrass, Nabil Ennasri, Samuel Grzybowski, Gabriel Hagi, Nadia Henni Moulai, Ghaïss Jasser, Saïd Ali Koussay, Edmond Lisle, Khaled Roumo, Alexandre Vigne, 'Au-delà de nos émotions, nos actions', in the *Huffington post* (21 January 2015) <[https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/naila-banian/au-dela-de-nos-emotions-nos-actions\\_b\\_6513522.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/naila-banian/au-dela-de-nos-emotions-nos-actions_b_6513522.html)> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>192</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Islam: Reforme et renouveau' (Juin 2015) <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/revue-n-166-juin-2015/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>193</sup> Fraternité d'Abraham, Edmond Lisle, 'Attentats du 13 Novembre' (14 November 2015) <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/attentats-du-13-novembre-2015/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>194</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Nostra Aetate, Non à la haine' N168 (December 2015) <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/n-168-decembre-2015/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

## #Refugees

Complying to the Abrahamic tradition of engaging in charity, also demanded by the Catholic pope who made several public declarations asking for government to welcome the refugees arriving in Europe, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* published several issues to support the rights of 'these immigrants who are fleeing war' (my translation), to be assisted. The authors of the article blame the reluctant European countries, 'as if Europe and its 500 million inhabitants could not afford to accommodate this tiny percentage of refugees who lost everything' and emphasize the duty of Europe 'to welcome the refugees (...) and help the neighbouring countries (especially) Syria, to accommodate them'<sup>195</sup> (my translation). The *Fraternité d'Abraham* pleads for the human rights of the refugees and asks the European Union states to fulfil their duty, once again demonstrating the political and social implication of the association.

## #Racism

The interreligious association condemns racism and anti-Semitism, publishing articles in reactions of the latest crimes and discriminates the Abrahamic religion, reflecting the views of the three religions' leaders, or at least the ones that share the values of the *Fraternité d'Abraham*. In context of a national protest against the rise of anti-Semite crimes in France, the association expressed its support, calling on to its members to march together with other religious and interreligious organizations. They reassert the French law where 'anti-Semitism is not an opinion, it is a violation of the law', and condemned 'all forms of violence, exclusion and denial of humanity, racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, Islamophobia, degradation of places of worship'<sup>196</sup> (my translation).

## Conclusion

The brief analyses of the *Fraternité d'Abraham*, historical background, aims, members, actions, publications and reactions after a specific event, demonstrated a determination to promote peace and brotherhood between the three Abrahamic religions. Launch in the context of the 1967 Israel/Palestine conflict, the interreligious association wanted to play a role as a diplomatic peace force, impacting the social cohesion of Jews and Muslims communities in France.

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<sup>195</sup> La Revue de la Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Nostra Aetate, Non à la haine' N168 (December 2015) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/n-168-decembre-2015/>> 2. Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>196</sup> Fraternité d'Abraham, 'Ca suffit' (18 February 2019) < <http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/ca-suffit/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019



Through a theologian and historical approach, the Christian, Jew and Muslim clerics, academics and experts engage in mutual knowledge as a source for political actions aiming to emphasize solidarity, social justice, peace and freedom for all. They also defend the Abrahamic religions as one of the medium to promote human rights and democracy, inviting the members to act toward peace, justice and freedom.

Using annual conferences and the diffusion of the newsletter, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* invites clergy members, lay intellectuals and experts to debate on religion fundamental values but also on societal issues, promoting economic, social and cultural rights. Through partnerships set up with the French government institutions, the interreligious association goes beyond the framework of *laïcité* and engages to realize its vision of economic and social ethics.

Despite refraining from taking a clear stand on the same sex marriage, the non-profit organization expresses its concern while arguing against any form of discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation. After the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* stood in favour of freedom, democracy, respect for life and human rights, entrenched in the republican values of France. Calling to welcome the refugees, the association condemned the European countries attitude, thus complying to the humanistic perspective encompassed in its actions and statutes.

The *Fraternité d'Abraham* is a good example of the evolution of interreligious association in France where the general discourse expands to become more political and to include religious minorities. However, the fact that the majority of the members are still Christian, reflects the lack of visibility of Muslims in French civil society organizations.

## *L'Amitié Judéo-Musulmane de France*

### **Historical background**

*l'Amitié Judéo-Musulmane de France* (A.J-M.F) was officially created in 2005, in reaction to anti-Semitic acts rising up in France<sup>197</sup>. Two years prior, the founder rabbi Michel Serfaty, former president of the *Consistoire de Paris*'s commission for the relations with other religions, was beaten up in the street by two young Muslims outside the synagogue of Ris-Orangis. In response to his aggression, he teamed up with the local imam Mohamed Azizi, and launched the interreligious association with the support of politicians, including the Former president of the European Parliament and human rights defenders Simone Veil, and religious institutions like the *Conseil représentatif des Institutions Juives de France* (Crif)<sup>198</sup>, the *Consistoire de Paris*<sup>199</sup> and the *Institut Musulman de la Mosquée de Paris*.

### **Aims**

A.J-M.F. wants to 'raise awareness' and engage in 'the fight against all forms of prejudice or intolerance', promoting 'the values of citizenship and respect for others'<sup>200</sup>, organizing local meetings, especially in the French *cités*<sup>201</sup> with the residents and particularly the young Muslims that 'have been raised with anti-Semitic ideology'<sup>202</sup> (my translations), and in schools, through anti-prejudices workshops. A.J-M.F. uses an interreligious dialogue as a tool to fight racism, targeting anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim discrimination. As the spread of prejudices leads to 'exclusion,

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<sup>197</sup> Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme, annual report on 'La lutte contre le racisme et l'antisémitisme et la xenophobie' (26 November 2004): 'The number of racist and anti-Semitic violent acts and threats recorded in 2004, is 1565, an increase of over 132% compared to 2003. Anti-Semitic incidents represent 62% of the total, but anti-Arabs acts have also increased'. <<https://www.cncdh.fr/fr/publications/la-lutte-contre-le-racisme-lantisemitisme-et-la-xenophobie-annee-2004>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>198</sup> The Crif is an umbrella organization of French Jewish associations, fighting against anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic state policies.

<sup>199</sup> Since 1808, the *Consistoire de Paris* is the national institution responsible for the administration of Jewish worships and congregations in France.

<sup>200</sup> A.J-M.F, 'Histoire' <<http://ajmf.org/qui-sommes-nous-2/notre-histoire/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>201</sup> *Cités* in French refers to impoverished immigrant communities living in the periphery of French major cities.

<sup>202</sup> Sarah Diffalah, "Dans les quartiers, la haine du juif ne disparaîtra pas par miracle" in *Le nouvel Observateur* (31 January 2015) <<https://www.nouvelobs.com/attentats-charlie-hebdo-et-maintenant/20150130.OBS1284/dans-les-quartiers-la-haine-du-juif-ne-disparaitra-pas-par-miracle.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

violence and crime'<sup>203</sup>, the association wants to 'ensure knowledge, understanding and respect between Judaism and Islam', by 'rectifying historical misunderstandings', and fight against stereotypes, 'through actions based on friendly cooperation and meetings'<sup>204</sup> (my translations). They intend to 'reunite Jews and Muslims on the occasions of festive, cultural, artistic, sports activities' in order to 'build the "living together"'<sup>205</sup> (my translations).

