# EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT

2016

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

SETA

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# ISLAMOPHOBIA
# REPORT

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# THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This is the second edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report* (*EIR*) which was presented for the first time in 2015. New countries are included in this year's *EIR*; while 25 countries were covered in 2015, the report for 2016 includes 27 country reports. *EIR 2016* is the result of 31 prominent scholars who specialise in different fields such as racism, gender and Islamophobia Studies. In the years to come we will attempt to include more countries in our report. Our final aim is to cover and monitor the developments of Islamophobia in all European countries.

Islamophobia has become a real danger to the foundations of democratic order and the values of the European Union. It has also become the main challenge to the social peace and coexistence of different cultures, religions and ethnicities in Europe. The country reports of *EIR 2016*, which cover almost all the European continent from Russia to Portugal and from Greece to Latvia, clearly show that the level of Islamophobia in fields such as education, employment, media, politics, the justice system and the Internet is on the rise. Since the publication of the last report there is little improvement. On the contrary, one can see from the country reports that the state of democracy and human rights in Europe is deteriorating. Islamophobia has become more real especially in the everyday lives of Muslims in Europe. It has surpassed the stage of being a rhetorical animosity and has become a physical animosity that Muslims feel in everyday life be it at school, the workplace, the mosque, transportation or simply on the street.

The refugee movement and the turmoil it has created in Europe, the unprecedented rise of far right parties all across the continent and the UK's Brexit decision, which took many by surprise, have revealed the importance and relevance of this report, which covers incidents and developments in 2016. The short-term political significance of Islamophobia is as much relevant as Islamophobia's structural dimension. As mentioned before, small successes can be witnessed in some European countries yet great challenges lie ahead for deepening the values of human rights and freedom of religion in Europe.

## The Rise of Islamophobia

As a survey conducted by the Chatham House Europe Programme shows, public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states is by no means confined to Trump's administration (implementation of the 'Muslim-Ban'). Respondents in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and the UK were presented with the statement 'All further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped'. As the report reveals, the majorities in all but two of the ten states agreed to this statement, ranging from 71% in Poland, 65% in Austria, 53% in Germany and 51% in Italy to 47% in the United Kingdom and 41% in Spain. In no country did the percentage that disagreed surpass 32%.[1]

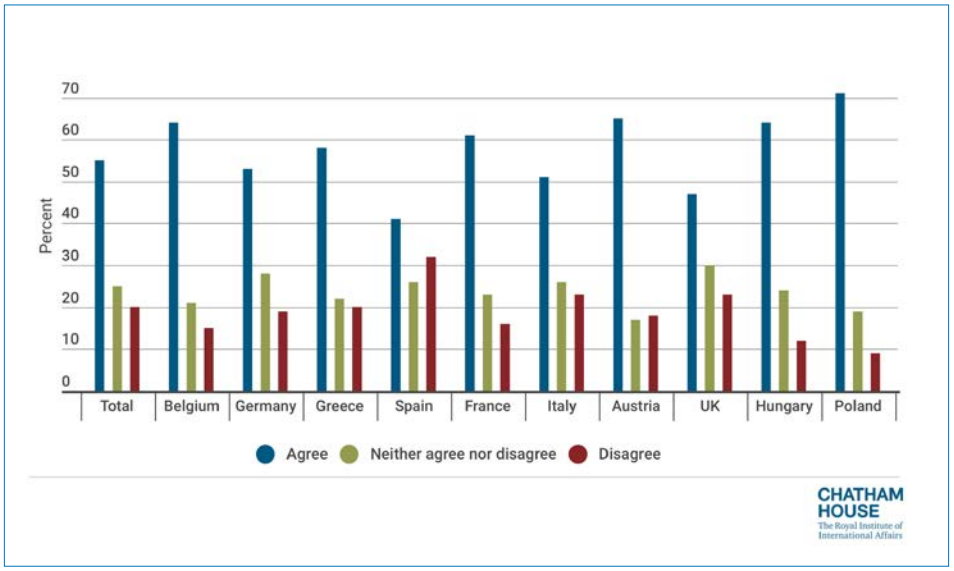


Figure 1: Public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states in Europe.[2]

The findings of this report go hand in hand with similar surveys on this topic. The Ipsos Perils of Perception Survey 2016 found that the current and the future Muslim population in Europe are enormously overestimated in most countries. Out of the list of all 20 countries where respondents overestimated the Muslim population by more than 10%, 12 are European, while the USA and Canada are among the remaining 8 countries. When asked "Now thinking about 2020, out of every 100 people, about how many do you think will be Muslim?", the top 20 countries where proponents overestimated the Muslim population again were in majority European (11). The average guess in France is that 40% of

1. https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration#sthash.O6J7kQrj.dpuf

2. Chatham House, https://www.chathamhouse.org/expert/comment/what-do-europeans-think-about-muslim-immigration

the population will be Muslim in 2020 when the actual projection is 8.3%. Italy comes third with 26% overestimation, and Belgium and Germany fourth with 24% overestimation.[3]

Connecting this to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, we can suggest that this overestimation is connected to unfavourable views regarding Muslims. The report states,

> "Opinions of Muslims vary considerably across Europe. Half or more in Hungary, Italy, Poland, Greece and Spain have a very or somewhat unfavorable view of Muslims. And in Italy (36%), Hungary (35%) and Greece (32%), roughly a third hold very unfavorable opinions. Majorities in the other nations surveyed express positive attitudes about Muslims. Nonetheless, at least a quarter in each country have negative views of Muslims."[4]

These numbers are not shocking if we look at the incidents of Islamophobia and its pervasiveness in power structure across Europe. Muslims are seen as the enemy 'within'. There is wide consent in Western societies to Muslims not being seen as equal citizens. Othering and differential treatment may also overlap with the dehumanization of Muslims. Thus, physical attacks and political restrictions can often be carried out and even defended in an atmosphere of wide distrust and enmity. Islamophobia is by no means confined to the working poor or the middle class, who have been misinformed about Islam and Muslims. It is especially true for the so-called educated elite. Discriminating policies like the ban of the hijab for certain professions, the ban of the niqab in public, bans of minarets and other laws restricting Muslim's freedom of religion speak volumes. If politicians can take such decisions and the media, along with large parts of society, accept them, why should we wonder about the strong opposition to immigration of Muslim people in Europe?

Hence, these numbers reveal the necessity of the *EIR*, which looks at the challenge of Islamophobia from a qualitative and not a quantitative research perspective. Its aim is to document and analyse trends in the spread of Islamophobia in various European nation states. There cannot be a claim of full comprehensiveness, since European nation states by majority still lack data collection. Hence, a central recommendation of the *EIR* is that Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hate crime should be included as a category in European nation states' statistics – a development that has not occurred as of yet. The *EIR*'s primary contribution is to reveal the tendencies of Islamophobia and to give representative examples of its overall unfolding in the investigated states.

3. https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/ipsos-mori-perils-of-perception-charts-2016.pdf

4. http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2016/07/Pew-Research-Center-EU-Refugees-and-National-Identity-Report-FINAL-July-11-2016.pdf

## Recognition of Islamophobia

There are various definitions of Islamophobia. However, the definition of Islamophobia used by the *EIR*, as defined by its editors, is as follows,

> "When talking about Islamophobia, we mean anti-Muslim racism. As Anti-Semitism Studies has shown, the etymological components of a word do not necessarily point to its complete meaning, nor how it is used. Such is also the case with Islamophobia Studies. Islamophobia has become a well-known term used in academia as much as in the public sphere. Criticism of Muslims or of the Islamic religion is not necessarily Islamophobic. Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilising and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of a constructed 'we'. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static 'Muslim' identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalised for all Muslims. At the same time, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary in different contexts, because Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about the Muslims/Islam".[5]

We think that with this definition, we clearly address many of the suspicions, which are put against the term as such. As a matter of fact, while supranational institutions such as the OSCE embrace the terminology Anti-Semitism, the OSCE still refuses to use Islamophobia, which we see as part of the problem. Again, we recommend that Islamophobia/anti-Muslim Racism or anti-Muslim hate crime should be included in the collection of "equality data" in all European states. Institutions such as the OSCE need to establish solid monitoring and recording mechanisms for discrimination, hate crime and hate speech towards Muslims. In order to have reliable data, it has to be segregated by bias/category and also segregated by gender. This is even more problematic in countries that do not allow collection of data on religion or race. This seemingly egalitarian approach in reality hides the discrimination of Muslims. Also, response mechanisms seem to be unclear and not adequately used. When there is an incident of discrimination/hate crime/hate speech, there are different response mechanisms available, yet, none of these are familiar to the vast majority of Muslim citizens of European countries. Thus, we recommend that response mechanisms should be made more available, accessible and clear. Last but not least, an empowerment of the Muslim community is needed to strengthen critical citizenship and help European states deepen their democracies.

5. Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016, p.7.

## Policy Recommendations for European Countries

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. The following list of recommendations serves to underscore some of these recommendations and to add some additional suggestions on the supranational level.

We think it is important for civil society to understand that Islamophobia is a problem of institutional racism. The illusion that Europe is a post-racial society prevents large parts of European societies from recognising the severe challenge of Islamophobia to local societies. The focus has to shift from Muslims' actions to those of European societies. Racism, including Islamophobia, tells us more about the racists than about their imagined scapegoat or their victims. Hence, Islamophobia reveals aspects of Europe and the internal problems European societies continue to face. A recognition and a critical consciousness of this societal disease is of utmost importance to be able to create more just societies in Europe. At the same time, Muslims must be allowed to enjoy their spaces of freedom like other dominant religious and political groups in European societies without being securitised or criminalised. The securitisation of Islam, especially policies countering violent extremism and their impact on the freedom of religion of belief for Muslims, and even freedom of movement or free assembly have to be challenged by all democratic forces in Europe. Communities must be consulted and human rights frameworks must be respected. National security is not among the criteria that should permit the limitation of freedom of religion or belief.

We especially urge politicians to speak out against Islamophobia as one of the most pressing forms of racism in our days. Europe needs more courageous politicians who do not only challenge the politics of right-wing populist parties, but also challenge institutionalised forms of racism targeting Muslims in the fields of employment, education, state bureaucracy, and media. We also call for journalists and editors to challenge Islamophobic reporting in their news media and give space to more balanced views. Generally, the issue of religious literacy is a huge problem that does not only concern media but also the police, prosecutors and civil servants. We see that people simply lack basic knowledge on Islam and Muslims' practices. We see a need for the introduction of more comparative religion courses, or religious teaching, in a formal and informal educational setting.

We see that Muslim women are among the most vulnerable direct victims of Islamophobia. ENAR has conducted a report on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women and presented 37 recommendations, which we can only underscore given the findings of our report.[6] Women who are visibly Muslim are socially are socially ostrasised in many places. The combination of internal community prob-

6. http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/forgottenwomenpublication_lr_final_with_latest_corrections.pdf

lems, discrimination (education and employment) and hate crimes against Muslim women (data shows that it is 70% more likely for a muslim woman to be attacked in the street) are leaving their horrible mark on Muslim women. Hence, the protection and the empowerment of Muslim women have to be on the central agenda of states and NGOs. The ruling of the European Court of Justice regarding Esma Bougnaoui's dismissal by a French company for wearing a hijab when dealing with clients as unlawful discrimination is an important step towards equality and an anti-discriminatory society.[7] At the same time, the case of Belgian Samira Achbita vs. Belgium, where it was argued that a dismissal due to the headscarf would be permissible against the backdrop of a general prohibition of all outward signs of political, philosophical and religious beliefs exhibited by employees in the workplace, is worrying and challenges the reality of a diverse Europe.[8]

7. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/14/world/europe/france-head-scarf-court.html?_r=0

8.http://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=179082&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=678370

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
# ALBANIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

BESNIK SINANI

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**Disclaimer:** Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions. No representation, either expressed or implied, is made of the accuracy of the material in the national reports. The editors of the *European Islamophobia Report* cannot accept any legal responsibility or liability for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The reader must make his or her own evaluation of the accuracy and appropriateness of the material.

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# Executive Summary

Following the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris in 2015, the Prime Minister of Albania, Edi Rama, spoke of the danger of religious extremism, while drawing attention to the potential threat of Islamophobia, inspired, as he stated, by right-wing movements and political parties in Europe. It was the first time that an Albanian official admitted the threat, or even the potential of Islamophobia in Albania, a nominally Muslim majority country that prides itself on religious tolerance. Despite this open admission, there have been no government policies to address such a threat, or even attempts to collect data on the reality of Islamophobia, its nature, its scope, and the affects it has in the Muslim community and society at large. Otherwise, public intellectuals, analysts, and pundits in Albania deny the possibility of Islamophobia in a Muslim majority country. Despite the lack of studies and reports on the state of Islamophobia in Albania, or recognition of its very existence, there are enough indications of the presence of persistent patterns of Islamophobia that are reflected in the discourse of political leaders, in media, school textbooks, violent incidents, and arbitrary arrests. Contrary to some reports, Islamophobia in Albania is not a recent phenomenon, and to a large extent is not driven – as it is believed to be the case in other European countries – by emigration or terrorist attacks. Islamophobia in Albania is entrenched in the political identity of the post-communist Albanian state, and its aspiration to become 'European'. It reflects and recycles the anti – Muslim and anti – immigrant rhetoric of European Islamophobia to stigmatize its own citizens of the Muslim faith, perpetuating patterns of discrimination that undermine overall social cohesion.

# Përmbledhje Ekzekutive

Pas sulmeve të Charlie Hebdos në Paris në vitin 2015, Kryeministri i Shqipërisë Edi Rama foli rreth rrezikut të ekstremizmit fetar teksa tërhoqi vëmendjen rreth mundësisë së rrezikut të Islamofobisë të frymëzuar, siç tha ai, nga lëvizje dhe parti politike të djathta në Europë. Ishte hera e parë që një zyrtar shqiptar pranonte rrezikun apo qoftë mundësinë e shfaqjes së Islamofobisë në Shqipëri, një vend nominalisht me shumicë muslimane, që krenohet me tolerancën e vet fetare. Megjithë këtë pranim, nuk ka patur asnjë politikë qeveritare për të adresuar një rrezik të tillë, apo qoftë përpjekje për të mbledhur të dhëna rreth realitetit të Islamofobisë, natyrës e kapacitetit të saj, si dhe efektit që ka mbi bashkësinë muslimane dhe shoqërinë në tërësi. Në të kundërt, intelektualë publikë, analistë e ekspertë në Shqipëri mohojnë mundësinë e egzistencës së Islamofobisë në një vend me shumicë muslimane. Megjithë mungesën e studimeve apo raportimeve rreth stadit të Islamofobisë në vend, apo qoftë edhe mohimin e egzistencës së saj, gjenden mjaftueshëm tregues të prezencës së vazhdueshme të formave të Islamofobisë, të cilat reflektohen në ligjërimin e udhëheqësve politikë, në media, tekstet shkollore, incidente të dhunshme, dhe arrestime arbitrare. Përkundër disa raporteve, Islamofobia në Shqipëri nuk është një fenomen i kohëve të fundit, dhe përgjithësisht nuk është e motivuar – siç besohet të jetë në vende të tjera europiane – nga emigracioni apo sulmet terroriste. Islamofobia në Shqipëri i ka rrënjët në identitetin politik të shtetit shqiptar post – komunist, dhe aspiratën e tij për tu bërë 'europian.' Ajo reflekton dhe riciklon retorikën e islamofobisë europiane për të stigmatizuar qytetarët e saj të besimit musliman, duke vazhduar forma diskriminimi dhe duke dëmtuar kohezionin e përgjithshëm social të vendit.

# Introduction

In 1967, Albania became the only country in the world to officially ban the practice of religion. The communist regime that came out of the Second World War demolished temples, closed down religious educational institutions, and imprisoned and executed members of the clergy. The Penal Code of 1977 made it a crime to propagate religion. In 1990, as the regime was facing its eminent downfall, following the events in Eastern Europe, the last communist leader, Ramiz Alia, took steps towards liberalization of religious services. Generations of Albanians had grown up not only alienated from their religious tradition, but also having gone through a system of education, and state-run cultural and political indoctrination that vilified religion and religious practices. In addition, the political process that brought the end of communism in Albania was perceived as a political vision directed towards Western Europe. The emerging political and cultural establishment of Albania saw the religious tradition of the majority of Albanians, Islam, as an impediment to 'joining the European family'. It is against this background, that a towering figure of Albanian literature, Ismail Kadare, asked the last communist leader, Ramiz Alia, to allow the opening of Christian churches but not mosques. In his own words, this would repair the 'historical accident' that separated Albanians from their natural European family by being part of the Ottoman Empire for five centuries and the conversion of the majority of Albanians to Islam. In a similar vein, former deputy Prime Minister of Albania, Gramoz Pashko (1991-1995), stated in a paper he wrote on Christianity that the only hope for Albania is its young generation 'which has loved European Civilization and Christian values'. Commenting on Pashko's writing, scholar Maria Todorova points out that '[this] frank appeal to Christian values from a country that before it became atheist was 70% Muslim bespeaks the naiveté and straightforwardness of the Albanian political discourse that has not yet mastered the ennobling façade of the pluralist vocabulary'. She further adds: 'It is, however, also a tribute to the sound political instincts of the new Albanian political elites who have not been duped by the pretence of supra-religious, non-racial, and non-ethnic universalism and pluralism of the European or Western discourse'.[1]

In 2005, addressing an audience at the Oxford Union in the United Kingdom, the former President of Albania (2002-2007), Alfred Moisiu, declared that in their essence Albanians are Christians and Islam is not an original religion of the Albanians.[2] In 2012, a journalist asked the same series of questions to a number of politicians, one of them being: in what historical event would you wish to have been part of? Quite a few politicians responded by saying in the defence of Constantinople – the name of Istanbul under the Byzantine Empire -, an event that, in their view,

1.Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

2.Alfred Moisiu, "Fjala e mbajtur ne Unionin e Oxfordit," [Speech presented at the Oxford Union], retrieved January 2006, from http://www.president.al/english/pub/info.asp?id=1089.

marked the tragic fate of Albanians. One of them described the conversion of Albanians to Islam as an act of 'becoming yellow and black' clearly using racist markers. The Head of the National Library of Albania, Dr. Aurel Plasari, called the conversion to Islam of Albanians 'the Albanian betrayal of Jesus Christ'.[3] These declarations are not motivated as much by a theological stand per se, as by identity politics that consider Christianity as an integral part of Western Civilization where Albania wants to integrate, and Islam as a marker of the backward East, and the Ottoman past from where Albania wants to escape. That is why the much-debated census in 2011 was seen by many as an opportunity for Albanians to remove the negative marker – in the eyes of Europeans - of being known as a Muslim majority country. Albanian politicians like the speaker of the Albanian Parliament have repeatedly stated that any obstacle towards European integration, like the failure to get visa liberalization with the EU in 2013 was due to Albania being seen as a Muslim country. It has to be noted that, the EU report mentioned failures of the Albanian government to meet its obligations and made no mention of religion. The fact that the only countries left out of the visa liberalisation agreement in 2013 were countries with majority Muslim or considerable number of Muslims (Albanian, Kosovo, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) was used by these politicians to shift the debate from their own failures to religious identity politics.[4] In a number of interviews with Western TV channels in 2015, the Prime Minister Edi Rama repeatedly stated that Albania is not a Muslim country.[5] Paradoxically, in other interviews he warned European leaders that if EU fails to integrate Albania, the Albanian people might be attracted to alternatives such as the DAESH.[6] The message to the Albanian population was clear: Islam and Muslims are not accepted in Europe. That is why in Albania since the fall of communism the primary targets of Islamophobia throughout 'the years of transition', have been the visible signs of Muslim presence: headscarves, beards, and mosque constructions. Current political leaders have modified their discourse into seemingly embracing the notion of religious diversity and tolerance as a national value, but as a review of school textbooks shows (see below), the Albanian state is committed to an identity construction that casts a shadow or at times fully negates the historical presence, the contribution, and significance of Islam and Muslims in the history of Albania.

3.E-Zani I Nalte, "Ekstremistet e medias Shqiptare, " *e-zani.com*, (June 1, 2012), retrieved December 27, 2016, from http://www.e-zani.com/2012/06/01/ekstremistet-e-medias-shqiptare/.

4. Anton Cara, "Dridhe Like me Konferencen Islamike," *e-zani.com*, (December 23, 2013), retrieved December 27, 2016, from http://www.e-zani.com/2013/12/23/dridhe-like-konferencen-islamike/.

5.Panorama Online, "Rama, në 'France24': S'jemi vend mysliman, por europian. Europa nuk është një klub i krishterë," *panorama*, (June 14, 2014), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.panorama.com.al/rama-sjemi-vend-mysliman-por-europian-europa-nuk-eshte-nje-klub-i-krishtere/.

6.E-Zani I Nalte, "Edi Rama perdor karten islamike," *e-zani.com,* (July 3, 2015), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.e-zani.com/2015/07/03/edi-rama-perdor-karten-islamike/.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Education

On 22 September, 2016, Imam Muhamed Sytari, Mufti of Shkodra,[7] one of the largest cities in the Northern region of Albania, posted on his Facebook page a comment about his son's 5th grade textbook that teaches students about the history of their city. As he points out, in a city where at least half of the population is of Muslim faith, out of over 30 famous writers, historical figures, actors named in the textbook, there is only one Muslim in the entire list otherwise composed of historical figures of the Catholic faith. There is a citadel on a hill overlooking the city and a temple that served as a Christian chapel before the Ottoman army took control of the citadel and transformed it into a mosque for the soldiers stationed there. It is commonly referred in many texts as a church/mosque. It has been a site of some communal dispute since occasionally Christians have performed the Sunday Mass in front of the ruins of the temple claiming it as a Christian house of worship (the latest incident was this year's Christmas Mass). Muslims have protested these moves and have occasionally conducted prayers in order to claim it as a Muslim temple. The textbook clearly sides with the Christian community by presenting the disputed edifice with a visible minaret as a church. The Mufti goes on to say that he has been raising concerns regarding such textbooks since 2008. He states that these kinds of texts are driven by Islamophobia and by an agenda to diminish the role of Muslims in the history of country.

It is not the first time the issue of textbooks is debated in the context of a Christian bias. In 2014, Professor of Sociology at the University of Tirana Enis Sulstarova wrote about his findings from a comparative study of school textbooks. The textbooks he reviewed, as he points out, present tenets of the Christian faith, like the miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ, as a historical fact, not as information on what Christians believe. On the other hand, aspects of the Muslim faith, like the Muslim belief on the origins of the Black Stone in the Holy Mosque in Mekkah, are rendered a 'superstition'.[8] Even textbooks of mathematics are commonly peppered with information on Christian celebrations or Christian saints. Muslim parents, activists and bloggers have raised these issues on social media, blogs, and newspaper articles. The situation described by the Mufti in 2016, therefore, is not new; rather it is a continuation of the same patterns of bias in textbooks in the Albanian educational system.

The issue of the textbooks reflects a wider debate on the review of history textbooks, a debate that has exposed the fusion of Islamophobia, violation of secular-

7.H. Omari, "Teksti shkollor diskriminues "Vendlindja ime"," *e-zani.com*, (September 22, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.e-zani.com/2016/09/22/teksti-shkollor-diskriminues-vendlindja-ime/.

8.Enis Sulstarova, "Nga mohimi ne predikim: Mrekullia e ringjalljes ne librat shkollore te histories," *e-zani.com*, (April 24, 2014), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.e-zani.com/2014/04/24/nga-mohimi-ne-predikim-mrekullia-e-ringjalljes-ne-librat-shkollore-te-historise/.

ism in promotion of Christianity,[9] and anti-Turkish rhetoric. In 2013, the Turkish government requested from the Albanian government the review of textbooks that contain anti-Turkish hate speech. A number of public figures, the writer Ismail Kadare being the best known among them, initiated a petition against the review, which gave rise in both Albania and Kosovo to media and political debates that often involved anti-Turkish hate speech.[10] It was quite telling that the governments of both Greece[11] and Serbia had posed similar requests to the governments of both Albania and Kosovo,[12] with no reactions whatsoever, despite the fact that the conflict with Serbia is quite recent. The petition was not signed by some of the best-known Albanian historians and others from the academic community considered it an act of intimidation against historians. These representative cases show, however, that the recent concerns raised by the Mufti of Shkodra, mentioned above, are neither isolated cases, nor recent, but rather continuations of government education policies and ideological stands of the cultural establishment that expose an agenda that aims at diminishing the contribution of Muslims, and violates the secular principles of the country by promoting Christianity, while encouraging and propagating negative views of Islam, Turkey and the Turkish people.

## Media

For many years now, the media has been one of the main sources feeding Islamophobia. The Deputy Chairman of the Albanian Muslim Community recently went on record accusing pundits for fueling the flames of Islamophobia.[13] His comments followed the publication and book signing of the latest book by Mustafa Nano, a pundit accused on various occasions of fueling bigotry against Muslims. The author depicted the Muslim presence and Muslim prayers as worrying and threatening to Albanian secularism. Mustafa Nano has a long history of controversial views towards the Muslim community. In the past he has written that Muslims have to prove to the rest of society that they don't represent a threat to the country. He has a long history of writing and representing Muslims as a threat.

9.E-zani I Nolte, "Tekstet shkollore shkelin laicitetin edhe ne oren e matematikes," *e-zani.com*, (April 30, 2014), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.e-zani.com/2014/04/30/tekstet-shkollore-shkelin-laicitetin-edhe-ne-oren-e-matematikes/. See also: Elton Hatibi, "Serigrafi matematikore me Nene Terezen." *e-zani.com*,(September 5, 2015), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.e-zani.com/2015/09/02/serigrafi-matematike-me-nene-terezen/.

10.Enis Sulstarova, "Peticioni i/kunder diktatit." *e-zani.com*, (May 8, 2013), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.e-zani.com/2013/05/08/peticioni-ikunder-diktatit/.

11.E-zani I Nolte, "Greqia kërkon ndryshimin e historisë: Qeveria thotë PO, «patriotët» në heshtje," *e-zani.com*, (November 19, 2014), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.e-zani.com/2014/11/19/greqia-kerkon-ndryshimin-e-historise-qeveria-thote-po-patriotet-ne-heshtje/.

