Link to the Resolution: [Texts adopted - The need for an EU strategy to counter Islamist entryism and the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood network - Thursday, 8 October 2026]

Whose democracy are we protecting? The European Parliament's dangerous approach to Islamist entryism

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On 8 October 2026, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling for an EU strategy to counter Islamist entryism and the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood network. It passed with 381 votes in favour, 167 against and 15 abstentions.

The resolution explicitly names organisations such as the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) and the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) in recital J, placing their participation in EU-funded projects within a broader narrative of alleged ideological infiltration and the capture of European funding. Although Roma organisations are not directly named, the proposed methodology raises wider concerns for minority-led and anti-racist civil society, particularly when institutional access, public funding and organisational legitimacy may become subject to assessments based on alleged ideological associations rather than evidence of wrongdoing.

The problem with this resolution is not that Parliament wants to address extremism or protect democratic institutions. It is the way the text constructs the threat and, in doing so, risks turning some of the ordinary practices of democracy into reasons for suspicion.

The concern becomes more serious when read alongside the resolution's reference to narratives of systematic victimhood. This language risks doing more than questioning the accuracy of particular claims. It may encourage the view that documenting racism, or insisting that discrimination is structural rather than exceptional, is itself part of a political strategy designed to manipulate public institutions.

Consider paragraph 6, which calls for a European methodology to identify Islamist entryism. Among the elements it associates with this phenomenon are institutional partnerships, activist reports and the use of anti-discrimination frameworks. These references deserve much closer attention than they have received.

For organisations working against racism, producing reports, engaging with public institutions and using anti-discrimination mechanisms are not peripheral activities. They are central to our work. We document discrimination, question public policies, challenge institutional practices and demand accountability from governments that do not always fulfil their own legal obligations. If these activities can be interpreted as indicators of ideological infiltration, what exactly distinguishes independent civil society from an organisation considered politically suspect?

For those of us working on structural racism, this is a familiar and troubling argument. Claims of discrimination are often dismissed as exaggeration, victimisation or political opportunism. Yet much of the progress made in European equality law and policy has depended precisely on civil society challenging the idea that discrimination consists only of isolated incidents.

If the language of victimhood becomes a means of discrediting evidence of racism, the burden shifts from institutions having to respond to discrimination to those experiencing it having to prove that their advocacy is legitimate. The purpose of anti-discrimination mechanisms is not to protect public authorities from criticism, but to provide means of holding them accountable.

I find this troubling because it exposes a wider contradiction in the relationship between European institutions and civil society. We are encouraged to participate in consultations, provide evidence of discrimination, monitor the implementation of European policies and contribute to democratic accountability. Yet some of these same activities are now being discussed as possible instruments through which organisations gain illegitimate influence.

This contradiction is particularly striking in light of Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union, which requires EU institutions to maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with civil society. Participation in policymaking and engagement with European institutions are not privileges granted to organisations whose positions are politically convenient. They are part of the democratic framework the EU itself has committed to uphold.

At what point does participation become infiltration? And who decides? These questions cannot be answered by assuming that all organisations acting in the name of religion, equality or human rights are necessarily democratic. They are not. Some religious and political movements promote interpretations of gender relations, sexuality or family life that are fundamentally incompatible with equality. Some may seek to restrict the rights of others while invoking democratic freedoms to defend their own activities. Others may deliberately exploit institutional access or public funding for purposes that deserve investigation.

Whatever the case, we should be able to criticise these positions and investigate unlawful conduct, including when they emerge within minority communities, without hesitation. But there is a considerable difference between criticising an ideology, investigating an organisation on the basis of evidence and constructing an entire field of religious and political participation as a potential security problem.

The selective defence of European values

The resolution invokes Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, referring to human dignity, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These are values I strongly defend, but I am troubled by how selectively they are sometimes invoked in European political debates, particularly when religion enters the discussion.

