

Tariq Ramadan Case: The Second “Dreyfus Affair” of France?

In December 1894, on the rise of political antisemitism in France, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish officer of the French army had been unjustly convicted for high treason and sentenced to life imprisonment by the French Military Court. As his military ranks and weapons were stripped off in the presence of an antisemitic crowd chanting “death to the Jews” in front of the famous Ecole Militaire of Paris, Dreyfus Affair passed into the history as the forerunner of the horrific crimes committed against Jewish population of France under the Vichy regime during the Second World War.

Dreyfus’ alleged crime was communicating French military secrets to the German Embassy in Paris, and was based on some hand-written notes found in the wastebasket of the German Embassy. Soon after Dreyfus’ conviction by the French military court, new pieces of evidence showed up that the hand-writing on the notes actually belonged to another Major Officer in the French army, named Ferdinand Esterhazy. Nevertheless, the pieces of evidence were suppressed by some of the high-rank officers in the French Military and Justice, on account of “saving the honour of the French army and the political stability of France” and Dreyfus was convicted for a second time, this time based on some additional newly fabricated documents.

After the show up of the evidences indicating Dreyfus’ innocence, and especially after the publication in a Parisian newspaper of the historic open letter written by famous French novelist Emile Zola, addressing the president of France, accusing the high rank French public officers who were accomplices in the conspiracy against Dreyfus, French public opinion could no longer ignore the explicit injustices committed in this affair. Zola’s declaration engaged many other French intellectuals’ attention to the case. The French Republic was shaken at its cores and it was obvious that the calm and stability of the nation couldn’t be restored without Dreyfus affair got resolved. That’s why in 1899 shortly after his second conviction by the French military court, the president of France felt obliged to pardon Dreyfus, yet his innocence was officially recognized only in 1906 through a decision of the French Supreme Court and then he was reinstated in the French army with the rank of Major.

Dreyfus affair remained as one of the biggest disgraces in the politico-legal history of France, by which an innocent man was persecuted with political and racist motives in the complicity of the French media and high-rank public officials of France.

Nearly 125 years after Dreyfus Affair, we are witnessing another racist and politically motivated character assassination in France, this time not targeting a Jewish military officer, but a highly influential European Muslim intellectual, Dr. Tariq Ramadan, who is already judged and executed by the French media as a “rapist Muslim” and being put into prison by the French justice, even before the preparation of the formal bill of indictment against him by the Paris Prosecution Office.

The similarity between the two cases is not limited to the political and racist motivations underlying them, but also includes complicity of some high rank French public officials whose actual duty meant to be substituting the justice.

According to the news and human rights groups’ reports, a crucial piece of evidence showing that Dr. Ramadan wasn’t even present in the alleged crime place at the alleged time was deposited to the French police by the defence attorneys in 6 December, however the evidence got mysteriously lost and wasn’t included in Dr. Ramadan’s file until his detention in February. The “loss” of this crucial piece of evidence draws all the attention to the Paris Public Prosecutor’s Office which is, according to French law, the director of the Judicial Police conducting the investigation about Dr. Ramadan.

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Public Prosecutor of Paris M. François Molins who is currently in charge of Dr. Ramadan's case is a magistrate who usually deals with "Islamic terrorism" cases with national jurisdiction. He was the one who investigates major terrorist attacks in France: the killings perpetrated by Mohammed Merah in 2012, the Charlie Hebdo attack, Nice attack of July 14, 2016, and so on.

Considering the fact that the first complaint against Dr. Ramadan was filed at the Rouen Public Prosecutor's Office and that is the one having natural jurisdiction over the case, the incomprehensible waiver of jurisdiction of that latter in favour of M. François Molins raises serious questions on whether Dr. Ramadan is under investigation because of an ordinary crime or just because he is a "Muslim".

Another indicator of abuse of public power in Dr. Ramadan's case come to the light by the public confession of a well-known French anti-Muslim and long-time adversary of Dr. Ramadan, Caroline Fourest, revealing that she had arranged a meeting in 2009 between a high rank French magistrate called Michel Debacq who is now holding an office in the Court of Cassation of France and the anonymous accuser called "Christelle", apparently in preparation to bring an action against Dr. Tariq Ramadan which also causes serious doubts on the impartiality of relevant French authorities addressing the Ramadan Case.

Since the very beginning of the process, the right to presumption of innocence of Dr. Tariq Ramadan constantly violated by the French media, along with a toxic anti-Muslim tone all over the news reports covering his case. Shortly after, French justice became a complicit in this violation by the undue investigation process applied to Dr. Ramadan and by putting him under indefinite detention despite the goodwill and full cooperation shown by him during the investigation process. On top of all, we learn from the reports that Dr. Tariq Ramadan has been put into a solitary confinement cell in the high-security wing of Paris' Fleury-Mérogis prison, without any understandable legal motive.

Now, Tariq Ramadan affair waits for its own Emile Zolas, who shall come out from the non-Muslim French intelligentsia and whose historic duty would be to call for attention to this blatant injustice currently taking place in France. Lessons taught by the history shows us that this conspiracy plotted against Dr. Tariq Ramadan with the explicit anti-Muslim motives, does not target only the personality of a single Muslim man, but the whole Muslim community of France and Europe. And those who chose not to speak up against the obvious injustice committed against Dr. Tariq Ramadan will be judged by the history as the accomplices of a much bigger crime committed against a whole European Muslim community.