12.Besnik Sinani, "Defter Turk," *e-zani.com*, (May 6, 2013), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.e-zani.com/2013/05/06/defter-turk/.

13.Albeu, "Intervista/ Gazmend Aga: Maks Velo ka frikë nga myslimanet?! – Ja garancia ime për të," *albeu.com*,(November 2, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.albeu.com/shqiperi/intervista-gazmend-aga-maks-velo-ka-frik-nga-myslimanet-ja-gara/268068/.

In the same meeting, another author, Maks Velo, added, "We are not a country of Islam, Islam is over there in Saudi Arabia…. Islam doesn't offer guaranties… it threatens to destroy Europe."[14] This author caused uproar in 2014 when in an interview he set to explain why he "hates Muslims and Northern Albanians".[15] Following public reactions he later apologized. A year later, in 2015, while depicting Albania as a country that doesn't understand art due to being oriental and Islamic, he made negative comments against Syrian refugees.[16] The same author, wrote an article titled "What is wrong with Islam these days."[17] According to Nano, the real problem with Islam is not DAESH, but non-violent Muslims who hold views and values incompatible with European values. The problem is their religion. At the same time, he emphasizes that the Quran furnishes the justifications for violence used by DAESH. He has dedicated part of his writings and time on his talk show (Zululand)[18] this year to condemning two Albanian football players who play respectively for Arsenal and FC Koln, who refused to wear a t-shirt with a beer logo or appear in front of journalists while advertising beer.[19] He delegitimizes their free expression of belief and conscience by depicting them as examples of the Muslim threat.

It has to be noted that when covering events like the latest arrests, media coverage of arrests has been, as some journalists have pointed out, biased. For example, newspapers have called individuals arrested as 'jihadists' and 'terrorists' before they have been sentenced.[20]

Despite the fact that many newspapers declare that they edit the comments of their online pages, based on ethical considerations, the comments remain the crudest examples of Islamophobia, calling for violence against Islam and Muslims. Newspapers have not blocked contents that fuel hatred or call for violence against Muslims.

14.Balkan Web, "Maks Velo sulmon myslimanët: Nuk jemi vend islami, kjo fe s'jep garanci," *Gazeta Shqiptare*,(October 30, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.balkanweb.com/site/maks-velo-sulmon-myslimanet-nuk-jemi-vend-islami-kjo-fe-sjep-garanci/.

15.Maks Velo, "Pse Jam Anti Verior dhe Anti Musliman," *Gazeta Tema,* (September 7, 2014), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.gazetatema.net/web/2014/09/07/maks-velo-pse-jam-antiverior-e-antimysliman/.

16.Mapo, "Shpërthen Maks Velo: Jemi vend islamik dhe oriental," *mapo.al,* (September 10, 2015). retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.mapo.al/2015/09/shperthen-maks-velo-jemi-vend-islamik-dhe-oriental/1.

17. Mustafa Nano,"Cfare ka qe nuk shkon me Islamin ne ditet e sotme," p*anorama,* (September 6, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.panorama.com.al/cfare-ka-qe-nuk-shkon-me-islamin-ne-ditet-e-sotme/.

18. TemA Televizion, "Much Nano përfytyron një bisedë të Mërgim Mavrajt me Zotin në ditën e gjykimit," *Gazeta Tema,* (July 14, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.tematv.al/2016/07/14/much-nano-p%C3%ABrfytyron-nj%C3%AB-bised%C3%AB-t%C3%AB-m%C3%ABrgim-mavrajt-me-zotin-n%C3%AB-dit%C3%ABn-e-gjykimit.

19. Cork Gaines, "Muslim footballer tries to remove beer bottle from his press conference but is overruled by club official," *Business Insider,* (October 17, 2015), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.businessinsider.com/muslim-shkodran-mustafi-beer-bottle-press-conference-2015-10?IR=T.

20. Mapo, ""Xhihadistët" dalin para gjykatës: S'duam avokat, na mbron Zoti." *mapo.al*,(November 7, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.mapo.al/2016/11/xhihadistet-dalin-para-gjykates-nuk-duam-avokat-na-mbron-zoti/1.

While the language of hate in the comment space is not exclusively reserved against Muslims, and various authors have identified it as a space that fuels extreme views,[21] Muslims remain one of the main targets of hate comments. Media critics have pointed out that there are enough indications to conclude that anonymous comments online are often organized and sponsored for political reasons and that these type of comments radicalize and transform the content of the news.[22]

The latest terrorist attack in a Christmas Market in Berlin, like other recent terrorist attacks in Europe, was reflected in negative media portrayals of Albanian Muslims. The director of the daily newspaper *Mapo*, Alfred Lela, wrote an editorial commenting on the attacks.[23] He positions Albanian Muslims who call their coreligionists to refrain from celebrating the end of year holidays in a dichotomy of good and evil. Good is represented by the festive atmosphere of Christmas festivities and the Christian values that motivate welcoming refuges in countries like Germany, while evil is represented by the attacker who follows "the lie of virgins" (promised in paradise), and the Albanian Muslims who ask their coreligionists not to celebrate end of year holidays. The author compares the expressions of Muslim religious views with those of terrorists. These positions are consistent with views expressed by the author following previous terrorist attacks in Europe. In the past, the author has contributed to the denial of the existence of Islamophobia.[24] He was the journalist who interviewed the author Maks Velo, where he declared his hatred for "Northerners and Muslims." Following the blowback, Lela wrote an article in defense of the views of Maks Velo, even after the author had publically apologized. One Muslim commentary saw Lela as part of the controversy, using the interview to promote his personal views.[25] Following the attacks in Brussels in 2015, Lela wrote that the current situation resembles pre-WWII Europe, where Islamic fundamentalists have replaced Nazis.[26] The wave of terrorist attacks, writes Lela, is coming towards Albania. Following the Paris attacks he reminded readers that Albanians are not immune to the

21. See for example: Interview with Ardian Vehbiu, "Shoqeria Shqiptare eshte e paqete me veten dhe politiken," *Gazeta Tema.* (June 2, 2014), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.gazetatema.net/web/2014/06/02/intervista-ardian-vehbiu-shoqeria-shqiptare-eshte-e-paqete-me-veten-dhe-politiken/.

22. Ardian Vehbiu, "Kur te vijne mendte…,"*Peizazhe te Fjales,* (March 3, 2013), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://peizazhe.com/2013/03/03/kur-te-vijne-mendte/.

23. Alfred Lela, ""Myslimanët" e Shkupit, George Frendo, dhe Krishtlindja," *mapo.al*,. (December 24, 2016);retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.mapo.al/2016/12/myslimanet-e-shkupit-george-frendo-dhe-krishtlindja/1.

24. Alfred Lela, "Perqafimi i modelit te krishtere nuk perben islamofobi," *Gazeta Dita*, (November 11, 2012), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.gazetadita.al/perqafimi-i-modelit-te-krishtere-nuk-perben-islamofobi-2/.

25. H. Omari, "Alfred Lela si apologjet i urrejtjes," *e-zani.com*, (September 16, 2014), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.e-zani.com/2014/09/16/alfred-lela-si-apologjet-urrejtjes-2/.

26. Alfred Lela, "Menekken Pis, kush mund te pshurre mbi fitilin e terrorizmit," *mapo.al*, (March 23, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.mapo.al/2016/03/manekken-pis-kush-mund-te-pshurre-mbi-fitilin-e-terrorizmit/1.

threat of Islamic terrorism, which in the view of the author represents the "Third World War". He follows by arguing that 'the clash of civilizations' is manifested also within Albania.[27] He sees the visit of the Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Albania in that same period of time as a manifestation of this tension. He concludes, nevertheless, that in order to defeat terrorism, an alliance with the 'good' Muslims is needed. Following the arrest in March 2014 of nine Albanian Muslims charged with aiding the recruitment of fighters to join the Syrian conflict, he called for restricting the religious liberties of Albanian Muslims for the sake of guaranteeing the liberties of the rest of society.[28]

## Justice System

On May 3, 2016, nine individuals of the Muslim faith accused of recruiting fighters to join DAESH, facilitating their travel arrangements, and preaching about jihad were collectively sentenced to 126 years in prison.[29] Their lawyer declared for the media that the decision is a mark of shame for the Albanian judiciary system, since, according to him, it was a decision against freedom of conscience and freedom of religion. He also complained about what he called "lack of transparency". As recorded court depositions indicate, Quranic verses quoted by the alleged terrorists were used as evidence of their commitment to an extremist ideology.[30] Similar sentiments have been expressed by journalists who, while agree that the accused might hold extreme views, still hold that the decision appears to be politically motivated, disproportionate, and the media reporting biased.[31] Since their arrest in 2014, Muslim leaders, like the Head of the League of Albanian Imams Justinian Topulli have expressed their concerns about the way authorities have handled the case and the fact that the media coverage has fuelled Islamophobia in the country.

Following Israeli Mossad notifications of an eminent terrorist attack in a football match between Albania and Israel (see below), some 150 Muslims were arrested for questioning, including imams who, according to many reports, are known to have spoken openly against DAESH and terrorism. A well-known public intellectual, Fatos Lubonja, referred to these arrests as a clear violation of human rights and

27. Alfred Lela, "Terrorizmi i Parisit dhe aleanca qe na duhet ne Tirane." *mapo.al*, (November 21, 2015), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.mapo.al/2015/11/terrorizmi-i-parisit-dhe-aleanca-qe-na-duhet-ne-tirane/1.

28.Besnik Sinani, "'Ne dhe Myslimanet'-Remix," Gazeta *Dita*,(March 24, 2014), retrieved January 5, 2017, from, http://www.gazetadita.al/shenim-ne-dhe-myslimanet-remix/.

29. Balkan Web, "Gjykata dënon xhihadistët me 126 vjet burg. Të akuzuarit kërcënojnë gjyqtarët," *Gazeta Shqiptare,* (May 3, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.balkanweb.com/site/gjykata-denon-xhihadistet-me-126-vjet-burg-te-akuzuarit-kercenojne-gjyqtaret/.

30. Official Youtube-Channel of *Gazeta Impakt*, "Mbrojtja e Genci Abdurrahman Balles ne gjyqin e xhihadisteve (The Defense of Genci Abdurrahman Balla in the jihadists court case)," (May 11, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d8XsKhpD78s.

31. Andi Bushati, "Rreziku i gjykimit të islamistëve," *Lapsi*, (April 6, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.m.lapsi.al/ide/2016/04/06/rreziku-i-gjykimit-t%C3%AB-islamist%C3%ABve#.WCX1-yMrIy4.

called them 'a fascist act'; another journalist invited to the same panel, Andi Bushati, echoed the sentiment that the arrests constituted 'a fascist act.'[32]

Some of the people stopped for questioning have reported violation of legal procedures, and the application of psychological pressure on them and family members with medical conditions. The arrests were conducted in the early hours of the morning (around 5 a.m.). The authorities did not press charges, did not present arrest warrants, those arrested were questioned without the presence of an attorney, and held longer then the period envisioned by the law. One of those questioned reported that the actions of the police have resulted in a sense of fear in the community, and animosity from his neighbors.[33]

One of those arrested was a citizen of Kosovo and a Muslim preacher who at the time was visiting Albania. He reported that when the police stopped the vehicle he was driving, he was ordered out of the car together with his companions, weapons were pointed at them, and he was assaulted in his head and ribs. They were taken to the police station in the city of Shkodra handcuffed, where they were photographed, held for a long period of time in physically challenging and painful positions. The Kosovar imam reported that throughout the interrogation he was never told why he was arrested, or asked about the football match between the Albanian and Israeli teams. He was never issued an arrest warrant, or documents proving that he was held for interrogation, and no charges were pressed against him. The imam ended the interview asking for the reason for this treatment of Muslims, and for the use of violence against them. One of those arrested called for society to raise concerns against arbitrary arrests, and violation of civil rights. Among others, the Mufti of Shkodra has protested the spectacular arrests that brought tension to the entire community. He added that tainting a whole community because of the perceived activities of few fuels animosity in the country.[34] He stated that these events are indicative of attempts by the authorities and the media to paint a picture of Islam as representing a threat to the security of the country.

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

In the first week of August, a Muslim woman was physically attacked in a public bus by another woman who shouted at her, "You are terrorists." The incident was reported in community media outlets. An author writing about the incident reported that after her article reporting on this case, other Muslim women wearing the headscarf

32. Official Youtube-Channel of *News 24*, "Te Paekspozuarit nga Ylli Rakipi ne News 24: Komunistet e rinj (The New Communists)," (November 24, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hH4rb1TkKMU.

33. Official Youtube-Channel of *Gazeta Impakt*, "Te arrestohesh per Izraelin (Getting arrested for Israel)," (November 23, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-JUG9nYb6Hk.

34. Te Sheshi, "Muhamed Sytari: të paudhët provokuan muslimanët shkodranë; e vërteta për ceremoninë e 13 priftërinjve," *Te Sheshi,* (November 11, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://tesheshi.com/muhamet-sytari-te-paudhet-provokuan-muslimanet-shkodrane-e-verteta-per-ceremonine-e-13-prifterinjve/.

contacted her, and reported to have faced similar attacks, which they preferred not to report to the authorities. The victim of this attack during an interview did not show her face and gave only her first name. The Mufti of the northern city of Shkodra, Muhamed Sytari, mentioned this incident in his weekly Friday sermon, as an indicator of growing Islamophobia in the country.[35]

Invited to a talk show, Muslim activists reported that the climate of prejudice against Muslim women who wear the hijab continues unchanged in the decades since the fall of communism.[36]

In September 2016, the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sebastian Kurz drew the attention of local media and the Muslim community by declaring that in Kosovo, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, women are getting paid to walk in the streets 'covered'. He mentioned these claims in reference to the growing threat of radicalism, marking Muslim practices and forms of identification as forms of extremism.[37] Among the responses from Muslim women, some noted with sarcasm that the payment they have "received is a whole life payment… of unending challenges".[38]

In November 2016, four Muslims were arrested in the northern city of Shkodra.[39] The arrests have been linked to the arrival of the Israeli football team (see above).[40] The football match against the Israeli national team mobilized more than 2.000 Special Forces. The office of the Public Prosecutor told the daily *Panorma* that the arrests followed notifications by the Israeli agency Mossad, claiming that the arrested men were planning to plant explosives during the match.[41] The four arrested men have denied the charges of affiliation with DAESH, recruiting people to fight for DAESH, or planning to plant a bomb at the match between the Albanian and

35. Official Youtube-Channel of *Gazeta Impakt,* "Dhune islamofobike ne Shqiperi (Islamophobic Violence in Albania)," (August 8, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zNB-t2VytY. See also: Facebook page *World Hijab Day – Albania*, from https://www.facebook.com/WorldHijabDayAlbania/.

36.Official Youtube-Channel of *RTV Klan*, "Besimtare te paragjykuara! (Prejudice against female believers)," (May 26, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sGJ4OkH8mo.

37. Opinion, "Ministri austriak: Në Shqipëri, femrat paguhen që të mbulohen," *Opinion*,(September 19, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://opinion.al/ministri-austriak-ne-shqiperi-femrat-paguhen-qe-te-mbulohen/.

38. Te Sheshi, "Përgjigje kryediplomatit austriak për mbulesën tonë: ja pse ajo nuk blihet e as shitet me para", *Të Sheshi*, (November 11, 2016),retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://tesheshi.com/pergjigje-kryediplomatit-austriak-per-mbulesen-tone-ja-pse-ajo-nuk-blihet-e-shitet-para/.

39. Java News, "Te arrestuarit ne Shkoder, dyshime per sulm kunder kombetares se Izraelit," *javanews*.al, (November 11, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.javanews.al/te-arrestuarit-ne-shkoder-dyshime-per-sulm-kunder-kombetares-se-izraelit/.

40. Top Channel, "2 mijë forca policore dhe Garda për sigurinë ndaj Izraelit," *Top Channel,* (November 11, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://top-channel.tv/lajme/artikull.php?id=340266#k2.

41. TemA Online, "Besimtarët e arrestuar në Shkodër, do vendosnin bombë në ndeshjen me Izraelin?" *Gazeta Tema,*(November 8, 2016). retrievedJanuary 5, 2017, from
http://www.gazetatema.net/web/2016/11/08/besimtaret-e-arrestuar-ne-shkoder-do-vendosnin-bombe-ne-ndeshjen-me-izraelin/.

Israeli national teams.[42] They have further stated that they have been targeted due to their faith.[43] The match was eventually moved to another Albanian city, Elbasan.

On May 26, 2016, a media analyst, Kastriot Myftaraj, pressed charges against the Quran.[44] The case he brought before the court and reported in the media demands for the Quran to be banned as a book that "contains plans of genocide against humanity, feeds religious, ethnic, and racial hatred, as well as insults and humiliates part of the population." It clarifies that it does not refer to a particular translation of the Quran, but to all its translations and claims that the books of the other religious traditions in Albania do not contain similar language. The Quran, according to the deposition, "is a manual of guidelines given to a violently active minority of the population in order to achieve submission and control of the tolerant majority". It has to be noted that the author is not new to the Islamophobia rhetoric. Following the massacre of young activists in Norway in 2011 by Anders Breivik, Kastriot Myftaraj wrote that Breivik was a hero fighting the collaborators of Muslim invaders. His articles were translated and published in the *Gates of Vienna* blog (later closed), believed to have been one of the ideological resources used by Anders Breivik. Kastriot Myftaraj had in other occasions glorified the massacre of Srebrenica, where more than 8000 Muslim men from Bosnia were executed by the Serbian military, and has called for ethnic cleansing of Muslims in the Balkans. Myftaraj has never been charged with hate speech. To the contrary, at times he is lauded as a valuable analyst by mainstream pundits and is often featured on various TV shows. To this day, the Court of Tirana, where the case against the Quran was submitted, has not made known its position on the case.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Albanian citizens of the Muslim faith do not stand in opposition to the Albanian ambitions of joining the European Union, and an overwhelming majority of religious and community leaders have strongly condemned political militancy that claims motivation in religion. It is incumbent on the Albanian government, therefore, which, declares its mission to join the EU, not to engage and fuel anti-Muslim sentiments and not to portray the Islamic faith of its citizens as a hindrance to European integration or as a scapegoat to justify the failures of government reforms. Albania can show commitment to a vision of a European Union that stands committed to

42.Mapo, ""Xhihadistët" dalin para gjykatës: S'duam avokat, na mbron Zoti" *mapo.al,*(November 7, 2016). retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.mapo.al/2016/11/xhihadistet-dalin-para-gjykates-nuk-duam-avokat-na-mbron-zoti/1.

43.Java News,"4 terroristet e Shkodres merren ne pyetje: Jemi arrestuar per shkak te besimit fetar," *javanews.al*,(November 6, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.javanews.al/4-terroristet-e-shkodres-merren-ne-pyetje-jemi-arrestuar-per-shkak-te-besimit-fetar/.

44.Kastriot Myftaraj, "Padia e rrallë: Kallzohet Kurani në Tiranë, "përmban plan gjenocidi"," *mapo.al*, (May 26, 2016),retrieved January 5, 2017, from
http://www.mapo.al/2016/05/padia-e-rralle-kallzohet-kurani-ne-tirane-permban-plan-gjenocidi/1.

the values of democracy, civil liberties, rule of law, freedom of religion and diversity. It is incumbent on the government of Albania, therefore, to assure the Albanian citizens of Muslim faith that their legal rights and civil liberties will be respected, and their religion will not be vilified. At this moment, the most urgent matter relates to the latest arbitrary arrests in November 2016 of over 150 citizens of Muslim faith and addressing the concerns of the community is of paramount importance.

- The Albanian government should commit to an independent investigation regarding the latest arrests of 150 citizens of Muslim faith, reports of use of violence while in police custody, and violations of legal procedures during the arrests and during interrogations.
- The Albanian government should commit to training its law enforcement personnel in respecting the rule of law and the civil liberties of all its citizens, even during arrests.
- In cases when there is a legal case against supporters of extremist groups like the DAESH, the judiciary should ensure that the law is applied, and those accused are granted their legal rights. Independent observers have noted that at the time of the arrests there was no legal framework for them and that the sentence given was disproportionate compared to other major crimes in recent Albanian history.
- The judiciary should review its admission of quotations of Islamic Scripture, namely the Quran, as proof of criminal activity. Such admissions violate freedom of religion and stigmatize law-abiding Muslims citizens.
- Cases of violence or abuse against people targeted because of their religion should be investigated and prosecuted.
- The government of Albania should not use the Muslim identity of its citizens as an excuse for its failures in the path to European integration.
- The Albanian government and especially the Ministry of Education, which is in charge of school textbooks, should review textbooks for content that unfairly portrays components of the Muslim faith; should uphold the principles of secularism and refrain from promoting religions considered 'European'; and should review textbooks for content that fuels ethnic and religious hatred against other people, such as the people of Turkey.
- The Albanian government in cooperation with the Union of Journalists should review the legality of policies that address hate speech in the comment space of online media.
- The Albanian government should reconsider the legal framework that addresses hate speech against groups or individuals that call for violence and/or ethnic cleansing of Muslims; promotes and celebrates crimes of right-wing extremists; and seeks to intimidate citizens in regard to their free exercise of religion.

## Chronology

- May 26, 2016: A media analyst, Kastriot Myftaraj, pressed charges against the Quran. The case he brought before the court and reported in the media demands for the Quran to be banned as a book that "contains plans of genocide against humanity, feeds religious, ethnic, and racial hatred, as well as insults and humiliates part of the population."
- May 26, 2016: Invited on a talk show, Muslim activists reported that the climate of prejudice against Muslim women who wear the hijab continues unchanged in the decades since the fall of communism.
- August 7, 2016: In the first week of August, a Muslim woman was physically attacked in a public bus by another woman who shouted at her, "You are terrorists."
- September 22, 2016: The Mufti of Shkodra reported cases of Islamophobia in school textbooks.
- September 19, 2016: The Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs accused Muslim women in the Balkans of receiving payments in order to wear the hijab.
- November 6, 2016: 150 Muslim men were arrested without charges; reports of violence and procedural irregularities.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN AUSTRIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

The aftermath of the events of 2015 determined the role of Islamophobia in 2016. The debate on refugees was reinforced by the events of New Year's Eve in Cologne. The sexual assaults led to a generalised debate on male Muslim hypersexuality. This debate impacted policy demands on the part of politicians and was broadcast in news media. During summer, restrictions were imposed in some public swimming pools for refugees and a burkini ban was enacted in certain public swimming pools.

The long-lasting presidential election campaign, which began in January and ended with the electoral victory of Alexander Van der Bellen on 4 December, allowed a right-wing candidate to openly present his anti-Muslim positions to a wide audience. These two events manifested themselves in the proposals for a new integration law. The conservative ÖVP announced a ban on the face veil, which was even welcomed by some social democrats like the SPÖ party whip. The political and media debates had an impact on society, as we can see by the reported verbal and physical attacks where perpetrators referred to the far right presidential candidate.

The media landscape, in particular, is characterised by the spread of Islamophobic positions. It is especially worrying that Islamophobic positions are expressed by high-ranking editorial board members. The editor-in-chief of daily *Österreich* even called for a ban of Islam, meaning the practice of the Islamic religion. The FPÖ watched its policy demands being introduced from afar, while organising events to foster anti-Muslim narratives, framing them as ahistorical battles between the Judeo-Christian West and the Muslim East, and allying with far right Zionists.

## Zusammenfassung

Das Kalenderjahr 2016 war hinsichtlich der Entwiklcung von Islamophobie von den Nachwehen der Debatten aus dem Jahre 2015 geprägt. Die Diskussion um geflüchtete Menschen wurde durch die Debatte über die Ereignisse zu Neujahr in Köln verstärkt. Die sexuellen Übergriffe führten zu einer Generalisierung männlicher Muslime und der Verstärkung der Figur des Hypersexuellen. Diese Debatte wurde medial geführt und ermöglichte Politiken der Ausgrenzung. Während des Sommers wurden etwa loakl in öffentlichen Schwimmbädern Restriktionen für geflüchtete Menschen und Burkini-Verbote verhängt. Der lange andauernde Präsidentschaftswahlkampf, welcher im Jänner begann und mit dem Sieg Alexander Van der Bellens am 4. Dezember endete, erluabte dem rechtspopulistischen Kandidaten, seine anti-muslimischen Positionen öffentlich einer breiten Masse kundzutun.

Diese beiden Faktoren führten zum Vorschlag über ein Integrationsgesetz. Die ÖVP schlug ein Verbot des Gesichtsschleiers vor, was auch vom Klubchef der SPÖ goutiert wurde. Die aggressiven Debatten und die Normalisierung der Ausgrenzung islamischer Praxis hatte ihren Einfluss auf die Gesellschaft, wie die erhöhte Zahl an Meldungen dokumentiert, in denen auf die mögliche Wahl der rechtspopuslitischen Präsidentschaftskandidaten Bezug genommen wurde.

Insbesondere die mediale Landschaft zeichnet sich durch eine Verbreitung islamophober Positionen aus. Besorgniserregend ist insbesondere, dass diese Positionen von Redaktionsmitgleidern verbreitet werden. Die Spitze des Eisberges war ein Aufruf des Chefredakteurs von Österreich, darüber nachzudenken, den Islam zu verbieten. Die FPÖ verfolgte diese medial und politisch geführten Diskussionen mit Genugtuung und sah sich in ihren jahrelangen Forderungen bestätigt. Gleichzeitig arbeitete sie daran, weitere anti-muslimische Narrative in die Öffentlichkeit zu bringen, diese als ahistorische Kämpfe zwischen einem imaginierten Jüdisch-Christlichen Westen und einem muslimischen Osten zu deuten und sich mit der radikalen zionistischen Rechten zu verbünden.