The resolution's inclusion of "hatred of Israel" alongside antisemitism and anti-Christian hatred raises another concern about how these distinctions are drawn. Antisemitism must be unequivocally condemned, but criticism of a state's policies and actions cannot automatically be equated with hatred directed at Jewish people. Criticism of Israeli government policies, demands for accountability under international law and solidarity with Palestinians are legitimate forms of political expression, even when they are strongly contested. This becomes particularly important in a resolution that already risks interpreting political advocacy and institutional engagement through the lens of ideological suspicion.

Although the final resolution broadens its language to religious entryism more broadly, its substantive focus remains overwhelmingly on Muslim organisations, networks and forms of political engagement. The apparent neutrality of this broader formulation does little to address the unequal scrutiny applied to different religious movements, particularly when comparable efforts to influence public policy are treated as legitimate democratic participation in some cases and as potential ideological infiltration in others.

Religiously inspired political movements have long been part of European democracy. Christian-democratic parties and conservative religious organisations have sought to influence legislation and public policies on education, family life, reproductive rights and sexuality, sometimes promoting positions that directly challenge women's rights and LGBTIQ+ equality. Yet people generally accept their political engagement as part of democratic pluralism rather than describing it as ideological infiltration or institutional capture.

Why, then, is the relationship between religion and politics approached so differently when Islam is involved? Religious movements are not all the same, and neither are their political objectives or methods. Some seek to influence public policy through democratic means, while others may engage in coercion, intimidation or unlawful activities. These differences should inform how institutions respond, rather than treating political engagement or religious conservatism as inherently suspicious.

What is particularly worrying is that some of the political forces most vocal about defending European values against Islamism have themselves opposed women's reproductive rights and LGBTIQ+ equality. Yet these positions are rarely approached through the same security lens. Christian religious organisations can campaign against abortion rights or same-sex marriage as part of legitimate political debate. In contrast, Muslim organisations seeking to influence public policy may find their activities examined through the language of entryism.

This inconsistency raises uncomfortable questions about what is actually being defended. If equality and fundamental rights are the principles guiding European institutions, they should apply equally to all religious and political movements, including those rooted in Europe's dominant traditions. Otherwise, we risk turning the defence of European values into a selective judgement about whose beliefs and political participation are considered legitimate.

The racialisation of Islam and the boundaries of belonging

The resolution formally distinguishes Islam as a religion from political Islamism. In recital C, it states that Islam is not inherently political or hostile and that the overwhelming majority of Muslims reject violence against civilians. This distinction may be intended to prevent the stigmatisation of Muslims. But the formulation itself deserves scrutiny.

Why must an entire religious community be reassured that its religion is not inherently hostile? Why is the rejection of violence introduced as a defining characteristic of Muslim believers? Would a resolution addressing Christian nationalism begin by establishing that most Christians reject violence against civilians?

Read in isolation, recital C might appear to be a reassurance that Islam should not be confused with political extremism. But I find the need for such reassurance revealing in itself, particularly when the rest of the resolution repeatedly associates Muslim organisations, political engagement and institutional participation with the possibility of ideological infiltration.

Islam is not a race, and Muslims are not a homogeneous community. They belong to different ethnicities, nationalities, religious traditions and political movements. Yet Muslims can be racialised through political narratives that construct them as a collectively identifiable population associated with particular cultural characteristics, presumed loyalties and security concerns.

Christianity, meanwhile, is frequently presented as part of Europe's cultural heritage, even though it is neither exclusively European nor white. Islam is often represented as external to that heritage, despite the long history and diversity of Muslim communities across Europe.

The result is not simply a distinction between religion and politics. It is also a distinction between religious identities that are perceived as naturally belonging to Europe and those repeatedly required to demonstrate their compatibility with it.

By distinguishing between Islam as an acceptable private religion and political Islamism as a potential threat, the resolution risks creating an implicit hierarchy between different forms of Muslim participation.

Muslims who practise their religion privately, avoid political controversy and do not challenge dominant institutional narratives may be more easily recognised as legitimate members of society. Those who organise politically, criticise discrimination, advocate collectively or seek influence over public policy may face greater suspicion.

The distinction between religious belief, political engagement and unlawful conduct is important here. A democracy should not require Muslims to withdraw from political life in order to demonstrate that they are sufficiently integrated or sufficiently democratic. Nor should political participation become conditional on minorities expressing their identities in ways that the majority finds reassuring.