To initiate the interreligious dialogue in the major French cities' impoverished suburban neighbourhood, A.J-M.F. works in partnership with secular associations that daily assist the youth to feel integrated to the French society through civic education and social support. A.J-M.F. ambitions to complement those initiatives, to empower vulnerable population, making these aware of the responsibilities citizens have, 'promoting a peaceful dialogue and precluding violence'<sup>206</sup> (my translations). The interreligious association develops its actions in the field through informal exchanges, because they believe in building 'long term relationship between Muslims and Jews', using 'wisdom and peace' (my translations), resulting from the promotion of knowledge to combat ignorance<sup>207</sup>.

The founder, rabbi Michel Serfaty, explains why teaching children about racism and prejudices should be done from a young age when he stated that some 'anti-Semitic acts are committed by those who are from troublesome neighbourhoods, where they are themselves discriminated, notably in schools where they feel left behind ... If we want to change the mentalities, we must carry out interventions in primary school'<sup>208</sup>(my translation).

The activities of A.J-M.F. are entrenched in the French *laïcité*, therefore it 'excludes syncretism or proselytise and does not call for an abdication or renunciation of one's beliefs, but expects everyone

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<sup>203</sup> A.J-M.F, Paris 'Qui sommes nous?'

<[http://www.ajmfparis1.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1348&Itemid=737](http://www.ajmfparis1.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1348&Itemid=737)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>204</sup> A.J-M.F, 'Qui sommes nous?' < <http://ajmf.org/qui-sommes-nous-2/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>205</sup> Ibid

<sup>206</sup> In 2005, French immigrant descendant demonstrated in several suburbs across France for a period of three-week burning cars and public buildings. Some national and international medias labelled the events 'riots'.

<sup>207</sup> A.J-M.F, Paris 'Qui sommes nous?'

<[http://www.ajmfparis1.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1348&Itemid=737](http://www.ajmfparis1.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1348&Itemid=737)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>208</sup> Christine Mateus, 'Antisémitisme : «Ces chiffres sont inférieurs à la réalité»' in *Le Parisien* (9 November 2018)<<http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/antisemitisme-ces-chiffres-sont-inferieurs-a-la-realite-09-11-2018-7939302.php>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

to be aware of what unites Jews and Muslims'<sup>209</sup> (my translations). Furthermore, it 'does not engage in political action and argues against the transfer of the Palestine/Israel war into the French context'<sup>210</sup> (my translations). A.J-M.F. is willing to stay within the law, respecting democratic principles and the freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

While collaborating with local grass-roots organizations, focusing on dialogue with young French Muslims and their communities that feel excluded and discriminated, A.J-M.F. promotes peace, social cohesion and democracy, defending the living together principle.

## Members

The founder of A.J-M.F., rabbi Michel Serfaty, is former professor at the Nancy University and ex-basketball champion. Together with imam Mohamed Azizi, they team up with young social instructors, working as volunteers, while touring in the streets of French suburbs, to discuss with the local populations especially addressing the Muslims children, and teenagers usually reluctant to dialogue with people of the Jewish religion<sup>211</sup>. Through a state's initiative<sup>213</sup>, the association is able to recruit non-graduates to be employed as volunteer as part of their training to become socio-cultural animator professionals.

Today A.J-M.F. has a network of ten local offices in France with hundreds of local imams, rabbis, priests, social workers, psychologists, teachers and citizens involved. A.J-M.F. collaborates with different national and international organizations. Among their partners there are Jewish, Muslim and Christian religious institutions, other interreligious associations, French ministries and international organizations like UNESCO<sup>214</sup>.

## Actions

### Conferences and local meetings

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<sup>209</sup> A.J-M.F, Paris 'Qui sommes nous?'

<[http://www.ajmfparisl.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=1348&Itemid=737](http://www.ajmfparisl.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1348&Itemid=737)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>210</sup> Ibid

<sup>211</sup> Jikeli Günther, 'L'antisémitisme en milieux et pays musulmans: débats et travaux autour d'un processus complexe' in *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* (n° 62, 2015). 'Today, there is consensus among researchers that Muslim anti-Semitism has become a major phenomenon in Western Europe, although there is still debate about its significance, scale, nature and especially its causes'. 97

<sup>213</sup> Collaboration with the French Ministry of labour through the initiative *Emploi d'Avenir* instituted by the law n° 2012-1189 (26 October 2012)

<sup>214</sup> A.J-M.F, 'Nos partenaires' <<http://ajmf.org/qui-sommes-nous-2/nos-partenaires/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

Since its creation, the association has dramatically evolved. At first, A.J-M.F organized interreligious conferences focusing on the historical and theologian approaches of Judaism and Islam, questioning the role of religion in the context of the French *laïcité*. Those meetings were held in Paris and gathered Muslims, Jews and Christians politicians, intellectuals and clerics, with the support of governmental and religious institutions. They explored various topic such as ‘*laïcité*, from Paris to the Arab Spring’<sup>215</sup>, or ‘Judaism, Islam and *laïcité*’<sup>216</sup> (my translations). Those yearly conferences still happened today but in addition to those events, the association has developed local meetings where the rabbi and the imam go to suburban neighbourhood to spread their messages of peace and tolerance, by dialoguing with people in the streets or in community centres, similarly to a grass-roots movement’s approach.

#### Community activities

##### ***Bus de l’Amitié Judéo-Musulmane***

Since 2005, the *bus de l’Amitié Judéo-Musulmane* tours around France for two month each year to discuss the danger of racism and discrimination on the basis of race and religion with local communities. Prior to their visit, A.J-M.F. contact the local authority and the religious representative to discuss the modalities of their visit in order to adapt to the context of each locality. After the 2015 terrorist attacks, rabbi Serfaty and imam Azizi were escorted from time to time by a policeman while cruising around the streets of immigrant-heavy suburbs where they were not welcomed. The bus advertises the messages of peace and friendship A.J-M.F. promotes the slogan ‘we are more alike than it seems’ (my translations). One of the posters displayed on the bus shows the face of a black child girl saying ‘I dreamed of god, she was black’, another presents a list of ‘outlaw discriminations’ related to ‘age, sex, origin, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, race, physical appearance, disability, religious believes’ (my translations).

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<sup>215</sup> A.J-M.F, ‘*Laïcité: de Paris au printemps arabe*’ (17 November 2011) < <http://www.affinitesante.net/pdf/Printemps-arabe1.pdf>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>216</sup> A.J-M.F, ‘*Judaïsme, Islam et laïcité*’ (6 April 2011) <http://www.affinitesante.net/pdf/cartons/Laicite1.pdf>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

### **Educate about religion**

Every year, A.J-M.F coordinates the ‘Synagogues & Mosques Open House Weekend’<sup>217</sup> during which Jews and Muslims are invited to meet at their respective places of worship to organize festive, artistic or intellectual activities. A.J-M.F also does ‘couscous dinners’ where the women of both religions are invited to dialogue in order to overcome stereotypes, while cooking and sharing a meal together.

### **Speaking the language of the youth**

As a former teacher and a rabbi Michel Serfaty translates his ideas into the association methods, adopting both an educative and religious approach to promote human rights and democracy. Through sports and music, young Muslims and Jews are invited to come together few times a year, might it be to play football or for ‘peace and brotherhood’ (my translations) concerts<sup>218</sup>.

