

The 1991 Muslim Brotherhood Memorandum: A Documented Strategy of Civilizational Jihad

In debates over religious ideology and democracy, few documents are as revealing as the 1991 memorandum authored by Mohamed Akram Adlouni, a senior figure in the Muslim Brotherhood's North American network. Titled An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Group in North America, it lays out, in blunt terms, the Brotherhood's long-term plan to reshape Western society from within.

The document was uncovered by the FBI in 2004 during a raid on the home of Ismail Elbarasse, a senior Brotherhood member linked to the Palestine Committee. It was introduced as evidence in the 2008 Holy Land Foundation trial, the largest terrorism financing case in U.S. history, where several Islamist groups funneled money to Hamas, a designated terrorist group.

At the heart of the memo is the concept of “civilizational jihad”: a strategy of nonviolent, ideological subversion. One of its most quoted passages reads:

“The process of settlement is a ‘Civilization-Jihadist Process’... a kind of grand jihad in eliminating and destroying the Western civilization from within and ‘sabotaging’ its miserable house by their hands and the hands of the believers so that it is eliminated...”

This is not a call for bombs or bullets, it's a call for influence. The memo outlines how education, media, charitable institutions, legal activism, and political lobbying can be used to subtly erode secular norms and replace them with Islamist ones. It describes a coordinated effort among groups operating under a shared ideological umbrella.

The document includes a list of affiliated organizations, such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Muslim Students Association (MSA), and the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), urging them to “march according to one plan.”

Although the memo was written over 30 years ago and focused on the North American context, its relevance endures. National security analysts and legal scholars continue to cite it as a rare, unfiltered glimpse into the Brotherhood's worldview and strategic model.

That model, gradual ideological capture through institutions, mirrors the Brotherhood's approach in Europe today. Through its umbrella group FIOE, the Brotherhood has built a continent-wide infrastructure of mosques, schools, youth organizations, and lobbying fronts. Key affiliated groups include the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR), the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO), and national groups like the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and Union of Islamic Communities in Italy (UCOII).

Blurring Lines: Islamophobia as a Political Shield

One of the Muslim Brotherhood's most effective political strategies in Europe is the deliberate blurring of lines between religious identity and political agenda. By portraying Muslims as a monolithic and systematically oppressed group, Brotherhood-linked organizations position themselves as the exclusive voice of European Muslims.

This framing not only suppresses dissenting Muslim perspectives but also enables these groups to advocate for legal and institutional changes that advance their ideological goals.

As part of this strategy, FIOE and its affiliates have secured significant public funding through EU programs targeting community cohesion and anti-radicalization. These funds are often used to promote narratives that embed Islamist ideological aims under the cover of civil rights language, reinforcing their claim to represent an entire faith community.

Examples include:

Public statements equating criticism of Sharia or political Islam with hate speech

1. French Government Report & EU Lobbies

A French government-commissioned report (seen by POLITICO) reveals that Brotherhood-linked organizations attempted to influence EU institutions to criminalize blasphemy and frame criticism of Sharia or Islamism as hate speech.

They pushed for legal frameworks that blur the line between critique of ideology and offense against people, effectively shielding religious doctrines from scrutiny.

Specifically, groups like FEMYSO and CEM were accused of using anti-Islamophobia campaigns to challenge legitimate academic and secular criticism. Some proposals included treating opposition to Sharia as equivalent to hostility toward Muslim identity.

2. CCIF & “Political Islamophobia” in France

The Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF), long criticized for its links to Islamist networks, has been documented by critics such as Caroline Fourest and Marine Le Pen for using the term “political Islamophobia.”

They argue it is used broadly to silence any criticism of Islamic doctrine, legal codes, or religious political motives. This suppresses secular or policy-based debate by labeling legitimate criticism of religious ideology as racist or hateful, blurring the line between protecting individuals and insulating belief systems from scrutiny.

French critics highlight that CCIF, in its reports, regularly conflates criticism of political Islam or Sharia law with hostility toward Muslim people. That tactic discourages open discussion on sensitive issues like gender equality, blasphemy laws, or sexual rights.

Advocacy for “Islamophobia” monitoring bodies

1. EU-Funded Islamophobia Monitoring (IMAN)

In 2012, the European Commission co-financed a program called Islamophobia Monitoring and Action Network (IMAN) with €70,000. Run by FEMYSO (a Muslim Brotherhood–linked youth group) and the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF) to build state-backed platforms that could monitor and critique media, education, and public statements for perceived “Islamophobia.”