Muslim women's rights and the contradictions of emancipation

The instrumentalisation of women's rights in racist political discourses is something I have been concerned about for many years. It is also an area in which I believe feminist and anti-racist movements need to be particularly self-critical.

We cannot ignore patriarchal practices, coercion or restrictions on women's freedoms within minority communities. Doing so would mean abandoning women who may already face multiple forms of discrimination. But neither can we accept that the protection of women provides an automatic justification for regulating their religious expression or excluding them from public life.

The resolution raises concerns about religious dress among minors and supports national prohibitions on full-face coverings in public spaces. These are distinct issues, and a full-face covering should not be confused with the hijab. Nevertheless, both are discussed within a broader framework of ideological influence and threats to democratic values.

Muslim women's emancipation cannot be assessed primarily through their clothing. Women may be pressured to wear religious garments, and that coercion must be addressed. But women may also be pressured to remove them, including through institutional rules that restrict their access to education, employment or public life. We cannot defend women's autonomy only when their choices correspond to our own understanding of emancipation. There is something deeply contradictory about presenting Muslim women simultaneously as victims of religious control and as possible symbols of ideological conformity whose public expression requires restriction. In both cases, their own voices risk disappearing.

Women's choices also need to be understood within the wider social and economic conditions in which they are made. Poverty, discrimination, family expectations and unequal access to education or employment can all affect women's ability to exercise autonomy. This is why I find it insufficient to discuss Muslim women's emancipation primarily through religious clothing, without giving the same attention to the inequalities they experience or to their own perspectives on the policies that affect them. A feminist approach that takes these realities seriously must be prepared to challenge patriarchal practices within communities as well as restrictions imposed by public institutions.

The same principle should apply to reproductive rights, LGBTIQ+ equality and freedom of conscience. These rights must be protected consistently, not selectively mobilised against particular religious or cultural groups.

From association to suspicion: the securitisation of civil society

The resolution's treatment of civil society becomes even more concerning when we examine the measures it proposes.

Paragraph 12 calls for organisations associated with the Council of European Muslims, including FEMYSO, to be excluded from European institutions and removed from the EU Transparency Register. Other provisions address EU funding, organisational relationships, transnational networks and security cooperation.

The resolution is non-binding. It does not itself exclude FEMYSO, terminate grants or authorise new surveillance measures. This distinction is essential. But political resolutions can shape future legislative proposals, administrative practices and institutional expectations. Their effects are not limited to what they immediately require.

The resolution's approach to organisational relationships and ideological associations is particularly problematic. Civil society organisations work through networks, partnerships and institutional cooperation, often across national borders. These relationships are essential to advocacy, especially for organisations representing minorities whose concerns are frequently overlooked at national level. Yet the resolution raises the possibility of restricting organisations on the basis of their alleged associations with particular movements or networks. An organisational connection, even where it can be established, does not mean that the organisations involved share every political position or are responsible for one another's activities.

This becomes especially problematic when allegations of ideological proximity are treated as sufficient grounds for exclusion from European institutions. If an organisation has engaged in unlawful activities, incited violence, misused public funding or attempted to interfere unlawfully with democratic processes, there are legitimate reasons to investigate and, where justified, take action. But such decisions should be based on evidence of the organisation's own conduct, with clear and proportionate criteria, transparent procedures and an effective opportunity to challenge the allegations. Even where formal procedures exist, broadly defined assessments of ideological affiliation can expose organisations to unjustified scrutiny and discourage legitimate political participation, penalising them for presumed associations or political positions rather than their own conduct.

The implications for EU funding are equally serious. Financial accountability is necessary, and organisations receiving public resources should be subject to transparent and consistent requirements. But examining whether public funds have been misused is very different from deciding that certain organisations are politically undesirable partners. For many minority-led organisations, European funding is what makes it possible to document rights violations, participate in policymaking, monitor the implementation of equality commitments and challenge institutional failures. Their independence depends, in part, on being able to criticise the very institutions that fund or consult them. This is also recognised in the EU's Civil Society Strategy, which emphasises the importance of an enabling environment for independent civil society and its meaningful participation in democratic processes. Subjecting organisations to politically or ideologically defined assessments of their eligibility for funding would risk undermining precisely the independence and democratic participation that the EU has committed itself to protecting.

