American Foreign Policy Council

Spain

Quick Facts

Population: 48,563,476 (July 2016 est.)

Area: 505,370 sq km

Ethnic Groups: Composite of Mediterranean and Nordic types

Religions: Roman Catholic 94%, other 6%

Government Type: Parliamentary constituional monarchy

GDP (official exchange rate): $1.2 trillion (2015 est.)

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated November 2016)

Overview

Since the turn of the century, Spain has seen a surge in Muslim immigration. As of 2015, Spain's Muslim population constituted approximately 1.89 million people, nearly four percent of the country's total 48.6 million inhabitants, and a figure that grew by nearly 300,000 in two years.[1] But as Islam in Spain steadily grows, so does the risk of radicalization on its margins. The opposing phenomena of insular religious radicalism and Spanish xenophobia toward Muslim immigrants have obstructed the social integration of this rapidly expanding community. Spain's location as the gateway of the Mediterranean renders it a prime destination for immigrants from North Africa and for foreign radical elements among them. To many such individuals, al-Andalus—the territory of the Iberian Peninsula lost by Islam in the fifteenth century—is no longer simply an abstract cause, but rather a concrete jihadist objective.[2]

Meanwhile, in Spanish political discourse, the issue of Islamic radicalism remains largely taboo, and the government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey has been loath to engage in the controversial debates arising from tensions with the country's Muslim minority. However, on

the counterterrorism front, the administration's recent efforts indicate a more aggressive, determined approach to the prosecution of suspected terrorists and a dedicated pursuit of effective border security measures.

Islamist Activity

While Spain has not suffered a mass casualty attack since the 2004 Madrid bombings, its geographic location and North African exclaves provide an ideal logistical hub for the transit of supplies and fighters to and from the European mainland. The radical organizations engaging in such activities typically include immigrants from the Maghreb (mainly Algerians and Moroccans who belong to cells originating in their home countries) and from Pakistan, due to the historical presence of a large Pakistani immigrant community in Catalonia. Although such cells and networks have traditionally been small and autonomous, recent investigations by Spanish security forces have detected increasing links with larger groups abroad. At the end of September 2016, the Ministry of the Interior reported that 143 would-be jihadists—of whom 113 were Spanish nationals—had been detained since the government elevated its terror alert level to "4" in 2015.[3]

Organized transnational terrorist groups on Spanish soil date back to the trial and sentencing of the Algerian *Comando Dixan* cell in 2002 and the legal processes against militants from a Catalan *jihadist* network in Santa Coloma de Gramenet in 2006. In 2012, Barcelona's police forces initiated *Operación Kartago* (Operation Carthage) with the stated goal of "neutralizing" the threat of lone-wolf terrorism by preventing potential Spanish terrorists from traveling abroad to seek training.[4] Since then, the export of fighters to eastern conflict zones has remained a key concern, with radicalized individuals continuing attempts to join the Islamic State, al-Qaeda affiliates, and other international terrorist organizations. The U.S. State Department's most recent *Country Reports on Terrorism* assessed that "most" of Spain's 25 returned foreign fighters remain in detention.[5]

From 2015 to 2016 alone, Spanish authorities arrested 83 individuals for links to such organizations.[6] The cases span a wide range of charges, from financing terrorist organizations to public proclamations of intent to murder non-Muslim civilians,[7] and include the dissemination of al-Qaeda propaganda and training,[8] as well as the recruitment of new members for training abroad. Spanish police have compared the lone-wolf style radicalization of these suspects to that of the Tsarnaev brothers, who masterminded the April 2013 Boston Marathon bombings.[9]

In one particularly high profile operation in August 2012, Spanish authorities in cooperation with international security services arrested three al-Qaeda activists for planning a major attack on British Gibraltar during the 2012 Olympic Games. Two of the suspects, Eldar Magomedov and Muhamed Ankari Adamov, were Russian citizens of Chechen extraction, while the group's ringleader, Cengiz Yalzin, was origi-

nally from Turkey. Upon investigation of the men's apartments, Spanish authorities found enough explosives to blow up a bus.[10] However, since no specific target had been determined, the judge presiding over the case ruled that intent to commit terrorism could not be definitively proven, and thus the suspects were released.

