

ERIC ZEMMOUR

IMPACT: Éric Zemmour is a far-right French writer and political pundit who supports the “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory, peddles historical revisionism, and has a history of making racist and anti-Muslim comments. He has been fined for and convicted of inciting racial hatred in France. Zemmour formally announced in November 2021 that he is running in the French presidential election in April 2022, and polls indicate that he could have enough support to qualify for the second-round runoff between the two leading contenders.

- Éric Zemmour is a **French columnist, writer, and political pundit**. He is the son of Jewish Algerian immigrants. Writers and members of the media have described Zemmour as a “far-right demagogue” “vile misogynist, racist conspiracist,” a “self-styled enemy of political correctness,” “professional provocateur,” “TV-friendly fascist,” and “anti-immigrant radical,” due to his history of making racist, anti-Muslim, and xenophobic comments.
- Zemmour is a **well-known media commentator and long-time columnist for Le Figaro**, described by a 2018 *Washington Post* [article](#) as “France’s most bourgeois newspaper.” From 2010 until 2019, Zemmour worked for French radio network *RTL* (identified by a 2018 *Washington Post* [article](#) as one France’s “most respected radio channels”).
- Zemmour has published a number of books including the 2010 *Mélancolie Française* (*French Melancholy*). In 2014, he published *Le Suicide Français* (*The French Suicide*), which sold 500,000 copies, “making him one of the most widely read authors in France that year,” and won the 2015 Prix Combourg-Chateaubriand literary award. A 2014 *New Yorker* piece by Alexander Stille [described](#) the book as a “broadside condemnation of everything that has happened in the past fifty years, such as birth control, abortion, student protests, sexual liberation, women’s rights, gay rights, immigration from Africa, American consumer capitalism, left-wing intellectualism, [and] the European Union,” all of which Zemmour argues are responsible for the problems faced by France. Further, Stille [observed](#) that **the book “reads at times like a manifesto for the National Front, the right-wing party of Marine Le Pen, offering a series of scapegoats for France’s troubles.”**
- A 2014 piece by Laura Marlowe [noted](#) that Zemmour “devoted seven pages in *The French Suicide* to the first names of the children of Muslim immigrants.” Zemmour [argued](#) that “the French don’t understand why they keep naming their children Mohamed or Aicha, rather than François and Martine. They see in this obstinacy the determination not to integrate, not to become like them.”
- In early September 2021, ahead of the release of his latest book, *La France n’a pas dit son dernier mot* (*France has not said its last word*), Zemmour [tweeted](#) he would no longer be writing for *Le Figaro* as he focuses on book promotion. A 2018 piece by Hans-Georg Betz [described](#) this book as “a manifesto designed to launch his campaign. The message is clear. It is not yet too late to act. But act we must, and fast. For we are faced with a situation of life and death: either remain France or disappear.”
- An October 2021 [poll](#) published by *Le Monde* [gave](#) Zemmour as much as “16.5 percent of the vote in the presidential election next year, enough to qualify for the second-round runoff

between the two leading contenders.” Another October 2021 [poll](#) by Harris Interactive [found](#) that Zemmour could reach the final round of the April election and take 45 percent of the vote against current President Emmanuel Macron. In **November 2021, Zemmour formally [announced his candidacy for president.](#)**