### **Collaboration with institutions**

In 2014, A.J-M.F started campaigning with local representative of the state institutions and politicians to conclude ‘Pact of Brotherhood’<sup>219</sup> each time they opened a local office for the association, pledging to strengthen interreligious dialogue in order to reconcile young Jews and Muslims, and thus achieve living together.

### Education

From the experience in the field, while touring with the bus and dialoguing with people in the streets, A.J-M.F. have developed tailor-made educational programs with teachers, psychologists and sociologists, to be used in schools while volunteers address the children during anti-prejudice and anti-discrimination workshops. Through the screening of videos and speeches, they debate with the youth to define and explain prejudice, discrimination, racism, anti-Semitism, secularism, Judaism, Islam, Shoah. By tearing down clichés and stereotypes, especially those targeting Muslims and Jews, their initiative promotes peace and mutual knowledge through interreligious dialogue.

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<sup>217</sup> A.J-M.F Paris ‘week-end portes ouvertes Synagogues-Mosques’ (November 2012) <[http://www.affinitesante.net/pdf/ajmf/FFEU\\_12nov.pdf](http://www.affinitesante.net/pdf/ajmf/FFEU_12nov.pdf)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>218</sup> La Fraternité d’Abraham, ‘Concert pour la fraternité et pour la paix’ (24 November 2016) <<http://www.fraternite-dabraham.com/concert-pour-la-fraternite-et-pour-la-paix-jeudi-24-novembre-a-paris/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>219</sup> A.J-M.F, ‘Le Pacte de Fraternité’ <<http://ajmf.org/nos-actions/dialogue-inter-religieux/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

A.J-M.F. works on different level to address different populations and spread its messages of peace, brotherhood to achieve living together. Through its activities in the streets, in community centres, in schools, or through partnerships with state representatives, the interreligious association promote democratic values and human rights. Dueto the network and personality of the president and founder Michel Serfaty, A.J-M.F. mixes educative and religious approach, using the language of the youth within the framework of *laïcité*, promoting social cohesion and democratic values.

#### Publication and award

A.J-M.F. does not published a newsletter but the association is very active on social media and since the terrorist attacks of Paris in 2015, A.J-M.F. has been mediatized<sup>220</sup> through television, radio and newspaper numerous articles, with an emphasize on its actions toward peace and democracy in difficult suburban neighbourhoods.

#### Reaction to headlines

##### *#Mariage pour tous*

The interreligious association did not publish messages regarding the same sex marriage law, neither demonstrated in the streets while other religious associations were protesting against the law.

##### *#Charlie Hebdo*

The A.J-M.F ‘denounced the heinous attack committed at the headquarters of Charlie Hebdo and expresses its solidarity with the families of the victims, journalists and cartoonists, defenders of our freedoms’<sup>221</sup> (my translations), calling to join the march organized few days later. The rabbi Serfaty visited some of the so-called ‘radical’ mosques of Paris suburban areas<sup>222</sup>, demonstrating his determination to maintain the dialogue between Jews and Muslims, promoting peace and democracy.

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<sup>220</sup> A.J-M.F, ‘Ils parlent de nous’ < <http://ajmf.org/qui-sommes-nous-2/ils-parlent-de-nous/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>221</sup> AJMF’s communiqué (9 January 2015) <[https://www.ajcf.fr/IMG/pdf/Artisans-de-paix/regards-croises/2015\\_01\\_09-COMMUNIQUE-AJMF.pdf](https://www.ajcf.fr/IMG/pdf/Artisans-de-paix/regards-croises/2015_01_09-COMMUNIQUE-AJMF.pdf)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>222</sup> Sarah Diffalah, "Dans les quartiers, la haine du juif ne disparaîtra pas par miracle" in Le nouvel Observateur (31 January 2015) <<https://www.nouvelobs.com/attentats-charlie-hebdo-et-maintenant/20150130.OBS1284/dans-les-quartiers-la-haine-du-juif-ne-disparaitra-pas-par-miracle.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

## #13Novembre

Few days after the terrorist attacks, the official representative of the first Muslim community in Europe, the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*<sup>223</sup>, presented the *Manifeste Citoyen des Musulmans de France*<sup>224</sup> with the support of the Minister of the Interior. The manifesto reaffirmed the universal values of the Republic and pled for more interreligious dialogue in order to bring ‘peace, justice, fraternity, solidarity and love of neighbour regardless of religion, colour or origin’<sup>225</sup> (my translations).

In that context, A.J-M.F held one week of interreligious meetings in Paris’ suburban cities, inviting people to join projections, anti-prejudice workshops and debating with the youth on how to address discrimination. One of the evenings was dedicated to the theme ‘*Violence de Dieu? Violence des jeunes*’<sup>226</sup> (my translations), at the town hall with the president of the *Conseil Français du Culte Musulman*, the bishop of Evry and a sociologist specialized on religions. To demonstrate this determination in addressing the youth, Michel Serfaty teamed up with the French Muslim rapper Coco TKT and produced three video clips<sup>227</sup> extolling the virtues of tolerance, including one in memory of Ilan Halimi<sup>228</sup>, a French Jew murdered in 2006. The rabbi explains that ‘rap music can be a powerful vector to talk to young people’<sup>229</sup> (my translation), expressing his conviction that the living together could be achieved, if both communities demonstrated respect and friendship towards each other, establishing social inclusion.

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<sup>223</sup> The Conseil Français du Culte Musulman is a national elected body, created on 28 May 2003, to serve as an official interlocutor with the French state in the regulation of Muslim religious activities

<sup>224</sup> Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, *Manifeste Citoyen des Musulmans de France*, (29 November 2015) <[http://www.musulmansdefrance.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Manifeste\\_Citoyen\\_des\\_Musulmans\\_de\\_France-1.pdf](http://www.musulmansdefrance.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Manifeste_Citoyen_des_Musulmans_de_France-1.pdf)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>225</sup> Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, *Manifeste Citoyen des Musulmans de France*, Article 2 (29 November 2015) <[http://www.musulmansdefrance.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Manifeste\\_Citoyen\\_des\\_Musulmans\\_de\\_France-1.pdf](http://www.musulmansdefrance.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Manifeste_Citoyen_des_Musulmans_de_France-1.pdf)> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>226</sup> A.J-M.F, invitation to the debate on ‘Violence de Dieu? Violence des jeunes’ (17 December 2015) <<http://ajmf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/invitation-17-dec.jpg>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>227</sup> Coco Tkt featuring rabbi Serfaty, ‘Tous unis’ (18 February 2016) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phspUN-y85w>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>228</sup> In 2006, 23 years old Ilan Halimi was abducted, tortured and murdered by the so-called “Gang des barbares” – a band of French-born children of Muslim immigrants from west Africa and north Africa.

<sup>229</sup> ‘Le rappeur et le rabbin’, in *Le Nouvel Observateur* (5 January 2016) <

<https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20151231.OBS2113/le-rappeur-et-le-rabbin.html>> Accessed on 15 June 2019



## #Refugees

In 2016 A.J-M.F launched a collect of footwear to be donated for refugees<sup>230</sup>, thus engaging in humanitarian actions, beyond the main objective to establish a peaceful interreligious dialogue between the Jewish and Muslim communities.