This incident illustrates the legal difficulties associated with confronting Spanish *jihadist* networks. Several other cases prosecuted on charges of terrorism have resulted in similar acquittals, including:

- The November 2005 arrest of ten Algerians who had allegedly engaged in credit card forgery to raise funds for the GSPC and al Qaeda in Alicante, Granada, and Murcia. Five of these men were tried in the National Court in May 2010. They were acquitted of all terrorism charges, although three of the five were sentenced to prison for forgery.[11]
- The January 2008 arrest in Barcelona of eleven Pakistanis accused of plotting terrorist suicide attacks on the Barcelona metro system on the orders of Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud. On December 14, 2009, the eleven detainees were found guilty of some of the charges leveled against them, but were found not guilty on the charges of terrorism; it was determined that the plot had not reached the level necessary to be a terrorist conspiracy.[12]
- The May 18, 2010 acquittal by Spain's *Audencia Nacional* (National Court) of two jihadists accused of attempting to make dirty bombs with red mercury.[13]
- The case of five Algerians arrested by Spanish security forces in September 2011 for providing logistical and financial support to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). All five were released when the judge ruled that there was insufficient evidence to convict.[14]

Alongside this pattern of non-conviction, past U.S. intelligence assessments have confirmed the alarming lack of intelligence on Islamist activity in Spain. In 2012, the Spanish daily *El País* published a Wikileaks cable written by the U.S. Embassy in Madrid in 2005, which reported that Spanish authorities had only minimal intelligence on radical groups in the country and recommended that a counterterrorism center be established at the U.S. consulate in Barcelona.[15] Although it remains unclear whether such a center was ever established, another U.S. cable from 2007 reports that Spanish authorities still deemed Barcelona's large Muslim population "susceptible to jihadist recruitment."[16]

There is an undeniable cause for concern regarding Islamist groups in Spain. Within the nation, five principal Islamist groups either overtly or covertly advocate a rigid adherence to Islamist doctrine and thus provide fertile ground for this kind of radicalization and recruitment. These groups are: the *Salafists, Al Adl wal Ihsane* ("Justice and Charity"), *Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jama'at,* and the Muslim Brotherhood. While some of them may display a more moderate public face in order to avoid social marginalization or persecution, some scholars assert that their activities hinder the

integration of Muslim communities into the social fabric of Spain.[17] Spanish intelligence sources estimated in 2012 that, of the more than 1,000 mosques throughout the country, 20 percent were involved in the active promotion of radical Islamic doctrine, primarily by calling for the rejection of Spanish society in favor of a strict adherence to a sharia-based lifestyle.[18] To that end, Spain's Interior, Justice and Labor Ministries published a joint 2010 report concluding that, despite the comparatively small percentage of radicals among Spain's Muslims, there are reasons for serious concern regarding both the intensity of their radicalism and their skill in promoting it.[19]

Numerous studies and investigations commissioned by city councils and the *Mossos d'Esquadra* (the autonomous regional civilian police of Catalonia) chronicle the advance of the *Salafist* movement in Spain.[20] *Salafists* are generally concentrated in the regions of Catalonia and Murcia and their surrounding areas. Local newspapers in these areas have reported cases of *Salafi imams* publicly advocating for a radical, violent ideology in their communities. In one such instance, nine men in Reus sentenced a woman accused of adultery to death by stoning. The woman managed to escape, and the men were arrested by the local *Mossos d'Esquadra.*[21] When brought to court, however, such cases have not often led to successful convictions, possibly due to bonds of loyalty between the imams and their congregations that may inhibit objective testimony.[22] However, the May 2013 deportation of Moroccan national, Noureddin Ziani, for disseminating *Salafist* ideology demonstrates that the Spanish government considers such ideas a "threat to society"[23] and is committed to countering them. Spain has also brought criminal charges against a significant number of well-known *jihadist* commanders espousing *Salafism*, including Eddin Barakat Yarkas, alias Abu Dahdah, a Spanish national directly linked to al-Qaeda and the 9/11 attacks. Abu Dadah was sentenced to 27 years in jail for membership in a terrorist organization and conspiracy to commit terrorist acts, although he was released early in 2013 when the Spanish Supreme Court reduced his sentence.[24]

Often, the most radicalized groups on Spanish soil maintain ties with different groups working in North Africa; for instance, the perpetrators of the 2004 Madrid train bombings were *Salafists* who received training abroad from the Moroccan Islamic Group (GICM). These connections open pathways to larger terrorist networks, including AQIM.[25] In other instances, Spain has served as an important hub for foreign *Salafist* organizations, including the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), whose members frequently interact with the GICM as well as with radicals in Catalonia.[26]