- Zemmour has a **history of making discriminatory and racist remarks targeting France’s six million Muslims.** In an October 2021 *New York Times* article, **Roger Cohen [wrote](#) that Zemmour has said French Muslims should “be given the choice between Islam and France.”** Cohen **writes that Zemmour “suggested their [French Muslims] deportation might not be impossible, claimed they [French Muslims] all consider jihadist terrorists to be ‘good Muslims’ and said he would ban all ‘non-French names,’ like Muhammad.”**
- **Zemmour [attributes](#) the usage of Muslim first names as a “sign of a rejection of France,” and claims that “traditional” Muslim names are to [blame](#) for harassment and employment discrimination.** He even [argues](#) that French individuals with Muslim names [cannot](#) be considered truly French because “the gap widened a little more between the legal country and the real country, between the nationality of paper and the nationality of heart, between the law and the fraternity.”
- An October 2018 *Washington Post* article [noted](#) that **Zemmour has stated there will be a “new civil war” between “those who do not wish to abandon the identity of France, which is to say its Christian, and white, identity,” and those who accept “the Islamization of France.”** He has further [compared](#) Nazism to Islam. During a September 2021 debate against Jean-Luc Mélenchon on *BFMTV*, Zemmour [claimed](#) “Islam is the exact opposite of France,” and affirmed that Islam “means submission” and “inequality between men and women” or between “free men and slaves.”
- On November 13, 2015, a [series](#) of six coordinated attacks were carried out across Paris by members of the militant group, Da’esh. Days later during a broadcast on French radio network, *RTL*, Zemmour [argued](#) that “instead of bombing Raqqa, France should bomb Molenbeek, in Belgium, where the Friday 13 commandos came from.”
- In February 2021, the “Strengthening Republic Values” bill was [approved](#) by members of parliament and [adopted](#) by the National Assembly on July 23, 2021. The law, introduced by President [Emmanuel Macron’s](#) government, is [aimed](#) at tackling “Islamist radicalism” and “separatism.” French legal scholar Rim-Sarah Alouane [described](#) the bill as an “attack” on civil liberties, and many others who opposed the bill expressed concern that it [would](#) “trample on religious freedom and make all Muslims into potential suspects.” **During a February 2021 television segment, Zemmour [welcomed](#) the law, stating, “If I had been a member of Parliament, I would have gladly voted for it.”** During the segment, which involved a conversation with French interior minister [Gérald Darmanin](#), **Zemmour also [stated](#), “I have been saying for years that Islam and Islamism started out as synonymous words. I was on trial for that.”**
- During an April 2021 [segment](#) of the program *Face à l’Info* on *CNews*, **Zemmour [defended](#) the use of the term “Islamogauchism” (Islam-leftism) comparing it to communism and describing it as “the conviction that Muslims, the Muslim proletariat, will replace the traditional workers’ proletariat, the French, of yesteryear and that will be the new revolutionary base.”** [Macron’s](#) government has employed the “Islamogauchism” term as well—the French Minister of Higher Education and Research went on [CNews](#) to claim that “Islamogauchism is

plaguing the entire society.”

- In October 2021, **Zemmour was filmed playing with a sniper weapon at an exhibition and then pointing it at journalists, saying “we aren’t joking here . . . move away.”** On October 25, 2021, in a recorded [video](#), Zemmour is seen “interacting with a veiled woman resident of Drancy and requesting that she remove her hijab in order to demonstrate ‘that she is free.’”
- In **2011, Zemmour was found “guilty of incitement to racial hatred after telling a TV chats how that drug dealers were mostly ‘blacks and Arabs.’”** During his trial, the state prosecutor [accused](#) him of using the “old stereotype that linked immigration to crime.” Further in 2011, Zemmour [was also](#) “fined for telling another TV channel that employers ‘had a right’ to turn down black or Arab candidates.”
- In **2018, Zemmour was convicted of provoking religious hatred over remarks he made during a show broadcast on September 6, 2016, in which he argued that Muslims should be given “the choice between Islam and France,” and that France had been “colonized by Muslims for 30 years.”** In September 2019, a court rejected Zemmour’s appeal of the 2018 conviction, and the judge [stated](#) that Zemmour’s comments, “which designated all Muslims who were in France as invaders and required them to renounce their religion or leave the territory of the Republic,” were aimed at Muslims as a whole and “contained an implicit exhortation to discrimination,” and [fined](#) Zemmour 3,000 euros for the comments.
- A 2019 *New York Times* [piece](#) noted that in 2014, Zemmour “told an Italian newspaper that ‘Muslims have their own civil code, which is the Quran’ (he was fined 3,000 euros, though the charges were later dropped); in 2016, he stated on TV that ‘jihadists were considered to be good Muslims by all Muslims; (he was fined 5,000 euros).” Following the 2014 remarks to Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Zemmour was [fired](#) from his recurring gig on a French chat show for the *iTELE* channel (which was later [reborn](#) as *CNews*).
- In **September 2019, Zemmour spoke at a right-wing convention organized by relatives of National Front politician Marion Maréchal and gave a speech discussing Islam and progressivism, which he termed as the “two totalitarianisms” that “have allied to destroy us before tearing each other to pieces.”** He argued that Islam will “be used to conquer us with our human rights and dominate us with its sharia,” branding immigrants as “colonizers,” warning about the “Islamization of the street,” and comparing djellabas (North African-style robes) and the veil to the “uniforms of the army of occupation.” He further claimed that Muslim immigrants “impose . . . their laws . . . on native stock French people, who must submit or go elsewhere—that is, live under the domination of Islamic mores and halal or flee.”
- In the speech, **Zemmour further stated, “I will be accused of Islamophobia, I’m used to it. We all know that this hazy concept of Islamophobia was invented to make it impossible to criticize Islam, to reestablish the notion of blasphemy to the benefit of the Muslim religion alone.”** Additionally, he [claimed](#) that “in France, as in all of Europe, all our problems are aggravated by immigration: education, housing, unemployment, social deficits, public debt, law and order prisons . . . and all our problems aggravated by immigration are aggravated by Islam.”