## #Racism

After the assassination of Mireille Knoll<sup>231</sup> in 2018, the co-president of A.J-M.F Besançon, Marc Dahan, recalled the names of victims of anti-Semitism: Ilan Halimi, Sarah Halimi<sup>232</sup> and Mireille Knoll in his speech, quoting the words of the son of Mireille Knoll: ‘Our Muslim friends must come with us. Hatred, that's enough!’ (my translation). During an interview, Michel Serfaty denounced ‘a cultural anti-Semitism, where the hatred of the Jew is transmitted from childhood in certain families’, emphasizing that ‘the perpetrators of these acts mainly come from difficult neighbourhoods, and are themselves being discriminated’, and pledging for anti-prejudice educative interventions carried out in schools<sup>233</sup> (my translations).

## Conclusion

The *Amitie Judeo-Musulmane de France* is one of the latest model of interreligious association being established, using the theologian approach in the modern context and acting toward the rebuilding of the relationship between citizens and the religious institutions on the local level, with the support of the French government. The year 2005 marks the beginning on violence erupting in France major city's suburban area, demonstrating the lack of social cohesion in impoverish localities. In response, A.J-M.F works mainly in those neighbourhood, fighting against all forms of prejudice, collaborating with local clergy to establish a peaceful interreligious dialogue and raise awareness through informal discussions with the population.

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<sup>230</sup> In December 2016, AJMF launched on its facebook page and through the distribution of leaflets, a shoes collect to be distributed among the migrants hosted in the locality of Forges-les-Bains.

<sup>231</sup> In 2018, Mireille Knoll, 85 Jewish woman – and a survivor of the Vel d'Hiv roundup – was stabbed 11 times by her neighbor, a 20 years old French Muslim, in her apartment and left to burn in a failed arson attempt.

<sup>232</sup> In 2017, Sarah Halimi, AKA Lucie Attal, a 65-year-old woman was hurled by her neighbor, a Franco-Malian Muslim, from the third-floor balcony of a social housing project in the 11th arrondissement of Paris.

<sup>233</sup> Christine Mateus, ‘Anti-semitisme: Ces chiffres sont inférieurs à la réalité’ in *Le Parisien* (9 November 2018) <<http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/antisemitisme-ces-chiffres-sont-inferieurs-a-la-realite-09-11-2018-7939302.php>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

Rabbi Serfaty and imam Azizi collaboration while touring in the friendship bus across the country makes the headlines of the media, propagating their message rapidly. They advocate for social justice, human rights and the respect of *laïcité*, teaming up with social workers to dialogue with the youth, preventing violence and pleading for the living together. By using the language of the young, through the organization of workshops and screening and communicating via social media, A.J-M.F promote democracy and fight against racism reaching out the most vulnerable populations.

If they don't participate to the public debate arising on the same sex marriage law, or, to some extent, the refugee crisis, the association is quite swift to speak up and stand for the freedom of expression, in solidarity with the victims of the terrorist attacks of 2015.

AJMF uses the historical and theologian knowledge as the base of the interreligious dialogue to reach out population whom is usually excluded from the public debate. The association work with local clerics and educators to construct the living together in the context of multi-cultural neighbourhood where people are being discriminated on the basis of religion and race. Thus, AJMF address economic and social rights, demonstrating the ability of the interreligious dialogue to evolve and involve everyone.

# **C.I.E.U.X**

## **Interreligious Committee for a Universal Ethics and against Xenophobia**

### **Historical background**

The ‘Interreligious Committee for a Universal Ethics and against Xenophobia’ (original translation), C.I.E.U.X, was created in 2005 by Alexandre Vigne, a Catholic teacher believing in building local interreligious dialogue in opposition of organizing meetings withhold to theologians, scholars and intellectuals debating among themselves. It aims at ‘locally gather members of religious and civic communities in order to promote living together while observing the principles of secularism’<sup>234</sup>.

### **Aims**

The C.I.E.U.X. ‘charter on interreligious and secular dialogue’, translated from French to English and Arabic, applies the human right approach, framing the objectives of the association in the human right legal framework and the French laws especially in reference to *laïcité*. The charter is defined as a ‘mutual agreement with a view to democratizing and promoting interreligious and secular dialogue in communities, cities, towns, neighbourhoods and beyond’<sup>235</sup>. There are over 30 repetitions of the expressions ‘human rights’ and the word ‘secular’. The author directly quotes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous other international conventions, demonstrating an in-dept knowledge of the human rights.

### Human rights

The charter expressed the humanistic views of the members of C.I.E.U.X., acting as an international organization advocating for the respect, implementation and promotion of individual rights, similarly to the human rights conventions. Using the same language, the last part of the charter is directly inspired by article 30 of the UDHR: ‘No provision in the present Charter, which will be registered in the archives of the National Assembly, UNESCO and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, can be construed as restricting or derogating from any right stated in the

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<sup>234</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue’ (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007) <<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>>1. Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>235</sup> Ibid

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenants on Human Rights'<sup>236</sup>. This article translates the objective of the association to be recognized as a human rights organization.

The freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief<sup>237</sup>, the freedom of expression, information, assembly and association, the right to be protected against discrimination, the right to sustainable development or the sacred right to peace are cited along the 40 pages of the charter. Enacting that 'human rights are principles of spiritual wisdom'<sup>238</sup> to be applied in everyday life, the author explains that the purpose of the C.I.E.U.X. interreligious meetings is to develop each time a different theme 'in the light of human rights, philosophical traditions, the great secular humanist texts and popular proverbs'<sup>239</sup>. The document emphasizes 'the duty to promote the love for humanity and its creative achievements'<sup>240</sup>.

Not only C.I.E.U.X. acknowledges human rights as the core of its ethic, but it enjoins the members to create new ones: 'everyone has the right, individually and in association with others, to develop new human rights ideas and principles and to advocate their acceptance'<sup>241</sup>. Participants are invited to 'think about human rights not only as social responsibilities towards others but also as moral responsibilities towards oneself'<sup>242</sup>. When elaborating on its operations, C.I.E.U.X. declares promoting 'better mutual understanding of values held by all, whether believers or not, whether practicing or nonpracticing, with respect for human rights and to promote living together'<sup>243</sup>.

### Living together

The expression 'living together', repeated seven times, strengthens the general argument of the charter defining the purpose of the association as a process sets up 'to attract, in a spirit of peace and dialogue, people of all backgrounds and beliefs'<sup>244</sup>. To make sure all members of the association follow those principles, C.I.E.U.X. created a guideline to be used prior to organizing a

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid. 9

<sup>237</sup> Ibid. 32

<sup>238</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>239</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>240</sup> Ibid. 33

<sup>241</sup> C.I.E.U.X., 'Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue' (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007)

<<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>> 3. Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>242</sup> Ibid. 3

<sup>243</sup> Ibid. 35

<sup>244</sup> Ibid. 4

local meeting meant to 'facilitate links for "living together" between the followers of officially recognised religious communities and people of good will'<sup>245</sup>. In the French context, 'officially recognised' could be a reference to the 1990's vivid public debate that aroused when a list of non-recognized religions, called *sectes*<sup>246</sup>, was issued by the government<sup>247</sup>, resulting in the redaction of a decree on 'sectarian derivatives'<sup>248</sup> few years later. Thus, with this remarks, C.I.E.U.X. reaffirms the legitimacy of its work, exclusively collaborating with religious communities that respect the law.

