

France gets tough on Muslim footballers praying on pitch

From the [Christian Estrosi is fighting to prevent a new mosque from opening](#), authorities are also trying to ensure that Muslims do not bring their religious beliefs anywhere near the municipal football pitches.

They have taken teams to task for breaching a new “secularism charter” that players and clubs are required to adhere to.

Ten breaches of the charter have been reported since last October, according to a report in BFM TV. Most of the incidents consisted of Muslim players praying either on or close to the field, before or during a match.

“We noticed that people were praying in the changing rooms, on the football fields, and sometimes, other inappropriate behavior such as players who refused to shake hands with the female delegates of the football federation,” Eric Borghini President of the French Football Federation in the Côte d’Azur region told The Local.

“There were even referees who refused to shake hands with female players. So that forced us to react because it doesn’t conform to the French republican spirit of secularism,” Borghini said. “When something is forbidden, we don’t do it. When you have a red light, you stop at the red light. It’s the law.”

But football chiefs on the Côte d’Azur say the current political climate means it’s more important than ever to reinforce the values of the French Republic. “Radicalization isn’t something that often happens on a football field, but there’s a true risk that these lapses could encourage radicalization,” said Borghini