ripostelaique.com

A far right, anti-Muslim website that regularly publishes conspiracy theories and unproven claims to advance its views.

Ownership and Financing

Ripostelaique.com is owned by the nonprofit organization Riposte Laïque Suisse, based in Geneva, according to the website. The site’s donation page (Nous aider) also provides a mailing address in Gisors, in the Normandy region of France. Riposte Laïque’s publishing director, Guy Sebag, is based in Acre, Israel, according to the site’s Contact Us (Nous contacter) page.

Riposte Laïque - which means “secular counterattack” in English - has helped to organize conferences against the Islamization of our countries (Des Assises internationales contre l’islamisation de nos pays) in 2010, according to the website’s Contact Us page. The nonprofit organization has published more than a dozen books, which are for sale on the website, with titles such as "Immigration: the French shipwreck" ("Immigration: le naufrage français") and "Forbid Islam" ("Interdire L’Islam").

Ripostelaique.com also generates revenue from donations. The website does not run advertisements.

Content

Riposte Laïque says on its Who Are We? (Qui sommes-nous?) page that the website "claims secular and republican principles, and brings together left and right patriots who do not accept the Islamization of their country, and the complicit silence of the left and the right, in the face of this mortal danger to our values." ("Il se réclame des principes laïques et républicains, et réunit des patriotes de gauche et de droite qui n’acceptent pas l’islamisation de leur pays, et le silence complice de la gauche et de la droite, devant ce péril mortel pour nos valeurs.")

Riposte Laïque primarily publishes opinion articles and videos on French politics and social issues, particularly articles that negatively portray France’s Muslim population and immigrants. Many articles promote Marine Le Pen’s far-right party Rassemblement National (RN) and its anti-immigration stance.

Typical headlines include “Rassemblement National shows the true path” (" Le Rassemblement National montre le vrai chemin"), “Macron defends the rich. Marine supports the working class” ("Macron défend les nantis. Marine soutient les classes populaires"), and “Sunday, get rid of Macron and all the immigrationists, vote RN!” ("Dimanche, ballez Macron et tous les immigrationnistes, votez RN!")

Credibility

Ripostelaique.com publishes content written by unpaid contributors who are not professional journalists, website founder Pierre Cassen told NewsGuard in an email. Articles generally summarize and add commentary to reports from other news organizations, including reliable sources such as Franceinfo, 20 Minutes and Le Parisien; as well as websites that NewsGuard has found to publish false and misleading information, such as LVoltaire.fr and Dreuz.info.

Riposte Laïque has repeatedly published false information and conspiracy theories, on topics including the Wuhan coronavirus outbreak and the April 2019 fire that ravaged Paris’ iconic Notre Dame cathedral.

For example, a May 2019 article titled “Notre-Dame: a fire of such violence impossible without accelerator” ("Notre-Dame: un feu d’une telle violence impossible sans accélérateur") said that the conclusion that the fire was an accident “does not match the first reactions of some construction and restoration professionals.” ("Or cette hypothèse ne coïncide pas avec les premières réactions de quelques professionnels de la construction et de la restauration d’ouvrages"). The article referenced more than 10 anonymous social media posts, including some that claimed that someone used a fire accelerator to speed the spread of the fire.
Paris public prosecutor Remy Heitz told reporters the day after the April 15, 2019, fire that "nothing suggests that it was a voluntary act."

In June 2019, the site published an article titled "No to Freemasons rebuilding Notre-Dame de Paris" ("Non aux francs-maçons pour reconstruire Notre-Dame de Paris"), and claimed, without evidence, that the church would be reconstructed by a "freemason project which aims to turn it into a vulgar amusement park for the Olympic Games" ("projet maçonnique qui vise à la transformer en un vulgaire parc d'attraction pour les jeux olympiques"). The author of the article also described the cause of the fire as "dubious."

In June 2019, the Paris-based Masonic organization Grand Orient of France told the news site L’Opinion that it was collecting funds to help the reconstruction of the cathedral as a "gesture of republican generosity" ("geste de générosité républicaine"). However, the organization will not participate directly in the reconstruction of the cathedral.

The site has also published false content that advance nationalist views. For example, in January 2013, the site published an article titled "Aachen treaty: Macron wants to deliver Alsace-Lorraine to Merkel" ("Traité d'Aix-la-Chapelle: Macron veut livrer l'Alsace-Lorraine à Merkel"), which claimed that French President Emmanuel Macron wants to "deliver" France's Alsace-Lorraine territory to German Chancellor Angela Merkel by signing a treaty in the town of Aachen.

"Macron will realize Hitler's dream with France subjected to Germany and cut to enlarge Germany [...] Alsace will go back under the German regime and the administrative language will be German," the article said. ("Macron va réaliser le rêve d'Hilter avec une France soumise à l'Allemagne et découpée pour agrandir l'Allemagne [...] L'Alsace repassera sous régime allemand et la langue administrative sera allemande").

The article attributed its claims to a YouTube video by the French nationalist Bernard Monot, a former lawmaker for the French far-right party Rassemblement national, which was taken down from the platform on January 16, 2019.

The Aachen treaty "does not mention any 'delivery', 'trusteeship' or 'German management' of Alsace and Moselle; the last two are not even mentioned in the text," ("Le texte ne mentionne aucune 'littéralisation', 'mise sous tutelle' ou 'gérance allemande' de l'Alsace et de la Moselle; ces deux dernières ne sont d'ailleurs même pas mentionnées dans le texte.") according to a news release posted by the French government on its website.