### Democracy

The notion of democracy appears eight times in the charter of C.I.E.U.X., clarifying on the association aim to 'democratize interreligious dialogue' and 'democratize the democracy'<sup>249</sup>, acting as a 'grassroots democratic movement' rather than a 'participative democracy' organization. The objectives are to 'open the debates between local actors, (...) seeking the common good', do 'educational actions on human rights and women's rights'<sup>250</sup>, and include foreign citizens in the meetings. C.I.E.U.X. pledges for social cohesion in order to support 'people who are in precarious situations and who are only marginally involved in the instances of participative democracy'<sup>251</sup>. The Interreligious Committee adheres to democratic values, actively promotes social inclusion and welcomes everyone who share its perspective on how civil society should be a democratic force, protecting individual rights to accomplish a peaceful living together.

### **Members**

The members of C.I.E.U.X are Muslims, Christian, Jews clergy and laypeople, but also Buddhists, atheists and agnostics with one of two participants aged between 20 and 50, being a young

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<sup>245</sup> C.I.E.U.X., 'Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue' (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007)

<<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>> 35. Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>246</sup> There is no definitions of 'secte' and 'religion' in the French law, 'therefore, the French legal system is interested in the sectarian excesses that are practical, methods, acts and behaviors, emanating from any group or individual (...) that undermine the order the laws and regulations, fundamental freedoms and the security or integrity of persons through the use of techniques of subjugation, pressure or threats, or practices that promote mental control and deprive people of a part of their free will' (Mission interministerielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les redives sectaires)

<<https://www.derives-sectes.gouv.fr/faq>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>247</sup> Assemblée Nationale report 'Au nom de la Commission d'enquête sur les sectes' (22 December 1995)

<sup>248</sup> Government of France, decree n° 2002-1392 'instituant une mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires' (28 November 2002)

<sup>249</sup> C.I.E.U.X., '10 positive outcomes' <<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/R%C3%A9sultats-positifs-en-anglais.pdf>> 1. Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>250</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. 4

Muslims, according to the founder Alexandre Vigne <sup>252</sup>. To be part of C.I.E.U.X., members have to sign the charter and subscribe to three commandments: ‘promote dialogue (...) with religious communities (...) and their leaders’, ‘observe the principles of secularism’, ‘promote respect for rights and responsibilities internationally recognised by states, especially those proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to reconcile religious values and civic values’<sup>253</sup>.

During the preparatory meeting, both religious and civic communities’ members explore their own literature. ‘In the light of the words of the Holy Book (...) and through proverbs as well as the great humanist texts (particularly those relating to human rights)’, the pre-meetings are meant to train C.I.E.U.X.’s representatives not only to learn about each other references on a specific topic, but mostly to ‘opening up people’s hearts so they listen to others’<sup>254</sup>.

The elected members of C.I.E.U.X. have a ‘duty to observe restraint with regard to the major topical issues likely to impact on the lives and/or management of religious and political institutions’<sup>255</sup>. Therefore, once again, the association maintain a neutral position in regards to the law, making sure its members don’t engage in religious or political polemics.

## **Actions**

### Conferences and local meetings

The monthly meetings are co-ordinated in association with the state representatives, mayors and regional authorities, together with local clerics who host the reunion in their places of worship. C.I.E.U.X. involves the society as a whole and ground itself in the legal framework of the French *laïcité*, to ‘democratise and promote interreligious and secular dialogue with communities, cities, towns and neighbourhoods’<sup>256</sup>.

After a brief introduction by a representative of one of the five religions, the audience is invited to form small groups and deepen the discussion on a topic previously chosen prior to the meeting. The

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<sup>252</sup> Alexandre Vigne interviewed on *Radio Esperance* (23 January 2012)

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PpX8ZgQJ0U>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>253</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue’ (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007) 2

<<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>254</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>255</sup> Ibid 40

<sup>256</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue’ (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007)

<<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>> 37. Accessed on 15 June 2019

themes refer to human rights, such as: freedom of expression, information, assembly and association<sup>257</sup>, or the right of the individual to freedom<sup>258259</sup>. They focus on ‘violations of human rights, discrimination based on origins and religion, acts of a racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic’<sup>260</sup>. They also debate about the place of religion in a secular society, exploring the ‘virtue of the republic, virtue of religions’<sup>261</sup>.

As a leading interreligious association in France, C.I.E.U.X is one of the organizer of the yearly Peace festival where thousands of people gather every summer in Paris. The Interreligious Committee also participated to the 65th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrations<sup>262</sup>.

The network of the association is composed of ten local offices and only request new members to be persons ‘of good will who takes a positive look at the diversity of cults and cultures, respect for human rights and secularism’<sup>263</sup>. Most meetings are held in Paris and suburbs, especially in the Eastern districts. C.I.E.U.X is very active in the multi-cultural borough of the 10 arrondissement that hosts around 15,000 Jewish and Muslims populations living together since the end of the decolonization in the 1960’s. Several racist and anti-Semite crimes happened there lately, like the terrorist attacks of the Bataclan concert hall in 2015, or the murder of two Jews old ladies Sarah Halimi in 2017, and Mireille Knoll in 2018<sup>264</sup>.

### Cultural celebrations

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<sup>257</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Rapport moral 2007’ <<https://www.cieux.org/2007-2/>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>258</sup> Ibid

<sup>259</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Rapport moral 2009’ <<https://www.cieux.org/2009-3/>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>260</sup> Shai Ktorza, C.I.E.U.X’ s blog, ‘Dialogue interreligieux et laïque de quartier: ‘un homme sur deux est une femme’ (26 february 2014) <<https://www.cieux.org/dialogue-interreligieux-et-laique-de-quartier-un-homme-sur-deux-est-une-femme/>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>261</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Rapport moral 2008’ <<https://www.cieux.org/2008-2/>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>262</sup> C.I.E.U.X’ blog page, ‘65eme anniversaire de la Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l’Homme’ (10 December 2013) <<https://www.cieux.org/65e-anniversaire-de-la-declaration-universelle-des-droits-de-lhomme/>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>263</sup> C.I.E.U.X. Donation page <<https://www.cieux.org/don/>> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>264</sup> In 2017, Sarah Halimi, AKA Lucie Attal, a 65-year-old woman was hurled by her neighbor, a Franco-Malian Muslim, from the third-floor balcony of a social housing project in the 11th arrondissement of Paris. In 2018, Mireille Knoll, 85 Jewish woman – and a survivor of the Vel d’Hiv roundup – was stabbed 11 times by her neighbor, a 20 years old French Muslim, in her apartment and left to burn in a failed arson attempt.

In 2013, the French Ministry of labour, employment and health certified C.I.E.U.X with the status of ‘solidarity association’ (my translation), allowing the recruitment of young volunteers as part of the civic service established by the state<sup>265</sup>. Since then, the enlarged association have intensified national and international interreligious meetings<sup>266</sup>. In collaboration with the local authorities, they set up conferences in Senegal, Lebanon, Israel, Tunisia or Qatar, targeting the youth to discuss about gender equality, empowerment of vulnerable populations, employability, democracy or citizenship<sup>267</sup>.

