

RASSEMBLEMENT NATIONAL (RN) (FORMERLY FRONT NATIONAL)

The RN is a far-right, anti-Muslim political party that launched as the Front National in 1972. The party has extreme, fascist roots but under the leadership of Marine Le Pen it has attempted to ‘de-demonise’ its image, including renaming itself in 2018.

However, the party remains extreme, not least in its anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim views, and it continues to maintain links to violent, racist, anti-Muslim extremists.

The party is predicted to do well at the 2019 European elections and it’s important that they are stopped.

Here is a short introductory guide to the RN, their anti-Muslim politics and their links to extremism.

ANTI-MUSLIM AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT COMMENTS

RN politicians have a long history of making anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant statements. The party has long attracted racist and anti-Muslim figures.

- Marine Le Pen has previously compared Muslims in France to Nazi occupation at a 2010 rally in Lyon:

“for those who really like to talk about the second world war, if we’re talking about occupation, we can also talk about this while we’re at it, because this is an occupation of territory,” [...] “It’s an occupation of swaths of territory, of areas in which religious laws apply ... for sure, there are no tanks, no soldiers, but it’s an occupation all the same and it weighs on people.”¹





Marine Le Pen and Jean-Marie Le Pen

- In July 2018 Le Pen's advisor Jean Messiha told an interviewer that when it came to Muslim immigration into France "We are at war now. Our country is under invasion and we are fighting this invasion."²
- In March 2019 head of the RN youth wing and leading 2019 European election MEP candidate, Jordan Bardella, did not disavow the "great replacement" conspiracy theory (that white Europeans are being 'replaced' by non-white, Muslim immigrants) cited by the suspected killer involved in the attack on mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in the same month. He stated that his home suburb was "submerged by mass migration ... by Islamist fundamentalism ... there is a substitution of population."³
- In 2017 Le Pen told CBS News that she is "opposed" to Muslims "wearing head scarves in public places."⁵
- In May 2018 David Rachline, former Le Pen campaign manager, RN senator and mayor of Frejus, cut all funds to a social centre that was distributing meals for the breaking of the fast during Ramadan.⁶
- The RN 2019 European election manifesto puts Islam and immigrants front-and-centre, declaring that Europe must "fight and win the war against Islamism" and "stop illegal immigration". It also states that current EU immigration policy "threatens the identity" of European nations and that Europe is "very vulnerable to the Islamist threat" and must close the "radical mosques", without stating how it will decide which are radical.⁷

ANTI-MUSLIM AND ANTI-IMMIGRANT POLICIES

For some time the RN have wanted to institute a serious crackdown on the freedom of Muslims and immigrants:

- In 2017 Le Pen stated that she is "against dual nationality outside Europe" and that those who had dual nationality from elsewhere would have to "choose French nationality, [or] they will have to leave France".⁴

RN'S EXTREMIST LINKS

Ever since its origins as the Front National, the RN has had ties to extremists, including the fascist Ordre Nouveau movement and Groupe Union Défense (GUD), and more recently with the racial separatist and anti-Muslim group, Génération Identitaire (GI), who are part of the 'identitarian' movement.