# Introduction

The aftermath of the events of 2015 determined the role of Islamophobia in 2016. The debate on refugees was reinforced by the events of New Year's Eve in Cologne and generally influenced public debates on the role of Islam. This was true for policy demands on the part of politicians as well as for the formation of opinions in the so-called quality press. The long-lasting presidential election campaign, which began in January and ended with the electoral victory of Alexander Van der Bellen on 4 December, allowed a right-wing candidate to openly present his anti-Muslim positions to a wide audience. These two events manifested themselves in the proposals for a new integration law, which has not been adopted yet. The conservative ÖVP announced a ban of the face veil. The political and media debates had an impact on the country's population, as we can see with the reported verbal and physical attacks where perpetrators referred to the far right presidential candidate. The media landscape, in particular, is characterised by the spread of Islamophobic positions. This applies to Islamophobic positions, which are expressed by in-house journalists as well as those that are uncritically disseminated as a result of the hegemonic power of Islamophobic views.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

Discrimination in the labour market is a common problem among Muslims, especially Muslim women. Elmar Podgorschek, a far right Upper Austrian member of the government, argues in an interview when asked about the frequent discrimination against Muslims:

> "This may be. Different cultures that collide are not compatible. Islam is very difficult to integrate in Europe. It is a very archaic religion in which the Koran has to be understood literally. I rely on the expertise of my friend (former Green MP) Efgani Dönmez, who sees this the same way."[1]

Podgorschek supports discrimination and even defends existing discrimination with additional arguments. He relies on the former Green Federal Council MP Efgani Dönmez, who regularly makes Islamophobic statements. The job application by a veiled Muslim woman for the position of a doctor's assistant in Bregenz was rejected on the grounds that the candidate was "wearing radical Islamic symbols".[2] A native-born Austrian is told at the job centre in Graz that she should take off her

1. Ertl, Josef (2016), "Gehen unsicheren Zeiten entgegen", *Kurier*, 10.10.2016. Available from: https://m.kurier.at/chronik/oberoesterreich/gehen-unsicheren-zeiten-entgegen/224.721.369 [Accessed: 12th December 2016]

2. Haber Journal (2016), Vorarlberg: 'Bewerbung wurde wegen dem Kopftuch abgelehnt', *Haber Journal*, 01.12.2016. Available from: http://www.haberjournal.at/avusturya/vorarlberg-bewerbung-wurde-wegen-dem-kopftuch-abgelehnt-h12985.html [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

headscarf, so that she can find a job more easily.[3] A student applied at a McDonald's restaurant for a weekend job. The store manager asked if "everything is ok with the headscarf" and the student replied, "Yes, I'd tie it up very easily". Thereupon the store manager commented, "No, unfortunately you cannot work with the hijab. The girl here - the manager pointed to a nearby girl - usually wears a headscarf and takes it off at work". The applicant answered, "I cannot do this, that is part of my personality and the headscarf belongs to me. I have a girlfriend who has worked in another branch with a headscarf and she wore it very simply. Compromises were reached". The manager then answered, "Unfortunately, the decision is not with me". After a telephone call, she said that she can do nothing and although the applicant speaks perfect German, she is "not able to hire her with a headscarf".[4]

## Education

Again and again young Muslim schoolgirls report that they face discrimination because of wearing a hijab. A female student, who was attending a gym class with boys and girls and a male sports instructor, reported that her instructor asked her to take off her hijab. The teacher insulted her. He asked her if she was an asylum seeker and why she was not living in Turkey. He shouted at her and embarrassed her by asking whether he should bring her to a psychologist the following day. During gym class, he sent her to a corner where she had to stand for two (!) hours.[5]

In Vorarlberg, a religious instructor of Islamic religious instruction, Ömer Kutlucan, was suspended by the education authority because he refused to shake a colleague's hand.[6] The reasoning for the suspension is based on the assumption that the refusal to shake a hand is an act of discrimination and a derogatory attitude towards the female gender. It is not considered that the refusal of contact with the other sex is based on a different conceptualisation of sexuality, the body, and the private and public sphere. In Styria, a teacher even announced that she wanted to sue a man for discrimination, after he refused to shake her hand.[7]

A mother reveals that her 16-year-old daughter has started to cover her hair. At school, she was confronted with remarks such as "This is not really serious, is it?" The class teacher expressed his suspicions about the girl and told her classmates that she seems to have slipped into radical circles and had saved money for a ticket to Syria.

3. Email to the Author.

4. Email to the Author.

5. Email to the Author.

6. NMZ (2016), Eine Landesschuldrätin, die auf Diskriminierung besteht, *Webpräsenz des Netzwerk Muslimische Zivilgesellschaft*, 22.05.2016. Available from: http://dieanderen.net/eine-landesschulraetin-die-auf-diskriminierung-besteht/ [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

7. Schwarz, Katrin (2016) Handschlag verweigert. Lehrerin will muslimischen Vater klagen, *Kleine Zeitung*, 23.01.2016. Available from: http://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/4910201/Handschlag-verweigert_Lehrerin-will-muslimischen-Vater-klagen [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

After talking to the mother, who does not cover her hair, he said that her classmates had misunderstood him. Afterwards, however, the class teacher called the student time and again from the class and asked her about ISIL/Daesh, Boko Haram and the driving ban for women in Saudi Arabia. After that, the Federal Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution was brought in. Two meetings followed and the agent of the Federal Bureau called the school authority's response an overreaction.

Public schools provide denominational religious education to which pupils of most recognised churches and religious communities are automatically registered if they do not actively log out within the first 10 days. Each year, different school authorities distribute forms only to Muslim pupils in which the logoff from Islamic education can be made. Since this means a direct and indirect influence, this is not permitted, but in practice it is still customary.

## Politics

In the interim report on Ednan Aslan's "research" on Islamic kindergartens, which had led to a sprawling public debate in 2015, a final report was announced for the end of January 2016.[8] This was not delivered. Journalists of *Kurier* accompanied an inspector of kindergartens and reviewed the debate in a different light and offered contrasting reviews of the debate. One of the inspectors said "With no single control, I have the fear that children can be forced.into a certain direction or even forced into a parallel society."[9] The *Kurier* also demanded a final report from the Ministry of Integration, which had commissioned the study. The question remained unanswered.[10] The social scientist Andrea Schaffar published a critical analysis of the interim report.[11]

This so-called "Kindergarten Study" also showed its long-term effect in that the political opposition and media representatives regularly referred to it in the course of discourse relating to Islam. The daily newspaper *Österreich*, for instance, claimed it had a "list of schools, which, according to Gudenus, are under suspicion of jihad".[12] The FPÖ demanded that Ednan Aslan, the author of the study, be commissioned to carry out a similar study for Viennese kindergartens.

The debate about refugees did not disappear. The ÖVP was the first to support a European fortress in the wake of the refugees who fled the war in Iraq and Syria.[13]

8. Farid Hafez (2016). Islamophobia in Austria xy 2015.

9. Kurier (2016) Kindergärten im Visier der Behörde, *Kurier*, 31.01.2016. Available from: http://m.kurier.at/chronik/wien/kindergaerten-im-visier-der-behoerde/178.100.650 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

10. Ibid.

11. Wieselberg, Lukas (2016) Kritik an Studie zu islamischen Kindergärten, *orf.at*, 23.03.2016. Available from: http://sciencev2.orf.at/stories/1768688 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

12. oe24 (2016a) Jihad: Zwölf Islam-Schulen unter Verdacht, *Österreich*, 30.03.2016. Available from: http://www.österreich.at/politik/Jihad-Zwoelf-Islam-Schulen-unter-Verdacht/229844935 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

13. Brickner, Irene (2016) Interview mit Ruth Wodak: „ÖVP befürwortete die ‚Festung Europa' als Erste", *Der Standard*, 19.11.2016. Available from: www.derstandard.at/2000047805573/Ruth-Wodak-OeVP-befuerwortete-die-Festung-Europa-als-Erstes [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

A local FPÖ politician (Graz) picked up the sexual assaults on New Year's Eve in Cologne. In a video, he stood next to a blond puppet doll. Standing next to her, he explains how "to deal with our women". He explained that "what one does not do at our place is to hassle women in a discotheque, to grab her ass, or even her breasts." In the end, he states "Hands off our women".[14] In the summer of 2016, restrictions were also made in public swimming pools, and rules on how to behave were published in Arabic, Urdu, etc. While, in some cases, asylum seekers were found guilty of sexual assault, there were cases that had been reported in the media that turned out to be fabricated.[15] Foreign Minister Kurz said that the anti-Semitism of refugees should also be addressed in the so-called "value courses", which he introduced.[16] The FPÖ,[17] as well as the official Jewish Community,[18] have both separately organised events in which the so-called "Islamic anti-Semitism" was discussed. The attempt of an alliance between right-wing actors and Jews and the projection of anti-Semitism on Muslims was accompanied by strong criticism by secular Jews as well as the Greens and the SPÖ.[19] Strache said in his speech at an FPÖ event that anti-Semitism on the Muslim side would be tolerated in the hidden form of anti-Zionism. He spoke of the attacks of Muslim pupils at Austrian schools against Jewish pupils, without providing any evidence. Strache claimed that left-wing parties would allow "limitless immigration of Islamic anti-Semitism in Europe".[20]

The Islam Act of 2015 showed its first effects. The first imams of the Muslim association ATIB (*Avrupa Türk-İslam Birliği*, Union of Turkish Islamic Cultural Associations) associated with Turkey had to leave the country.[21] NEOS Vienna presented a "NEOS 9-Point Plan for Integration and Deradicalisation", which emphasised that fearmongering and embellishment (of the truth, FH) were not helpful. It

14. Sippel, Armin (2016) FPÖ-Video: „Sehr geehrte Herren Asylanten", Der Spiegel, 01.06.2016. Available from: http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/fpoe-video-fuer-fluechtlinge-sorgt-fuer-spott-a-1095360.html [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

15. Kleine Zeitung (2016) 13-Jährige hat Übergriffe im Bad erfunden, *Kleine Zeitung*, 03.07.2016. Available from: http://www.kleinezeitung.at/oesterreich/oesterreich/5042655/Mistelbach_13Jaehrige-hat-Uebergriffe-im-Bad-erfunden [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

16. Kath (2016) Österreich: Heftige Parlamentsdebatte um neues Integrationsgesetz, Katholische Nachrichten, 16.11.2016. Available from: http://www.kath.net/news/57493 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

17. Vienna (2016) Hofer bei FPÖ-Event: "Werden beweisen, dass wir Freunde Israels sind", *vienna.at*, 08.11.2016. Available from: http://www.vienna.at/hofer-bei-fpoe-event-werden-beweisen-dass-wir-freunde-israels-sind/5001986 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

18. Alexandra, Hahlweg (2016) Zwischen Pest und Cholera?* – Wenn die IKG Muslime zum „Dialog" einlädt, dürfen „Schnitzgermanen" nicht fehlen, *Die Jüdische*, 18.11.2016. Available from: http://www.juedische.at/pages/juedisches-oesterreich/zwischen-pest-und-cholera.php [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

19. Hofer bei FPÖ-Event: "Werden beweisen, dass wir Freunde Israels sind"

20. Komplettaufzeichnung: Haben wir aus der Geschichte gelernt? - Neuer Antisemitismus in Europa https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5DhgcfGku4

21. Krieglsteiner, Alfons (2016) In Oberösterreich müssen jetzt neun Imame gehen, *nachrichten.at*, 20.02.2016. Available from: http://www.nachrichten.at/oberoesterreich/In-Oberoesterreich-muessen-jetzt-neun-Imame-gehen;art4,2155409 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

also contained reasonable suggestions. On the other hand, it reproduced a general suspicion of Muslim institutions when demanding "full transparency regarding the financing of religious institutions"[22] as such a measure is not in place for other religious institutions.

The refugee topic was also exploited by right-wing populist actors. Media outlets such as *Österreich* took the opportunity to draw comparisons between the FPÖ and the AfD. Thus, Strache was criticised for saying "Smoke out the Islamist nests!"[23]

When asked "How do you intend to deal with foreign perpetrators under the age of 18?", Interior Minister Wolfgang Sobotka replied "There must also be covert investigations in the milieu of the jihadists. I want to know what is happening in mosques and Islamic clubs. We need an intensive cooperation with the Islamic Council."[24] In the following reply, he underlined the good cooperation with the Islamic Council. With regard to the Islamic Council, he said

> "We now need more support, just before the summer, as far as the position of women is concerned. If we take the presence of Muslim men in public swimming pools, then the question is: how do they react to this new situation? We need a new commitment that the Islamic Council clearly gives signals to their people who are arriving now: we have cultural rules that must be adhered to."[25]

The Minister of the Interior felt in necessary to school Muslim men in how to deal with women: "Islam has not gone through enlightenment. Europe here has been too compliant and soft for decades".[26] Here, the minister refers to common prejudices against the Muslim religion, and blends questions of security, religion (general suspicion of the danger posed by mosques and Islamic societies), migration, Islam and asylum. Peter Pilz, the security spokesman for the Greens, said that the Islamic Council was to be screened by the Federal Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution, since the ATIB has taken over power.[27] In fact, the ATIB is already represented in the Islamic Council since 2011.

22. Neos Wien (2016) Meinl-Reisinger/NEOS Wien „Politik darf bei Radikalisierung nicht länger zusehen!", *ots.at*, 31.05.2016. Available from: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160531_OTS0073/meinl-reisingerneos-wien-politik-darf-bei-radikalisierung-nicht-laenger-zusehen [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

23. oe24 (2016) Strache und AfD nutzen Anschläge für Zynismus, *Österreich*, 23.03.2016. Available at: http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Strache-und-AfD-nutzen-Anschlaege-fuer-Zynismus/229010925 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

24. Riss, Karin/Weißensteiner, Nina (2016) Sobotka an straffällige Asylwerber: „Du hast bei uns nichts verloren!", *Der Standard*, 11.05.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000036670746/Sobotka-an-straffaellige-Asylwerber-Du-hast-bei-uns-nichts-verloren [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Eichholzer, Gerhard (2016) Pilz fordert Law and Order gegen radikale Erdoğan-Anhänger, *Der Standard,* 27.7.2016. Available from: www.derstandard.at/2000041900635/Pilz-fordert-Law-and-Order-Politik-gegen-radikale-Erdogan-Anhaenger [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

Heinz Christian Strache, the president of the FPÖ, claimed that State Secretary Muna Duzdar (SPÖ) has something to do with the "invitation of Islamist terrorists".[28] Duzdar complained and won the case in the second court.[29]

During a session of the national parliament on 16 March, 2016, MP Robert Lugar (Team Stronach) said

> "For most of them who are coming (refugees, FH) are uneducated, religiously blinded, fanatical, not able to integrate and they have a worldview like the Neanderthals, where women's rights are trampled. And that the Greens are working for such a species is really a disaster for me, because the Greens have always kept women's rights high in their agenda, and now they are bringing in exactly those Neanderthals who we have wiped out from among us, thank God."[30]

The Greens demanded that Lugar step down.[31] The few active politicians of the Team Stronach continuously made racist and sexist statements.

The 333th anniversary of the end of the so-called "Second Turkish Seize" by the Ottomans was used by the FPÖ to spread its ideology of the eternal struggle against an imagined evil Islam and a supposed Islamization. The event was entitled "September 12, 1683 – protect the West, then as now".[32] Historian Thomas Just compared this event with the 250th anniversary, which the Austro-Fascist regime had organised.[33] NEOS Vienna criticised the fact that this event was financed by means of party promotion by the city of Vienna. She wrote in a letter to the MA5 that the title and the occasion of the event would "introduce a parallel between the second Viennese Turkish siege, an act of warfare, on the one hand, and current migration movements on the other." She went on to say. "It is therefore necessary to examine the extent to which [...] an event with poisoned, offensive or racist content can be supported by the City of Vienna."[34]

28. oe24 (2016) Staatssekretärin Duzdar verklagt Strache, *Österreich*, 04.06.2016. Available from: http://m.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Staatssekretaerin-Duzdar-verklagt-Strache/238353901 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

29. Die Presse (2016) Duzdar gewinnt auch in zweiter Instanz gegen Strache, *Die Presse*, 13.10.2016. Available from: http://diepresse.com/home/politik/innenpolitik/5101129/Duzdar-gewinnt-auch-in-zweiter-Instanz-gegen-Strache [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

30. Team Stronach (2016) Team Stronach Pressedienst: Abschrift der Rede von Klubobmann Robert Lugar zu den Flüchtlingen, *ots.at*, 16.05.2016. Available from: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160316_OTS0258/team-stronach-pressedienst-abschrift-der-rede-von-klubobmann-robert-lugar-zu-den-fluechtlingen [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

31. Grüne (2016) Offener Brief an Klubobmann Lugar. „Wir fordern Sie auf, treten Sie zurück, Herr Lugar!", *Webpräsenz der Grünen*, 19.03.2016. Available at:.https://www.gruene.at/ots/wir-fordern-sie-auf-treten-sie-zurueck-herr-lugar [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

32. FPÖ (2016) 333. Jahrestag: FPÖ feierte Ende der Türkenbelagerung, *Webpräsenz der FPÖ,* 13.09.2016. Available from: https://www.fpoe.at/artikel/333-jahrestag-fpoe-feierte-ende-der-tuerkenbelagerung/ [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

33. Memic, Nenad (2016) Osmanisches Erbe als PR-Strategie, *Wiener Zeitung*, 13.09.2016.Available from: http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/wien/stadtleben/844447_Osmanisches-Erbe-als-PR-Strategie.html [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

34. Der Standard (2016) Wiener FPÖ feiert Ende der Türkenbelagerung, *Der Standard*, 07.09.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000043976328/Wiener-FPOe-feiert-Ende-der-Tuerkenbelagerung [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz demanded a ban on the face veil after thirty French municipalities had forbidden the burkini, a swimsuit covering the whole body. For him this was a "symbol of counter-society" and not a "religious symbol". In the integration law envisaged by the government, according to him, there are two prohibitive variants: a ban on face veiling either only in public institutions or in the public sphere as a whole.[35] He was supported by the Professor of Islamic Religious Education Ednan Aslan.[36] The response of Federal Chancellor Christian Kern (SPÖ) was divided: "A burka ban is at the end of my priority list [...] This may concern about 100 to 150 women. What is obvious, however, is that we will in no way accept oppression of women."[37]

Responding this way, he did not stand clearly against the attempt to restrict religious freedom, but rather had an eye on the right-wing electorate, which sees the restriction of religious practices of Muslims as a legitimate demand. Julia Herr, the chairman of the Socialist Youth, criticized the SPÖ party whip Andreas Schieder for his support of Kurz's demand: "I do not want to defend the burka and nikab under the cover of liberal, free society." For her, this proposal was a debate that diverted from more urgent women's problems.[38]

The Muslim feminist Dudu Kücükgöl, who is against wearing a facial veil, opposed a ban.[39] According to the integration minister's announcement the ban should be part of a so-called integration law. The general manager of the SPÖ, Georg Niedermühlbichler, expressed his reservations and reticence (ORF 2016b).[40] Simultaneously, Burkini-bans were introduced by local authorities in many areas such as Melk, Korneuburg and Hainfeld (Lower Austria).[41] According to the ÖVP, the integration law should also include "measures against the distribution of Korans by Salafists",[42]

35. ORF (2016) Verbot für Vollverschleierung angedacht, *orf.at*, 18.08.2016. Available from: http://orf.at/stories/2354363/2354364/ [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

36. Warenski, Brigitte (2016) Die Vollverschleierung ist „einfach menschenverachtend", *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, 21.08.2016. Available from: http://www.tt.com/panorama/gesellschaft/11911388-91/die-vollverschleierung-ist-einfach-menschenverachtend.csp [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

37. Kurier (2016) Burka-Verbot: Kern skeptisch, *Kurier*, 27.08.2016. Available from: https://kurier.at/politik/inland/burka-verbot-kanzler-christian-kern-skeptisch/218.009.354 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

38. Weissensteiner, Nina (2016) Burkaverbot: SJ-Chefin kontra SPÖ-Klubobmann Schieder, *Der Standard*, 21.08.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000043144581/Burkaverbot-SJ-Chefin-kontra-Schieder [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

39. Kaltenbrunner, Stefan (2016) Aktivistin: „Burka-Verbot ist rein populistisch", *Kurier*, 18.08.2016. Available from: https://kurier.at/politik/inland/aktivistin-burka-verbot-ist-rein-populistisch/216.379.782 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

40. ORF (2016) „Politisch einfach zu beantworten", orf.at, 20.08.2016. Available from: http://orf.at/stories/2354621/2354619/ [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

41. Zahrl, Jürgen (2016) Burkinis im Melker Freibad unerwünscht, *Kurier*, 27.07.2016. Available from: https://kurier.at/chronik/niederoesterreich/burkinis-im-melker-freibad-unerwuenscht/212.007.064 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

42. ÖIF (2016) Integrationsminister Kurz wirbt bei Ländern für Integrationsgesetz, *ots.at*, 23.11.2016. Available from: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20161123_OTS0190/integrationsminister-kurz-wirbt-bei-laendern-fuer-integrationsgesetz [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

although it is not clear how far a Quran distribution should be allowed by non-extremist associations.

The four elections for the federal presidential election in 2016 were a central issue on the political stage. After the first election, a runoff election was held, which was contested, and a third election date was postponed. In sum, elections were held from 24 April to 4 December. Societal polarisation was the result of diametrically opposed candidates. The theme of Islam played a significant role during the election. The FPÖ attacked the non-partisan presidential candidate, Irmgard Griss, for trivialising the headscarf, which for the FPÖ was a "clear sign of the lack of integration".[43]

After the first runoff election and the victory of Van der Bellen, the anti-racist NGO SOS Mitmensch published an open letter to politicians entitled "No to division based on origin and religion!" In this letter, the authors criticised the FPÖ presidential candidate Norbert Hofer, for "not recognising people as part of Austria solely because of their religious affiliation." The letter continues, "In the election campaign, he even called for unconstitutional laws against Muslims."[44]

Both civil society and politics intervened. The then Federal Chancellor Werner Faymann as well as Erich Fenninger, Federal Commissioner of the humanitarian institution Volkshilfe, criticised the misanthropic politics and positions. Repeatedly they drew comparisons to the 1930s. Scholar of communication Fritz Hausjell clearly said "What is new is the channels, but in terms of contents, the agitation and propaganda happens in the same way as we have seen it with the rise of National Socialism."[45]

The presidential candidate of the FPÖ, Norbert Hofer, used his candidacy to spread the Islamophobic positions of his party.[46] He announced that he would not organise the break of fasting during Ramadan in the Hofburg, the residence of the president, as introduced by Heinz Fischer. On various occasions, Hofer repeated that for him Islam was not part of Austria. In addition, in regard to the refugee movements, he spoke of an "invasion of Muslims". He warned against Muslims living in Austria and said it was "dramatic" that the percentage of population would rise in the coming years. He demanded a ban of the hijab in the public sphere.[47] During an

43. Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (2016) FPÖ-Kickl: Unfassbare Naivität gegenüber dem Islamismus disqualifiziert Griss für das höchste Amt im Staat, *ots.at*, 03.03.2016. Available from: http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20160330_OTS0091/fpoe-kickl-unfassbare-naivitaet-gegenueber-dem-islamismus-disqualifiziert-griss-fuer-das-hoechste-amt-im-staat [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

44. SOS Mitmenschen (2016) Offener Brief nach Bundespräsidentenwahl: Nein zu Politik, die Spaltung nach Herkunft und Religion betreibt!, 31.05.2016. Available from: http://www.sosmitmensch.at/site/petition/petition/12.html [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

45. Weiss, Alexia (2016) Der Holocaust-Vergleich, *Wiener Zeitung,* 19.02.2016. Available from: http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/blogs/juedisch_leben/801844_Der-Holocaust-Vergleich.html [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

46. ORF (2016) Für Hofer Gesetze mit „Ablaufdatum" vorstellbar, *orf.at*, 11.09.2016. Available from: http://orf.at/m/stories/2357578/ [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

47. Offener Brief an Politik: Nein zu Spaltung nach Herkunft und Religion!

election campaign, he said "Do we know a Muslim who works in the field of care? Who is perhaps ready to change the diapers of our elder persons?" When Christian humanitarian organisations replied arguing that hundreds of Muslims work in this field, Hofer replied that only "liberal Muslims" would do this work. During a live TV appearance, Hofer said to a Muslim student, "If you think that the FPÖ is a party that stirs up hate against Islam, I am not convinced that you should select it."[48] At another instance, in a speech, he stated "I was asked if I would embrace a minister with a headscarf. And I said: No, I would not."[49]

## Media

The sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve led to a sprawling debate about the male, sexual, North African and Arab threat. While there were only 15 suspects, 581 complaints were filed. [50] This debate led to generalisations.

The Austrian Press Council reprimanded the weekly magazine *Falter* for a cover published at the beginning of January. It shows five weeping women who are sexually harassed by a large number of men, as well as a policeman who is being pushed away. (Figure 1) A reader criticised the cover by stating that in her opinion, the men were portrayed as "specifically North African", which led to a degradation of a particular group, and that sexism was constructed as a purely Muslim and alien problem. According to the Press Council, the *Falter* cover violates the code of honour in Point 7 (Protection Against Libel and Discrimination), to which *Falter* abides. [51]

Figure 1: Cover of weekly Falter from early January

The local newspaper *meinbezirk.at* reported on an alleged mass strike in front of the inn *Gasthaus zu Linde*. However, the free newspaper *Heute* changed the news value by use of the title "Mass strike in front of mosque in Bad Vöslau" on 1 February, 2016; an association of religion

48. Linkswende (2016) Der durchtriebene Islam und Türkenfeind Norbert Hofer, linkswende.org, 25.10.2016. Available from: http://linkswende.org/der-durchtriebene-islam-und-tuerkenfeind-norbert-hofer/ [Access: 25 October 2016)

49. Norbert Hofer - Best Of, 01.11.2016, https://vimeo.com/193696675?ref=fb-share&1

50. Der Standard (2016) Kölner Silvesternacht: Ermittlungen gegen 73 Beschuldigte, eine Anklage, *Der Standard*, 15.02.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000031141767/Koelner-Silvesternacht-Bisher-73-Beschuldigte-eine-Anklage [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

51. Der Standard (2016) Sexuelle Übergriffe in Köln: Presserat rügt „Falter"-Cover, *Der Standard*, 25.04.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000035701837-1192182008495/Sexuelle-Uebergriffe-in-Koeln-Presserat-ruegt-Falter-Cover [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

and violence was thus established. In fact, there is an ATIB mosque in Bad Vöslau but whereas the inn is at Wolfstrasse, the prayer house is on a street called Castelligasse. The distance between the two buildings is more than 100 metres. Furthermore, the visitors of the mosque were not involved in the fight that took place in front of the inn.