### Education

C.I.E.U.X is sometimes invited in schools to discuss religion, peace or the living together<sup>268</sup>. They also educate children, teenagers and adults, while setting up local interreligious meetings and visits to Mosque, Synagogues, Churches and Temples.

The founder and president of C.I.E.U.X, Alexandre Vigne, created a web search navigator called *Zemus*, to source proof internet researches for students, only displaying the results from a selected network of international universities and medias<sup>269</sup>. From 2013 to 2018, hundreds of young Christians, Muslims and atheist civic service volunteers in France and abroad, animated intercultural digital workshops called ‘*cybercitoyen*’ in schools and city hall to discuss about cultural diversity, civic education and racism. Through their actions to inform French and, sometimes foreign, children and teenagers, C.I.E.U.X educates the young generation to the values of democracy and human rights.

### Publications and awards

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<sup>265</sup> The civic service is a voluntary mission created by the French government for French citizen aged 16 to 25 years old, accessible without condition of diploma, paid and carried out in France or abroad.

<sup>266</sup> Conference held in Italy on the theme of the interreligious dialogue ‘le dialogue interreligieux’ in partnership with InCo, IVA – Israeli Volunteer Association, DRK – Soziale Freiwilligendienst, Programme Erasmus + ; and the Cultural Centre of Trento (19 and 27 June 2018) < <https://www.cieux.org/le-dialogue-interreligieux-israel-26-juin-2018/>> Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>267</sup> Session for the awareness on the ‘Vivre ensemble’ held at the Amel Center, Beyrouth, Lebanon (20 June 2017) < <https://www.cieux.org/sensibilisation-vivre-ensemble-2/>> Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>268</sup> ‘Ecole et Religion’ at the lycée catholique Saint Louis de Gonzague in Paris (9 January 2013) < <https://www.cieux.org/ecole-et-religion-9-janvier-2013-paris/>> Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>269</sup> Israelis High school students were invited to participate to the Zemus workshop at Paris Town Hall during the international Week Against Racism and Anti-Semitism (10 March 2019) < <https://www.cieux.org/a-paris-40-lyceens-israeliens-regardent-le-monde-comme-un-village-sur-zemus-infohttps-www-youtube-com-watchvewmssfxpuser-lanbspshellip/>> Accessed on 10 July 2019



C.I.E.U.X does not issue newsletters but uses the website as an informative platform, reporting on the different activities throughout the years and publishing videos to illustrate the engagement of the members and civic service volunteers. In 2013, Alexandre Vigne's book advocated for strengthening interreligious dialogue in the French democracy in order to prevent discrimination on the basis of religion or culture, 'to discern the ethical value of beliefs and behaviours regardless of the traditions that justify them'<sup>270</sup>. While being interviewed in the press, the founder of C.I.E.U.X defends the interreligious dialogue as a social inclusion instrument that can be used to build the living together<sup>271</sup>.

## Reactions to headlines

### #Mariage pour tous

C.I.E.U.X declares promoting and defending human rights but does not explicitly advocate for all human rights. Despite the fact that 'sexuality'<sup>272</sup> features in the list of topic to choose from when organising a CIEUX' meeting, there is no reference to LGBT's rights. In the case of the same sex marriage law and the public debate that followed with French Catholics protesting in the streets for several month<sup>273</sup> before the adoption of the law, there seem to be no official reactions from the interreligious association. According to the C.I.E.U.X.'s charter, the members are requested 'to observe restraint with regard to the major topical issues likely to impact on the lives and/or management of religious and political institutions'<sup>274</sup>, thus they chose not to engage in the controversy.

### #CharlieHebdo

Few days after the *Charlie Hebdo* and *Hypercashier* attacks, in January 2015, the representatives of several interreligious associations including Alexandre Vigne, published a message in one of the

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<sup>270</sup> Alexandre Vigne, *Le dialogue interreligieux de proximité: une urgence pour la Démocratie*, (Paris, Publisud, 2013)

<sup>271</sup> Marilyne Chaumont, 'Alexandre Vigne, président de l'association Cieux. Il tisse des liens entre voisins chrétiens, juifs, musulmans ou athées' in *La Croix* (14 April 2010) < [https://www.la-croix.com/Archives/2010-04-14/Alexandre-Vigne-president-de-l-association-Cieux-1--Il-tisse-des-liens-entre-voisins-chretiens-juifs-musulmans-ou-athees.-\\_NP\\_-2010-04-14-368646](https://www.la-croix.com/Archives/2010-04-14/Alexandre-Vigne-president-de-l-association-Cieux-1--Il-tisse-des-liens-entre-voisins-chretiens-juifs-musulmans-ou-athees.-_NP_-2010-04-14-368646)> Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>272</sup> C.I.E.U.X., 'Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue' (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007) <<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>> 27. Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>273</sup> Alexander Still, 'An Anti-Gay-Marriage Tea Party, French Style?' in *The New Yorker* (18 March 2014) < <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/an-anti-gay-marriage-tea-party-french-style>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>274</sup> C.I.E.U.X., 'Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue' (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007) <<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>> 8. Accessed on 15 June 2019

national newspapers<sup>275</sup>. The article emphasizes ‘Republican values and rights - secularism, living together, equality’, shared by ‘Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, agnostic, atheist and other cultures’, being strongly attached to ‘the republican values, human, spiritual and universal’. One year after the attacks, the rabbi of the synagogue Don Isaac Abravanel in Paris, one of the leaders of C.I.E.U.X., celebrated a Muslim ceremony at the Synagogue in memory of the policeman killed at *Charlie Hebdo*. In 2017, C.I.E.U.X., initiated the ‘March of Muslims against terrorism’, where religious representatives, local imams, and citizens met in front of the *Hypercacher* supermarket where four Jewish people were assassinated in 2015<sup>276</sup>.

### #13 November

A part from an article in the local Paris newspaper published few weeks after the attacks, C.I.E.U.X., did not publicly reacted<sup>277</sup>. However, by choosing to discuss *radicalisation*<sup>278</sup> during a workshop held in a school, few month after the attacks, the interreligious association demonstrates its capacity to adapt to headlines, taking into consideration new societal issues concerning democracy and human rights.

### #Refugees

On the matter of the refugees arriving in France especially since 2011 and the beginning of the Syrian war, C.I.E.U.X. does not seem to directly get involved and choose to call for charity to support the schooling of Syrian and Iraqi children fleeing the war with their families and hosted in Lebanon<sup>279</sup>.

### #Racism

C.I.E.U.X acts against racism within the framework of the local meetings organized throughout the years. The association does not usually react after specific incidents or crimes perpetuated against a minority on the basis of race or religion. However, in 2014, on the occasion of the Assumption celebration, the Interreligious Committee initiated, together with the mosque in the 12th

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<sup>275</sup> ‘Au-delà de nos émotions, nos actions’, *Huffington post* (21 January 2015) <[https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/naila-banian/-au-dela-de-nos-emotions-nos-actions\\_b\\_6513522.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/naila-banian/-au-dela-de-nos-emotions-nos-actions_b_6513522.html)> accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>276</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Rapport moral 2017’ <<https://www.cieux.org/rapport-moral-2017/>> Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>277</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Rapport moral 2016’ <<https://www.cieux.org/rapport-moral-2016/>> Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>278</sup> Workshop on radicalization at the College Albert Thomas in Egletons (12 March 2016) <<https://www.cieux.org/la-radicalisation/>> Accessed on 10 July 2019

<sup>279</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Rapport moral 2015’ <<https://www.cieux.org/rapport-moral-2015/>> Accessed on 10 July 2019

arrondissement of Paris, to send a message of solidarity to Christians of Iraq, persecuted by the Islamic State: ‘One of the first principles of human rights is that we do not humiliate a human to remain human ourselves’<sup>280</sup>.