What happens when access to funding becomes dependent on increasingly vague assessments of ideological acceptability? Organisations may begin to avoid politically sensitive issues, soften their criticism of public authorities or distance themselves from partners whose activities could attract scrutiny. This is particularly concerning for anti-racist organisations, whose work often involves challenging institutional practices, documenting structural discrimination and questioning policies that governments would prefer not to have publicly criticised. These are not signs of illegitimate influence. They are part of the democratic role of civil society.

The resolution also raises concerns through its references to transnational networks, mobility and security cooperation. International partnerships, research exchanges and cross-border advocacy are ordinary features of European civil society. A researcher attending a conference, a youth organisation cooperating with international partners or an activist participating in meetings abroad should not become a subject of security suspicion merely because their work involves Muslim organisations or politically controversial debates. There is a real risk that information about individuals and organisations could be collected, shared or interpreted through assumptions about ideological affiliation rather than evidence of unlawful conduct.

What makes this especially troubling is that restrictions do not have to be formally imposed to affect how civil society operates. The possibility of being labelled politically suspect, losing access to funding or being excluded from institutional dialogue may already influence the choices organisations make. Some may reconsider partnerships, avoid international events, refrain from addressing sensitive issues

or hesitate to challenge public authorities. Over time, this can narrow the space for independent advocacy without any explicit prohibition being introduced.

And there is little reason to assume that such an approach, once normalised in relation to Muslim organisations, would remain confined to them. The broader concern is what happens when the ordinary practices of civil society—building transnational partnerships, producing reports on discrimination, advocating for stronger equality policies, engaging with European institutions and challenging government policies—begin to be interpreted through a security framework rather than recognised as essential forms of democratic participation.

For Roma civil society, this is not an abstract concern. Roma and Travellers are themselves increasingly treated as a security issue across Europe. At the recent Council of Europe Dialogue on Security Policies and Inclusion, we discussed how poverty, informal settlements, mobility and even entire Roma neighbourhoods are increasingly approached through policing and public-order measures rather than through social inclusion, equality and fundamental rights.

The concerns raised about police operations targeting Roma communities in Greece were particularly revealing. The European Roma Rights Centre documented operations involving tactical units, drones and other specialised equipment. The Hellenic Police defended their approach by referring to prevention, mediation and human rights training. But the fundamental question remains whether such practices are proportionate and whether the same approaches would be considered acceptable in other communities.

What was striking in these discussions was the reversal of the very meaning of security. Roma and Travellers experience racist violence, discriminatory policing, forced evictions and unequal access to justice. Yet rather than consistently addressing their insecurity, public authorities increasingly approach them as populations requiring control.

The situations of Roma and Muslim communities are not identical, and the mechanisms through which they are securitised differ. But the underlying question is similar: why are racialised minorities so often discussed in terms of the risks they supposedly represent, rather than the risks and discrimination they themselves experience?

This also has consequences for civil society. Roma organisations document discriminatory policing, challenge segregation and evictions, and demand accountability from the institutions with which they are expected to cooperate. If criticism of public authorities, anti-discrimination advocacy or international partnerships can themselves become grounds for suspicion, the independence of civil society is placed at risk.

The danger is therefore not only that particular organisations may face exclusion. It is that security frameworks can progressively redefine both minority communities and those defending their rights as problems to be managed, rather than democratic actors entitled to equal protection and participation.

The political choices behind the resolution

The parliamentary process through which the resolution was adopted deserves particular attention. The final text was based on a proposal from the European People's Party, following competing motions from Renew Europe, the European Conservatives and Reformists, Patriots for Europe and Europe of Sovereign Nations.

