**Bardot fined for anti-Muslim remarks**

By AP, 4 June 2008

France's 1960s screen icon Brigitte Bardot has been fined 15,000 euros for inciting hatred against Muslims by attacking the ritual slaughter of animals in Islamic culture.

In December 2006, the film star-turned-animal rights activist wrote to France's then interior minister, now President Nicolas Sarkozy, arguing Muslims should stun animals before slaughtering them during the Eid al-Adha holiday.

She outraged anti-racist groups by saying: "I've had enough of being led by the nose by this whole population which is destroying us, (and) destroying our country by imposing their ways."

Aged 73 and suffering from arthritis, Bardot has been convicted four times before in similar cases. She was absent from Tuesday's hearing.

"The court ruled that the comments in question clearly referred to the Muslim community and constituted a legal offence," said judge Nicolas Bonnal.

France is home to Europe's largest Muslim community, estimated at five million people.

Bardot was also ordered to pay 1,000 euros in damages to the MRAP anti-racism group, and one euro in symbolic damages to the LICRA league against racism and the Human Rights League.

The former star was also told the ruling must be published in the journal of her animal rights foundation.

Bardot's lawyer said he did not know whether the actress would appeal the sentence - which fell short of the two-month suspended jail term sought by the prosecution - but that she "will not be silenced in her defence of animals".

The film star had written to the court saying: "I'm sickened by how (these organisations) are harassing me. I will not shut up until stunning is carried out" on animals before their ritual slaughter.

Bardot's previous convictions, dating back to 1997, were for writings attacking the "Islamisation" of France, calling for a halt to mosque-building and describing Muslims as "invaders".

In the latest case in 2004 she was fined 5,000 euros ($1,147) for inciting racial hatred in her book "Un Cri Dans le Silence" (A Cry in the Silence).

For the past 20 years, the former bombshell of New Wave cinema has headed a wildlife foundation, leading high-profile campaigns against seal-hunting, the fur trade and cruelty to animals.

The Paris-based Brigitte Bardot Foundation counts 57,000 donors in some 20 countries.

It is part of several animal protection coalitions, including the Eurogroup for Animal Welfare, the Global Anti-Whaling Campaign, the Fur Free Alliance and the French Federation Against Bullfighting.

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**Australians beware**

Halal killing is cruel, and the compassionate proposal by the famous former actress is entirely reasonable. But it seems that in France freedom of speech is circumscribed by the assumption that Muslim are beyond criticism. In Australia there are people in positions of power who attack Christian beliefs yet seek to impose penalties and sanctions on anyone who has the temerity to question the practices of Islam.

*Michael Darby*

Visit Michael Darby's website