In its mission to respect and promote human rights and democracy, the interreligious association C.I.E.U.X. seems to comply to its engagements, ‘to observe restraint with regard to the major topical issues likely to impact on the lives and/or management of religious and political institutions’<sup>281</sup>. However, its members did engage a few times to express their solidarity when the national cohesion was threatened.

## Conclusion

C.I.E.U.X. was launched by the Catholic teacher Alexandre Vigne, in the context of the rise of anti-Semitism in France at the beginning of the 2000’s, with the support of political and religious institutions.

Through the establishment of partnership with local clergy members and local state representative, C.I.E.U.X. organises local interreligious meetings where citizens of the same neighbourhood can discuss the religious and republican virtues. The topics of each meeting reflect modern social and religious concern and include human rights, democracy, *laïcité* and the living together, but also violence, radicalization or sexuality. C.I.E.U.X. uses the theologian and human rights approaches to democratize the interreligious dialogue.

The members of C.I.E.U.X are Muslims, Christian, Jews clergy and laypeople, but also Buddhists, atheists and agnostics with a majority of young Muslims. Through the partnership with the State of France, the association expanded its activities internationally, involving young volunteer engaged in the promotion of human rights and democracy. Education is one of the focus point of C.I.E.U.X.

In regards to the reaction of the latest headlines, the Committee seems to respect the principle depicted in its Charter observing ‘restraint with regard to the major topical issues likely to impact on the lives and/or management of religious and political institutions’<sup>282</sup>. On the same sex marriage law, after the 13 November terrorist attacks, on the refugee crisis or in reaction to the anti-Semite

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<sup>280</sup> Florence Méréo, ‘Les vœux d’une mosquée parisienne aux chrétiens d’Irak’, *Le parisien* (14 août 2014) <<http://www.leparisien.fr/informations/les-voeux-d-une-mosquee-parisienne-aux-freres-chretiens-d-irak-14-08-2014-4063435.php>> accessed 15 June 2019

<sup>281</sup> C.I.E.U.X., ‘Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue’ (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007)

<<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>> 8. Accessed on 15 June 2019

<sup>282</sup> Ibid 40

crimes committed since 2006, C.I.E.U.X. did not publicly respond. However, the founder of the association and other members denounced the Charlie Hebdo attacks. Its partnership with the State might be one of the reason why the Committee choose to limit its public intervention to the promotion of its activities. Applying a human right approach, C.I.E.U.X. frames its objectives in the human right legal framework and the French *laïcité* respecting the ‘plurality of the citizen identities’<sup>283</sup>.

### **Comparison: four associations and human rights promotion**

The four interreligious associations chosen in this analyse demonstrate a variety of actions, discourse and approach to promote human rights and democracy.

#### **Historical background**

Each one belongs to different historical context. The AJCF was launched after the Second World War, on the basis of the reconciliation process between Christians and Jews after the holocaust. The *Fraternité d’Abraham* was created in the late 1960’s when France lost its colonies in North Africa, generating an immigration wave with Muslims and Jewish people settling down in freshly build suburban neighbourhood. Forty years later, the A.J-M.F. and C.I.E.U.X address the children and grand-children of those first immigrants, living in the suburbs that have become impoverished neighbourhoods, where social exclusion led to the rise of discrimination, racism and anti-Semitism.

#### **Aims**

The four interreligious associations aim to reach similar objectives: increase mutual knowledge and explore religious texts to find arguments that support the fight against prejudice on the basis of religion and race, the promotion of peace, respect and human dignity. However, while comparing their statutes and charters, it seems like, while the AJCF and the *Fraternité d’Abraham* emphasize on brotherhood in order to reconcile the different religious communities, the A.J-M.F. and

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<sup>283</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 292

C.I.E.U.X aim at encompassing non-Abrahamic religions together with atheists. The *Fraternité d'Abraham* appears to be the most political, affirming its objective to promote social justice, freedom, and pledging to establish a European ethics of economy, thus defending economic, social and cultural rights. The four associations position religious values in the context of modern French society and demonstrate their ambition to play a role as a medium to ground the living together in the framework of *laïcité*.

## **Members**

The AJCF, the *Fraternité d'Abraham*, the A.J-M.F. and C.I.E.U.X, work with a network of clerics, academics and laypeople under the patronage of democratic and religious institutions. However, goals are pursued differently and do not rally the same audience and members. The A.J-M.F. and C.I.E.U.X, both work in multi-cultural neighbourhoods and have more Muslims and Jewish involved than Christians members in comparison to the AJCF. These two also invite atheist and non-Abrahamic religion to participate. The *Fraternité d'Abraham* seems to be more elitist, gathering high ranked clerics and intellectuals to debate in national or European conferences and through the articles published in the newsletter. The AJCF has established numerous local offices forming a dynamic network of members, mainly educated Christians. Similarly, A.J-M.F. and C.I.E.U.X are well embedded locally. Collaborating with local State representative, clerics and social workers, the two most recent associations share the particularity of being represented and mediatized by their founders.

## **Actions**

Mutual knowledge and human dignity are at the core of the four interreligious associations work, yet A.J-M.F. and C.I.E.U.X educate a broader audience coming from different social background and ethnicity, and address a wider range of topics during the interreligious meetings, from sexuality to democracy. These two also share a common view on how to consider the Israel/Palestine conflict and try to dissociate from the Middle Eastern battle.

While C.I.E.U.X applies the human right approach as a backbone while setting up local meetings, the A.J-M.F. acts as an emissary for social cohesion and the living together, going down the streets of impoverished neighbourhood to address racism and anti-Semitism. They are both active on social media and speak the language of the youth. Rabbi Michel Serfaty, founder and president of the A.J-

M.F., launched a new type of interreligious dialogue to spread anti-discrimination messages, teaming up with social organizations, clerics and artists settled locally, issuing videos and songs to reach vulnerable young people, especially the Muslims.

The AJCF, the *Fraternité d'Abraham*, the A.J-M.F. and C.I.E.U.X have developed partnership with the State institutions. A.J-M.F. and C.I.E.U.X have an emphasize on education, doing workshops on racism, teaching the children and the teenagers about religion in the framework of *laïcité*, while the *Fraternité d'Abraham* collaborates on a more political level, to discuss the implementation of ethics in economy and finance, promoting economic, social and cultural rights. In that perspective, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* encompasses a broader concept of *laïcité* where clerics, theologian and State representatives cooperate to build the living together.

The A.J-M.F. and C.I.E.U.X use the collaborative approach with the public authorities but concentrate their actions on a local level, democratizing the interreligious dialogue and reaching the non-believers, the youth and the Muslims people. While AJCF and A.J-M.F. are rooted in the national context, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* and C.I.E.U.X expand the sphere of their actions beyond French borders, with C.I.E.U.X sending civic service young volunteers across the world to engage in humanitarian actions, and the *Fraternité d'Abraham* commenting on international headlines in articles published in the newsletter.