A further problem arises when spokespeople defending Islamophobic positions are uncritically featured in media. Without critical comment daily *Die Presse* gives a large place to the Islamophobic conspiracy theories of Czech President Milos Zeman. In the article "Zeman: Refugee Wave of Muslim Brotherhoods", Zelman is quoted with the following words: "Based on [...] sources of information, I believe that the invasion (meaning the refugee movements of 2015, FH) is organised by the Muslim Brotherhood and is financially supported by a number of states." [52] In a long interview with *Die Presse* German philosopher Rüdiger Safranski talks of his fear that an "Arab-North-African anti-Semitism" could be imported to Germany. He warns of "parallel societies of the greatest extent [...], Arab-African ghettos". The "dramatic overhang of frustrated men" is a "ticking time bomb".[53] For Safranski, the inability of Turks, Arabs and Africans to integrate has to do with religion:

> "There are almost only problems with people from the Islamic culture (*Kulturkreis*). Unfortunately, it is like that and there is no politically correct language (to explain this). This is linked to religion that strongly influences the everyday life of people. Religious people are actually an enrichment to secular societies, but unfortunately not so with Islam that has not been through the Age of Enlightenment, that is undemocratic, does not know freedom of religion, legitimates women's oppression, and deforms the sex life of young men."[54]

Furthermore, the philosopher explains that economic refugees should not be accepted any longer, since they take away the place of the many war refugees. Probably unconsciously paraphrasing a FPÖ slogan, he said: "If you are no longer master of your own house, you can not be a host."[55]

This also applies to *Kronen Zeitung*, in which left-wing Prime Minister Robert Fico shortly before the EU presidency was uncritically quoted as saying "Islam has no place in Slovakia".[56]

52. Die Presse (2016), Zeman: Flüchtlingswelle von Muslimbrüdern organisiert, *Die Presse*, 05.01.2016. Available from: http://diepresse.com/home/politik/aussenpolitik/4898366/Zeman_Fluchtlingswelle-von-Muslimbrudern-organisiert [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

53. Hecht, Judith (2016) Safranski: „Den politischen Islam will ich nicht bei uns haben", *Die Presse*, 20.03.2016. Available from: http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/4949948/Safranski_Den-politischen-Islam-will-ich-nicht-bei-uns-haben [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. Krone (2016) Klare Ansage. Slowakei- Premier: „Islam hat keinen Platz bei uns", *Kronen Zeitung*, 28.05.2016. Available from: http://www.krone.at/welt/slowakei-premier-islam-hat-keinen-platz-bei-uns-klare-ansage-story-512256 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

Columns and comments by editorial staff of the "quality press" are also problematic. Martina Salomon, the vice chief editor of *Kurier,* stated in the aforementioned daily "It is not even certain anymore that we are a Christian-influenced country where German is spoken. During some subway rides in Vienna you will be taught something different."[57] Salomon believes that Austria has to get rid of these illusions.

The identitarian discourse points out to an idealised homogenisation of a constructed pure Austrian identity. In an article titled "Murderous Islam" published in the weekly *Profil,* Peter Michael does not only quote out of context verses of the Quran, which deal with acts of war, but admits that in his opinion accusations against Islam are legitimate until "not individual imams, but all the heads of the Islamic religion hold a world conference in which they unanimously and unambiguously declare that there is no justification for killing unbelievers; that these attacks are crimes and offend the spirit of Islam."[58] Hellmuth Butterweck, an author born in 1927, similarly argued

> "Unfortunately, we are far from the point where the enlightened Muslim, who has arrived in pluralistic Europe, has convinced the less enlightened Muslim, who has not yet arrived here, that in this world a woman has the same worth as a man; that his daughter can marry whom she wants; that respect for the Prophet cannot be demanded, yet there isn't left any for Jesus; and that in Europe one can make fun of whatever he wants. And that if the Muslim woman wears her headscarf, she shouldn't be surprised that it is not understood as a confession to an open society, but rather to a closed world of belief with a pronounced claim to power. No, we are not that far. Rather, much suggests that the opposite is the case."[59]

In a hysterical and less subtle commentary entitled "Molenbeek also likely to happen in Austria", Andreas Koller from *Salzburger Nachrichten* states "What happened yesterday in Anderlecht and Molenbeek, where terror suspects lived like fish in water, is also likely to happen in Simmering and Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus.[60] Or in Graz. Or in Wels."[61] The author goes on to state "Do we have a chance to defuse the time bomb?" Koller then makes a list of generalisations coupled with accusations against politicians that - in his opinion- deny these problems.

57. Salomon, Martina (2016) Das Ende der Gewissheit, *Kurier*, 30.01.2016. Available from: http://m.kurier.at/meinung/kommentare/das-ende-der-gewissheit/177.908.443 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

58. Lingens, Peter Michae (2016). Mörderischer Islam, *Profil*, 29.3.2016. Available from: https://www.profil.at/meinung/peter-michael-lingens-moerderischer-islam-6288130 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

59. Butterweck, Hellmut (2016) Brüssel und das Schweigen der Muslime, *Der Standard*, 23.03.2016. Available from: http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000033527932/Bruessel-und-das-Schweigen-der-Muslime [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

60. Simmering and Rudolfsheim-Fünfhaus are two districts of Vienna.

61. Koller, Andreas(2016) Molenbeek droht auch in Österreich, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 29.03.2016. Available from: http://www.salzburg.com/nachrichten/meinung/kolumne/kollers-klartext/sn/artikel/molenbeek-droht-auch-in-oesterreich-189507/ [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

In another commentary in *Die Presse*, Gudula Walterskirchen presents her thesis that "the charge of Islamophobia (*Islamophobie-Keule*) undermines freedom of expression".[62] According to Walterskirchen, the "charge of Islamophobia" is used by fundamentalists. Thus she cites people and organisations that support the use of the term such as Thomas Tartsch, Hamed Abdel-Samad and ILM, the Initiative for Liberal Muslims. The myth that the concept of Islamophobia was first used by the mullahs in Iran in 1979 is misrepresented once again. It is argued that "with this term [...] every criticism on Islam, Islamic associations or individual representatives is being choked off." [63]

In *Der Standard*, Hans Rauscher addresses an open letter to the Muslims of Europe. He includes generalisations and declares religion as the most prominent distinction between Western and Muslim people: "Simply said: To you, religion is still very important, to us it is no more. To you, Islam demands to encompass and regulate your whole life. We have shaken off this demand [...] a long time ago."[64]

Arnulf Häfele from *Vorarlberger Nachrichten* degradingly dubbed his factual comment about the face veil with "*Ein Fetzen Stoff*" (A rag of cloth).[65] Furthermore, *Standard* journalist Lisa Nimmervoll offered central stage to key players who voice generalising and racist discourse on Islam; namely Hamed Abdel-Samad, Ahmad Mansour and Heiko Heinisch.[66]

This also applies to tabloid journalism. The chief editor of *Österreich*, in a comment, states

> "The third point in fighting terrorism is the most sensitive: Meanwhile the discussion, whether Islam should be banned from Europe must be allowed. With all due respect for freedom of religions and the many peaceful, sympathetic supporters of Islam - also in Austria- , the borders between peaceful Islam and terror in the name of Islam are becoming increasingly blurred. In our municipal kindergartens. In many mosques. Terror is promoted, preached, prepared there. It cannot and must not move on like this."[67]

62. Walterskirchen, Gudula (2016) Wie die Islamophobie-Keule die Meinungsfreiheit untergräbt, *Die Presse*, 21.08.2016. Available from: http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/quergeschrieben/walterskirchen/5072463/Wie-die-IslamophobieKeule-die-Meinungsfreiheit-untergraebt [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

63. Ibid.

64. Rauscher, Hans (2016) Werte Muslime in Europa!, *Der Standard*, 29.7.2016. Available from: www.derstandard.at/2000042031392/Werte-Muslime-in-Europa [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

65. Häferle, Arnulf (2016). Ein Fetzen Stoff, VN, 18.11.2016, http://www.vorarlbergernachrichten.at/politik/2016/11/17/ein-fetzen-stoff.vn# [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

66. Nimmervoll, Lisa (2016) Historiker Heinisch: „Die Schule sollte ein kopftuchfreier Raum sein", *Der Standard*, 17.04.2016. Available from: www.derstandard.at/2000034954194/Heiko-Heinisch-Die-Schule-sollte-ein-kopftuchfreier-Raum-sein [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

67. Fellner, Wolfgang (2016). Wie lange schauen wir dem Terror noch wehrlos zu?, *Österreich*, 22.03.2016. Available from: http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/wolfgangfellner/Wie-lange-schauen-wir-dem-Terror-noch-wehrlos-zu/228949560 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

Fellner's call for a ban on Islam led to a corresponding protest of human rights activists such as Alexander Pollak and the IGGIÖ, the Islamic religious community, which saw this as a "monstrosity". On the request of the Austrian Press Agency, Fellner qualified his statement. He claimed that it is not about prohibiting religion, but of a possible prohibition of practice. He said he had "never received so much positive approval for a comment."[68] Later, Fellner withdrew his statement, but stated in relation to Muslims "[T]he practice of religions must be in accordance to our Constitution and our laws. If the radical scene of the Islamic religious community advocates and promotes terror, then they must be stopped immediately. And forbidden. From the kindergartens to the mosques."[69] Fellner explicitly uses the name of the state-recognised religious society IGGIÖ. He doesn't speak of an extremist group within the community of Austrian Muslims. This is a clear indication that, in fact, he is talking about the abolishment of institutions of Muslims in Austria. The editor-in-chief of *Kurier* also repeatedly refers to Ednan Aslans so-called "Kingergarten study" and generalises the results of this interim report, which is based on an "analysis" of four kindergartens. Editor-in-chief Helmut Brandstätter says

> "A few months ago an investigation of kindergartens in Vienna showed that children were compelled to memorise chapters of the Qur'an. From this alone it can be seen that the Qu'ran is above state law. Here supervisors are obliged to act. Anyone who doesn't stand 100% by the Republic of Austria is not allowed to teach children. This is not a general suspicion, but a call for help. This is not a prohibition of freedom of expression, but an appeal/plea: resist the beginnings." [70]

Referring to the forced memorising of the Quran, Brandstätter makes claims that cannot be found in the interim report.[71] In addition, one has to ask oneself: where is the difference between a child memorising a song and one learning chapters from the Quran by heart? Why is one being criminalised, while the other one is considered an unproblematic norm?

Notorious Islamophobes are given a stage in op-eds of many daily newspapers. The well-known Islamophobic author Hans-Peter Raddatz is presented as a scholar. In his op-ed in *Die Presse*, he spreads his wild conspiracy theories about a domination of the world by Islam:

68. Der Standard (2016). Islam-"Verbot": Aufregung um Fellner-Kommentar in „Österreich", *Der Standard*, 23.03.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000033526592/Aufregung-um-Oesterreich-Kommentar-zu-Islam-Verbot [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

69. Ibid.

70. Brandstätter, Hellmut (2016) Nicht nur Hassprediger sind gefährlich, *Kurier*, 15.07.2016. Available from: http://kurier.at/meinung/leitartikel-nicht-nur-hassprediger-sind-gefaehrlich/209.872.672 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

71. Aslan, Ednan (2016) Projektbericht Evaluierung ausgewählter Islamischer Kindergärten und -gruppen in Wien. Tendenzen und Empfehlungen, *Universität Wien*, Februar 2016. Available from: https://iis.univie.ac.at/fileadmin/user_upload/p_iis/Abschlussbericht__Vorstudie_Islamische_Kindergarten_Wien_final.pdf [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

> " For a long time, public debates, which use a unified language of fluff, are limited and become aggressive as soon as criticism of their project for the Islamization of Europe is stimulated. This is especially true since the EU declared Islam to be the "co-ordinator of Europe" (Bat Ye'or, "Europe and the coming caliphate") with the Mekka manifesto of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) [...] The paper regulates the spread of Islam, which follows strictly the Koran with the creation of a net of mosques, assassinations in Europe, Christian persecution in the Orient, use of European leaders and actions against Israel."[72]

At the end of his text he blames the elites for the submission of Europe to Islam. Christian Ortner frequently writes in a very generalised way about "Islam" in the *Wiener Zeitung*. In an article, quoting writer Boualem Sansal, Ortner says "There is no foundation in any country – may it be Arab or European– that one day an enlightened Islam will emerge."[73]

Again published in *Wiener Zeitung*, Ortner reviewed the work of Michael Ley, a notorious Islamophobe. Accepting Ley's claims without criticism, Ortner states that for Muslims the

> "Quran […] is above secular law, the superiority claim of Islam towards other religions and atheism, to the Islam immanent urge to spread; the wide spread anti-Semitism within the Muslim immigrant milieu and of course the degradation of women in the Islamic world 'are all reasons for the end of Europe'".[74]

With Robert Lugar, the *Wiener Zeitung* offered a platform to the world conspiracy theories of a national MP. In a commentary Lugar states "A goal of political Islam is to achieve world supremacy - and we must protect ourselves from that", and goes on to state that "in some Turkish families not the Austrian constitutional state is the first priority, but the Shariah".[75] Finally he concludes that since no one wants "a war in Europe", one has to "resist the beginnings."[76] With the help of anti-Muslim world conspiracy theories Islam is posthumously declared a new fascism.[77] In *Die Presse,* Christian Ultsch explains why a burqa ban

72. Raddatz, Hans-Peter (2016) Europas Eliten, die EU-Bürger und der Islam, *Die Presse*, 06.04.2016. Available from: http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/gastkommentar/4960892/Europas-Eliten-die-EUBurger-und-der-Islam [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

73. Ortner, Christian (2016) Der europäische Islam und andere Irrtümer, *Wiener Zeitung,* 14.07.2016. Available from: http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/gastkommentare/831754_Der-europaeische-Islam-und-andere-Irrtuemer.html [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

74. Ortner, Christian (2015) Suizid des Abendlandes?, *Wiener Zeitung,* 27.09.2015. Available from: http://www.wienerzeitung.at/themen_channel/literatur/buecher_aktuell/776860_Suizid-des-Abendlandes.html [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

75. Lugar, Robert (2016) Islamisierung Europas - wehret den Anfängen, *Wiener Zeitung,* 12.09.2016. Available from: http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/gastkommentare/844240_Islamisierung-Europas-wehret-den-Anfaengen.html?em_cnt=844240 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

76. Ibid.

77. Ibid.

is necessary; he then clarifies that such a ban has only a symbolic character, since in fact only a few women are affected.[78]

In an op-ed published in *Die Presse*, Hans Winkler addresses tensions within the Catholic Church on the question of how to deal with refugee movements. The last section of his article is one-sided and portrays Islam and Muslims as violent. Winkler writes that 'Islam has no problem with terror' - at least from what can be seen in public.[79] An unbiased analysis of the headscarf ban such as that of Isolde Charim is rare.[80]

In the tabloid press, Islamophobic arguments can be found again and again. In *Kronen Zeitung,* Austria's most popular yellow press, titles such as 'Muslims cause bloodbath on Styrian pasture' are found alongside stories about Jewish 'brutal' kosher butchers. The text further states "In East Styria, 79 sheep were massacred with five knives. […] Fortunately, the animal tragedy was noticed by an individual who got help. 52 sheep could be saved, but 79 are dead."[81] The person committing these acts appears in Muslim garments.

A positive example of an in-house column is the critical analysis by Gerfried Sperl. In "Why Kurz attacks Erdoğan, but not Putin", he points out why, despite the annexation of the Crimea, Putin is not seen as an "enemy" of the Austrian Republic, while Erdoğan is considered a "dangerous enemy" because of his proximity to political Islamism. According to Sperl, anti-Turkish populism seems like a useful tool for Austria's foreign minister.[82] Another critical article from Sybille Hamann was published in *Die Presse*. In her text, she partially reflects the position of journalists towards the coverage of the 'Muslim Other'.[83] Another critical commentary from Ayad Al-Ani was published in *Der Standard*. [84] There was also strong criticism towards the invitation policy of the private broadcaster Servus TV: Martin Sellner, speaker of the radical

78. Ultsch, Christian (2016) Es gibt gute Gründe für ein Burkaverbot, *Die Presse,* 17.10.2016. Available from: http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/kommentare/leitartikel/5072183/Es-gibt-gute-Grunde-fur-ein-Burkaverbot [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

79. Winkler, Hans (2016) Die Sorge der Bischöfe vor dem Islam, *Die Presse,* 22.08.2016. Available from: http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/gastkommentar/5072474/Die-Sorge-der-Bischofe-vor-dem-Islam [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

80. Charim, Isolde (2016) Kopftuch, Burka und Burkini, *Wiener Zeitung*, 19.08.2016. Available from: http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/gastkommentare/839445_Kopftuch-Burka-und-Burkini.html [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

81. Stockner, Eva (2016) Muslime richten Blutbad auf steirischer Weide an, *Kronen Zeitung*, 14.09.2016. Available from: http://www.krone.at/oesterreich/muslime-richten-blutbad-auf-steirischer-weide-an-illegal-geschaechtet-story-529513 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

82. Sperl, Gerfried, Warum Kurz Erdoğan attackiert, Putin aber nicht, *Der Standard,* 29.05.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000037841575/Warum-Kurz-Erdogan-attackiert-Putin-aber-nicht [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

83. Hamann, Sybille (2016) „Allahu akbar" – und was einer Ungläubigen dazu einfällt, *Die Presse,* 10.08.2016. Available from: http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/quergeschrieben/sibyllehamann/5066206/Allahu-akbar-und-was-einer-Unglaeubigen-dazu-einfaellt [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

84. Al-Ani, Ayad (2016) Über die Funktion der „unteren Kaste", *Der Standard,* 29.7.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000042031414/Ueber-die-Funktion-der-unteren-Kaste [Accessed: 21st December 2016]

New Right movement '*Identitäre Bewegung Österreich*' that is under observation for possible constitutional violations, was invited by the broadcaster to a discussion.[85]

## Public Sphere

In an interview with *Kurier* a woman tells how she doesn't cover her hair with a headscarf that reveals her Muslim identity any longer. She uses caps instead to protect herself from hostility. She reports that people awkwardly starred at her, whispered secretly about her, and that strangers spoke to her on the street. A stranger pointing at her and said "Look, again one of these, another head with a diaper on it. She is from the Islamic State. That's a terrorist, they should go home." The woman commented "It was all very degrading and hurtful. Sometimes I fought back and said something, but that makes little sense."[86] In the interview, she spoke of many acquaintances who have had similar experiences.

The political debate, following the failed coup attempt in Turkey, primarily served domestic political controversies. In an open letter the conservative major of Wiener Neustadt, Klaus Schneeberger, asked that the Turkish flag is not hung from balconies and houses: "Those who do not confess to Wiener Neustadt have no place in our city." [87] Loyalty to Austria is denied to Turks, who are mainly identified as Muslims. Also, while rules are set up for Turks, members of other nationalities do not face similar restrictions

In 2016, a Tyrolese member of the Landtag (Green Party) of Muslim confession received two postal threats and two digital ones. He calculates that during the year he received between 40 and 50 racist insults. One stated that "GOD wil[!] Punish [!] you!"[88]

During a carnival parade in the city of Maissau (Lower Austria) a carnival car was named "Shariah Police" and had various Islamophobic slogans on it. National Socialist codes (88 for "Heil Hitler") adorned the number plate. Posters with the inscription "We f*** your moms" or "We f*** your shaved virgins" were read. Pictures of the carnival showed people hanging from nooses with placats stating "Islam gives you wings".[89] The mayor of Maissau dissociated himself from the event. The Office for Constitutional Protection announced an investigation.

85. Der Standard (2016) ORF-Chef: Servus TV lädt „von Verfassungsschutz beobachtete Neonazis", *Der Standard* ,21.10.2016. Available from: www.derstandard.at/2000046285108/Servus-TV-ORF-Chef-erstaunt-ueber-Einladung-von-Verfassungsschutz-beobachteten [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

86. Kaltenbrunner, Stefan (2016) Muslima: „Habe Angst, Kopftuch zu tragen", *Kurier,* 30.09.2016. Available from: https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/muslima-habe-angst-kopftuch-zu-tragen/223.786.231 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

87. Mein Bezirk (2016) Schnee verbietet türkische Fahnen in Neustadt, *meinbezirk.at*, 23.07.2016. Available from: http://www.meinbezirk.at/wiener-neustadt/politik/schnee-verbietet-tuerkische-fahnen-in-neustadt-d1810413.html [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

88. Email to the Author.

89. Weichhart, Johannes (2016) Verfassungsschutz ermittelt nach Faschingsumzug in NÖ, *Kurier*, 08.02.2016. Available from: http://kurier.at/chronik/niederoesterreich/verfassungsschutz-ermittelt-nach-faschingsumzug-in-noe/179.780.987 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

Figure 2: "Shariah Police" (Photo by Facebook User)

For the weekly magazine *Profil*, the opinion research institute Unique Research conducted a survey of the attitudes of Austrians (n=500) towards religious symbols such as the Muslim headscarf, the kippa and the cross in public space. When asked whether judges should be allowed to wear religious symbols, 42% responded negatively, while 23% argued in favour of it. Only 17% are more likely to say 'yes', another 14% of respondents declared that they are okay with judges wearing religious symbols. A similar opinion is expressed when it comes to teachers with headscarves: 62% of the respondents are against it while only 35% answered that they are in favour of a teacher with a headscarf. 3% abstained from answering. A total of 60% said that they would not allow Muslims to observe their prayers several times a day or to fast in Ramadan during working hours; 37% appeared tolerant to this question, while 3% did not provide any information. [90] However, the rejection of Muslim religious practice is not only advocated by the majority of respondents. Even a chair of Islamic Religious Education at the University of Vienna, Ednan Aslan, is quoted during a training session for teachers in Graz as saying "For children to observe Ramadan is unacceptable in Europe."[91]

The following photograph was taken in Goethestraße, Salzburg on 1 May, 2016. (Figure 3) It shows the word 'Muslim' written on a stone beside a hanged person.

The following photo was taken at the main train station in Vienna on 1 September, 2016: "F*** Muslim" and "Kill the Muslim". (Figure 4) The word "Muslim" was later crossed out.

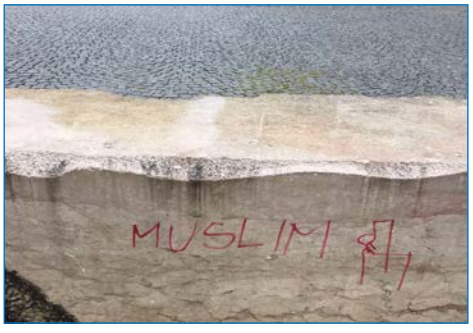

Figure 3: Photo shows the word 'Muslim' written on a stone beside a hanged person. (Photo sent to the Author)

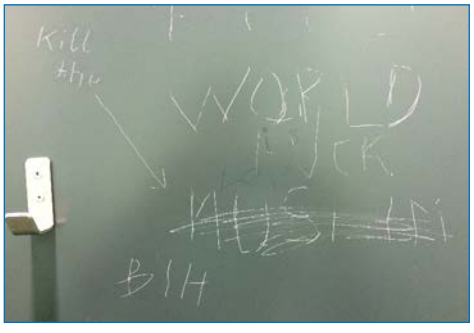

Figure 4: "F *** Muslim" and "Kill the Muslim (Photo sent to the Author)

90. Profil (2016) „profil"-Umfrage: Mehrheit der Österreicher will weder religiöse Symbole im Gerichtssaal noch Lehrerinnen mit Kopftuch, *Profil,* 16.07.2016. Available from: http://www.profil.at/oesterreich/umfrage-religioese-symbole-gerichtssaal-lehrerinnen-kopftuch-7176763 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

91. Winter-Pölsler, Gerald (2016) Ramadan: Viele Kinder kommen derzeit zu spät in die Schule, *Kleine Zeitung,* 23.06.2016. http://www.kleinezeitung.at/s/steiermark/graz/5032530/Islam_Ramadan_Viele-Kinder-kommen-derzeit-zu-spaet-in-die-Schule [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

The New Right *Identitäre Bewegung* used posters and stickers to warn against an alleged "Islamization". Figure 5 shows the election poster for Van der Bellen.

Stickers with the slogan "We have to stay outside" showing a man and woman dressed in traditional religious attire were placed outside stores. (Figure 6)

A club named *Die Aufklärer* (The Enlighteners) (aufklaerer.at) distributes flyers with the title "Why should I deal with Islam?" The leaflets seem to call for incitement against Islam more than for peaceful dialogue. The club's seat also hosts the headquarters of the student fraternity *Gothia*.

On 6 December, writing found in a tram in Graz states "Muslim pigs out". (Figure 7)

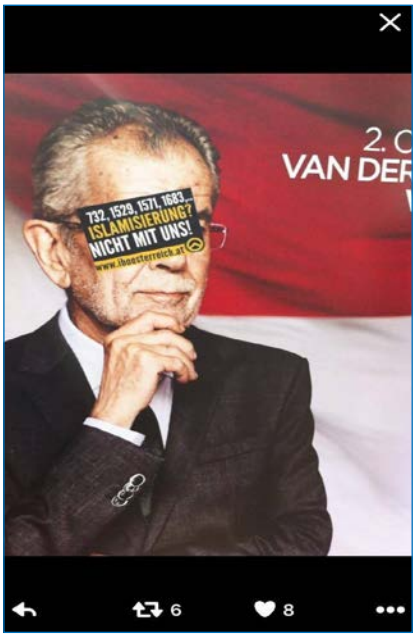


Figure 5: "Islamization? Not with us!"

Another inscription 'Castrate all Muslims sl.ts' was sighted in a tram in Graz in October 2016. (Figure 8)

Again in a tram in Graz an inscription "Piss on Islam" was sighted. (Figure 9)

Figure 6: "We have to stay outside" (Photo sent to the author. Photo is taken outside of an AIDA Café store.)

Figure 7: " Muslim Pigs out"[92]

Figure 8: "Castrate all Muslims sl.ts"(Photo sent to the author.)

Figure 9: "Piss on Islam" (Photo sent to the author.)

92. Nicola Baloch on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10209636306858149&set=a.1273795418662.38992.1643235998&type=3&theater

On 11 December, 2016 at the same public location in Graz an inscription stating "Muslim pigs" was photographed.[93] (Figure 10)

On the night of 10 December, the car of a Muslim family was smeared with a swastika. [94]

Figure 10: "Muslim pigs" (Photo sent to the author.)