The treaty, which was signed on January 22, 2019, also does not specify any requirement to speak German in Alsace or any region, as the article claimed. The treaty does encourage bilingualism and more cooperation between France and Germany, especially at the countries' border, according to the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs.

In April 2019, Ripostelaïque.com published a post titled "Sri Lanka: This child murdered by Muslims will not make the news 'headlines'..." ("Sri Lanka : cet enfant assassiné par les musulmans ne fera pas la 'Une' des médias..."), which showed a photo of a dead boy covered by a white shroud. The site falsely claimed that the child was one of the victims of an Islamic State terrorist attack in Sri Lanka in April 2019, which killed more than 350 people and injured more than 500. "Sri Lanka buries its children and we suspect that this child massacred by a madman of Allah will not make the headlines," ("Le Sri Lanka enterre ses enfants et on se doute que cet enfançon massacré par un dingue d'Allah ne fera pas la une des médias"), the article said.

The same photo was shared on several anti-Muslim websites spreading similar rumors, according to France 24's fact-checking site The Observers. The child died with nine other people in a car accident between a bus and a van in Batticaloa, in the eastern part of Sri Lanka, on April 17, 2019, four days before the terrorist attacks, according to the Observers' report as well as the Sri Lankan news organizations News 1st and Athavan News.

Because Ripostelaïque publishes false and misleading content that generally supports anti-Muslim and right-wing views, NewsGuard has determined that the site repeatedly publishes false content, does not gather and present information responsibly, and fails to avoid deceptive headlines.

Ripostelaïque does not publish a corrections policy, and NewsGuard could not find any corrected stories on the site. Its false stories remain
In an emailed statement to NewsGuard, which was also posted on Ripostelalrique.com on August 21, 2019, before NewsGuard’s review was published, Cassen wrote, “We fight for the survival of our civilization, and denounce the islamization of our country, which is killing it more and more every day. All what we have written in the last twelve years was confirmed, the facts prove us right,” (“Nous menons un combat pour la survie de notre civilisation, et dénonçons l’islamisation de notre pays, qui est en train de le tuer toujours davantage, tous les jours. Tout ce que nous avons écrit depuis douze ans se confirme, les faits nous donnent dramatiquement raison.”)

The email did not answer NewsGuard’s questions about specific stories on the site and Ripostelalrique.com’s editorial practices, including its lack of corrections.

The site’s Who Are We page describes the website’s refusal to accept “the Islamization” of France and the “complicit silence of the left and the right, in the face of this mortal danger to our values.” Articles on the website, which are not labeled as either news or opinion, generally reflect this disclosed anti-Islam perspective, which is why NewsGuard has determined that the website meets NewsGuard’s standard for distinguishing news and opinion.

**Transparency**

Ripostelalrique.com discloses on its Who Are We page that it is owned by the nonprofit organization Riposte Lâaque Suisse. However, it does not provide information about its financing or identify any donors, which does not meet NewsGuard’s standard for revealing ownership and relevant financing.

Cassen did not answer questions about the site’s lack of information about the nonprofit’s financing in an email to NewsGuard.

The Contact Us page provides a general email address to submit articles or contact the site. And identifies Sebag as its publishing director.

Articles on the site include author names and link to profile pages, which include a list of the contributor’s previous articles on the site. However, the site does not generally provide contact or biographical information for its content creators.

“Apologists of Islam write on our site, risking their lives. People are forced to write under a pseudonym to protect themselves, physically and professionally,” Cassen told NewsGuard. (“Des apologistes de l’islam écrivent sur notre site, au péril de leur vie. Des personnes sont obligées d’écrire sous pseudo pour se protéger, physiquement et professionnellement.”)

**History**

Ripostelalrique.com was co-founded in 2007 by Brigitte Bayle, a former teacher who died in 2013, and Cassen, a retired typographer, former communist activist, and former editor of the French leftist publication Republika.

In 2012, Cassen and author Pascal Hilout were both convicted by the Paris Criminal Court of inciting hatred for publishing two anti-Muslim editorials in 2010. The editorials were titled “Can we defeat the Islamist offensive by democratic means alone?” and “Occupation: Prayers in the streets, the hijab, halal and mosques are of course symbols of occupation and conquest” (“Pourra-t-on vaincre l’offensive islamiste par les seuls moyens démocratiques?” et “Occupation: bien sûr que les prières dans la rue, les voiles, le halal et les mosquées sont des symboles d’occupation et de conquête”).

Cassen was fined 4,000 euros and Hilout was fined 1,500 euros. At a hearing, Cassen stated, “No topic should be taboo when it comes to our freedoms and our values.” (“Aucun sujet ne doit être tabou quand il en va de nos libertés et de nos valeurs.”)

Alain Jean-Mairet, president of Riposte Lâaque Suisse, was convicted in 2016 of inciting hatred against Muslims with an article titled “What if Islam was the cult of sexual and moral perversion?” (“Et si l’islam était le culte de la perversion sexuelle et morale?”), and fined 5,000 euros. The Paris Criminal Court found that the text participates in a “widespread and systematized stigmatization of Muslims” (“stigmatisation généralisée et systématisée des musulmans”).

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Written by: Sophia Tewa
Edited by: Sophia Tewa
## Sources

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### Content
- https://ripostelaique.com/videos.rl
- https://ripostelaique.com/qui-sommes-nous.html

### Credibility

- "Antisémitisme : un seul coupable, la gauche !" http://archive.fo/6yIYk
- "Le bilan de Macron : la France livrée à des musulmans qui rêvent de faire sécession" http://archive.fo/9qRdz#selection-273.0-273.83
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