### **Reactions to headlines**

In regards to the reaction of the latest headlines, the two oldest associations, the AJCF and the *Fraternité d'Abraham* appear to be more prompt to react and stand in favour of their opinion, despite emphasizing their duty not to engage in proselytist activities, thus complying to the French law on non-profit organization. These two both argue against the same sex marriage law, but welcome refugees, denouncing the French and the European governments lack of charity, recalling the Pope speech. In the case of the *Fraternité d'Abraham*, the latest international politics headlines are being discussed with a special interest on the Israel/Palestine conflict and its developments.

The four interreligious associations seem to act similarly when it comes to condemn the 2015 terrorist attacks, defending the freedom of expression and the republican values. Following those events, Michel Serfaty, president of the A.J-M.F, went to visit some of Paris suburban so-called radicalized mosque to interact with Muslims, demonstrating his dedication to the promotion of

peace. Since the attacks, his association sets up anti-racism workshops in schools with the support of social workers, psychotherapists and local clergy members.

AJCF, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* and A.J-M.F, are quite swift to speak up when anti-Semite acts and crimes are committed. These interreligious associations condemn racism and anti-Semitism, publishing articles and joining national protests to march together with other religious and interreligious organizations. Asserting that anti-Semitism is a violation of the law, those three associations condemn all forms of violence, racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

C.I.E.U.X seems to be the one restraining the most from 'the major topical issues likely to impact on the lives and/or management of religious and political institutions'<sup>284</sup>.

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<sup>284</sup> C.I.E.U.X., 'Charter on interreligious and secular dialogue' (Assemblée Nationale, 21 March 2007) <<https://www.cieux.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CIEUX-Charter-UK.pdf>> 40. Accessed on 15 June 2019

## ○ CONCLUSION

The analyse of the four interreligious associations demonstrates how their contribution to the socialization and moral education of the participants, promote human rights and democracy. While collaborating within the structure of non-profit organizations, clerics and religion followers meeting in these interreligious associations, together with agnostic and atheists, challenge their different vision of the world, democratizing interreligious dialogue. Through mutual knowledge and collaborative social actions, the members work to establish peace and social justice, considering the universal values of human rights overlapping their own, ‘already embedded into their understandings rather than something separate that needs to be integrated’<sup>285</sup> and sometimes integrating the language of human rights as part of their core identity.

The *Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France* is one of the oldest interreligious association in France and demonstrates the evolution of the interreligious action since the end of the Second World War. The founding members were humanists and resistance fighters, defending the right to life against torture. Today the battle against anti-Semitism and all forms of racism are the main objectives of the association. Through the study of Christian and Jewish holy books, high ranked clerics and intellectuals lead conferences where they expose religion modern challenges. Entrenched in the local network, the members organize many community activities where they collectively promote peace, charity and human dignity. The AJCF yearly prize, rewarding the effort of interreligious dialogue actors across the world, brings to light the determination of the association to advocate for freedom and justice. While the AJCF respects the rules of the *laïcité*, and does not intervene in governmental issues, the participants do sometimes engage to support or protest when societal matters are rising up in the French society especially when in the case of anti-Semite acts and crimes, fighting against discrimination on the basis of religion and race. The Christian/Jew interreligious association *Amitié Judéo Chrétienne de France* does not promote all the human rights but de facto collaborates to the promotion of human dignity by emphasizing on peace and respect beyond the two communities. They collaborate to the affirmation of the French democratic values when national cohesion is at stake.

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<sup>285</sup> Tanya B.Schwarz, *Faith-based organizations in transnational peacebuilding* (Rowman&Littlefield 2018) 5



The *Fraternité d'Abraham*, historical background, aims, members, actions, publications and reactions after a specific event, reveals its determination to promote peace and brotherhood between the three Abrahamic religions. Since its creation in 1967, the interreligious association intends to be a diplomatic peace force, using theologian and historical approach, to bring together Christian, Jewish and Muslim clerics, academics and experts. The mutual knowledge is presented as a medium for political actions aiming to emphasize solidarity, social justice, peace and freedom for all. Through the organization of annual conferences and the diffusion of the newsletter, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* invites clergy members, lay intellectuals and experts to debate on religion fundamental values but also on societal issues, promoting economic, social and cultural rights. Through partnerships set up with the French government institutions, the interreligious association goes beyond the framework of *laïcité* and engages to realize its vision of economic and social ethics. After the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, the *Fraternité d'Abraham* stood in favour of freedom, democracy, respect for life and human rights, entrenched in the republican values of France. Calling to welcome the refugees, the association condemned the European countries attitude, thus complying to the humanistic perspective encompassed in its actions and statutes. The *Fraternité d'Abraham* is a good example of the evolution of interreligious association in France where the general discourse expands to become more political and to include religious minorities.

The *Amitié Judeo-Musulmane de France* established in 2005, uses the theologian approach in the modern context and acts to strengthen the relations between citizens and the religious institutions at the local level, with the support of the State representatives. Rabbi Serfaty and imam Azizi fight against all forms of prejudice, collaborating with local clergy, and establish a peaceful interreligious dialogue to raise awareness on racism through informal discussions with the population of impoverished neighbourhood. They advocate for social justice, human rights and the respect of *laïcité*, teaming up with social workers to dialogue with the youth, preventing violence and pleading for the living together. By using the language of the young, through the organization of workshops and screening and communicating via social media, A.J-M.F reaches out the most vulnerable populations. The association addresses economic, social and cultural rights, demonstrating the ability of the interreligious dialogue to evolve and involve everyone.

The C.I.E.U.X members are Muslims, Christian, Jews clergy and laypeople, but also Buddhists, atheists and agnostics with a majority of young Muslims. Through the partnership with the State of

France, the association expanded its activities internationally, involving young volunteer engaged in the promotion of human rights and democracy. Education is one of the focus point of C.I.E.U.X. Its partnership with the State might be one of the reason why the Committee choose to limit its public intervention to the promotion of its activities. Applying a human right approach, C.I.E.U.X. frames its objectives in the human right legal framework and the French *laïcité* respecting the ‘plurality of the citizen identities’<sup>286</sup>.

The analyse of four interreligious associations in the context of the French *laïcité* reveals that they promote human rights and democracy within different historical, social and political context. The interreligious dialogue is a medium between diverse religious communities, between the secular state of France and religious institutions, between the citizen and the clergy, between the youth and democracy.

In the streets or in places of worship, at the local town hall or in a national consortium, the interreligious associations presented, campaign for the living together. The members are peace activists but they choose their battles in respect to their duty not to engage in proselytist actions. Although it depends on the collaboration among the members of each association, and on the cooperation with external support, from the different churches and from the state.

According to the observations made on the case studies of the *Amitié Judéo-Musulmane de France* and C.I.E.U.X, it seems that when one association opens the dialogue up to a broader audience, in terms of social ranking and ethnicity, it further promotes human rights and democracy. The theological approach applied to the social cohesion can reach out populations for whom religion is the backbone of their lives, entrenched in the core of their identity.

Considering that those four interreligious association participate to the empowerment of minorities, promoting equality among the different religious members and acknowledging distinctive individual identities, their actions and publications, are valuable to human rights and democracy locally and nationally.

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<sup>286</sup> Anne-Sophie Lamine, *La cohabitation des Dieux, pluralité religieuse et laïcité* (Ed. Puf 2004) 292

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