Al Adl wal Ihsan represents another such foreign-based Islamist group, particularly in Spain's southern regions. Founded in 1983 by Moroccan preacher Sheikh Abdesalam Yassine, the group was outlawed by the Moroccan government for its refusal to recognize the religious legitimacy of the Moroccan Crown. Although it does not have as much visibility in Spain, Spanish authorities believe that *Al Adl wal Ihsan* has the potential to "damage the integration of Muslims into Spanish society by defend-

ing the prevalence of Islamic law over Western law, and have therefore labeled the group a radical organization."[27] Spanish authorities remain wary of any connection between *Al Adl wal Ihsan* and domestic Muslim organizations; in 2010, for example, the naturalization application of Mounir Benjelloun, vice president of Murcia's Islamic Federation (FIRM), was rejected because of his ties to *Al Adl wal Ihsan*. Benjelloun reportedly forged a close and potentially strategic relationship between FIRM and *Al Adl wal Ihsan*, and since FIRM reportedly controls 45 of the 120 existing mosques and prayer rooms in Murcia, some analysts feared that *Al Adl wal Ihsan* obtained a strong, legitimate platform from which to disseminate its message through this relationship.[28]

Similarly, the municipal government of Ceuta, one of Spain's two North African exclaves, has also expressed concern about the potential for strategic collaboration between *Al Adl wal Ihsan* and *Tablighi Jama'at*, a Sunni proselytization movement whose Spanish off-shoot is led by prominent imam and UCIDE-Ceuta president Laarbi al-Lal Maateis.[29] As with *Al Adl wal Ihsan*, Spanish Intelligence Services have tried to deny citizenship to members of *Tablighi Jama'at* on the premise that they are radicals opposed to social integration. However, the Spanish National Court often overturns such decisions.[30]

Less information is available publicly about *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* (HUT), but in 2007 the *Athena Intelligence Journal* defined the group's three primary activities in Spain as: proselytizing and distributing propaganda, especially to "foment division and confrontation between Muslims and non-Muslims;" increasing its presence in Islamic cultural and social organizations; and advancing an Islamist, anti-Western agenda through online forums and discussions.[31]

The final Islamist group with a major presence in Spain is the Muslim Brotherhood, which became one of the more solidly-established Islamist organizations in Spain through its 1971 affiliation with the Spanish Muslim Association. Radical Muslim Brotherhood elements were especially active in Spain at the turn of this century; Abu Dahdah's network, an al-Qaeda hub based in Madrid, provided funding to the Brotherhood while coordinating logistics for recruits transiting Europe.[32] The Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies (IEEE) notes that the network played a significant part not only in the 9/11 attacks, but also in the attacks in Morocco in 2003 and Madrid in 2004.[33] Although their activity has faded from the media spotlight, the Brotherhood maintains a serious presence in Spain, largely in the regions of Andalusia, Valencia, and Madrid.[34]

Islamism and Society

The United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Racism has publicly chastised current trends in Spanish society, asserting that "it is crucial that Spain makes the agenda of combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance a pri-

ority… in particular, there is a need for clear and more visible political leadership in combating racism and xenophobia."[35] The nexus of a growing Muslim population and rising distrust or xenophobia among non-Muslim Spaniards may provide a dangerous opportunity for Spanish Islamists to increase their sway among moderate Muslims.

According to the *Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España* (Union of Islamic Communities in Spain, or UCIDE), Spain's Muslim population in 2015 constituted approximately 1.89 million people, or nearly four percent of the country's total 48.6 million inhabitants.[36] This represents an increase of 300,000 since 2013, when UCIDE reported the same figure to be 1.6 million people, or three percent of the country's 47.4 million inhabitants.[37] Approximately 41 percent of this population consists of natural-born Spanish citizens. Of the remaining 59 percent, 40 percent are Moroccan immigrants, and the remainder comes largely from Algeria, Pakistan, Senegal, Nigeria, the Gambia, and Mali.[38] The percentage is lower than Europe's overall five percent average of Muslim inhabitants, but proportionally similar to Germany (where Muslims make up approximately 3.7% of the population).[39]

These figures result from a striking increase in Muslim immigration to Spain after the turn of the century. Over a ten-year period from 1998 to 2007, Spain nationalized 61,086 Muslim immigrants. Yet in the three subsequent years from 2008 to 2011, 52,095 Muslim immigrants were nationalized – nearly triple the rate of the previous decade.[40] The percentage of Muslims as a subset of the national population has also more than tripled since 2000,[41] and in total, Muslim immigrants account for more than 20 percent of Spain's immigrant population.[42]