## Justice System

In August, a man from Burgenland was sentenced to conditional imprisonment for three month.[95] Prior to the imprisonment, he had posted a hate message against Muslims on the website of Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz. In September, a 36-year-old man from Burgenland was sentenced with a 2,160 Euro fine. He had replied to a hate post that stated "Islam is killing everyone ..." with "It's time to operate Dachau, Mauthausen and Ausschwitz (sic) again. So our friendly immigrants will get an accommodation they deserve."[96]

In 2013 and 2014, police press releases were analysed. The authors of the report noted that while Viennese police frequently reported the snatching of bags and drug crimes, rape and racial violence were almost never mentioned. Racism in the form of National Socialist reactivation was actually the only kind of racial violence that was reported by the police in its press releases.[97] Accordingly, anti-Muslim hate crimes have not been the subject of any press releases by the Viennese police.

## Internet

The homepage ekiw.com is operated by the "Interest group for quiet residential area citizens' Initiative 'Objection! ekiw.com' 'Objection! No Mosque in residential areas'". The content of ekiw.com is related to Austria and primarily contains Islamophobic reports and reports on mosque construction projects to be prevented. However, the imprint page gives an Uruguayan publisher.

Facebook offers well-known personalities the opportunity to bring their message to a large audience. The extreme sports athlete Felix Baumgarten, who seems to have a certain sympathy for the FPÖ, writes in a post on 26 January, 2016,

93.https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10209636306858149&set=a.1273795418662.38992.1643235998&type=3&theater

94. https://www.facebook.com/jasmina.amasha/posts/1204458142967534

95. ORF (2016) Hetze gegen Muslime: Drei Monate bedingt, *orf.at*, 30.08.2016. Available from: http://burgenland.orf.at/news/stories/2793842/ [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

96. ORF (2016) Hetze gegen Muslime: 2.160 Euro Strafe, *orf.at*, 13.09.2016. Available from: http://burgenland.orf.at/news/stories/2796444/ [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

97. Kanya Evelyn/Siebenhofer, Alexandra (2015) Gefühlte Kriminalität, *corrective.org*, 26.08.2015. Available from: https://correctiv.org/recherchen/stories/2015/08/26/polizeiberichte-verzerren-wirklichkeit/ [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

> "The PEOPLE are annoyed, because in our country nothing will be the same again in the future. We will have to wonder, How far are we willing to give up our identity and our culture and to mix them up with a completely different religion and ideology? What will become of our WOMEN'S RIGHTS when we are about to share this country, with a culture where women have no rights? The history has shown more than once that every attempt to do so anyway has NO future!"[98]

The post was shared more than 49.000 times and was liked 143,000 times.

The online medium *katholisches.info* provided news claiming that the imam of the Holy Mosque in Mecca allegedly offered a prayer for the jihadists against Jews, Christians and hypocrites.[99] This assertion was republished by the tabloid newspaper *Kronen Zeitung*, without checking its sources. Their article suggested that the imam of the mosque in Saudi Arabia had conducted a prayer in favour of DAESH/IS.[100] In an interview with Richard Schmitt, chief editor of the online *Kronen Zeitung*, explained that his newspaper is in competition with right-wing online magazines such as unzensuriert.at.[101] Schmitt explained that the reason his newspaper gives space to many right-wing positions is the active presence of FPÖ in social media.

Right-wing actors often use the Internet to spread their positions in plain, easily understandable language. The youth wing of the FPÖ, RFJ, used their Facebook account to spread posters. These in turn were shared by prominent personalities such as the FPÖ party leader, who has more than 460,000 likes, a high rating for a fan page of an Austrian politician. The RFJ poster below (We demand: Headscarf ban in schools!) was shared by H.C. Strache and received 7,890 responses and was shared 836 times. (Figure 12)

Figure 12: "We demand: Headscarf ban in schools!". Screen Shot of a poster by the FPÖ's youth wing

98. Offizielle *Facebook-Präsenz* von Felix Baumgarter, Beitrag vom 21.01.2016. Available from: https://www.facebook.com/FelixBaumgartner/posts/10153949158828804:0 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

99. Katholisches (2016) Imam der Heiligen Moschee in Mekka: „Oh Allah, schenk den Dschihadisten auf der ganzen Welt den Sieg", *katholisches.info,* 13.11.2016. Available from: http://www.katholisches.info/2016/09/13/imam-der-heiligen-moschee-in-mekka-oh-allah-schenk-den-dschihadisten-auf-der-ganzen-welt-den-sieg/[Accessed: 21 December 2016]

100. Krone (2016) „Lass Dschihadisten bösartige Christen besiegen!", *Kronen Zeitung*, 16.09.2016. Available from: http://www.krone.at/welt/lass-dschihadisten-boesartige-christen-besiegen-imam-hetzt-in-mekka-story-529868 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

101. Huber, Markus (2016) „Zu weit weg von der Bevölkerung", *Fleisch Magazin*, Sommer 2016 (not dated). Available from: http://www.fleischmagazin.at/index.php/fleisch-38-krone-richard-schmitt [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

Figure 13: "The number of students with German problems increases massively." Screen Shot of a poster by the FPÖ's youth wing.

Another poster shared by the RFJ on Facebook addresses the rising problems with the German language among pupils and shows a female figure with a hijab.

The Austrian Identitarians also use the Internet to make their activities popular. The Niqab-veiled woman has a placard saying "Integration is a Lie" (Figure 14)[102]

Figure 14: "Integration is a Lie". Screen Shot of a poster by the Identitarian movement

Campaigns against Muslim institutions and projects, such as the introduction of Islamic banking, are regularly launched online and use harsh and radical language. The picture below shows a half-buried woman, who is alive, with the title "Free financing of your first stoning: with Islamic banking at BAWAG PSK." (Figure 15) Journalist Kenny Lang published an article in which he defended the allegation that the introduction of Islamic banking "leads to the formation of 'parallel societies'."[103]

Figure 15: "Free financing of your first stoning: with Islamic banking at BAWAG PSK." Screen Shot of an Islamophobia poster

Facebook makes it possible for people to engage in unrestrained hate speech. Although the comment below was reported, Facebook didn't delete it and stated that it doesn't violate their community standards. (Figure 16) The user - a fake account - comments "Only a dead Moslems [sic] is a peaceful, good Moslems [sic]."

102. Facebook-Präsenz des Rings Freiheitlicher Jugend, Beitrag vom 12.10.2016. Available from: https://www.facebook.com/RFJOesterreich/photos/a.307509049850.148644.261850724850/10154643180104851/?type=3&theater [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

103. Lang, Kenny (2015) Ein Konto wie vom Propheten, *medium.com,* 15.01.2015. Available from: https://medium.com/@KennyLang/das-konto-des-propheten-d94ef84a9776#.aelsm4uk9 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

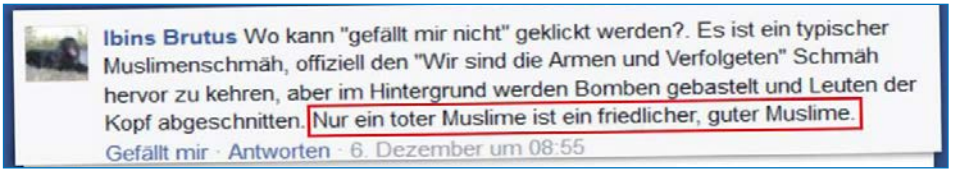


Figure 16: "Only a dead Moslems [sic] is a peaceful, good Moslems [sic]." Facebook screenshot by author

Political movement also use the Internet to mobilise their positions. In Upper Austria, employees of FPÖ called for the Christmas bonus that is regulated in the collective agreement to be only paid to Christians.[104]

## Physical and Verbal Attacks[105]

On 11 January, 2016, at the city library of Vienna (Burggasse) an inscription written by strangers reads "Defend yourselves against the criminal, backward IS-headscarf Islamists". A woman in hijab crosses the street when a person shouts from a standing car "You rag!"[106] (June, Graz). A woman with a headscarf is waiting for sushi in an Asian restaurant when people sitting behind her start talking loudly and disrespectfully about scarves, the Quran and bombs. They say to her "Now everything is going to get blown up!" (September, Graz). Two middle-aged men are waiting at a tramway station. One says to another "The son of so-and-so has shot himself." The other replies pointing to a veiled woman "Such a veil also has to be shot!" (October, Graz). A woman with a headscarf goes past a young man, who calls her "pu..y" (July, Graz).

At the beginning of November, a student wearing a hijab was in an Asian restaurant. A male customer said "Muslim crap!" to which the student asked "What?" The customer went on to say "Muslims crap (sic). Leave all of you. Go back to Turkey." The student replied that she was at home. Then the customer called her "Headscarf pu..y" and "Headscarf sl.t". She threatened him with the police, whereupon he quieted down. The student sat down and after three minutes, the man came across from her, spat at her, showed her the middle finger and screamed "Kill all Muslims" several times, repeating his verbal abuse and running out of the store.

A Syrian refugee reveals people shouted at her from a parked car. Sometimes she was called "Arab b..ch" and "Musel sl.t". A neighbour regularly looks out of the window and calls her Muslim neighbour "Muslim sod". A passer-by screamed to a Muslim woman with a headscarf calling her a "whore". He said to her "In February, there comes a law, then you will see you Muslim whores." A passer-by told a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf "There is need for a new holocaust."

In spring 2016, a woman with her hair covered in the city of Wiener Neustadt reported that an elderly gentleman passed by her and called her a "junior jihadist". In

104. Kurier (2016). Kein Weihnachtsgeld für Muslime? Freiheitliche lassen abstimmen, *Kurier*, 27.11.2016. Available from: https://kurier.at/politik/inland/kein-weihnachtsgeld-fuer-muslime-freiheitliche-lassen-abstimmen/232.869.947 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

105. Unless stated otherwise, these incidents were reported to the author directly, usually by email.

106. A tattered piece of cloth; pejorative term for Muslim hair covering.

the summer of 2016, a Muslim woman from Salzburg reported that two half-drunk men about 30 years old passed a bus stop and shouted "Muslim pu..y, Turkish pu..y". In summer 2016, a pass-by in Salzburg said to a Muslim woman wearing a veil "Are you not hot? You can do that at your place. If you then smell, then you can blame yourself."

In October 2016, a veiled woman left the bus in Tyrol. A boy between 10 and 14 years of age entered and referred to her as a "Taliban". In October 2016, a student of a polytechnic school in Vorarlberg reported that classmates told him "You are not an Austrian. You Muslims have no place here in our country. Hofer (far right presidential candidate) will come and our jobs will be free again."

In September 2016, a passer-by went to a Muslim woman at the Viennese subway station Schottentor and said: "Crap Islam!" In November 2016, a woman stepped on a veiled Muslim woman at a metro station and then said "This is how you do it where you come from." At the day of the federal presidential election, 4 December, 2016, three veiled Muslim women (one with a stroller) came across a group of men and women with children and strollers. One of the group's members said to one of the children "stand aside". Thereupon someone else replied "Don't make way for the headscarves. Run them down. F..k it." On the same day, a lady with three small children entered the underground in Vienna. A veiled Muslim woman offered her a seat. The mother of the three children told them "We don't sit here now!" All three children looked at each other and one said "True, we learned that when a lady wears a headscarf, we run away or don't talk to her."

In November 2016, a student in a Teacher Training course learnt from her practice teacher that there is a ban of headscarves at her school. The director told her "We want a scarf-free school. For you as a grown woman there is no prohibition" and explained that the prohibition of the headscarf is not public, but would be clarified by talking to the parents. One of the pupils at this school was told by the director "If you do not take off the headscarf, then there are also other schools!" A schoolgirl left school after she was told that a headscarf was not allowed. Another student – a Syrian refugee – takes off her headscarf before she enters school and puts it on again after she leaves.

A veiled Muslim woman offered the seat next to her to an older woman. She refused by saying "I won't sit down next to such a headscarf-woman." When another Muslim woman intervened, the older lady commented "Actually, you should be forbidden to drive with public transport." A woman revealed that a neighbour insulted her on the balcony by saying "F..king foreigners! Damn Muslims!"

The Graz police had received information in April according to which "right-wing groups want to carry out actions of disturbance in front of the mosque" and were accordingly prepared.[107] On May 5, 2016, a mosque in Graz was desecrated. At around 11 p.m., three people illegally trespassed the terrain of the mosque. Two pig

107. Kleine Zeitung (2016) Polizei rüstete gegen Aufmarsch „rechter Gruppen" vor Moschee, *Kleine Zeitung*, 06.04.2016. Available from: http://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/chronik/4961692/Graz_Polizei-ruestete-gegen-Aufmarsch-rechter-Gruppen-vor-Moschee [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

head halves were hanged around the minaret at the building fence, and the minaret was sprinkled with pig's blood. During Ramadan, the mosque in Linz was also desecrated. Unknown people brought half a pig's head to the main entrance.[108]

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Daily newspapers such as *Kurier* have repeatedly printed Islamophobic prejudices; such commentary was deliberately spread by Norbert Hofer during the Austrian election campaign.[109]

Under the motto 'We swim as we want' Anahita Tasharofi organised an action against the call for the ban on burkinis.[110]

The intervention of (Christian) aid institutions, which showed that many Muslim carers work for their institutions, was important in countering the allegations of the Federal President candidate Norbert Hofer.

Together with the IGGIÖ, the *Initiative Muslimischer ÖsterreicherInnen* (Initiative of Austrian Muslims) set up a documentation centre for Muslims. At the end of 2014, they presented the first report on attacks on Muslims.[111]

Wiener Linien, the Viennese public transport, started a campaign against loud telephone calls and included a woman with a hijab in their posters. Such campaigns can contribute to the normalisation of Muslims in public space. (Figure 17)

Figure 17: Placard used by the Viennese public transport, screenshot by author

108. Kurier (2016a) Linz: Vandalen befestigten Schweinskopf auf Moschee, *Kurier*, 23.06.2016. Available from: https://m.kurier.at/chronik/oberoesterreich/schweinekopf-an-tuer-linzer-moschee-von-vandalen-heimgesucht/206.041.380 [Accessed: 12 December 2016]

109. Draxler, Peter (2016) Nach Hofer-Sager: Die Wahrheit über muslimische Pfleger, *Kurier,* 15.11.2016. Available from: www.kurier.at/politik/inland/bundespraesidentenwahl/faktencheck-nach-norbert-hofer-sager-die-wahrheit-ueber-muslimische-pflegekraefte/230.817.644 [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

110. von Usslar, Maria / Gaigg, Vanessa (2016) Burkini-Verbot: Solidaritätsaktion auf Wiener Badeschiff, *Der Standard,* 30.08.2016. Available from: http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000043539105/BurkiniSolidaritaets-Aktion-am-Wiener-Badeschiff [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

111. APA (2016) Antimuslimischer Rassismus trifft vor allem Frauen, *Der Standard*, 21.04.2016. Available from: http://derstandard.at/2000035437209/Antimuslimischer-Rassismus-richtet-sich-gegen-Frauen [Accessed: 21 December 2016]

# Conclusion and Recommendations

- Austria should fulfill its promise from Durban 2001 and adopt a National Action Plan against racism (NAP) in order to meet the challenges regarding discrimination and racism which are prevalent in all areas of society.
- Financial and human resources should be raised for the Equal Treatment Commission and for an increase of the capacities of the Ombud for Equal Treatment to fulfill its task of raising awareness of the Equal Treatment Act.
- Discrimination on the job market must be fought with better legal standards and the creation of a relevant consciousness. Penalties for the violation of discrimination on the six grounds mentioned in the EU Directives on this issue should be increased.
- The amended Equal Treatment Act (August 2013) has to fulfill the long-demanded extension of protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, age, belief and religion to areas outside employment.
- The Islam Law has to be amended in order not to be in conflict with the Austrian Constitution. This is of utmost importance, since the new law has sent a message of inequality to the Muslim masses.
- Training on racism, especially Islamophobia, should be offered to journalists, lawyers, and police (security officials) by qualified personnel.
- Muslim civil society has to be empowered with information to combat Islamophobia, especially in the creation of a consciousness towards the illegality of hate crimes.
- Educational institutions and stakeholders have to work towards creating an alternative narrative of Muslims in Austria which will work to dispel the widely accepted negative image of Islam.

## Chronology

- 11 January: Weekly Falter published a cover connecting North-African men in a generalised way with sexual assaults. The Austrian Press Council reprimanded the magazine on 25 April.
- January: It is announced that there is no final report as had been promised on Islamic kindergartens by Ednan Aslan.
- 20 February: First imam has to leave Austria due to new Islam Law of 2015.
- 22 March: Editor-in-chief of daily Österreich called for a ban of Islam.
- 24 April: First of four rounds of presidential election campaigns that occur on 22 May, 2 October (abrogated) and 4 December with right wing populist Norbert Hofer campaigning against Muslim minorities and the alleged Islamization of Austria.
- June-August: Restrictions in some public swimming pools for refugees from Muslim countries and a ban of the burkini in the public swimming pools of Melk, Korneuburg and Hainfeld.
- 18 August: Foreign Minister Kurz demanded a ban of the face veil in the public sphere.
- 20 August: SPÖ party whip Schieder supports the foreign minister's claim.
- 7 November: FPÖ's event "Have we learned from history?" with Israeli right-wing politicians who warn of the dangers of Muslim anti-Semitism.
- 12 September: FPÖ's event for the commemoration of the second Turkish siege of Vienna under the title "September 12, 1683 – Protect the West, Then as Now".

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN BELGIUM
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

AMINA EASAT-DAAS

# The Author

**Amina Easat-Daas** earned her PhD from Aston University, Birmingham, UK. Her doctoral research focused on the nature of Muslim women's political participation in France and Belgium, with specific emphasis on the motivations, opportunities and barriers to their political careers. Amina is currently based at the University of Leeds and is working on a project in the department of sociology and social policy funded by the European Commission. The project aims to counter Islamophobia across Europe through the development of best practice. Amina's research interests include the study of 'European Islam', and also the study of the gendered nature of Islamophobia. She has given interviews related to her research on the BBC and has presented her work in the European Parliament. Some of Amina's forthcoming research publications include Easat-Daas, A. 2017, "Gender and Islamophobia in Belgium", in Awan, I. and Zempi, I. (eds) *Key Readings in Islamophobia.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. E-mail: a.easat-daas@leeds.ac.uk

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# Executive Summary

As with previous years Islamophobia in Belgium has continued to grow throughout the country in 2016. The most notable peak in anti-Muslim hate arose in the weeks following the Brussels terror attacks at Zavantem Airport and Maalbeek metro station on 22 March, 2016. The climate of anti-Muslim prejudice and hate in the period after the attacks was fueled by political figures and the Belgian media alike; most notably flagrant claims of Muslims celebrating the attacks contributed to exacerbating Islamophobia.

Islamophobia continued to affect Muslims, presumed Muslims, those linked to Muslims and Muslim sites. However, Belgian Muslim women faced the bulk of Islamophobia throughout the country over the course of the year. This discrimination was present at numerous levels: Muslim women faced physical and verbal attacks, they were the subject of political scaremongering, they faced legal limitations on their dress, and even deprivation of their right to education and employment.

In spite of these worrying developments in 2016, Belgian NGOs maintain a strong counter-presence, and lead projects directly related to the inequalities and Islamophobic prejudices that have become apparent in Belgium in 2016.

## Synthèse

Le sommet le plus remarquable au niveau des crimes haineux s'est présenté dans les semaines á la suite des attentats terroristes á l'aéroport Zavantem et lemétro Maelbeek, le 22 mars 2016. Le climat des préjugés et haine antimusulman, dans la période aprèsles attentats,était alimenté par les personnalités politiques et les médias de la même manière; affirmations flagrantes que les Musulmans ont célébré les attentats a contribué á augmenté l'Islamophobie. Les crimes haineux antimusulmans continuaient a affecté les Musulmans, ceux qui sont présumé d'être Musulman, ceux qui sont connectés aux Musulmans et les endroits Musulmans. Cependant, les femmes, Musulmanes, Belges rencontraient la plupart d'Islamophobie á travers du pays au cours de l'année. Cette discrimination s'est présentée aux niveaux variés. Les Musulmanes font face aux attentats verbaux et physiques, elles étaient sujet des alarmismes politiques et aux mesures législatives qui ont limité leurs droits vestimentaires et les ont privées de l'éducation et l'emploi. En dépit que ces développements souciants, les ASBLs Belges maintiennentune contre-présence forte et amènent des projets directement liées aux inégalités et préjugés islamophobes qui sont devenus évidents en Belgique pendant 2016.

## Overzicht

Zoals de afgelopen jaren blijft islamofobie in België tijdens 2016 toenemen, net zoals in de andere landen in dit rapport. De hoogtepunt van de haatmisdrijven tegen moslims is in de nasleep van de Brusselse terreuraanslagen in de luchthaven en het metrostation Maalbeek op 22 maart 2016. De klimaat van moslimhaat en vooroordelen in de periode na de aanslagen was gevoed door politieke figuren en media; de meest flagrante uitspraken over moslims die de aanslagen vieren, verergerde het islamofobe klimaat. Islamofobie bleef moslims, zij die verbinden zijnaan moslims en hun vaste plekken, raken en bezighouden. De Belgische moslima's bleven echter het hardst getroffen door islamofobie in het hele land gedurende het jaar. Deze discriminatie manifesteerde zich op verschillende niveaus. Moslimvrouwen werden geconfronteerd met fysiek en verbaal geweld, ze waren het onderwerp van politieke paniekzaaierij, zij worden geconfronteerd met wettelijke beperkingen op hun kleding en zelfs het ontnemen van het recht op onderwijs en werkgelegenheid.Ondanks deze zorgwekkende ontwikkelingen in 2016, houden de Belgische middenveldorganisaties een sterke houding aan en leiden ze projecten die rechtstreeks verband houden met de ongelijkheid en islamofobe vooroordelen die in België scherp staan tijdens 2016.

# Introduction

At the heart of Europe, Belgium represents a culturally and ethnically diverse nation, which is recognised for its multicultural ideals. Belgian Muslims constitute an estimated 6% of the total national population;[1] this figure is estimated to be as high as 20% in the Brussels region,[2] rising to 40% in specific communes within the capital.[3] Following Christianity, Islam represents Belgium's second most popular religion. Under the constitutional framework of national religious recognition, Islam is recognised as an official Belgian religion and thus receives state funding, support for mosques, clergy, chaplains and religious education teachers in state schools.

Yet, Belgium is no stranger to Islamophobia. Like much of the rest of Europe and the West, over recent years the country has witnessed an exponential growth of anti-Muslim prejudice and hate crimes. This section of the report highlights significant Islamophobic events, their triggers and consequences in Belgium in 2016. Importantly this report also sheds light on some of the initiatives being undertaken in Belgium in the fight against Islamophobia, and the way in which these measures represent glimmers of hope in what is largely a bleak picture of Islamophobia in Belgium in the past year.

# Significant Incidents and Developments

Although Belgium is typically recognised for its multiculturalism and religious tolerance, 2016 marked a period of sustained growth of Islamophobia throughout the nation. Most notably, on 22 March 2016, Belgium witnessed the deadliest acts of terrorism it had ever faced, with Brussels Zavantem Airport and Maalbeek[4] metro station tragically being hit by terror attacks, perpetrated by five men with links to *DAESH*.[5] The attacks on the capital resulted in 35 fatalities (three of whom were the suicide bombers) and left over 300 injured. Naturally, Belgian Muslims too were among the dead and wounded.

In the period that followed, tensions between Muslims and wider society were stoked by the Belgian media, far right supporters, and influential - and somewhat irresponsible - politicians such as Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon of the New Flemish Alliance who alleged that Belgian Muslims had celebrated the terror attacks.

1.Pew Forum, "Religious Composition by Country 2010-2050," *Pew Forum*, (April 2, 2015), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2010/percent/all/.

2.Jan Hertogen, "In België Wonen 628.751 Moslims," (September 12, 2008), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.indymedia.be/index.html%3Fq=node%252F29363.html;Fatima Zibouh, "Muslim Political Participation in Belgium: An Exceptional Political Representation in Europe," Jorgen S Nielsen (ed.), *Muslim Political Participation in Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press).

3.Vivek Chaudhary, "How Molenbeek Fought Back against Isis – with Football," *The Guardian*, 30.10.2016.

4.Maalbeek in Flemish, or Maelbeek in French.

5.*Daesh* – Islamic State of Syria and the Levant.

The tragic events caused a significant peak in anti-Muslim hate crimes: for example, the Belgian Counter-Islamophobia Collective (CCIB)[6] recorded 36 Islamophobic incidents in the month following the attacks. In spite of self-reporting biases, this still means that on average over one anti-Muslim hate crime took place each day in the period following the Brussels terror attacks. The extent of hate crimes was such that, Breuic de Meêus, CEO of the Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company (STIB),[7] came forward to speak out against the wave of violence against Muslims that had taken place in the capital city transport network during this period.

Consistently in Belgium, Muslims, those presumed to be Muslim or linked to Muslims and Muslim sites, continued to be targets of Islamophobic attacks. However, most remarkably in 2016, Muslim women, and especially those who visibly appear so, have been subject to rapidly increasing levels of Islamophobia across Belgium.

During the summer of 2016, Muslim women's dress was once again central to media and political debates. Evidence presented in this report demonstrates that Belgian Muslim women face prejudice and discrimination in education, employment and generally are more likely to be targets of anti-Muslim hate crimes. Thus, Belgian Muslim women are more likely to be victimised and face systematic exclusion in numerous fields in the country. This 'Othering' has negative consequences not only for Belgian Muslims themselves, but also deprives society of the contribution that these individuals may bring to the wider community. Also on a more sinister note, the exclusion and targeting of Belgian Muslims feeds into narratives exploited by so called 'Islamic' fundamentalists and the far right to continue to generate tensions throughout the country.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Employment

Within the labour market, Belgian Muslim women have disproportionately felt the effects of Islamophobia in 2016. Based on the cases outlined in this report, it appears that Muslim women were more like to face discrimination if they wear a headscarf. Statistical evidence indicates that 44% of employers said that the headscarf negatively impacted on candidate selection,[8] meaning that visibly Muslim women are more likely to face difficulty in searching for employment in Belgium.

