GN GIRONA NOTICIES.COM + Periodisme

Barcelona

Catalan caliphate

Opinió | 27/11/2026 | 21:36



Two people arrested in Catalonia on suspicion of jihadism had already been convicted as minors. What went wrong for security forces to identify a “specific, real and serious” danger again years later?

The arrest of two suspected jihadists in the towns of Sitges and Montcada i Reixac shows once again that we have a serious problem in Catalonia. Of course, we should not generalize. If we assume there are around 400,000 people of North African origin and that 1% are tempted by violence, that comes to 4,000. But no one has established that the figure is 1%, and that arithmetic tells us nothing about how many people would be willing to blow themselves up, shoot or stab someone in the street. Fingers crossed.

The police operation took place on the 17th, although it only became public on Thursday. There are also two worrying circumstances. The first is that both had already been convicted when they were minors. The question is what effect those convictions had and why, years later, the two have been arrested again for acts related to jihadism.

The second is that you cannot remigratethese two, to use one of the expressions fashionable lately. Where to? They hold Spanish and French nationality. If the security forces carried out the operation now, it is because they perceived a “specific, real and serious” danger.

With these arrests, three suspected repeat jihadist offenders have now been detained in the province of Barcelona this month. Last year, Catalonia was the autonomous community with the most arrests on these grounds, with 33 of the 100 made across Spain. This year, the nationwide total has already exceeded 100. More, therefore, than in 2025.

Nor is that surprising. No one can say we were not warned. Warning signs have appeared repeatedly for more than twenty years. The first came in 2001, after the attack on the Twin Towers in New York, when it emerged that one of the ringleaders, Mohamed Atta, had been to Salou. Of course, he did not come as a tourist. Camp de Tarragona is one of the areas with the most Salafist mosques.

Then, in 2010, came the WikiLeaks leak. The US State Department considered Catalonia, and Barcelona in particular, to be one of the main centers of Islamist radicalism in southern Europe. The concern was such that the United States pushed for the creation of an intelligence and counterterrorism center at its consulate.

In 2016, meanwhile, it emerged that the Mossos had identified more than seventy Salafist mosques. Approximately one in three mosques was Salafist. A decade later, it remains to be seen how that figure has changed.

Of course, Salafism does not necessarily lead to violent behavior. It is a highly strict interpretation of Islam. Those who follow it consider themselves, quite simply, good Muslims.

Finally, there was the 2017 attack on Barcelona's La Rambla. The imam had preached freely in Ripoll, the cradle, incidentally, of Catalonia. Most members of the terrorist cell were young people of Moroccan origin who had grown up here.

After the La Rambla massacre, several members of the cell headed toward Salou, the same town Atta had visited. They ended up in Cambrils, the scene of the second attack. As in the movie: "Houston, we have a problem".

Autor: Xavier Rius

https://gironanoticies.com/en/catalan-caliphate/