This blurred critiques of Islamist ideology with bigotry against Muslims.

2. EU Lobbying to Shape Islamophobia Policy via Islamist-Linked Bodies

In 2018, over 20 organizations, including FEMYSO, CCIF, and the Muslim Council of Britain, joined European Network Against Racism (ENAR) in urging the EU to expand its Islamophobia strategy. Their letter framed Islamophobia as a form of racism requiring policy action.

Analysts like Djemila Benhabib warned that such initiatives promote a “victimhood discourse,” conflating criticism of political Islam or Sharia with racial hatred, thereby silencing ideological dissent.

3. Influence in Education and Sports Policy

In 2023, the European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) published a detailed report outlining how Muslim Brotherhood–linked networks have strategically advanced their influence in French schools and sports associations.

The report identified 21 schools connected to Brotherhood affiliates, enrolling approximately 4,200 students, some even operating under state contracts. These schools reportedly promoted gender-segregated classes, mandatory religious instruction, and parallel curricula that deviated from the secular standards of public education.

In sports, 127 associations showed Islamist ties, 18 directly to the Brotherhood, representing over 65,000 members. These groups often infused activities with religious messaging and gender restrictions.

Movements like Les Hijabeuses, backed by Brotherhood networks, pushed for hijab accommodation in competitions, framing religious separatism as a civil rights issue.

The activities of FIOE and its affiliates reveal that the Muslim Brotherhood’s presence in Europe is not just religious, it is fundamentally political.

By presenting themselves as moderate and representative, Brotherhood-linked groups have gained institutional trust, public funding, and media platforms. Meanwhile, they subtly advance a vision of society more aligned with Islamist goals than democratic pluralism.

Muslim communities absolutely deserve protection from bigotry, but that protection is undermined when Islamism cloaks itself in the language of civil rights. These are not champions of inclusion, but ideological actors pursuing a long-term theocratic project.

➡ **Next in the series:** How CAIR reshaped US universities, speech codes, and civil rights definitions

 Further reading & sources

- An Explanatory Memorandum from the Archives of the Muslim Brotherhood in America – Center for Security Policy <https://centerforsecuritypolicy.org/an-explanatory-memorandum-from-the-archives-of-the-muslim-brotherhood-in-america/>
- Government Exhibit 003-0085: Muslim Brotherhood's "Explanatory Memorandum" – U.S. v. Holy Land Foundation (via Investigative Project on Terrorism) <https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/misc/20.pdf>
- Book Review: The Muslim Brotherhood's Pan-European Structure – Middle East Forum <https://www.meforum.org/middle-east-quarterly/book-reviews/the-muslim-brotherhood-pan-european-structure>
- The Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE): Origins, Structure, and Influence – Global MB Watch (PDF Report) https://www.globalmbwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/The- * * Federation-of-Islamic-Organizations-in-Europe.pdf
- FIOE Profile and Affiliates – Global Influence Operations Report Wiki <https://www.global-influence-ops.com/wiki/federation-of-islamic-organizations-in-europe/>
- Muslim Brotherhood Alarmed France with EU Lobbying for Islamic Law – Politico EU <https://www.politico.eu/article/muslim-brotherhood-france-alarmed-egypt-european-union-lobby-islamic-law/>
- Aims and Methods of Europe's Muslim Brotherhood – Investigative Project on Terrorism <https://www.investigativeproject.org/173/aims-and-methods-of-europes-muslim-brotherhood>
- When the Fight Against Islamophobia Serves the Muslim Brotherhood – Decolonialisme.fr <https://decolonialisme.fr/en/When-the-fight-against-Islamophobia-serves-the-Muslim-Brotherhood/>
- EU Funding of IMAN Project (2012) – €70,000 grant for Islamophobia Monitoring Network run by FEMYSO and CCIF <https://zdechovsky.eu/en/news/why-is-europe-ignoring-the-threats-of-muslim-brotherhood>
- EU Appoints "Islamophobia" Czar, Imperiling Free Speech – Middle East Forum <https://www.meforum.org/eu-appoints-new-islamophobia-czar-imperiling-free>
- The Muslim Brotherhood's Entryism in France – European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) (Full PDF Report) <https://eclj.org/geopolitics/french-institutions/entrisme-des-freres-musulmans-a-quand-leur-interdiction-en-france-?lng=en>

The Islamophobia Series

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