

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

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WRITTEN DECLARATION

for entry in the register

pursuant to Rule 51 of the Rules of Procedure

by Robert Evans, Alima Boumediene-Thiery, Neena Gill and
Olle Schmidt

on religious rights and freedoms in France and the European Union

Expiry date: 6 May 2004

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Rule 51 of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. recognising that European history has been blighted by religious intolerance,
- B. noting that Europe's 370 million citizens include some 20 million Muslims, plus Sikhs, Jews, Hindus and other religious minorities,
- C. aware that several European countries have successfully integrated minority religious communities whilst respecting their cultural differences,
- D. alarmed at the rise of Islamaphobia in many European countries, especially since 11 September 2001,
- E. deeply concerned at the French ban on the display of religious identities in schools and conscious that a future enlargement of the European Union will embrace Turkey, with its Muslim majority,
- F. believing this ban on the Muslim hijab, Sikh turban, Jewish skullcap, Christian cross and other symbols to be an infringement of human rights,
- G. considering that gender equality is a fundamental right and that the goal should be for women to acquire rights not lose them,
- 1. Urges the French Government to rethink its ban and investigate ways of improving the opportunities for religious minorities to integrate more fully into French society;
- 2. Calls on the representatives of different religions in France and the European Union to work together with the French Government to address the challenges of integration;
- 3. Considers that a debate on this subject should be held in the European Parliament.