RN AND GÉNÉRATION IDENTITAIRE

- GI launched in France in 2012 declaring “war” against its political opposition and complaining of “forced mixing of the races”. The movement, which has now spread around the world, started as the youth wing of the far-right Bloc Identitaire and has engaged in actions including handing out soup with pork in to the homeless to exclude Muslims, and numerous demonstrations aimed at stopping the “replacement” of white Europeans by non-white and Muslim migrants.
- In 2019 a series of links have emerged between GI and the mass shooter who attacked two mosques and killed 50 Muslims in New Zealand including that he donated more than €1000 to them.⁸
- Marine Le Pen has welcomed the identitarian movement in February 2019, stating that they “have never been banned or convicted for violence” yet, “They’re being prosecuted for a banner against migrants. I’m sorry, but I don’t see what is reprehensible about that.”⁹
- A 2018 investigation revealed close ties between GI and RN.¹⁰
 - At least two members of GI held political posts at RN. GI activists Pierre Larti and Remi Meurin worked for RN at the regional council for Hauts-de-France.
 - Secret recordings showed the leader of GI Lille, Aurelien Verhassel, claiming that he wrote speeches for leaders of the RN and it was proved he had close ties with Le Pen’s aid, Sebastien Chenu.
 - GI activists from Bordeaux were filmed admitting that they provided security for RN leaders during the 2017 presidential campaign.
 - RN members were shown to be regular visitors at the GI run ‘Citadelle’ bar in Lille. Some members were caught on camera advocating violence and discussing weapons supplies. GI members who engaged in and advocated violence against Muslims were also present.
 - GI work with the extremist groups GUD and Action Francaise.
 - Secret recordings caught numerous senior RN figures attending the Citadelle bar and expressing support for GI, including Nicolas Bay MEP and Christine LeChavalier MEP. LeChevalier said that many other RN members would like to attend, and stated that “Marine [Le Pen] isn’t personally against this”.
 - Damien Rieu (Damien Lefèvre), a former leading activist in GI, has worked for Marion Marechal Le Pen¹¹, Marine Le Pen’s niece and a former RN politician who maintains links with GI.¹²



From left to right: Clément Galant (President of Génération Identitaire), Marion Maréchal Le Pen (Member of RN), Romain Espino (Spokesperson for Génération Identitaire), 2018

OTHER EXTREMIST LINKS

- Former RN senior figure, Aymeric Chauprade, told the authors of the 2017 exposé *Marine Knows All About It*, that some of Marine Le Pen's closest advisors and those who "have power over the finances of the [party]" include those tied to its extreme roots. In particular, Frédéric Châtillon - dubbed one of Le Pen's "Men in the Shadows" by the French press and a longtime "friend and confidant" to her - led the fascist Groupe Union Défense (GUD) as a student.

A former GUD member revealed in the exposé that Châtillon held an annual celebratory dinner for Hitler's birthday and that as his bachelor party Châtillon told a barman "You, negro, serve me a drink". He was supposedly banned from working for the party but as recently as March 2019 appeared at an event featuring the head of the RN youth wing and leading MEP candidate, Jordan Bardella. Axel Loustau, an RN regional councillor for Île-de-France who, like Châtillon, has been close to Le Pen since the early 1990s, is reported to have exchanged messages with Châtillon marking the "sad" anniversary of Hitler's death and was photographed giving a nazi salute in 2011.¹³

NOTES

- 1 <http://lelab.europe1.fr/marine-le-pen-reitere-son-parallele-entre-les-prieres-de-rue-musulmanes-et-l-occupation-9692>
- 2 <http://memri.fr/2018/08/22/le-conseiller-politique-de-marine-le-pen-jean-messiha-sexprime-contre-limmigration-musulmane-en-france-nous-sommes-en-guerre-notre-pays-est-envahi/>
- 3 <https://www.bfmtv.com/mediaplayer/video/jordan-bardella-face-a-jean-jacques-bourdin-en-direct-1147883.html>
- 4 <https://www.euronews.com/2017/02/10/dual-citizenship-for-europeans-only-le-pen-says>
- 5 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/frances-marine-le-pen-says-shes-not-waging-a-religious-war/>
- 6 <https://www.thenation.com/article/frances-national-front-dead-politics-alive-well/>
- 7 <https://rn-europeennes.fr/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/europeennes-projet.pdf>
- 8 https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/entry/brenton-tarrant-christchurch-generation-identitaire_fr_5ca6427ce4b082d775e2525d
- 9 <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/marine-le-pen-the-eu-is-dead-long-live-europe-1.3801809>
- 10 <https://www.aljazeera.com/investigations/generationhate/>
- 11 <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/paulaveline/nazi-salute-exterminating-the-arabs-national-front>
- 12 <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/070419/l-extreme-droite-se-reunit-en-colloque>
- 13 <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/many-marine-le-pen-cohorts-linked-to-neo-nazi-ideas-1.3015127?>