- In September 2020, he was fined 10,000 euros for insult and incitement of hatred regarding these comments. However, in September 2021 the Paris Court of Appeal [overturned](#) the 2020 verdict and a number of other cases regarding inciting racial hatred were dismissed. Zemmour was [ousted](#) from his [position](#) at *RTL* due to his remarks at the convention.
- From **2019 to 2021, Zemmour was a presenter of *Face à l'Info* on *CNews*, described by a September 2021 *New York Times* piece as France's "Fox-style news network," which gives a "a bullhorn to far-right politicians, and in the span of just four years, has become France's No. 1 news network."** Despite the network having been fined by France's broadcast regulator for inciting racial hatred, the [article](#) notes that *CNews* is shaping the national debate, "especially on hot-button issues like crime, immigration and Islam's place in France that are expected to sway next year's presidential election."
- An **October 2021 *Haaretz* piece notes that Zemmour is also obsessed with declining birth rates.** Robert Zaretsky notes that according to Zemmour "French women must become breeders, subservient to white French men, if France hopes to stem the 'great replacement.'" In the *Haaretz* piece, Zaretsky accuses Zemmour of being a "vile misogynist" and notes that several women have [accused](#) the media pundit of sexual assault.
- **Zemmour has repeatedly pushed the white nationalist "great replacement" conspiracy theory,** coined in 2012 by French writer [Renaud Camus](#). The theory argues that white Europeans will be replaced by hordes of Muslims. **The far-right theory has inspired deadly violence all around the globe, including the attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019,** when a white nationalist killed fifty-one Muslims. During an August 2021 segment, Zemmour [stated](#), "You have a population that is French, white, Christian, of Greco-Roman culture" that is being replaced by a "population that is from the Maghreb, African and mostly Muslim."
- During a segment on *CNews*, **Zemmour claimed, "France sees that it is going to die: it is undergoing a phenomenal wave of migration, a transformation of the population unprecedented in the history of this country; and an incredible replacement of one population by another."** Further, he [described](#) the Paris neighborhood Seine-Saint Denis as proof of the "Great replacement" theory, claiming that "long the historical heart of France, where the tombs of our kings are located," the neighborhood is becoming a "Muslim enclave [subject to the rule of Allah](#)."
- In 2018, Zemmour [told](#) James McAuley of the *Washington Post* that "Today, we live in a de facto colonization from the populations that come from the south of the Mediterranean and who impose —through numbers and, sometimes, with violence—a de facto sharia."
- An October 2021 poll by Harris Interactive, [quizzed](#) French people on the concept of a "Great Replacement" of white, Christian populations in Europe with Muslim migration from Africa. The poll found that 61 percent of people thought the scenario will "definitely" or "probably" happen. In a November 2021 tweet, Zemmour [stated](#) that "67% of French people think the great replacement isn't a fantasy, whether you like it or not."
- Zemmour speaks frequently about French identity and the need for assimilation. In a February 2019 [interview](#) with the *New York Times*, Zemmour stated, "On the one hand, French elites no longer want to teach history, out of post-colonial guilt, And on the other hand, immigrants no longer want to acquire French culture or identity. They hold that their identity of origin always comes first, even

if they claim to be French, to live on French territory and have the same rights as the French who've been living there for thousands of years. That's the novelty. **If you want to live in France and be French, then you must become French.**"