Once Muslim women secure employment they continue to encounter obstacles. In May 2016, the case of Laila Afhim emerged in the Belgian press. The now 30-year-

6. CCIB – *Collective Contre L'Islamophobie de Belgique* (Belgian Counter-Islamophobia Collective)

7. STIB – *Société des Transports Intercommunaux de Bruxelles* (Brussels Intercommunal Transport Company)

8.Bouhlal Radouane, Enar Shadow Report 2011/2012 Belgium (Brussels: European Network Against Racism, 2013).

old woman had worked for the town of Huy since 2006 without issue. However, last year, Laila began to wear the headscarf. Months after this, the region officials rushed through a local bylaw to ban the presence of faith symbols from the workplace. Laila states "I had the impression the vote concerning this regulation was put in place more quickly than expected on the grounds of my situation".[9]

Sadly, Laila's experience is not an isolated case; 2016 was peppered with stories, rulings and debates surrounding the appropriateness of Muslim women's dress in the Belgian workplace. This national discussion (and in some cases unfounded hysteria) has been framed in reference to Belgian principles of 'neutrality'; a term which is becoming increasingly influenced by the French *laïcité*. In June 2016, the Belgian state appealed a previous decision to ban the headscarf in the workplace, made by the Court of Anvers. The court ruled in favour of Muslim women's rights to wear the headscarf, stating that forbidding it would constitute discrimination.

Similarly, both the French and Belgian Supreme Courts took appeals, regarding the headscarf in the workplace, to the European Court of Justice in 2015.[10] In May and July 2016, both cases were presented and in each contrasting verdicts were reached, meaning that legally speaking, we are no closer to reaching a conclusion related to the permissibility of the headscarf.

In response to this ongoing saga, and in order to effectively address growing discrimination in the Belgian labour market, the CCIB launched their 'Open Jobs Testing' project in November 2016, which will be discussed in detail later in the report.

## Education

As with the field of employment, Muslim women and their dress were disproportionately affected by Islamophobia in Belgium in 2016. The prejudice was faced by Muslim women learners, Muslim women teachers and Muslim mothers involved in their young children's schooling.

Unlike France where there is a blanket ban on headscarves in schools, typically the decision to ban or allow the headscarf lies with individual schools throughout Belgium. However, in 2013, the francophone Belgian region of Verviers issued a mandate prohibiting "ostentatious faith symbols" in schools.[11] Since its implementation, there has been continued debate across Belgium concerning headscarves in schools, which ultimately increases hostility and local tensions. In February 2016, Flanders officials debated a ban on teachers wearing the Islamic headscarf in schools - this is in spite of state provisions for faith teachers across the country.[12]

9.Aurélie Bouchat, "Licenciée Par La Ville De Huy Pour Son Voile," *La Meuse*, 06.05.2016.

10. For further details see: http://www.eurel.info/spip.php?article2915&lang=fr.

11.Verviers Conseil Communal, "Déclaration Politique Générale - Mandature Communale 2013-2018 ," *veviers.be*, (not dated), retrieved January 26, 2016, from http://www.verviers.be/dpg/dpg-a5-paslivret.pdf.

12.Robyn Boyle, "Belgian Court Says Religion Teacher Can Wear Headscarf at School," *The Bulletin*, 04.02.2016.

Muslim women learners were also affected by growing anti-headscarf sentiment in Belgium. In August 2016, two young women in Uccle were prevented from sitting exams for their access courses as they both wore the headscarf.[13] Subsequently, relevant officials allowed these women to take their tests, before declaring an official ban on the headscarf in access courses as of September 2016; the ban was subsequently overturned a fortnight later. The decision is especially pertinent since such 'social promotion' courses are intended to provide previously underqualified individuals with skills to better access the workforce. Prohibiting the presence of visibly Muslim women from partaking constitutes structural discrimination which consequently maintains the disempowerment of Muslim women and upholds societal inequalities. The case also clearly illustrates the inconsistent position of Belgian officials.

In October 2016, 28-year-old Yousra Dahri's application to the Brussels Arts Academy was rejected on the grounds of her headscarf; she was advised to remove the scarf in order to attend classes. Following this, the CCIB launched a case in her support.[14]

Like Yousra, Chaudhary Awais Tayeb was also denied the chance of studying a degree in petrochemical engineering on the grounds of the headscarf, since her headscarf was deemed to be unsafe. In response to this, Awais designed the non-flammable headscarf, which sold out almost immediately after it was launched in September 2016.[15]

Mothers who wear headscarves on the school-run also faced anti-Muslim hate, and this was borne out in two different ways; firstly, in September 2016, coverage of the experiences of Belgian Muslim women of Turkish heritage emerged. The three women were at their children's school in Bourg-Léopold, Limbourg, and Liège. Two of the women were attacked by an apparently hysterical man who began telling the women to remove their headscarves and that they must speak Dutch. In front of teachers, students and other parents, the man proceeded to spit at the women, grabbed one

Un jeune Molenbeekois invente
LE HIJAB ININFLAMMABLE
Ce foulard est destiné aux musulmanes qui souhaitent faire carrière dans la science

Figure 1: Article taken from dhnet.be detailing the creation of the non-flammable headscarf

13.Thi Diem Quach, "Uccle: Obligée De Choisir Entre Son Voile Ou Son Examen De Passage," *RTBF.be,* (August 30, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from https://www.rtbf.be/info/belgique/detail_promotion-sociale-le-port-du-voile-ou-l-examen-de-passage?id=9391570.

14.Aline Jacobs/Charles Carpriaux, "Refusée Par L'académie Des Arts De Bruxelles Parce Qu'elle Porte Le Foulard," *bx1.be*, 13.10.2016.

15.Maïli Bernaerts, "Un Jeune Molenbeekois Invente Le Hijab Ininflammable," *dhnet.be*, (September 13, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.dhnet.be/conso/consommation/un-jeune-molenbeekois-invente-le-hijab-ininflammable-57d6fc49357055f1ebe7b17e.

by the throat, only to be stopped by a school employee.[16] The case represents not only a stark example of the sinister verbal and physical aggression brought about by Islamophobia in Belgium, but also the intersection of ethnic and religious prejudices and how these are borne out.

Similarly, in October 2016, senior councilwoman for education, Fouzia Hariche, commented that school volunteers are technically classed as school workers and therefore must abide by rules governing neutrality. Rulings passed earlier in 2016 preventing teachers from wearing the headscarf mean that henceforth Muslim mothers who wear the headscarf cannot participate in state schools as volunteers across Belgium. Again, these examples portray the 'Othering' and exclusion of visibly Muslim women in Belgium, and also the increasing amalgamation of Belgian neutrality with French *laïcité*.

## Politics

Whilst this year has been marked by numerous instances of Islamophobia in politics, represented in both policy and through the discourse presented by political officials, perhaps the most remarkable case is that of Jan Jambon and his comments in the period following the Brussels terror attacks of March 2016.

On 16 April, 2016, in an interview with *Standaard*, the Belgian Interior Minister Jan Jambon, asserted that "a significant part of the Muslim community [in Belgium] danced when the [Brussels] attacks were announced"[17]. Although a minority of public figures came out in support of the minister, Jambon's comments largely sparked outrage among politicians, Muslims and civil society actors.

Although the minister subsequently issued an apology, Jambon's unfounded remarks are not only Islamophobic in themselves, but they also serve to contribute to a climate of Islamophobia, to legitimise further hate speech, and to stoke intercommunity tensions at a time when the contrary is very much needed.

## Justice

During the course of the year, the Belgian judicial system took punitive measures against perpetrators of anti-Muslim hate crimes. Examples include Alain Binet who was found guilty of inciting hate online against Muslim Brussels MP Mahinur Ozdemir. In November 2015, Binet posted comments online. He was sentenced to a six-month suspended term in May 2016. Like other examples outlined in this section of the report, this case demonstrates the overlap of gender-based, ethnic and religious hate in Muslim women's experiences of Islamophobia.

Similarly, in February 2016, the Brussels correctional court sentenced six far right activists to between 12 and 18-month suspended sentences and each was or-

16.Sud Info, "Un Homme Agresse Deux Femmes Portant Le Foulard: "Retire Ce Chiffon De Ta Tête"," *Sud Info*, (September 01, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.sudinfo.be/1658895/article/2016-09-01/un-homme-agresse-deux-femmes-portant-le-foulard-retire-ce-chiffon-de-ta-tete.

17.Belga, "Pour Jan Jambon, Beaucoup De Musulmans «Ont Dansé» Après Les Attentats," *Le Soir*, 17.04.2016.

dered to pay €1,200 fines for their involvement in the disruption caused by the far right presence at the Place du Luxembourg, Ixelles demonstration.

Finally, a 37-year-old first time offender was found guilty of attempted arson of the Al Ihsan Muslim Centre in Herstal, Liège, allegedly in revenge for having been hit by an object from the mosque. Initially the attacker tried to deny the offence until presented with CCTV footage. His actions highlight the way in which physical sites also bear the consequences of Islamophobia.

This brief snapshot of the way in which the Belgian judicial system deals with perpetrators of Islamophobia, be it lone actors or anti-Muslim groups, attacks on individuals or Muslim sites, highlights the potential of the Belgian legal system in overcoming Islamophobia. Notwithstanding, Belgian courts have also been complicit in passing measures that limit the freedoms of visibly Muslim women, which in turns contributes to Islamophobia in the country, thus demonstrating the somewhat confusing and paradoxical position occupied by the state.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

The Brussels based group, *Bruxelloise et Voilée*[18] (B&V), was formed in March 2015 and is led by young Belgian Muslim women. Each month they release a two-minute video profiling a headscarf-wearing woman from the city of Brussels. These videos are often viewed over 4,000 times each. Speaking to this year's edition of the Belgian European Islamophobia Report, Bouchra Saadallah of B&V stated:

> "The objective is to promote a multicultural society by fighting against discrimination and stereotypes, in particular against Muslim veiled women. It's both an artistic movement and a militant initiative that aims… to show our diverse identities by speaking about everything but the hijab."[19]

B&V is not immune to Islamophobic hate crimes; given their social media presence the group regularly faces anti-Muslim 'trolling'. For example, a commentator writes:

> "The headscarf is the emblem of your submission. You know it. You should be ashamed for being apologists for your submission whilst other women are fighting diktats created and imposed by men in the name of a false God".[20]

This type of cyber-hate feeds into narratives of visibly Muslim women as anti-feminist, and since feminism and gender equality are ideals that are held closely as West-

18. The French name *Bruxelloiseet Voilée* means "Women from Brussels who were the headscarf".

19. Taken from personal communication with the author.

20. Taken and translated from the French. « Le voile est l'emblème de votre soumission. Vous le savez. Vous devriez être honteuse de faire l'apologie de la soumission alors qu'il y a d'autres femmes qui combattent contre les diktats inventés et imposés par h'homme [sic] au nom d'un prétendu dieu… » Bruxelloise et Voilée, "Bruxelloise Et Voilée," https://www.facebook.com/BruxV/?fref=ts.

ern values, Muslim women are constructed as 'Others' and foreign to national ideals, which in turn contributes to the legitimisation of attacking visibly Muslim women.

In light of the normalisation of such narratives and also given the highly gendered nature of Islamophobia in Belgium, the B&V initiative represents a means of combating stereotypes surrounding visibly Muslim Belgian women and as a result countering Islamophobia.

The Counter-Islamophobia collective in Belgium continues to be at the forefront in recording and reporting rates of Islamophobia, along with providing support and campaigning for the rights of those who suffer anti-muslim hatred in Belgium. Their 'Open Schools4 Women' and the 'Open Jobs Testing' campaigns are among their most noteworthy and original projects of 2016.

The 'Open Schools 4 Women' campaign led by the CCIB was launched in September 2016. The project has a strong social media presence, represented via the hashtag *#OpenSchools4Women* and the social media image shown in Figure 2 below.[21] Given the range of controversies related to Muslim women's dress that surfaced throughout the year, the campaign seeks to encourage the inclusion of Muslim women who wear the headscarf in schools and create dialogue rather than the exclusion of these young women.[22]

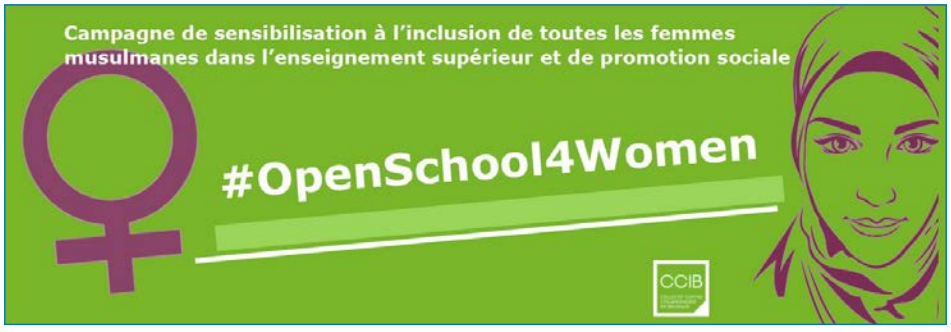


Figure 2: CCIB #OpenSchool4Women social media imagery. Tagline reads 'Campaign to raise awareness for the inclusion of all women in higher education and access courses.'

Similarly, the 'Open Job Testing' project is backed by Brussels MP Didier Gosuin and was launched by CCIB on 28 October, 2016. Inspired by the significant adversities to access to the labour market (such as those highlighted by the 'Forgotten Women' project detailed below), the organisation aims to address the obstacles to employment faced by individuals when accessing the job market, compile statistical evidence pertaining to discrimination in the labour market, and ultimately create resources designed to overcome these barriers.[23]

21. CCIB, (2016) https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/775570419160145921. Accessed 13.02.17

22.Belga, "Lancement D'une Campagne Contre Les Interdictions Du Voile Dans La Formation Pour Adultes," *La Libre*, 12.09.16.

23.Vanessa L'Huillier, "Des Projets Contre La Discrimination À L'embauche," *Le Soir*, 28.10.16.

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) presented its work to combat growing anti-Muslim prejudice, in which ENAR policy officer, Julie Pascoët, spoke of the then-forthcoming 'Forgotten Women' report. The report was launched in the Belgian National Library on 26 May, 2016, and examines the gendered dimension of Islamophobia in the labour market in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK, and, finally, Belgium.

The report highlights statistical evidence to demonstrate the way in which Muslim women are disproportionately affected by Islamophobia in the workforce across Europe, and especially in Belgium. For example, the section pertaining to Belgium highlights that 44% of employers surveyed by Radouane[24] suggested that the headscarf negatively impacts candidate selection.

Similarly, it outlines a case whereby a Muslim woman, who wore the headscarf, was dismissed from her post following a period of maternity leave.[25] The case further highlights the role of gender discrimination in Muslim women's experiences in the workplace. This, along with evidence linked to ethnic discrimination in employment in Belgium, sheds light on the intersection of the numerous features of Belgian Muslim women's identities that contribute to the negative experiences that they face.

The statistical and experience-based examples in the report indicate that Muslim women are more likely to be excluded from the workforce and consequently face limited career progression and socio-professional exclusion. This systematic exclusion of Muslim women from the Belgian labour market also feeds into narratives of Muslim victimhood, which in turn may be exploited by a small minority and contribute to terror attacks and subsequent waves of Islamophobia throughout the country; this highlights the connected nature of terror, Islamophobia, populist discourses and Muslim victimhood.

In the face of growing Islamophobia, the scapegoating of Belgian Muslims, the implication of a very small number of Belgian Muslims in recent terror attacks, and the comparatively significant numbers of Belgian 'jihadi' fighters in Syria, the *Académie Jeunesse Molenbeek* (AJM)[26] presents a refreshing alternative.

Molenbeek has gained both local and international notoriety and has regrettably earned the labels of "Islamic State of Molenbeek" and "Europe's Jihadi capital", among others. The Brussels region of Molenbeek has an estimated 41% Muslim population, compared to 20% throughout Brussels or 6% nationally across Belgium.[27] The area suffers high rates of unemployment, lower educational attainment and poverty. Arguably, these factors contribute to the rise of the exclusion and 'Oth-

24.Radouane, "Enar Shadow Report 2011/2012 Belgium."

25.Elsa Mescoli, *Forgotten Women: The Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Women in Belgium*, (Brussels: ENAR, 2016).

26.*Académie Jeunesse Molenbeek* – Molenbeek Youth Academy.

27.Chaudhary, "How Molenbeek Fought Back against Isis – with Football"; Hertogen, "In België Wonen 628.751 Moslims"; Zibouh, "Muslim Political Participation in Belgium: An Exceptional Political Representation in Europe."

ering' of its population, and perhaps it is this that contributes, in part, to a very small but significant number of Molenbeekers pursuing extremism; of the 543 Belgians believed to be fighting in Syria, 47 were from Molenbeek. Alternatively, the perpetrators of the Brussels terror attacks, the Paris attacks and the Jewish Museum attacks are all said to have links with Molenbeek.

Based in the troubled Brussels region, the youth football academy AJM Under 12's team of rising stars are at the top of their game. The young Molenbeekers fought off competition from across Europe, including Real Madrid and Barcelona Under 12's, to become the league title holders. It is clear that these young stars and their successes are entirely contrary to the Molenbeek terrorist tag.

The club instils discipline and a sense of belonging in these young men. As the club's founder Omar Tizguine states:

> "Our priority is not football but discipline and keeping children off the street. Many boys in Molenbeek are poorly educated and unemployed: they get into bad company and this makes them vulnerable. We make it clear that if you do not focus on school and don't behave in all areas of your life, you cannot be part of this club".[28]

Following the Paris terror attacks and as parents increasingly worry about their children falling prey to extremist rhetoric, the club has faced unprecedented demand by parents of young boys. The work of AJM is supported by Molenbeek Mayor Françoise Schepmans and receives partial financial support from the local authorities.

Based on the assumption that exclusion can, in very small numbers, lead to extremism, which in turn results in attacks that threaten the immediate well-being of society as a whole, and can also bring about increases in anti-Muslim prejudice and attacks, funding and morally supporting projects that are led by locals and importantly reflect the desires of the local population can, on the other hand, create feelings of inclusion and belonging. This sense of belonging should in theory remove the vulnerability of these young Muslim men, reduce attacks perpetrated in the name of fundamentalism and consequently improve the security of society and lessen Islamophobia.

28.Chaudhary, "How Molenbeek Fought Back against Isis – with Football."

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

To summarise and conclude, like in preceding years, 2016 in Belgium has been characterised by a growth in Islamophobia. In particular, anti-Muslim hate crimes peaked in the period after the Brussels terror attacks. Tensions during this time were further stoked by sensationalised and unfounded claims by political officials and media.

Notwithstanding, analysis has shown that through the course of the year, in the fields of employment and education, Islamophobia in Belgium is remarkably gendered, with Muslim women facing increased hostility in the fields of education and employment.

Based on these principal observations, the report makes the following recommendations:

- Continued efforts from politicians, media and policy makers to ensure that their work and remarks are not divisive or contribute to the legitimisation of Muslims in Belgium.
- Similarly, there should be continued support for Belgian NGOs that work to combat anti-Muslim hate and support victims of Islamophobia.
- Given the observed peaks in Islamophobia that become apparent in the periods after terror attacks, in addition to heightened national security, measures should also be implemented to protect the Belgian Muslim community.
- Based on the gendered dimension of Islamophobia in Belgium and the way in which controversies surrounding the headscarf have been used as tools to discriminate Muslim women in education and the workplace, there is a distinct need for increased legal clarity surrounding the headscarf. Furthermore, this should be informed by statistical and qualitative evidence.

# Chronology

## January

- 16 January: Mouvement Réformateur (MR) proposes a headscarf ban, echoing proposals led by Vlaams Belang (VB) in previous years.
- 23 January: Verviers authorities ban PEGIDA demonstration.

## February

- 7 February: Programme 'dimancheRTL' runs a poll which reveals that 80% of respondents do not have a problem with civil servants wearing the headscarf.
- 17 February: Brussels correctional court sentences six far right activists.

## March

- 2 March: Debate surrounding the implementation of secularism in Belgium. Risks compromising the right to wear religious attire, including the headscarf, are discussed and demonstrate the influence of French secularism on Belgium.
- 2 March: UNIA report published. Highlights of the report include the finding that 12% of respondents would be uncomfortable with a Muslim colleague.
- 8 March: CCIB launches report into the gendered dimension of Islamophobia in Belgium. Their evidence indicates that two-thirds of victims of Islamophobia in Belgium, who have come forward to the organisation, are women.
- 20 March: At a round table discussion, Yves Goldstein, president of PS in Scharbeek, states that his teacher friends have asserted that "90% of students aged between seventeen and eighteen years old consider the Paris terrorists to be heroes." Later, it emerges that his claims are largely unfounded and Mr Goldstein quickly backtracks in an attempt not to alienate Muslim supporters.
- 22 March: Brussels terror attacks at Zavantem Airport and Maalbeek metro station by extremists, killing 35 and wounding over 300.
- 22 March: Muslim associations across Belgium, including the Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique (EMB) and the League of Belgian Imams, issue official statements to condemn the terror attacks.
- 27 March: Far right supporters descended on Brussels terror attacks vigil, chanting "F*** IS", giving the Nazi salute, and generally disrupting the peaceful gathering.
- 27 March: Calls for peace from Muslim victims of Brussels terror attacks.
- 29 March: Two potential suspects of the Brussels terror attacks are identified on the grounds that they were praying and carrying backpacks. Later, it emerges that police suspicions were incorrect.
- 29 March: Francoise Schepmans (MR) issues an official ban prohibiting a far right protest due to be held at the Place Communale, Molenbeek.

## April

- 9 April: Muslim associations continue to join in commemoration gatherings for victims of Brussels terror attacks.

- 10 April: Belgian writer and staunch 'laïcist', Nadia Geerts, compares the headscarf to the Jewish yellow star.
- 15 April: Demonstration, by anti-Muslim group, PEGIDA, due to be held in Liege on 21 April, 2016, at the Place du Vingt Août is banned on the grounds of the protection of public order.
- 16 April: Interior Minister Jan Jambon sparks controversy with his allegations that Belgian Muslims had celebrated the recent terror attacks.
- 17 April: MPs Jean-Marc Nollet, Ahmed Laaouej and Emir Kir condemn Jambon's remarks. The latter two issue an open letter to Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel calling for the cautioning of Jan Jambon for his claims.
- 19 April: Federal Deputy Nahima Lanjri comes forward to condemn Jan Jambon, stating he must substantiate or apologise for his claims.
- 21 April: MP Siegfried Bracke states: "Personally, Jan Jambon was right to say what he did [about Belgian Muslims]".
- 24 April: Runner stopped from competing in the Anvers race by four police officers; he believes he was targeted due to his beard and Muslim appearance.
- 25 April: Jan Jambon applauded for defending Belgian Muslims in European Parliament. He rebuffed Dutch far right MEP, Vicky Maeijer, for arguing that Muslims are the root of terror. The action demonstrates contradictory stance by Jan Jambon.
- 27 April: CCIB publishes report and records 36 Islamophobic events in the month following Brussels terror attacks of 22 March.
- 29 April: Director of STIB Breiuc de Meeus speaks out against wave of hate crimes on public transport following the Brussels terror attacks.
- 29 April: Jan Jambon recognises the error of his comments and admits he could have used "better words".
- 30 April: Over 250 Muslim police officers publish an open letter addressed to Jan Jambon following his comments after the Brussels attacks, stating "It is difficult to be a Muslim in the Police Force, because are loyalties are continually being questioned… No, Mr Minister we did not dance on 22 March, we wept for our dead and wounded and some of us still continue to grieve". The letter continues to accuse Jan Jambon of ignoring the efforts of Belgian Muslims in the Police Force.

## May

- 4 May: Three pig heads left outside the future Malmedy mosque site.
- 5 May: Laila Afhim interviewed in the media regarding losing her job in Huy because of her headscarf.
- 6 May: Demonstration of approximately 30 people at the National Infantry Monument against the comments of Jan Jambon about Muslims following the Brussels terror attacks.

- 6 May: School in Molenbeek introduces vegetarian option for Muslim students; efforts met with Islamophobic backlash by online commentators.
- 12 May: Molenbeek Senior Councilwoman Sarah Turine receives death threats and mysterious white powder in anonymous letter, accusing her of being "the shame of the West", and suggesting that the author should "eliminate" her. The letter carries images of crusaders, the Celtic cross and an obscene hand gesture with the word "Islam" written underneath it. (Figure 3)[29]
- 13 May: Opinion piece published in rtbf.be on three women wearing the headscarf and walking in Wavre who were stopped by a man who was staring at them and gestured a gun sign from inside his car.

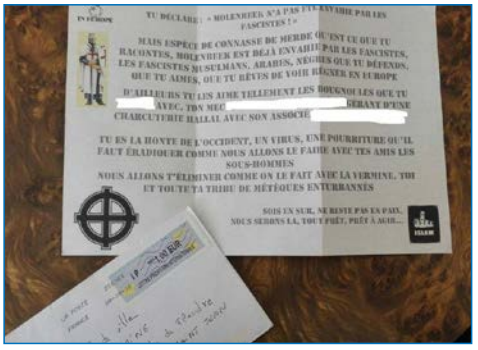


Figure 3: Image showing the anonymous threatening letter received by Sarah Turine

- 14-15 May: Third Flemish Expo held in Flanders. Attended by around 40 members of VB carrying Islamophobic placards with the slogans "no mosque", "no Islam", "no headscarves". Flemish Belgian Muslim woman, Zakia Belkhiri, posed in front of the protesters making the peace symbol. Photos quickly went viral internationally. However, she soon fell from grace as it was alleged she had previously tweeted anti-Semitic messages. (Figure 4)[30]

Figure 4: Image showing Zakia Belkhiri posing for a 'selfie' in front of a Vlaams Belang anti-Muslim protest.

- 26 May: Sud Presse publishes statistics pertaining to Muslim populations across Belgium; '781 887 Musulmans vivent en Belgique' - serious news or whipping up hysteria of a Muslim takeover?
- 26 May: ENAR "Forgotten Women" project launched at the national library.
- 30 May: Thibault de Montbinal cartoon published; the image reads: "Islamophobia is a concept used for shutting down all debate". Such 'non-arguments', in fact, halt meaningful discussion of anti-Muslim prejudice. (Figure 5)[31]

29. Karim Fadoul, "Molenbeek: L'Échevine, Sarah Turine, menace de mort dans un courier anonyme porte plainte." *Rtbf.be* (12th May 2016), retrieved on 13th February 2017 from http://www.vox.com/2016/5/17/11692306/muslim-selfies-islamophobia-protest-antwerp-belgium.

