After the “Islamo-leftists” case, a reverted “which-hunt” towards Islamophobic researchers in France:

The French debate on “Islamo-leftism” within French University opened by the French Minister of Higher Education Frédérique Vidal has seen a new rebound last week.

Two professors of Grenoble Political Science Institute were targeted by accusations of “Islamophobia” and “fascism” on March the 4th. The professors’ names have been anonymously posted at the main entrance of the Institute’s building accompanied with the slogans “fascists are in our amphitheatres” and “Islamophobia kills”[[1]](#footnote-1) while posters also asked for the resignation of K. and T. (the two professors). The local affair has then been nationally debated and covered by French main media.

The controversy first emerged between two professors, as they were jointly working on a conference project focusing on “Racism, Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism”. For K., presenting Islamophobia on an equal footing with Anti-Semitism and Racism was not acceptable as he did not recognize any academic viability to the concept. K.’s insistence – he notably sent emails to explain his strong opposition to the use of this term – led one of his colleagues to finally drop out the term Islamophobia from the conference program.

A local trade union took up the case and took side against K. A second professor, T., has also been targeted by this campaign, after he brought his support to K. T notably threatened to exclude some of his students because of their affiliation to a trade union that previously warned on the content of his teachings. T. was accused of diffusing Islamophobic content during his classes.

This internal quarrel then turned into a public debate at the national level, with the poster campaign on the Institute’s walls. A local branch of a leftist students union republished the picture of the poster on its social media, before moving forward. If T. did not publicly react, K. made a media tour and vehemently defended his position, which consisted to denounce the progression of Islamo-leftism and the censorship among French researchers. He received strong political support from the majority and from the right that portrayed him as both the illustration of “Islamo-leftism” within University and a collateral victim of the “one track thinking”. His administrative direction initially reacted timidly before condemning his attitude when he mediatized the controversy.

A juridical investigation has been launched for public insult and degradation. Vidal, the Minister of Higher Education, vehemently condemned the pressures on two professors who have been put under police protection[[2]](#footnote-2).

Such case illustrated the context surrounding Islam in France and the pressure on academics. It also sheds light on the fragmentation of French University on this question.

SOURCES:

<https://www.liberation.fr/societe/education/a-sciences-po-grenoble-une-enquete-ouverte-pour-injures-contre-deux-professeurs-accuses-dislamophobie-20210307_BUGJ6I5R3BGULEEV6LUQPW4H5M/>

<https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/03/07/enquete-pour-injure-publique-apres-des-accusations-d-islamophobie-a-sciences-po-grenoble_6072260_3224.html>

<https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/education/islamophobie-a-l-iep-de-grenoble-un-troisieme-professeur-sous-protection-policiere-1615563687>

1. <https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/03/07/enquete-pour-injure-publique-apres-des-accusations-d-islamophobie-a-sciences-po-grenoble_6072260_3224.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/education/islamophobie-a-l-iep-de-grenoble-un-troisieme-professeur-sous-protection-policiere-1615563687 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)