Socialists, Greens and the Left proposed numerous amendments, including on fundamental rights, institutional participation and EU funding, and most ultimately opposed the resolution. These amendments reflected important concerns about the potential consequences for civil society. Yet they also raise a broader question about whether strengthening procedural safeguards is sufficient when the underlying approach already treats Muslim political participation as something requiring exceptional scrutiny. Are we challenging the assumptions behind this security framework, or primarily trying to make its application less discriminatory?

Nevertheless, the resolution secured a majority with substantial support from the centre-right, liberals, conservatives and the far right. What is concerning is that this was not simply another example of far-right rhetoric about Islam. The resolution gained support across a much wider political spectrum, suggesting that the language of security, democracy and European values has made certain assumptions about Muslim political participation increasingly acceptable within mainstream European politics. I think we need to examine how this happened, and why proposals that could restrict the participation of Muslim organisations are gaining legitimacy when presented as necessary measures to defend democracy.

The defence of democracy cannot become a justification for deciding which political views deserve institutional legitimacy. European institutions have a responsibility to respond to unlawful activities and genuine threats to fundamental rights, but conservative, illiberal or unpopular political beliefs cannot automatically be treated as security threats. This distinction matters especially when the organisations under scrutiny represent communities already exposed to discrimination and political exclusion.

The responsibility of European institutions

The European Parliament has adopted its position, but what happens next will depend on how other European institutions respond. The European Commission, as guardian of the Treaties, has a particular responsibility to ensure that the political demands contained in the resolution do not translate into discriminatory practices concerning EU funding, institutional access or civil society participation. Existing rules on transparency, financial accountability, fraud and exclusion already provide mechanisms for examining the conduct of organisations. These should be applied consistently, without introducing special forms of ideological screening based on broadly defined notions of entryism.

I find this particularly important given the EU's commitments to combating racism, protecting civic space and ensuring the meaningful participation of racialised minorities. The new EU Anti-Racism Strategy, including its commitment to addressing anti-Muslim racism, makes this contradiction particularly apparent. It would be deeply contradictory for European institutions to encourage civil society to document discrimination and hold governments accountable while simultaneously treating some of these activities as potential indicators of ideological infiltration, particularly when they are undertaken by organisations representing the very communities the EU has committed to protecting against racism and discrimination.

The Council and Member States also have responsibilities, especially where the resolution calls for greater security cooperation. Such cooperation must not become a justification for religious or racial profiling, or for extending security scrutiny to lawful political expression, academic exchanges and international civil society activities. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, equality bodies and independent human rights institutions have an important role in examining the possible discriminatory consequences, including for Muslim women and minority-led organisations.

And Parliament itself should remain accountable for the political choices it has made. Adopting a resolution does not remove the responsibility to examine the evidence behind its claims, consider the consequences of its proposals and ensure that the values invoked in their defence are applied consistently. Democratic institutions should be open to criticism, including when that criticism challenges the assumptions on which their own policies are based.

I also think this debate requires some reflection within civil society itself. Anti-racist and feminist movements have not always found it easy to address religious conservatism, misogyny, antisemitism or restrictions on LGBTIQ+ rights within minority communities without reinforcing the prejudices those communities already face. These are difficult conversations, but avoiding them leaves space for others to instrumentalise legitimate concerns about fundamental rights in support of discriminatory policies. I do not believe we should have to choose between confronting oppressive practices and opposing racism. Both are necessary, even when holding these positions together is politically uncomfortable.

What concerns me about this resolution is that it moves us further away from that complexity. By placing religious identity, political participation, institutional relationships and anti-discrimination advocacy within an expanding security framework, it risks making suspicion a starting point rather than a conclusion supported by evidence. The European Commission and Member States will now have to decide how to respond to Parliament's demands, particularly in relation to EU funding, institutional participation and security cooperation. Their responsibility is to ensure that existing safeguards against discrimination are not weakened in the name of protecting democracy.

I keep coming back to our discussions at the Council of Europe about Roma and Traveller communities. We spoke about security, but much of the discussion concerned people whose own security has never been adequately guaranteed. There is something deeply unsettling about European institutions becoming increasingly preoccupied with the threats that racialised minorities might represent while remaining unable, or unwilling, to address the threats those minorities experience. I think this contradiction deserves much more attention than it receives in the Parliament's resolution.