

## Czech leader says Muslims 'impossible to integrate' in Europe



Czech President Milos Zeman has repeatedly spoken out against the surge of migrant and refugee arrivals in Europe (AFP Photo/Patrick Kovarik)

Prague (AFP) - Czech President Milos Zeman, known for his fiery anti-migrant comments, said on Sunday that it was almost impossible to integrate the Muslim community into European society.

"The experience of Western European countries which have ghettos and excluded localities shows that the integration of the Muslim community is practically impossible," Zeman said in a televised interview.

"Let them have their culture in their countries and not take it to Europe, otherwise it will end up like Cologne," he added, referring to the mass New Year's Eve assaults on women in Germany and elsewhere.

"Integration is possible with cultures that are similar, and the similarities may vary," pointing out that the Vietnamese and Ukrainian communities had been able to integrate into Czech society.

Zeman, a 71-year-old leftwinger and the first-ever directly elected president of the Czech Republic, has repeatedly spoken out against the surge of migrant and refugee arrivals in Europe.

Earlier this month, Zeman claimed the influx was masterminded by Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood which uses

money from several states to finance it in a bid to "gradually control Europe".

Late last year, Zeman called the surge in refugee numbers "an organised invasion," urging young men from Iraq and Syria to "take up arms" against the Islamic State (IS) group instead of running away.

More than one million migrants reached Europe in 2015, most of them refugees fleeing war and violence in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, according to the United Nations refugee agency.

But few asylum seekers have chosen to stay in the largely secular Czech Republic, an EU and NATO member of 10.5 million people, with the majority heading to wealthier Germany and other western EU states.