30. Emily Crockett, "This Woman Brilliantly Countered an Anti-Muslim Protest – with Selfies." (25th May 2016), retrieved on 13th February 2017 from http://www.vox.com/2016/5/17/11692306/muslim-selfies-islamophobia-protest-antwerp-belgium.

31. CCIB, 30th May 2016. Retrieved on 13th February 2017 from https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/737298358457536512.

- 31 May: Alain Binet found guilty and received a six-month suspended sentence for inciting hatred against Brussels MP Mahinur Ozdemir on Facebook in November 2015.

Figure 5: Image shared by CCIB. Reads "Islamophobia is a concept used for shutting down all debate."

## June

- 17 June: Islamophobic stickers found placed around Liege. The messages read "Stop Islamization– www.villescontrelislamisation.fr" and "Yes to steeples, no to minarets." Both carry images of mosques that have been crossed through. (Figure 6)[32]

Figure 6: Image showing Islamophobic stickers placed around Liège.

## July

- 4 July: CCIB annual report launched detailing Islamophobia and the organisation's activities in the previous year.
- 5 July: Liege announces that schools will no longer permit the headscarf from the start of the new academic year.
- 13 July: Advocate general of the European Court of Justice, Eleanor Sharpston, puts forward opinion on headscarves in private companies, stating "The workplace ruling that companies can force an employee to remove her headscarf during contact with clients represents an illicit and direct discrimination." Ruling published in Belgian media amid the background of ongoing headscarf cases.
- 26 July: Reports emerge of Islamophobic petition posted throughout Anderlecht. The document is directed to "Belgians of Anderlecht and beyond" and states "We must stay vigilant and remark that as a result of matters, we are forced to become Islamo-

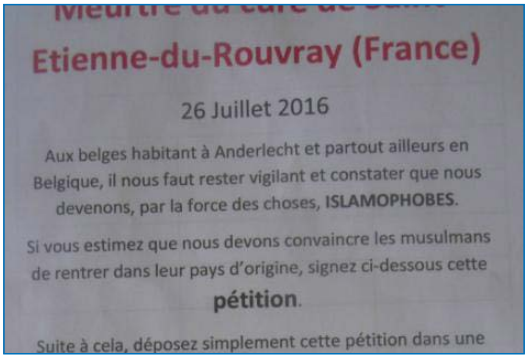


Figure 7: Image from Islamophobic petition circulated in Anderlecht.

32. CCIB, 17th June 2016. Retrieved on 13th February 2017 from https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/743804467863232512.

phobes. If you think that we must convince Muslims to return to their countries of origin sign this petition below…We must safeguard our religion." Whilst also being directly Islamophobic, this petition compounds 'them' and 'us' type views, and conflates racial and religious prejudices. (Figure 7)[33]

- 28 July: In the Brussels metro, a Muslim woman wearing the headscarf is physically attacked on her commute home.

## August

- 2 August: UNIA opens a dossier for Islamophobic hate messages following the death of an adolescent.
- 4 August: Le Soir publishes cartoon commentary on the changing nature of hate speech online, particularly relevant considering the large volume of everyday Islamophobia on the Internet. (Figure 8)[34]
- 17 August: Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (NVA)[35] Deputy Nadia Sminate calls for a ban on the burkini throughout Belgium, including beaches and swimming pools. She says "We must absolutely avoid that women walk around in burkinis in Flanders, not on the beaches or in swimming pools."

Figure 8: Figure showing the evolving nature of hate. Text reads before and after.

- 17 August: Flanders Red Cross scandal breaks out: the organisation tweeted a call for a blood drive and received the reply "I would very much like to give blood, but not to Muslims, can you guarantee that?"
- 24 August: Theo Francken, minister for asylum and immigration, speaks out to oppose the burkini on the grounds of gender equality.
- 25 August: MR party in Anderlecht comes under fire as a result of a supporter sharing video calling for the murder of Muslims.
- 31 August: Two Muslim women were prohibited from sitting exams in Uccle on the grounds of their headscarves on 30 August, 2016. The decision was overturned by the *Institut d'enseignement de promotion sociale de la communauté Francaise* that allowed the women to sit their exams.

33. Belga, "La Police Enquête sur une Pétition Islamophobe à Anderlecht" *lesoir.be* (27th July 2016), retrieved 13th February 2017, from http://www.lesoir.be/1277350/article/actualite/belgique/2016-07-27/police-enquete-sur-une-petition-islamophobe-anderlecht.

34. CCIB, retrieved on 13th February 2017 from https://twitter.com/CCIB_be/status/761221289126293504.

35. *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* – New Flemish Alliance.

## September

- 1 September: Bylaw comes into effect to forbid ostentatious faith symbols on access courses.
- 1 September: Belgian Muslim women, of Turkish origin, attacked at children's school in Bourg-Léopold, Limbourg, and Liège.
- 2 September: Francophone MP, Joelle Maison, spoke out on behalf of Muslim women who wear the headscarf. She argued "Forbidding the headscarf on access courses means to deprive women of the right to education" and stressed the need for blanket regulation rather than leaving the decision with individual schools.
- 10 September: *#openschool4women* campaign launched by CCIB that seeks to encourage the inclusion of women who wear the headscarf and promote dialogue, rather than exclusion.
- 13 September: Choudhry Awais Tayeb, a 19-year-old Molenbeek student, invents non-flammable headscarf for Muslim women who wish to pursue science careers. The hijab is sold out immediately. She came up with the idea after having been refused entry to study petrochemical engineering due to her headscarf not meeting health and safety standards.
- 16 September: Nadia Geerts publishes an open letter to Muslim women on her blog, criticising Muslim women who claim to be feminist and frames the headscarf as an affront to gender equality.

## October

- 4 October: Reaffirmation that mothers who wear the headscarf cannot participate as volunteers in schools. Senior Councilwoman for education, Fouzia Hariche, commented that as volunteers the women become classed as workers and therefore must abide by rules governing neutrality.
- 4 October: The Court of Liege announces that schools cannot ban the wearing of political, philosophical and faith symbols. Case brought by 16 headscarf-wearing students. Judge announced that the headscarf is not an obstacle to education.
- 11 October: *Parti Socialiste* (PS)[36] Deputy Deborah Géradon comments on the headscarf in higher education: "Personally, [I think] religious beliefs are for the private domain. Sometimes neutrality must be imposed [by schools]."
- 13 October: Yousra Dahri's application rejected by the Brussels Arts Academy because of her headscarf.
- 17 October: In Herstal, Liège a mosque is attacked by a drunk 37-year-old male.

## November

- 8 November: CCIB project *#openjobtesting* is launched.
- 16 November: The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office

36. *PartiSocialiste* – Socialist Party (PS).

for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE – ODIHR) publishes a report detailing hate crimes internationally. The report includes an overview of SETA report on Islamophobia in Belgium in 2015.[37]

### December

- 1 December: The Union of Brussels Region Mosques and the Platform of Belgian Muslims issue a letter to Brussels political officials condemning the "abusive inspections" of Muslim sites of worship. Mosques in the capital report feeling unreasonably targeted and that such inspections contribute to the wider sentiment of hate experienced by Belgian Muslims.

## Acknowledgements

In addition to recognising the work of the numerous and effective counter-Islamophobia initiatives in Belgium, I also extend particular gratitude to Bouchra Saadallah of *Bruxelloise and Voilée*, and Şükran Bulut of *KifKif* for their contributions to this section of the *European Islamophobia Report*.

37. The full report can be found here http://hatecrime.osce.org/belgium.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

HIKMET KARČIĆ

## The Author

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# Executive Summary

The overall negative and discriminatory trends towards Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina are evident mostly in the educational, political and media sectors. The main generators of Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim bigotry are the Bosnian Serb political, media and academic policymakers. The Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity *Republika Srpska* intensified its secessionist rhetoric and raised tensions in the country by holding a referendum regarding its Statehood Day while undermining the B&H Constitutional Court. *Republika Srpska*'s political establishment often used anti-Muslim and Islamophobic rhetoric to rally support; this was especially evident during the general elections in October 2016.

This year also saw the continuation of the denial of genocide and war crimes by the Serb authorities. The local and regional media contributed to anti-Muslim bigotry with reports about terrorist threats and radical ideology, connecting it with the Bosniak political and religious establishment. The wars in Syria and Iraq gave way to sensationalist media reports trying to connect Bosniaks with "Islamic extremism". The two main occasions for these reports were the return of several dozen Bosniaks from the Syria and Iraq war zones and local court cases where ex-fighters and local instigators were tried.

A relatively new development in the country is the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab bigotry as a result of the rise of Arab tourists in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Certain media outlets suggested that Arabs in fact were not tourists but migrants who will change the demographic image of B&H. This assumption is further fueled by claims that these Arabs will impose their laws and their culture on Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

Lastly, this year saw a continuation of physical and verbal attacks on mosques and imams, mostly in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity *Republika Srpska*. Almost all of these cases remain unresolved by the police. Additional anti-Muslim hatred was visible at football matches and in graffiti in Serb-dominated towns.

# Sažetak

Cjelokupni negativni i diskriminatornih trendovi prema muslimanima u Bosni i Hercegovini se uglavnom očituje u obrazovnom, političkom i medijskom sistemu. Glavni generatori islamofobije i anti-muslimanske netrpeljivosti su čelnici bosanskih Srba - politički, medijski i akademski nosioci politike. Bosansko-hercegovački entitet Republika Srpska intenzivirala je secesionističku retoriku održavanjem referenduma u vezi s danom državnosti RS, i time podrivala odluku Ustavnog suda BiH. Političke strukture Republike Srpske često su koristili anti-muslimansku i islamofobičnu retoriku za mobilizaciju podrške što se vidjelo tokom opšti izbora u oktobru 2016. godine. Ove godine se nastavilo negiranje genocida i ratnih zločina od strane srpskih zvaničnika. Domaći i regionalni mediji doprinijeli su anti-muslimanskim netrpeljivostima kroz izvještavanje o terorističkim prijetnjama i radikalnoj ideologiji, povezivajući ih s bošnjačkim političkim i vjerskim zvaničnicima. Ratovi u Siriji i Iraku dali su povoda senzacionalističkim medijima da povezuju Bošnjake sa "islamskim ekstremizmom". Dva glavna događaja za ova izvještavanja su: povratak nekoliko desetina Bošnjaka s ratišta Sirije i Iraka te domaći sudski slučajevi gdje su bivši borci i domaći podstrekivači. Relativno nova pojava je porast anti-muslimanske i anti-arapske netrpeljivosti koja je uzrokovana porastom broja arapskih turista u zemlji. Pojedine medijske kuće sugerirale su da Arapi ustvari nisu turisti već migrant koji će promijeniti demografsku sliku BiH. Ova pretpostavka je dalje potpaljena tvrdnjama da će ovi Arapi nametnuti svoje zakone i njihovu kulturu on bosanskohercegovačko društvo. Konačno, ove godine je vidljiv nastavak fizičkih i usmenih napada na džamije i imame, većinom u bosanskohercegovačkom entitetu Republika Srpska. Skoro svi ovi napadi nisu procesuirani od strane policije. Dodatna anti-muslimanska mržnja bila je vidljiva na fudbalskim utakmicama i na grafitima u srpsko-dominantnim gradovima.

# Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a post-conflict and transitional country which has a very complex political structure. Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attacks have been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a long time. The first public Islamophobic statements appeared in the late 1980s and were made by Orientalists and self-proclaimed Islam experts at the University of Belgrade. After the aggression and genocide of 1992-95, and especially after the terror attacks of 11 September, 2001, Islamophobia has been on the rise. Most of the attacks are aimed at Bosniak returnees in *Republika Srpska* and in Croat-majority areas. The largest concentration of Bosniaks is in the Federation where there are almost no attacks other than occasional Islamophobic statements or writings. Research for this report was based on available reports, media analysis and interviews with important stakeholders; people and institutions were contacted in order to gain relevant information on different topics that included the media, justice, education, etc.

It is generally accepted that Islam arrived in Bosnia with the Ottoman armies in the fifteenth century. Today, Bosnian Muslims are overwhelmingly Sunnis. Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) are an indigenous Slavic ethnic group. More than 55 years of communism (1945-1990) in Yugoslavia kept religion in the dark. However, after Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito's death in 1980, a rise of Serb nationalism first incited anti-Albanian and later anti-Muslim rhetoric. Centuries old ideas of establishing a homogenous greater Serbian state was revived by the Yugoslav regime under Slobodan Milošević. During 1992-95, an international armed conflict and genocide (the aim of establishing a Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia meant dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina and getting rid of its Muslim population) caused the deaths of at least 100,000 people, 30,000 enforced disappearances and the rape of 30,000 women and girls.[1] The vast majority of the victims were Bosniaks whose remains were buried in hundreds of hidden mass graves throughout the country. In addition to this, an estimated 600 mosques and a variety of Islamic religious objects were deliberately destroyed by the Bosnian Serb Army and the Croat Defence Council. A decade of communism followed by genocidal massacres of the Bosniak population resulted in today's situation where interreligious understanding and tolerance is fragile and complex.

The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the war entrenching the results of genocide, and cementing the divide in the country. Annex 4 of the Dayton Agreement is the Constitution of B&H in which two separate entities (territorial units) are established: the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the *Republika Srpska*, each with its own president, government, parliament, police and other bodies. Overarching these entities is the state of Bosnia government

1. For a better understanding of the war see: Edina Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2014).

and rotating (three-member) presidency. In addition, there is the district of Brčko, a self-governing administrative unit established as a neutral area that is placed under joint Serb, Croat and Bosniak authority. This elaborate multi-tiered system of government, with cabinets and parliaments on state, entity and cantonal levels, means that Bosnia is now overburdened with politicians and civil servants, many of whom continue to receive salaries not in keeping with the country's impoverished condition.[2]

When it comes to the population of Muslims in B&H, according to the census conducted in 2013, 50.11% (1,769,592) of inhabitants declared themselves to be Bosniaks (out of a total 3,531,159).[3] A slightly larger percentage (50.70%) stated that their religion is Islam. Since, in the case of all three constituent ethic communities in Bosnia, the ethnic and religious identities overlap to large extent, this figure is usually taken as indicative of the number of adherents to Islam. Due to war-related death, expulsion and internal and external migration in the 1992-1995 aggression against B&H, the numbers and demographic distribution of ethnic groups have significantly changed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a secular state with no state religion. In today's post-war B&H, the increased presence of religion in the public arena is evident. Some welcome the religious revival as a healthy assertion of identity after the decades-long de-Islamization process that occurred during the communist period, while others see it as a rising threat to the secular and politically fragile state.[4]

Annex 1 of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina includes 15 main documents on human rights. The constitution states that the rights and freedoms set forth in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols shall apply directly in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These shall have priority over all other law (Article 2.2). All persons within the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall enjoy the human rights and fundamental freedoms referred to in Paragraph 2 above; these include: (...)(g) Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 2.3). A special law providing for the freedom of religion and religious non-discrimination, as well as the legal status of churches and religious communities was adopted in 2004. This is the Law on Freedom of Religion and the Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to this law everyone has the right to freedom of religion or belief, including the freedom to publicly profess, or not, a religion. Also, everyone has a right to adopt or change his or her religion, and has the freedom - individually

2. For more information, see: CIA Fact book, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ bk.html.

3. *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina - 2013 final results*, http://www.popis2013.ba/popis2013/doc/Popis2013prvoIzdanje.pdf

4. Also see: State Department's International Religious Freedom Report for B&H at http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper

or in community with others, in public or private - to manifest his or her religion or belief in any manner, in worship, practice and observance, or in maintenance of customs or other religious activities. Everyone has the right to religious education, which shall be provided solely by persons appointed to do so by an official representative of the individual's church or religious community, whether in religious institutions or in public and private preschool institutions, primary schools and higher education, and this shall be regulated according to the specific regulations (Article 4.1). Along with this, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination was also adopted in 2009; according to this law discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief consists of any differential treatment, including any type of exclusion, limitation or preference based on real or assumed features towards any person or group of persons on grounds of religion or belief, and every other circumstance with a purpose or a consequence that inhibits or endangers recognition, enjoyment or realisation of rights and freedoms in all areas of public life (Article 2.1). Prohibition of such discrimination shall be applied to all public bodies, all natural and legal persons, in the public and private sector, in all spheres; in particular, in employment, membership in professional organisations, education, training, housing, health, social protection, goods and services designated for public and public places together with performing economic activities and public services (Article 2).

Hate crime as a specific crime is motivated by intolerance towards certain groups in society. Some of the several criminal codes in B&H contain limited provisions that allow more severe punishment to be imposed for crimes committed with a motivation of bias. Use of these provisions is inconsistent and relatively rare. For example, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) and the Brčko District Criminal Codes include aggravated forms of some criminal acts, such as murder, rape or causing grievous bodily injury when committed with a motivation of bias. The FB&H Criminal Code also includes an aggravated form of malicious mischief. Many laws on peace and public order at the cantonal level also include minor offences, punishable with a fine, which encompass insulting behaviour based on national, racial or religious grounds. The FB&H, *Republika Srpska* and Brčko District Criminal Codes also include provisions on incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, discord or hostility. According to OSCE B&H statistics hate crimes in B&H often target returnee communities (who are often isolated and vulnerable) and religious and sacred objects (mosques, churches and graveyards), as well as private property belonging to returnees or members of minority communities. OSCE B&H also records hate crimes through the Hate Monitor.[5] More than 85% of all hate crimes registered through the Hate Monitor are due to ethnicity/religion. Unfortunately, the statistics are not segregated by religion. When it comes to hate speech regulations, the FB&H

5. For more information, see: http://hatemonitor.oscebih.org/Default.aspx?pageid=10&lang=EN

and RS laws do not specifically proscribe hate speech, but prohibit acts that cause ethnic, racial or religious hatred.[6] Nevertheless, usage of incendiary language (in the media, by politicians and others) usually goes unpunished.[7]

Islamophobic hate speech is particularly common online. To this date, no procedures have been initiated that would limit or sanction such activities. More information on hate speech in media will be given in the report's media section.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Three events marked the rise of Islamophobia in 2016. Firstly, the secessionist rhetoric of *Republika Srpska*'s political establishment reached a new high when a referendum on the *Republika Srpska* Statehood Day was held in September. *Republika Srpska*'s President Milorad Dodik is on the record for making anti-Muslim statements and for denying the Bosnian genocide in the past. This year his actions continued and were echoed by other politicians from *Republika Srpska*.

The ongoing war in Syria and Iraq opened way for sensationalist media reports and the association of Bosniaks with extremists. This is an especially interesting topic for media outlets in Croatia and Serbia which often portrayed Sarajevo and B&H as centres of "Islamic extremism".

Finally, the rise in visits by Arab tourists provided a new and virtually unknown form of bigotry in Bosnia and Herzegovina: a phobia of Middle-Eastern tourists.

The following incidents were collected through media report, direct reporting to the Commission and personal contacts.[8] The Interreligious Council of B&H also published a report on the monitoring and the responces to attacks on religious buildings and other holy sites in B&H.[9] When this report was being written, the data for 2016 had not yet been published.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Employment

The High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council's decision to ban headscarves and other religious symbols on October 2015, reached its peak with highly publicised public debates in the start of 2016. The Islamic Community petitioned to the council to

6. For more information, see: http://zalbe.vzs.ba/index.php/zakonska-rjesenja

7. United States Department of State, Country Report for B&H on Human Rights Practices for 2015, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor.

8. I would like to thank Mr. Mensur Karadža, head of legal department in Riyasat of Islamic community; Nihad Mehmedović, legal adviser in Riyasat of Islamic community; and Elvedin Subašić, journalist from *Preporod* newspaper for their valuable information and insight.

9. I would like to thank Mr. Igor Kožemjakin from the Interreligious Council for providing informtion of IRC registered attacks from January to October 2016. The IRC only registers attacks which are reported to it.

reconsider its decision, but in February 2016, the council reaffirmed its position on the ban of religious symbols in courts and other legal institutions.[10]

The proposed text of the agreement between Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would improve the status and guarantee rights of Muslim employees, was passed on to the B&H Presidency in March and has not progressed since that date.[11]

The most publicised case regarding employment was that of Edvin Omerović, an employee of the Tuzla International Airport. Omerović was fired from his job after a TV report in which he was portrayed as a suspected terrorist after asking for a prayer room at the airport and for attending certain public lectures by Muslim preachers.[12]

In 2016, the Commission for Freedom of Religion received three complaints out of which only one can be considered an obvious violation of a Muslim person's freedom of religion and a breach of human rights.

Mirza Drežnjak is an employee of the Federal Penal and Correctional Facility in Mostar. Drežnjak was asked by the Facility Director Romeo Zelenika to write a statement for being late to work after using his daily break. Zelenika stated that Drežnjak was late on six occasions by between 9 and 20 minutes. Drežnjak replied in a written statement that he used his daily break (30 minutes) for *jummah* prayers. The *jummah* prayers were conducted within the facility. Zelenika brought a Decision on Preventive Suspension of Drežnjak due to existing evidence of committing the criminal offence of "provoking general danger" according to Article 323 of the Federation B&H Criminal Code. Since 20 May, 2016, Drežnjak has been suspended pending the decision of the prosecution. The Commission for Freedom of Religion has written to the Federal Ministry of Justice regarding this case but has not received any reply as of yet.[13]

## Education

The year 2016 marked a continuation of a blunt and serious violation of Bosniak children's constitutional right to be taught as a "national group" in schools in *Republika Srpska*. Several Bosniak returnee communities refused to enroll their children in schools in the Bosnian entity *Republika Srpska* because they were not entitled to learn the Bosnian language. One such community in Vrbanjci near Kotor Varoš sued the Sveti Savo Primary School. On 25 November, 2016, the Regional Court in Banja

10."Bosnia Judicial Authorities Uphold Hijab Ban, Despite Protests", *RFE*, February 11, 2016, http://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-judiciary-upholds-ban-on-hijab-despite-protests/27545654.html

11. E. Mušinovič, "Sporazum Islamske zajednice i BiH dostavljen Predsjedništvu BiH na usvajanje" /Klix.ba,28.3.2016,http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/sporazum-islamske-zajednice-i-bih-dostavljen-predsjednistvu-bih-na-usvajanje/160328049

12.Mersiha Gadzo, "In Bosnia, Syrian Abu Hamza jailed without trial", *Al Jazeera*, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2016/03/bosnia-syrian-abu-hamza-jailed-trial-160323093808061.html

13. I would like to thank Nihad Mehmedović for providing the documentation for this case.

Luka delivered a decision that there was no discrimination against Bosniak children in the school. Bosniak parents announced that they will appeal to higher judicial levels in order to secure their children's right to be taught Bosnian in school.[14]

In January 2016, a similar case was turned down by the Primary Court in Banja Luka in the case of Bosniak returnee children and the teaching of Bosnian in Petar Đokić School in Konjević Polje near Srebrenica.[15]

As a result, the Islamic Community provided temporary makeshift schools where children are taught according to national B&H curriculum and teachers are brought in from the Federation B&H.

On 28 December, the University of Sarajevo Senate adopted an initiative that suggested to its faculties to provide a break in courses for jummah prayers and other religious ceremonies.[16] This caused an outbreak of reactions in the media and in academia. One of the most visible reactions came from *Republika Srpska* Radio and Television whose evening news was titled "*Pauza petkom u vrijeme džume – da li je Sarajevski univerzitet uveo šerijat*?" (Break on Fridays during jummah – did the Sarajevo University adopt Shariah?). The event was reported in an extremely sensationalist manner.[17]

## Politics

The political atmosphere was marked by a continuation of secessionist rhetoric and a culmination of Serb nationalism with a referendum regarding the *Republika Srpska* Statehood Day (9 January) which was ruled by the B&H Constitutional Court as unconstitutional since it is a Orthodox Christian religious holiday and "marks the day in 1992 when a renegade Bosnian Serb assembly declared an independent Serbian state in Bosnia".[18]

As in the past years, *Republika Srpska*'s President Milorad Dodik spearheaded the Islamophobic campaign. After the 2013 population census was published in July 2016 (which showed that Bosniaks constitute more than 50% of the population), Dodik gave an interview to Belgrade-based *Politika* in which he stated:

> "Bakir Izetbegović said that he is continuing the politics of his father Alija. Alija Izetbegović said that Muslims have to endure in a minority until they are a

14. Jakub Salkić, "Sud legalizirao diskriminaciju bošnjačke djece", *STAV*, 16.12.2016, http://stav.ba/sud-legalizirao-diskriminaciju-bosnjacke-djece/

15. "Presuda u slučaju diskriminacije djece u Konjević Polju", *BHTV*, 23.01.2016, http://www.bhrt.ba/vijesti/bih/banja-luka-osnovni-sud-odbio-tuzbu-roditelja-i-ucenika-iz-konjevic-polja/

16. "Senat UNSA odlučio: Studenti će imati slobodno vrijeme za džumu, misu i druge vjerske obrede", Klix.ba, 28.12.2016, https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/senat-unsa-odlucio-studenti-ce-imati-slobodno-vrijeme-za-dzumu-misu-i-druge-vjerske-obrede/161228050

17. "Pauza petkom u vrijeme džume – da li je Sarajevski univerzitet uveo šerijat?", *RTRS*, 29.12.2016, http://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=236578

18. Gordana Knezevic, "The Politics Of Fear: Referendum In Republika Srpska", *Radio Free Europe*, 23 September 2016, http://www.rferl.org/a/politics-of-fear-referendum-in-republika-srpska-statehood-day-dodik/28009309.html

> majority. When they become a majority then they have to form an Islamic state. We see this Islamic State in the Middle East. Here, now they have reached 50% and now is probably the time to create an Islamic state in Bosnia."[19]

After the B&H Council of Ministers accepted the draft agreement between the state and the Islamic Community, the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD), the leading political party from *Republika Srpska* headed by Milorad Dodik, stated that the agreement is discriminatory and that it "dictates shariah law".[20]

## Media

In 2016, the leading print and electronic media in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina dealt with Islam and Muslims mostly in two ways: firstly, on the occasion of holidays and secondly, on the occasion of topics related to terrorism or the war in Syria and Iraq. Islamophobic articles and reports related to Bosniaks and Bosnia and Herzegovina were also strongly present in neighbouring countries Serbia and Croatia which were then picked up by media outlets in B&H.