The interests of both immigrant and natural-born Muslims in Spain are represented by the Islamic Commission of Spain (CIE), the official Islamic partner of the Spanish government formed in 1992 by the country's two largest Muslim associations: UCIDE and the *Federación Española de Entidades Religiosas Islámicas* (Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities, or FEERI). FEERI's membership leans heavily Moroccan; UCIDE, by contrast, involves Muslim clerics of Syrian and Saudi origin. Another organization, the smaller Junta Islámica de España (Islamic Junta of Spain), is reportedly more overtly political, involving converts to Islam and so-called "progressives" while promoting a distinctive version of Islam that is occasionally at variance with the state.[43] Although none of these three organizations provide figures concerning their membership or structure, it is estimated that FEERI and UCIDE together account for roughly 70 percent of all registered Muslim religious organizations in Spain.[44] But official organizational registration with Spain's Ministry of Justice remains voluntary, and thus such numbers cannot reflect the entire picture. This uncertainty is only likely to intensify as the comparatively explosive growth of the Muslim population in Spain is mirrored by a growth of new Islamic institutions.

While the number of legal, officially approved mosques in the country remains low (no more than two dozen), a large number of cultural associations have sprung up in recent years, filling the need for new venues of worship and prayer. By the end of 2015, the Ministry of Justice's Registry of Religious Entities recorded 44 distinct Islamic religious federations, 1,427 official religious communities, and 20 religious associations.[45] Despite this institutional growth, UCIDE reports that 13% of Spanish Muslim communities lack access to a mosque, while 95% lack an almacabra (Muslim cemetery).[46] Meanwhile, the *Asesoria de Inteligencia y Consultoria de Seguridad*, a private intelligence and risk assessment firm, reported in 2016 that approximately 800 "illegal" (unregistered) mosques currently operate in Spain, while Spanish law enforcement authorities have managed to shut down an additional 100.[47] The invisible nature of such facilities is an understandable frustration to Spanish law enforcement and counterterrorism authorities, which have no way of knowing the nature of the mosques' activities and whether or not they are espousing radical doctrine.

While expanding in size, Spain's Muslim community is also growing increasingly devout. In its April 2010 survey of national religious attitudes, the Spanish government found a marked increase in piousness among the country's Muslims (with religious adherence rising from 41 percent in 2006 to 52 percent in 2009). These statistics stand in stark contrast to the prevailing trend of widespread secularism among the country's native population that has developed over recent decades. For example, less than 20 percent of Spaniards today define themselves as practicing Catholics, compared to 50 percent in 1976. Meanwhile, more than 60 percent of Spanish Muslims regard Islam and democracy as "compatible, but sometimes at personal cost."[48]

Differences between native-born Spanish Muslims or converts and their immigrant counterparts foster divisions in the larger Muslim community, particularly over the issues of interpretation and proper delegation of religious authority. For instance, there is a struggle underway between the competing interpretations of Islam and Islamic law practiced by Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Both versions of Islam are conservative (although the Saudi one is considerably more so), while the Moroccan variant is complicated by Spain's legal possession of North African territory—namely, the exclave cities of Ceuta and Melilla, two smaller territories (Peñón de Vélez de la Gomera and Peñón de Alhucemas), and the Chafarinas archipelago. Morocco's King Mohammed VI has publicly urged the Moroccan Muslim diaspora in Europe to disavow extremist, violent interpretations of their faith.[49] Yet several recent incidents—including the October 2016 arrest of a cell of Moroccan Spanish nationals recruiting children between the ages of 12 and 17 in Ceuta[50]—signify that the exclaves' geographic circumstances render their societies acutely accessible and thus acutely vulnerable to radical elements.

Unlike other immigrant communities in Spain, Muslims are not evenly distributed throughout the country. Due to their location on the African continent, Ceuta and Melilla have a particularly high proportion of Muslim residents. On the mainland,

Spanish Muslims are concentrated in three regions: Catalonia (510,481), Andalusia (300,460), and Madrid (278,976).[51] Andalusia, because of its geographic proximity to North Africa and its need for extensive manpower for agriculture, has attracted comparatively high levels of Muslim immigrants. So has Madrid, which serves as Spain's largest engine of economic growth and thereby provides greater opportunities for employment to immigrants.[52]

