

Beat: Politics

## GERARD COLLOMB CELEBRATES AN IFTAR RAMADAN IN LYON AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR

### HE IS FORMER MAYOR OF LYON

Paris, Washington DC, 20.06.2017, 03:27 Time

**USPA NEWS** - The Minister of Interior, Gerard Collomb visited the Great Mosque of Lyon on Thursday (June 15th) for the breaking of the fast (iftar) and delivered his first speech as minister in charge of worship. Gerard Collomb had been mayor of Lyon for 15 years and had declared during his passing by abandoning this post, to become Minister of the Interior. "For 15 years, 'had put all my soul, all my energy into it, Space of 15 years, this city this metropolis have gone ahead. It is the same energy that I want to devote to this Ministry of the Interior. " For his first iftar (meal of breaking the fast of Ramadan) as Minister of the Interior in charge of cults, Gérard Collomb chose "his city" from Lyon, At the Great Mosque on Thursday 15 June.

Present were the religious leaders of the Lyon region (Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, Rabbi Haïm Korsia, Rector Kamel Kabtane ...), at the meeting "Concorde et solidarité", at the Lyon City Hall, March 14, 2017 .

"The appointment was made long ago with the Mayor," says Kamel Kabtane, rector of the Grand Mosque of Lyon and president of the future French Institute of Muslim civilization (IFCM), and explains to SaphirNews "For 20 years we Organize each year an iftar with all the authorities of the city. In the meantime, the mayor became a minister. And it is probably he who wanted to privilege the mosque of Lyon ... ", explains the rector who said to know Gérard Collomb for thirty years. "We almost started our career together! "He says with a touch of humor. "I was fighting for the construction of the mosque; He was fighting for the mayor's office! As usual, some fifty personalities are invited (Catholic, Protestant and Jewish Catholic religious authorities, local councilors, representatives of the Rhône-Alpes Muslim religious council, consuls of Muslim countries and the United States, representatives of the Office of worship of the Ministry of the Interior ...).

Source SaphirNews-----FULL TEXT OF STATEMENT BY GERARD COLLOMB MINISTER OF INTERIOR-----

Mr. Gerard Collomb, Minister of State, Minister of the Interior, gave a speech on the occasion of the breaking-of-fasting dinner at the Grand Mosque of Lyon, June 15, 2017 at 10 pm.

Here is the whole of his speech, - Only the pronounced is authentic -

Rector of the Great Mosque of Lyon, Dear Kamel KABTANE,  
The Prefect of the Rhône-Alpes Region, Prefect of the Rhône,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Consular Corps of Lyon,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Ladies and gentlemen, the representatives of the judicial authorities,  
The Cardinal, Archbishop of Lyons, Primate of Gaul,  
Monsieur the Grand Rabbi of Lyons,  
Representatives of the Religious Authorities,  
Distinguished representatives of universities,  
Ladies and gentlemen representatives of associations,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a profound joy to be with you this evening, in this Great Mosque of Lyon, where we shared so many moments, where we lived so many common moments.

You know, like Mayor of Lyon, I have always honored this appointment of breaking the fast.

Because I know how important this one is to you.

Because I believe that one of the roles of the political leaders is to accompany each community in the highlights that mark the year.

So I wanted to spend my first Iftar as Minister of the Interior with you among you. I was about to say among my own.

I would of course like to thank my friend Kamel KABTANE, Rector of the Grand Mosque of Lyon, for allowing us to hold this meeting. I want to thank you all for welcoming me so warmly. From Lyon, I also wish to address to all Muslims in France the fraternal greeting of the nation in this month of Ramadan. This period is for all Muslims, a time of celebration, conviviality. It is also a moment of introspection and a step back.-----

So you will allow me to seize the opportunity offered to me this evening to deliver you some messages.  
First of all, by saying that, Minister of the Interior, I will do everything to allow the Muslims of France to exercise their worship in good conditions. Those who know me know that I am a disciple of Aristide Briand who, rapporteur of the Secularity Act of 1905, stressed before the National Assembly that his text should - I quote - "allow all Beliefs to express themselves freely".

