

# Adlene Hicheur - convicted of 'autoradicalisation' Featured

Written by CP Editor

Wednesday, 06 June 2012

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**On 4 May 2012, the 14th Chamber of the Palais de Justice de Paris decided that writing on virtual forums opinions against the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq is considered as terrorism. On this very same day, the Court has established that criticising the Occident's interventions in the Middle East was the expression of "pro-djihadistes" sympathies.**

Adlene Hicheur was arrested on 8 May 2008 in his house in Vienne, for "criminal association in relation with a terrorist undertaking" as established by article 421-2-1 of the French criminal code, the pre-emptive approach stroke again. Step aside the fact that this criminal definition is so vague that it allows casting a wide net and implies a very low standard of proof behind any arrest, the dossier held against him was extremely thin. He was blamed for having exchanged emails with a presumed member of Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb called Mustapha Debchi and of having visited "pro-jihadist" websites. Charges that have proved to be during the trial, empty and futile as his lawyer explained after the sentencing. Indeed, except for few emails exchanged, which Hicheur himself has recognised could sound tendentious arguing that he was going through a difficult time, no real verification has been done i.e. Mustapha Debchi and his links with Al-Qaeda nor any evidence found assessing with no reasonable doubt that Hicheur had in mind to commit a terrorist crime on the french soil. Is exchanging emails and expressing different opinions enough to spend 4 years in jail? Apparently yes.

The investigating judge, neutral body looking for both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence, has only investigated one side of the story. It is a trial of a story-telling by secret service first and then by prosecution, that has not brought any crucial evidence nor found anyone from Al Qaeda linked to Hicheur. On the contrary, everybody that knew him well, people working with him, his family etc have never stopped claiming his innocence. An international support committee was even set up and brought together many of the finest scientists in the world to denounce the destroying judicial machine otherwise called “anti-terrorist section” and support his combat for liberty.

However, even without solid evidence to confirm his involvement, Adlene has spent more than 2 years in preventive detention, in a specific part of the prison with few contacts with family and friends, as required for terrorists' suspects, until his trial which sentenced him to 4 years. Given the time he has already spent in prison, combined with various term reductions available under the French judicial system, Hicheur was freed in the evening of Tuesday 15 May. So if I understood everything correctly, he spent more than 2 years in jail, got sentenced finally to 4, but walk out 10 days after his sentencing. Does this sound right to you? It looks like Adlene Hicheur was condemned before his trial, the sentence was then pronounced to cover the preventive detention, a practice commonly used in terrorism's cases as most of the time dossiers are empty, however one has to justify two, three and sometimes four years in preventive detention, so what could be better than a condemnation to cover for the time spent in pretrial detention? As obviously a 'happy ending' will end up raising way too many questions i.e. the blatant failure of secret services working outside of any legal framework in close collaboration with investigating judges, the lack of evidence behind decisions putting "suspects" behind bars for years and so on, just to tell us the story of the “perfect terrorist” caught before striking.

Also, it is interesting to notice that Hicheur's trial was held one week after the killing by the RAID of Mohamed Merah, a 24-year-old French citizen of Algerian origin, suspected of killing seven people, including three soldiers and four civilians — three of whom were young children — in Toulouse. Hicheur's supporters say that this event, which became a key one impacting on the French presidential election campaign, did not help him get a fair trial. Interestingly enough, French intelligence appears to have been monitoring Merah just as they did monitor Hicheur. Claude Guéant, France's interior minister, told the press that in Merah's case, they did not consider the evidence they had against him to be sufficient to issue an arrest warrant “Expressing ideas and jihadist opinions is not sufficient grounds for bringing someone up before the courts,” he said. It is to understand however that it was sufficient enough to arrest and then condemn Hicheur ...double standards?

Following the Merah's killing, French President Nicolas Sarkozy called for a crackdown on those who visit extremist websites, pledging that: “From now on, any person who habitually consults Web sites that advocate terrorism or that call for hatred and violence will be criminally punished.” This law was finally presented to the Senate on 4 May 2012 but has not been adopted yet.

It seems like France is now focusing into preventive neutralisation of “autoradicalised

individuals”, difficult to detect by definition, however filling up streets and internet forums, according to the official narrative. Under the pretext of preventing risks, one’s penalises intentions. To be “interested in” becomes an act of complicity. In his book *Minority Report*, Philip K. Dick anticipated what was coming; a pre-crime brigade was looking into our consciences. We are basculating into a state of fear, trying to prevent the unpredictable by spreading fear and doubt among the population. A policy state where anarchist's, anti capitalist's blogs and forums will be forbidden as well as marxist groups, pro-palestinians' websites and support groups, right wing extremists sympathisers, anything and everything. What was singular in Adlene Hicheur’s case, as we were told, is probably his Algerian nationality and the fact that his father was on the secret service’s antiterrorist files due to his pilgrimage to the Mecca, one of the five pillars of islam. Just as Me William Bourdon noticed, a well recognised lawyer in terrorism’s cases - “The crime of association [terrorism] is deduced from proximity to the devil: you are a young Muslim, you shared an apartment with some Salafists, unwisely, you exchanged some letters. The level of proof is weak because it’s about a presumed intention. The fact of having been close to a Salafist means you might have had the intention of committing a terrorist act” ... That seems to be enough to put you in jail in case you might want to commit a crime someday, who knows? Adlene Hicheur is finally free and yet will always be guilty with a criminal record and labeled as a terrorist.

**Written by Jennifer Castello**

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