

France — Ilham Moussaid : statement by the National Executive Committee of the NPA

Tuesday 16 February 2010, by [BESANCENOT Olivier](#), [NPA / NPA l'Anticapitaliste](#) (Date first published: 8 February 2010).

1) At the same time as the government is accentuating its anti-social policies and increasing expulsions of undocumented migrants, the NPA is being targeted in the framework of the debate on national identity.

The NPA is confronted with a political-media campaign centred on one of its 2000 candidates in the regional elections, Ilham Moussaid, who wears a headscarf and is in fourth position on the NPA - Alternatifs list in the Vaucluse department of the Provence-Cote d'Azur (PACA) region, where Jacques Hauyé heads the departmental list.

Contrary to what some people have been making out, it is in no way a question of a « political and media coup » orchestrated by the leadership of the NPA, but of a decision that was taken in Vaucluse. A minority of the members of the NPA in this department were opposed to it. The decision taken by the Vaucluse comrades cannot be taken to be the position of the NPA as a whole, since it had not been discussed in advance at any level of the party. 2) Our comrade Ilham Moussaid is a member of the NPA, and as such, can put herself forward as a candidate in the same way as the other members of our party.

A majority of comrades in Vaucluse decided to accept her as a candidate. Whatever one may think of this decision, it was taken in conformity with the statutes of the party. We assure the NPA-Alternatifs list and all of the candidates of our solidarity at this difficult moment.

3) Ilham wears a headscarf (and not a burqa, as some people have said and written). She sees no contradiction between this and the founding principles of the NPA, of which the feminist and secular dimension constitutes one of the keystones, and affirms her attachment to these values and to all of the founding principles of the party.

The headscarf is not only a visible religious symbol, but also an instrument of subjection of women, used in various forms and at various times by the three monotheistic religions, even though Ilham does not experience it as such, and is not the only woman in our society to feel that way.

4) The announcement of the candidacy of Ilham Moussaid has provoked many reactions. All of them are not of the same kind. The criticisms and disagreements expressed within the NPA and by movements or by activists of the social movement and the feminist movement represent arguments which enrich the discussion, and the debate will continue.

On the other hand, we denounce the hate-ridden and hypocritical flood coming from the far Right, the UMP, the Socialist Party, and indeed the Left Party and the Communist Party. We don't hear so much from them when the President of the Republic falls into the arms of the Pope or crosses himself in public on an official visit, or when Boutin brandishes the Bible in the National Assembly. The institutional parties spend millions on financing private high schools, in particular Catholic ones.

As for the Communist Party, it really ought to be more careful, since, alongside the SP, it accepted on its lists during the local election campaign a candidate wearing a headscarf, who continues to wear it in the municipal council of Echirolles of which she is a member.

5) Within the NPA, the EC confirms that the debate on « religion and emancipations », planned before this political-media campaign, will take place. The internal debate that we are having is a public debate. The decision taken in Vaucluse does not create any « jurisprudence » on the question. The congress of the NPA is sovereign.

6) Now it is time to first of all and above all conduct the campaign around the lists that we are presenting or supporting, a campaign to get across what is really different about us, that we are a Left that is anticapitalist, antiracist, ecologist, internationalist and feminist, a Left which has always been in solidarity with women who resist those who want to force them to wear the veil.

Adopted unanimously by those present, with one abstention, February 8, 2010

“What I actually said to *Le Figaro* regarding the headscarf”

Olivier Besancenot

Le Figaro caricatured my words regarding the candidacy of Ilham Moussaïd, who is on our list in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur regional elections.

Ilham Moussaïd, a student and a party treasurer, is NPA candidate for the regional council of Vaucluse in southern France.

After a serious and complex debate, the Vaucluse chapter of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) made a choice to include on its feminist, anti-capitalist, and internationalist lists an NPA member who believes in wearing a headscarf on account of her religious convictions.

Our party welcomes youth, the unemployed, the precarious, workers of all backgrounds who find their values reflected in the party. Faith is a matter of personal choice that does not create any obstacle to participation in our struggle so long as members sincerely share the secular, feminist, and anti-capitalist fundamental principles of our party.

I therefore simply said to *Le Figaro*: “Ilham is evidence that one can be a member of the NPA and wear a headscarf.”

The NPA is a party that fights against any form of oppression and exclusion. A debate on liberation and the place of religion — and all its forms of expression — exists within the NPA, in view of its next congress.

3 February 2010

** Olivier Besancenot is the best-known spokesperson of the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), formed in 2009 following a call by the Revolutionary Communist League (Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR), French section of the Fourth International). As candidate for the LCR in the presidential elections in 2002 and 2007, he received 1.2 million votes (4.5%) and 1.5 million votes (4.2%) respectively.*