- In his September 2019 book, *Le venin dans la plume - Edouard Drumont, Eric Zemmour et la part sombre de la République*, **French historian Gerard Noiriel compares the way Zemmour talks about Muslims to how French journalist and antisemite Édouard Adolphe Drumont wrote about Jews. Both treat their intended targets as the untrustworthy "other" and constant threat. Noiriel identifies how both utilize tropes, "Jewish banker" for Drumont and the "Muslim terrorist" for Zemmour, to "convince their readers of the mortal danger hanging over France."** Zemmour expands on this by employing the "great replacement" theory, arguing that immigration poses an existential threat to French culture and identity. Noiriel observes that both individuals tie crime to immigration, but argues that for both Drumont and Zemmour, the "most serious crime is the refusal of the Jews [for Drumont] and of the Muslims [for Zemmour] to 'assimilate.'" Zemmour is an avid proponent of the clash of civilizations theory, arguing that Christian Europe and Islam are "two irreducibly antagonistic civilizations."
- During a **September 2021 broadcast on CNews, Zemmour claimed that the "Vichy [France's Nazi collaborationist wartime regime] protected French Jews and gave the foreign Jews [to the Nazis]." An October 2021 piece in the New York Times noted that "from 1942 onward, there is no evidence that the Vichy regime tried to protect French Jews. It collaborated with the Nazis to round up Jews, whether foreign or French," and identified Zemmour's comments as "borrowed from the Trump playbook of staying at the top of the news through provocation and outrage."** Zemmour's comments regarding the Vichy government also divided the French Jewish community, and **France's chief rabbi, Haim Korsia, identified Zemmour as an antisemite.** The *New York Times* also reported that Bernard-Henri Lévy, a leading Jewish intellectual and one of Zemmour's most prominent critics, referred to Zemmour as "dangerous," and said "he insults Jewish morality." In a February 2019 *New York Times* piece, Raphaël Glucksmann, the former editor of *Nouveau Magazine Littéraire*, a left-leaning publication, argued that Zemmour's claims about the Vichy government served a particular purpose: "Zemmour has a very clear ambition, which is to erase the divide between the Republican right and the far right under the banner of the far right." Elisabeth Zerofsky, who wrote the *Times* piece, stated that "softening the verdict on the Vichy regime, the historical ancestor of the French far right, would make such an alliance more plausible."
- Jean-Marie Le Pen, the founder of the National Front, now the National Rally party, and father of Marine Le Pen, the leading right-wing French presidential candidate, said he will back Zemmour because of his "courage and culture" and his defense of Vichy. **In an October 2021 interview with Le Monde, the elder Le Pen stated, "The only difference between me and Mr. Zemmour is that he's a Jew, so it's difficult to qualify him as a Nazi or a Fascist. That gives him great freedom."**
- A 2021 piece by Hannah Rose found that **the far-right is able to use Zemmour's Jewish identity to dispel accusations of racism, noting that Zemmour has "the capacity to attract votes from portions of the electorate who support his policies, but do not consider themselves to be fascists or racists.** His identity reassures them of this belief." Dominique Moïsi, a political scientist whose father survived Auschwitz, described Zemmour's appeal, noting that "the classic, conservative bourgeoisie can say to themselves, this is a good Jew: He says that

Vichy wasn't so bad, and that Muslims are even worse than people say usually.”

- In a 2018 [interview](#) with *Washington Post* journalist James McAuley, Zemmour blamed Muslims for antisemitism in France, stating “It’s simple, if I dare to say it. Anti-Semitism was reborn in France with the arrival of the populations from Muslim territories, where anti-Semitism—if you like—is cultural.” Claiming antisemitism is inherent to Islam is an [anti-Muslim trope](#) and is often used by right-wing and far-right voices.
- An **August 2021 piece in *Haaretz* described Zemmour as the “French Tucker Carlson,” noting that both media personalities have an “animosity to immigration, aversion to Muslims and abhorrence of ‘political correctness.’”**
- In an October 2021 piece for the Centre for Analysis of the Radical right, University of Zurich **Professor Hans-Georg Betz described Zemmour as “France’s response to Donald Trump, if not his French avatar,” noting that “like Trump, he has no filters, but unlike Trump, he is highly intelligent, erudite, refined, articulate and sharp-witted.”** Betz also [stated](#) that “like so many other right-wing populists in Europe these days, Zemmour is obsessed with Islam” and “regurgitates . . . familiar anti-Islamic tropes that have made the political fortunes of radical right-wing entrepreneurs.”
- In a November 2021 [piece](#) for the *London Review of Books*, Adam Shatz [writes](#) that “Zemmour resembles Trump in his ability to recast the rhetorical rules of right-wing politics,” and notes that Zemmour casts the religion of Islam as a threat. He **describes Zemmour’s ideas as “extremist, racist and exclusionary,” but argues that “the groundwork for his rise was laid by mainstream intellectuals and politicians.”**