#### FRENCH SECULARISM IS A SECULARISM OF FREEDOM-----

"Yes, French secularism is a secularism of freedom.  
Which means that everyone has the right to believe or not to believe.  
But it is also incumbent upon the State to ensure that every citizen has the possibility of exercising his religion without any restriction other than respect for the republican order.  
Such a mission presupposes first and foremost the security of all places of worship.  
And at a time when the terrorist threat is at a high level, I want to have a thought for policemen, gendarmes and soldiers, who are mobilized to protect the mosques as well as all religious buildings.  
Guaranteeing freedom of worship also means taking action to improve the material conditions.  
You know that, Mayor of Lyon, I have always been on the side of the various religious communities of the city on this subject. Minister of the Interior, I will continue to encourage all initiatives that allow all cults, and in particular Muslims, to take a proper place in our society. Finally - and it is a theme for which Kamel KABTANE has proved to be a forerunner - I am convinced that the public authorities must encourage the development of imams on French soil.  
Obviously, it is not a question of interfering in theological questions, which is not the role of a secular state.  
But to encourage all initiatives to ensure that the imams who preach in French mosques preach an Islam that is in all respects compatible with the Republic.-----

Ladies and gentlemen,  
As you will have understood, you will always find in me an indefatigable defender of the freedom to exercise your worship.  
However, the ambition that I want to carry as Minister of the Interior is even greater.  
For my role is not simply to allow each Frenchman to live his belief.  
It is also to gather, in their diversity, those who believe as those who do not believe.  
It is to fight against the divisions that mark this country, to finally build a more peaceful society.  
This implies first of all a regular sharing of views between the different religious communities.  
And on this subject, the forum of dialogue that we initiated in Lyon, Concorde and Solidarity, is - I believe - a model to follow.  
It allows the whole year to maintain the link between all of us, to prevent possible misunderstandings.  
It also makes it possible to speak in a strong and united voice when tragic circumstances demand it. And we were together after the attacks of 13 November.  
Building a calm society also means fighting amalgams that mark our society.  
Because we have to face reality. Today, in France, Muslims are the victims of too many caricatures.  
To-day, in France, too often Islam is equated with the hatred of those who, flouting this religion, commit the worst.  
To combat such a phenomenon, one must fight vigorously against radical Islam. This is a matter for the government, which takes strong measures with the possibility of closing down places of worship, dissolving associations, and using hate speech.  
This is the affair of the Muslim community, which, as you are doing here in Lyon, is mobilizing more and more on this subject. It is a matter for all religious communities, but more generally for all French people

#### IGNORANCE LEADS TO FEAR AND FEAR CONDUCT TO VIOLENCE

Finally, we have, My dear friends, to fight a longer-term battle, a cultural battle.  
Each one of you knows this beautiful phrase of the great Arab philosopher Averroes who writes that "ignorance leads to fear, that fear leads to hatred and that hatred leads to violence"  
My deepest conviction is that to appease our society lies precisely in action for knowledge, and in particular to give to the French the diversity and richness of Muslim civilization.  
In our country too little is known how many philosophers, mathematicians, artists and Arab doctors have contributed to the richness of our civilization in a permanent exchange between Arab culture and Western culture, of which some French architectural treasures are undoubtedly the most beautiful testimony.  
It is too little known that Muslim intellectuals were the passers-by of much of Hellenic thought in the West, and that by translating many authors from Greek to Arabic and then from Arabic into Latin, Have participated from emergence to modern Western thinking.

At bottom, in France, Islam is undoubtedly misunderstood.

And it is this misunderstanding that happens to be the breeding ground for caricatures and amalgams.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is because we have for a long time an acute awareness of this situation that with Kamel KABTANE, we carried the creation of a French Institute of Muslim Civilization.

It was presented to us just now, and the quality of the project is indisputably at the rendezvous.

I have no doubt that it will enable the Lyonnais and all the French to become aware of the major contribution of Muslim civilization to European culture and French culture.

I have no doubt that it will help create a society of harmony and serenity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To you, to all the Muslims of France, I mean my deep esteem.

There are many challenges before us.

We shall know that I am sure that they will be taken up together, with the support of the whole nation.

Thank you. [?] Gerard Collomb, Minister of Interior, stated.

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