But Catalonia accounts for the majority of Muslim immigrants, in part because the region's official antagonism to the Spanish language has led regional authorities to prioritize non-Spanish speaking immigrants in the belief that it would be easier to immerse the newcomers into Catalan separatist culture. Yet this hope may have been ill-founded, as anti-Muslim sentiment has captured Catalan headlines in many well-publicized incidents. Most visibly, a dozen Catalan towns became the first in Spain to ban the *burqa* and the *niqab* in municipal buildings. Lleida, a city in Western Catalonia whose population is a full 25 percent Muslim, is at the epicenter of this movement. Beyond banning the *niqab*, its mayor shut down the city's lone mosque because there were allegedly too many Friday worshippers. In February 2012, angry townspeople began accusing Lleida's Muslims of poisoning dogs in revenge.[53] Such regional unrest has only been magnified by Catalonia's historic secessionist attitudes and Spain's recent economic woes. Against the wishes of Madrid, the regional Catalan government plans to hold a referendum on independence in September 2017. If the referendum succeeds, the would-be state will have to contend with the creation of its own integration, counter-radicalization, and security policies. In that light, the future of the Muslim community in Catalonia is of particular importance.

Intense friction over access to mosques is not limited to Catalonia, however. Rather, it is widespread among rural Spanish communities. Between the mid-1990s and 2012, there were 60 registered disputes between Muslim communities and their Spanish neighbors over the construction of mosques.[54] Riay Tatary, president of UCIDE, has angrily protested what is perceived as a segregationist movement to "exile" mosques by relocating them to areas outside of city and residential neighborhoods.[55] The most publicized incident of this nature occurred in 2012 in Torrejon, a town of 120,000 (of which Muslims comprise nearly 10 percent). The Muslim citizens of the town purchased land to expand the city's mosque, at the time located near the town's center. However, angry protests and petitions from the rest of the town's residents, as well as a demonstration by the anti-immigration Platform for Catalonia, induced the municipal authorities to revoke the building permit and change the site to one near an industrial park outside of town.[56] In other instances, residents have strewn pig's blood and pork meat over potential mosque sites in a deliberate attempt to permanently contaminate the sites in the eyes of Muslims.[57] While revealing a measure of grassroots fear in some areas, these acts have the potential to alienate the moderate Spanish Muslim community, even turning some towards radicalization and retribution.

Although Catalonia has been the focal point of such conflict, it mirrors a xenophobic undertone across Spain that may endanger the peaceful integration of Muslim communities. According to the Pew Global Attitudes Project 2011 Report, 58 percent of non-Muslims in Spain believed that relations between Muslims and Westerners were poor. Sixty-six percent believed that Muslim immigrants do not want to adopt Spanish national customs.[58] Among those asked which religion is the most violent, 87% responded "Islam." Sixty-one percent of those polled expressed concern about Islamic extremism at home. Spain was one of the only Western countries in the project in which the majority of the population (63%) had an unfavorable attitude towards Muslims. Pew also reported that the three top stereotypes about Muslims held by Spanish non-Muslims are "fanatical" (80%), "violent" (61%), and "arrogant" (48%). The report concluded that Spain was the only Western country in which a majority of non-Muslims associate three or more negative characteristics with Muslims.[59] A similar poll conducted by the Economist in 2013 concluded that nearly 65% of Spaniards believe that Islam is not compatible with the West.[60]

Yet simultaneously, Spanish society has shown remarkable openness to the victims of the 2015 refugee crisis, regardless of their religious affiliation. Under the EU's redistribution plan, Spain agreed to accept 15,000 resettled refugees to ease the load on Greece and Italy—a departure from the administration's original figure of just under 3,000, likely due to the pressure of Spanish grassroots organizations urged on by Rajoy's left-wing political rivals.[61] Unlike their counterparts elsewhere in Europe, Spanish groups professing a complete rejection of Islam and Muslim immigrants—including *Plataforma x Catalunya, Spain 2000*, and the newly arrived PEGIDA ("Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident," a German movement that launched its Spanish branch in 2015)—have been unable to gain significant traction.[62]

It is vital to note that the majority of Spanish Muslims reject the use of violence and consider themselves well integrated into the broader Spanish community.[63] However, for the minority that does not share these feelings, the blend of isolation and xenophobia that they experience is dangerous. Since the Muslim community in Spain is primarily made up of immigrants, it encounters many obstacles to integration: unfamiliarity with the Spanish language, lack of documentation, an unusually high percentage of unmarried men, and frequent unemployment. All of these factors have the potential to increase frustration and estrangement, consequentially increasing the risk of radicalization.[64] The 2010 Religious Attitudes study found that approximately four percent of Muslims in Spain do not condemn the use of violence in pursuit of political objectives, suggesting that this demographic would possibly be more predisposed to radicalization. As the Spanish government struggles with its finances, the resulting social chaos will likely cause increased perceptions of deprivation and insularism among each community—promoting more xenophobia, which will in turn promote more isolationism—which may only make the fractures between the two communities worse.

Islamism and the State

In spite of the effects of economic crisis, potential Catalan secession, and paralyzing political deadlock, the Spanish government under the leadership of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey has nevertheless managed to pursue an effective counterterrorism strategy in terms of immigration and border control. Spain helped found the Global Counterterrorism Forum in 2011 and maintains an inter-ministerial Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) working group, described by the U.S. State Department as "tied closely to the fight against illegal immigration and the integration of existing immigrant communities."[65] Spain has also stepped up its cooperation with other Western countries through mechanisms such as the U.S. Immigrant Advisory Program and increased access to Europol information databases on terrorism and organized crime.[66]

While trying to maintain a policy of religious neutrality, the federal government has adopted an assertive stance in pursuit of *jihadist* cells, with varying degrees of success. In July 2015, the country's criminal code was updated to "improve its legal framework to more effectively counter the movement of foreign terrorist fighters to conflict zones, better pursue suspected terrorists without clear affiliation to a known criminal organization, and curtail terrorist preparatory activities online."[67] This legal step—which Amnesty International denounced as so vague that they would be not only ineffective but also an infringement on basic human rights[68]—was likely a response to harsh critiques over the cases described above of multiple terrorist suspects that have been released from Spanish prisons due to excessive punishment or lack of evidence.[69] An inability to convict is an unfortunate consequence of the aggressive policies of quick intervention in cases of suspected terrorism, which was a policy established in 2004 after the attacks in Madrid. In many instances, the police arrest a suspect without having the necessary evidence to guarantee a conviction.

In tandem, Spain has adopted a National Counter Radicalization Strategy, which is promulgated by the national Center for Counter-Terrorism and Organized Crime Intelligence (CITCO). This strategy recognizes that radicalization occurs at the local level and attempts to directly address the causes for grievance posed by, for example, the closure of *almacabras* or lack of access to mosques.[70]

However, outside of traditional security and counter radicalization measures, Spain has been reluctant to articulate a position on political Islamism. In light of the wave of *burqa* bans of the early 2000s, the government under President Luis Rodríguez Zapatero attempted to pass a new, more expansive Religious Freedom Law in order to redefine Spain as secular and neutral to all forms of religious expression.[71] However, the attempt was not successful, and Zapatero acknowledged that the lack of a political and social consensus in Spain prevented the law's passage.[72]

Meanwhile, the controversial issue had gained national prominence with the People's Party's June 2010 proposal of a motion urging the Spanish Senate to extend the *burqa* ban nationwide, both in public buildings and in the street.[73] The Zapatero administration rejected the proposal and blocked the passing of that same motion in Congress days later.[74] Shortly afterward, the ban came under further attack when eleven mosques and prayer rooms run by *Salafist* preachers in Lleida, Barcelona, and Tarragona challenged the ban in court. On its second appeal to the Spanish Supreme Court, the Lleida prohibition was overturned in a landmark March 2013 ruling. However, the ruling was based on the judges' opinion that municipal governments do not have the authority to make a ban that requires the backing of constitutional law. Thus no judicial precedent has yet been set on whether the national government could pass such a measure constitutionally.[75]

Rajoy, who succeeded Zapatero as Prime Minister on December 21, 2011, has appeared to be sensitive to the Spanish Muslim population, and in his public statements since taking office he has been careful to distinguish between "Islam" and "Islamism." However, one particularly controversial legal initiative infuriated Rajoy's opponents and those wary of Islamist doctrine. Sustained Moroccan pressure on the Spanish government led to an agreement passed by both countries in February 2013 (and subsequently incorporated into the Spanish legal code) that gave Moroccan religious authorities the right to "monitor" any Moroccan children adopted by Spanish citizens in order to ensure that the children remain religiously and culturally Muslim during their upbringing. Some critics have called this measure "an unprecedented encroachment of Islamic *Sharia* law within Spanish jurisprudence [and]… a frontal assault on the freedom of religion."[76]

Endnotes

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[6] Vasco Cotovio and Chandrika Naranyan, "Spain arrests 7 suspected of sending guns, bomb materials to ISIS," CNN, February 7, 2016, http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/07/world/spain-terror-arrests/.

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