Certain media in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region opt for sensationalist approaches, unprofessional attitudes, and inconsiderate and inflammatory rhetoric. A majority of these reports suggested that B&H is a safe haven for terrorists. For example, in March, Zagreb-based newspaper *Večernji List* published a report written by Zoran Krešić titled "*U Sarajevu zapovjedni centar Islamske države*" (The Command Centre of Islamic State is in Sarajevo) which stated that six former Guantanamo Bay prisoners are walking freely in Sarajevo.[21] This report came quickly after Imand al-Huseini, better known as Abu Hamza, was released from the Immigration Centre in Sarajevo after six years of detention without trial.

Another example is the Banja Luka-based, *SRNA*, the official *Republika Srpska* News Agency, which published a report in December titled "*Teroristi se već okupljaju u BiH, na Kosovu i u Sandžaku*" (Terrorists are already gathering in B&H, Kosovo and Sanjak). This report quoted a certain Milan Pašanski, a professor at the Faculty of Applied Ecology at Singidunum University in Belgrade and a self-proclaimed expert on terrorism.[22] The report suggested that there is an exodus of terrorists from the so-called Islamic State towards Europe and that they are

19.Biljana Baković, "Od popisa do islamske države u BiH", *Politika*, 2 July 2016, http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/358416/%D0%9E%D0%B4

20."SNSD: Ugovor između Islamske zajednice i BiH diktat šerijata", *ATV*, 1 October 2016, http://www.atvbl.com/snsd-ugovor-izmedu-islamske-zajednice-bih-diktat-serijata/

21. Zoran Krešić, 'U Sarajevu zapovjedni centar Islamske države', *Večernji list*, 10 March 2016, http://www.vecernji.hr/svijet/u-sarajevu-zapovjedni-centar-islamske-drzave-1066950

22. He teaches subjects such as "The Politics of Ecology" and "EU Ecology Politics". Singdunum University is a private institution.

gathering in B&H, Sanjak and Kosovo from where they will "carry out terrorist attacks in the EU".[23]

In recent years, Bosnia and Herzegovina has become a tourist destination for tourists from the Gulf countries. Some media outlets in the country and in the region reacted in two ways: connecting Arab tourists to extremism and claiming that B&H is losing its land and becoming an Arab colony. Zagreb-based *Večernji list* published a report by their correspondent Hassan Haidar Diab titled "*Naučite arapski. Uskoro bi to mogao postati drugi službeni jezik u BiH*" (Learn Arabic. Soon It Will Be the Second Official Language in B&H) which cited anonymous sources who claimed that they were afraid of the number of Arabs visiting B&H. Diab also stated that 30% of these Arabs were followers of Wahabbi-Salafi ideology, such as the ideologies of Al-Qaeda and the so-called Islamic State.[24] This report was picked up by Bosnian Croat and Serb portals.

Media outlets are partly responsible for anti-Muslim and Islamophobic sentiment due to their insufficiently balanced and sensationalist approaches, unprofessional attitudes and inconsiderate and inflammatory rhetoric.

## Justice System

In February 2016, Imad Al-Husin, also known as Abu Hamza, a Bosnian citizen of Syrian descent was released after being kept in detention at the Immigration Centre near Sarajevo without trial for seven years on the grounds that he was a "threat to national security". The Ministry of Security released a statement regarding his release:

> "[Imad Al-Husin] [s]till represents a menace for the national security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and our Service will continue activities to find a safe third country willing to accept this foreign citizen with the objective of his removal from Bosnia and Herzegovina."[25]

Due to the fact that a significant number of former fighters return from conflict zones to B&H, the state brought a new law criminalising taking part in foreign conflicts. As a result, several former fighters were arrested. In March, Emin Hodžić was the first person to be sentenced by the Court of B&H for fighting with the so-called Islamic State.[26] Since then more than a dozen former fighters were sentenced for supporting, funding and fighting with IS.

23. This report was published by several media outlets including Banja Luka-based *Nezavisne Novine*: Teroristi se već okupljaju u BiH, na Kosovu i u Sandžak, 12 December 2016, http://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/ex-yu/Teroristi-se-vec-okupljaju-u-BiH-na-Kosovu-i-u-Sandzaku/402481

24. Hassan Haider Diab, "Naučite arapski. Uskoro bi to mogao postati drugi službeni jezik u BiH", 5 September 2016, *Večernji list*, http://www.vecernji.hr/svijet/naucite-arapski-uskoro-bi-to-mogao-postati-drugi-sluzbeni-jezik-u-bih-1111301.

25. See more at: "Bosnia Ends Abu Hamza's Seven-Year Ordeal", Balkan Insight, 18 February 2016, http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnia-releases-abu-hamza-02-18-2016#sthash.K5dFKLgD.dpuf

26. "Prva presuda za borbu na strani ISIL-a: Sud BiH osudio Emina Hodžića na godinu dana zatvora", Slobodna Bosna, 21 March 2016, http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/29136/prva_presuda_za_borbu_na_strani_isil_a_sud_bih_osudio_emina_hodzica_na_godinu_dana_zatvora.html

The Islamic Community (IC) spearheaded several important CVE projects, two of which stand out. The Association Ilmijja organised a series of lectures throughout the country in cooperation with OSCE titled "*Imamski poziv, vjerski radikalizam i nasilni ekstremizam*" (The Imam's Profession, Religious Radicalism and Violent Extremism).[27] The lectures were given by Islamic scholars and experts.

The second project was led by the IC's Directorate of Foreign Affairs and titled "*Rad sa mladima na njihovom pravilnom usmjeravanju i prevenciji bolesti ovisnosti, nasilja i ektremizma*" ("Working with young people for their proper guidance and prevention of addiction, violence and extremism"). This project was supported by the Norwegian Embassy in B&H. Its aim was to train professionals by offering them skills and knowledge for their work with young people.

The OSCE was also active with projects such as the Youth Summit held in Bihać in December 2016. The event was organised as part of the OSCE mission regarding the prevention of violent extremism in B&H. It contributes to the OSCE's wider campaign under the title "United in Countering Violent Extremism".

Finally, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) implemented a project titled "Community-based approach to support youth in targeted Municipalities of B&H" which also dealt with CVE.

An important initiative which should also be mentioned is the case of illegal Jamaats in B&H. These are newly established *jamaats* which are not recognised and are not part of the Islamic Community – a total of 38 such *jamaats* were identified. From December 2015 to March 2016, the Islamic Community worked on an inclusive mechanism to make these *jamaats* a part of the institutionalised Islamic Community. The majority of them accepted to become part of the Islamic Community while a smaller number refused.[28]

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

Most of the Islamophobic incidents that occurred in 2016 are related to the Bosniak returnee communities in *Republika Srpska* and in Croat-majority areas.[29] In January, an armed attack occurred on the Atik Mosque in Janja, Bijeljina.[30] Several unidentified persons shot firearms and damaged a window and the facade of the mosque.

In late March, online threats were made to the Main Imam of Vlasenica Nurudin – ef. Grahić by a local Serb.[31] In Bijeljina, Enesa Okanović, an employee of the Islamic

27. "Ilmija" is an association of imams and teachers of religious studies classes in public schools.

28. "Rijaset predstavio izvještaj o razgovorima sa nelegalnim džematima", *Islamska Zajednica*, 23 April 2016, http://www.islamskazajednica.ba/vijesti/mina-vijesti/23739-rijaset-predstavio-izvjestaj-o-razgovorima-sa-paradzematima

29. I would like to thank Elvedin Subašić, journalist at *Preporod* newspaper, for providing information for this section.

30. Agencija Anadolija, "Novi napad na Atik džamiju u Janji, pucano iz vatrenog oružja", *Klix.ba*, 7.1.2016, https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/novi-napad-na-atik-dzamiju-u-janji-pucano-iz-vatrenog-oruzja/160107052

31. Elvedin Subašić, "Pregled: Napadi na muslimane u BiH u 2016. godini", *Preporod*, 15.01.2017, http://www.preporod.com/index.php/sve-vijesti/drustvo/akuelno/item/6136-pregled-napadi-na-muslimane-u-bih-u-2016-godini

Community was verbally attacked by local Serbs. A few days later, the building of the *Majlis* of the Islamic Community in Bijeljina was desecrated with Serb nationalist graffiti stating "Only Unity Saves The Serbs" (*Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava*) and "Serbia to Tokyo" (*Srbija do Tokija*). Both of these slogans refer to the Greater Serbia nationalist ideology – whereby all Serbs will gather into a homogenous Serb state.[32]

On 8 May, a day after the reconstructed Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka was opened, during morning prayers, a group of Serbs chanted the nationalist slogan "The Knife, The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica" (*Noz, zica, Srebrenica*) in front of the mosque.

In June, Bosniak returnees in Pljevi, Šipovo, were verbally attacked. A few days later, a bomb exploded in front of Bosniak returnee Nijaz Glavaš's house in Majevac near Šipovo.[33] On 21 June, an antiterrorism exercise was organised in Luke village near Srebrenica, as a show of force in order to intimidate Bosniak returnees.[34] The next day, pyrotechnics were thrown on a mosque in Čajnice during the *Laylat-Al Badr* night of Ramadan. The day after, an explosive device was thrown during *Tarawih* prayers near Mir Muhamed Mosque in Čajniče.[35] On 24 June, the Orthodox priest Bojan Pačavra and Ljubiša Božić, under the influence of alcohol, insulted and threatened worshippers in front of the mosque in Vrbanja, Banja Luka.[36] One of the men held a knife. Both were arrested by the police.

In late August, Bosniak returnees in Kotor-Kukavice, Kotor Varoš were insulted and intimidated by a group of Serbs.[37] The police intervened. On 24 August, Imam Mirsad Husejnović was verbally attacked by local Serbs in Bratunac.

On 9 September, a Bosniak returnee, Mensur Saračević, was verbally and physically attacked by a group of Serbs in Vlasenica. On 16 September, a group of 20 Serb men severely beat a young man when they heard that he was a Muslim in a café in Eastern Sarajevo.[38] On 17 September, a group of Croat men attacked a group of Arab

32. Ibid. The idea of Greater Serbia and the explanation of Serb nationalist symbolism is well explained by Michael A. Sells in his book *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia (*Berkeley: University of Carlifornia Press, 1998).

33. "Napad bombom na povratnika kod Šipova", *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 28.06.2016, http://balkans.aljazeera.net/video/napad-bombom-na-povratnika-kod-sipova

34. "Vježba specijalaca RS-a uznemirila Srebreničane", *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 21.06.2016, http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/vjezba-specijalaca-rs-uznemirila-srebrenicane

35. E.A., "Čajniče: Eksplozija u blizini džamije uznemirila vjernike dok su klanjali teraviju", *Klix.ba*, https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/cajnice-eksplozija-u-blizini-dzamije-uznemirila-vjernike-dok-su-klanjali-teraviju/160623011

36. "Pravoslavni sveštenik pred džamijom vrijeđao vjernike", *N1 Website*, 24.06.2016, http://ba.n1info.com/a101966/Vijesti/Vijesti/Pravoslavni-svestenik-pred-dzamijom-vrijedjao-vjernike.html

37. E.S., "Kotor-Varoš: Dva dana uznemiravali Bošnjake, policija spriječila nastavak divljanja", *Preporod*, 11.09.2016, http://www.preporod.com/index.php/duhovnost/tradicija/item/4777-kotor-varos-dva-dana-uznemiravali-bosnjake-policija-sprijecila-nastavak-divljanja

38. "Istočno Sarajevo: Došao iz Engleske, otišao u kafić pa ga 30 osoba udaralo jer se zove Meho", Avaz.ba, 19.09.2016, http://www.avaz.ba/clanak/255222/istocno-sarajevo-dosao-iz-engleske-otisao-u-kafic-pa-ga-30-osoba-udaralo-jer-se-zove-meho?url=clanak/255222/istocno-sarajevo-dosao-iz-engleske-otisao-u-kafic-pa-ga-30-osoba-udaralo-jer-se-zove-meho#sthash.Ya0nuH04.dpuf,

tourists and their Bosniak guide in Kravice Waterfall, Ljubuski.[39] On 26 September, a mosque in Karakaj, Zvornik was desecrated with Serb nationalist graffiti.[40]

On 1 October, the Selemija Mosque in Bosanska Gradiška was attacked when a group of local Serbs tried to destroy the mosque's fence.[41] They also verbally attacked the imam and his congregation. On the 26 October, football fans of FC Kozara from Bosanska Gradiška chanted "The Knife, The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica" (*Noz, zica, Srebrenica*) during a football game with FC Sarajevo.[42]

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

The first European Islamophobia Summit was organised in Sarajevo on 24-26 June, 2016, sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey. This event contributed to bringing the issue of Islamophobia closer to the Bosnian public. It was evident that personal accounts of cases of Islamophobia are crucial in combating hate. A Final Declaration was signed by the participating NGOs which stated: "We are particularly concerned that the current period of political and economic uncertainty within Europe, especially given Britain's referendum decision to leave the EU and the rise of far-right extremism across Europe, will only further exacerbate a climate of divisiveness, fear and bigotry." The event and its content were well publicised and presented in the media.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- Cooperation between governments (state level, entity level, and district Brčko level), the Islamic Community and NGOs in fighting discrimination against Muslims should be fostered.
- Public awareness on human rights and freedom of religion and belief should be raised by NGOs, media, etc.
- The methods of documentation of cases of violation of the rights of Muslims should be enhanced by the Islamic Community, NGOs, the police and judiciary.
- Awareness of hate crimes against Muslims, their proper registration and prosecution should be raised by the Islamic Community, NGOs, the police and judiciary.

39. "Fizički napadi na arapske turiste u BiH", *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 18.09.2016, http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/fizicki-napadi-na-arapske-turiste-u-bih

40. "Karakaj: Na džamiji osvanuli uvredljivi graffiti", *Bir.ba*, 27.09.2016, http://www.bir.ba/index.php/vijesti/bih/item/3828-karakaj-na-dzamiji-osvanuli-uvredljivi-grafiti

41. "Bosanska Gradiška: Vandali izvršili napad na džamiju", *Avaz.ba*, 2.10.2016, http://www.avaz.ba/clanak/256839/bosanska-gradiska-vandali-izvrsili-napad-na-dzamiju?url=clanak/256839/bosanska-gradiska-vandali-izvrsili-napad-na-dzamiju#sthash.yRgpIr6H.dpuf

42. "Gradiška: Navijači Kozare skandirali 'Nož, žica, Srebrenica'" , *N1 Website*, 26.10.2016, http://ba.n1info.com/a119399/Vijesti/Vijesti/Gradiska-Navijaci-Kozare-skandirali-Noz-zica-Srebrenica.html

- Awareness of hate speech (online and offline) by media, politicians, etc. should be raised.
- Awareness about Islamic practice (prayer, jumaah, and headscarf) and available ways to accommodate this in education and employment should be raised. Regulations should be adjusted accordingly.
- Laws that stipulate that public officers or officials "shall refrain from public manifestation of their religious beliefs", which discriminate against Muslim employees in fasting, taking a break for daily prayers or wearing the headscarf should be amended. The most flagrant cases should be referred to the HJPC (High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council).
- Awareness of citizens and NGOs about reporting offensive media language to the Press Council in B&H and Communications Regulatory Agency should be raised.
- Awareness of citizens and NGOs about filing complaints related to human rights violations to the B&H Ombudsman's office, the Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees and in regular courts should be raised.
- Commitment to countering violent extremism, but not at the expense of freedom of religion and not solely focusing on Islam or Muslims should be developed.

# Chronology

## January

- **1.1.** Glass thrown on the outbuilding of the Emperor's (*Careva*) Mosque in Foća.
- **6.1.-7.1.** Armed attack on Atik Mosque in Janja, Bijeljina. Several unidentified persons shot a firearm and damaged a window and the facade of the mosque.
- **15.1.** Two Molotov cocktails were thrown at a mosque in Pale.

## March

- **12.3.** A mural of World War Two Serb nationalist leader General Draža Mihailovića in the centre of Gacko was installed next to a mural of Serb war criminal Ratko Mladić.
- **27.3.** Online threats made to the Main Imam of Vlasenica Nurudin – ef. Grahić.
- **28.3.** Verbal threats to an employee of the Islamic Community in Bijeljina Enesa Okanović.

## April

- **2.4.** An imam in Kupres was insulted in front of his mosque.
- **5.4**. Serb nationalist graffiti "Only Unity Saves The Serbs" (*Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava*) and "Serbia to Tokyo" (*Srbija do Tokija*) was written on the Islamic Community Majlis building in Bijeljina.

### May

- **8.5.** During morning prayers and evening prayers, a group of Serbs chanted nationalist slogans "The Knife, The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica" (*Nož, žica, Srebrenica*) in front of Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka.
- **20.5** Mirza Drežnjak, an employee of the Federal Penal and Correctional Facility in Mostar, was suspended from work after he attended jummah prayers several times in the facility's building.

### June

- **12.6.-13.6.** Verbal attacks on Muslims in Pljevi, Šipovo.
- **15.6.** A bomb exploded in front of Bosniak returnee Nijaz Glavaš's house in Majevac near Šipovo.
- **21.6.** An antiterrorism exercise was organised in Luke village near Srebrenica, as a show of force to intimidate Bosniak returnees.
- **22.6.** Pyrotechnics thrown at a mosque in Čajnice during *Laylat-Al Badr* night of Ramadan.
- **23.6.** An explosive device was thrown during *Tarawih* prayers near Mir Muhamed Mosque in Čajniče.
- **24.6.** The Orthodox priest Bojan Pačavra and Ljubiša Božić, under the influence of alcohol, insulted and threatened worshippers in front of the mosque in Vrbanja, Banja Luka. One of the men held a knife. Both were arrested by the police.

### August

- **9.8.** The mosque in Zapodi (Gradište) in Zenica was broken into and ransacked.
- **19.8**. Bosniaks in Kotor-Kukavice, Kotor Varoš were insulted and intimidated by a group of Serbs. The police intervened.
- **24.8.** Verbal attack on Imam Mirsad Husejnović in Bratunac.

### September

- **8.9**. The mosque in Klopce, Zenica was broken into and ransacked.
- **9.9.** The Bosniak returnee Mensur Saračević in Vlasenica was verbally and physically attacked by a group of Serbs.
- **16.9.** A group of 20 men severely beat a young man when they heard that he was a Muslim in a café in Eastern Sarajevo.
- **17.9.** A group of Croat men attacked a group of Arab tourists and their Bosniak guide in Kravice Waterfall, Ljubuski.
- **26.9.** Serb nationalist graffiti written on a mosque in Karaka, Zvornik.
- October
- **1.10.** Attack on Selemija Mosque in Bosanska Gradiška. A group of Serbs tried to destroy the mosque's fence and verbally attacked the imam and his congregation.
- **26.10.** Football fans of FC Kozara from Bosanska Gradiška chanted "The Knife,

The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica" (*Noz, zica, Srebrenica*) during a football game with FC Sarajevo.

## November

- **29.11.** Croatian President Kolinda Grabac-Kitarović stated that Islam in B&H is "becoming more radicalised, especially in rural areas, changing the way of life, even the appearance of people, in terms of clothing and behaviour and a lot more rigid interpretation of the values of Islam."

## December

- **28.12.** The University of Sarajevo Senate adopted an initiative that suggested to its faculties to provide a break in courses for jummah prayers and other religious ceremonies. This caused an outbreak of reactions in the media and academia.

Figure 1: A screenshot of a report published in *Nezavisne Novine* "Terrorists are already gathering in B&H, Kosovo and Sanjak".

Figure 2: Graffiti on the mosque gate in Bijeljina stating "Serbia to Tokyo", a Greater Serbia nationalist slogan from the nineties.

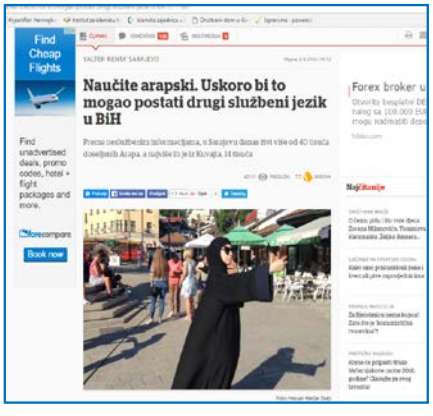


Figure 3: A report published in Croatian newspaper *Večernji List* titled "Learn Arabic. Soon It Will Be the Second Official Language in B&H".

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN BULGARIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

HAYRİ EMİN

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# Executive Summary

This report presents an overview of major Islamophobic events and negative attitudes against Muslims in Bulgaria in 2016. The report was drafted on research based on a survey of available reports, media analyses and interviews with a number of experts from different NGOs and the country's Islamic community, conducted in November 2016.

The terrorist attacks in Europe and the so-called refugee crisis and immigration due to the war in the Middle East shaped the public debate on Islam in Bulgaria in 2016. These crises were the base of anti-Muslim manifestations and the Islamophobic rhetoric of the extreme nationalist political parties like VMRO-BND (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Bulgarian National Movement), NFSB (National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria) and ATAKA. Far-right organizations like BNU (Bulgarian National Union) were the driving force of anti-Islamic discourse and sentiment in the country, as they have organized a series of anti-immigrant protest meetings across the country.

The PF (Patriotic Front)[1] and the political party ATAKA brought legislative initiatives to adopt new legislations and amendments to the existing laws at the National Assembly of Bulgaria and gave support to all anti-immigrant protests in the country throughout the year. In September, the law prohibiting the wearing of clothing that covers the face, the so-called "Burqa Law" was adopted in the National Assembly. Some municipal councils have also adopted such regulations. Along with this law, extreme nationalists proposed amendments to the Law on Religions and the Penal Code, which according to human rights experts pose a restriction of the freedom of religion, especially the rights of Muslims in the country. The adopted law and proposals for amendments to the laws have been criticised as discriminatory by many scholars, human rights experts, activists, NGOs, including the Office of the Grand Mufti and religious communities.

1. Patriotic Front is a nationalist electoral alliance around the political parties VMRO and NFSB.

# Резюме

Този доклад представлява преглед на основните събития, свързани с ислямофобията и негативното отношение към мюсюлманите в България през 2016 г. Методологията, използвана при изготвянето на този доклад се състои от вторична информация и се основава на налични доклади, медиен анализ и интервюта с експерти в неправителствени организации и ислямската общност в страната, проведени през ноември 2016 г.

През 2016 г., терористичните атаки в Европа, бежанската криза и миграцията поради войната в Близкия изток, оформиха обществения дебат, свързан с исляма и мюсюлмсните в България през 2016 г. Тази криза беше в основата на анти-мюсюлманските прояви и ислямофобската реторика на крайните националистически партии като коалиция „Патриотичен фронт" (ВМРО и НФСБ), Атака и БНС-НД, както и крайно десните организации като БНС (Български национален съюз) бяха движещата сила за антимюсюлманската реторика и настроения в страната. Те организираха и редица анти-мигранти протестни шествия и митинги в цялата страна.

Коалиция „Патриотичен фронт" и партия АТАКА повдигнаха въпроси за нови законодателни инициативи, които включват приемане на нови закони и промени в съществуващите закони в Народното събраниеи дадоха подкрепа за всички антимигрантски протести в страната през годината. През септември беше приет Закона за забрана на облекло, прикриващо или скриващо лицето, т.н. Зако за бурката. Някои общински съвети също приеха разпоредби, които забраняват носенето на облекло, което покрива лицето. Впоследствие беше приет закон в Народното събрание. Заедно с този закон, крайните националисти предложиха изменения в Закона за вероизповеданията и в Наказателния кодекс, които според експерти по правата на човека е ограничение на свободата на религиите, особено правата на мюсюлманите в страната. Приетият закон и предложенията за промяна и допълнение в законите са критикувани като дискриминационен от много учени, експерти по човешки права, активисти, неправителствени организации, включително и Главно мюфтийство и религиозни общности.

# Introduction

The Republic of Bulgaria is a parliamentary democracy and the constitution vests legislative authority in the unicameral National Assembly. According to the 2011 Census, the population of Bulgaria is 7,364,570. The people who responded and identified themselves as Eastern Orthodox are 4,374,135 or 76%. The Catholic religion was chosen by 48,945 persons and the Protestant faith by 64,476 persons - or 0.8% and 1.1% of the respondents respectively. There are 577,139 Muslims or 10% of the population, of which 546,004 identified as Muslim Sunni and 27,407 as Muslim Alevi - 3,727 people identified simply as "Muslim". The question of religious denomination was the one with the largest percentage of people who did not respond (21.8%). Amongst those who declared themselves as belonging to the Bulgarian ethnic group 67,350 are Muslims; while from those who declared themselves as Roma, 42,201 are Muslims.[2] Bulgarian Muslims are native-born and consist of different ethnicities such as Turks, Pomaks, Roma, Tatars, Cherkess, and Bulgarians. A small percentage of Muslims are immigrants (about 15,000 people) from other Muslim countries (Middle-East and Asia diasporas) and are mainly based in the capital Sofia and Plovdiv.

The Muslim community in Bulgaria is the largest religious minority group in the country; it remained within the boundaries of the Bulgarian state after the country's liberation in the second half of 19th century. The Muslim community in Bulgaria can be characterized as honest, loyal, peace-loving citizens; they have never been involved in collective crimes or public provocations. Despite their loyalty and propriety to the statutory order of the country, the problems are not few. The problems that underlie Islamophobia in the country are mainly political. These problems have sometimes taken on a legal form in order to impose restrictions on the country's Muslim community.

Anti-Muslim hate, vandalism against mosques and discrimination have persisted in 2016; many religious sites and symbols were subjected to various forms of violations including damage to property. Anti-Muslim rhetoric is very common in the nationalistic parties' public discourse and is used to intimidate society and present Islam and Muslims as a threat to Bulgaria. According to the Office of the Grand Mufti, notwithstanding the progress made since the advent of democracy in Bulgaria in 1990, discrimination, ethnically and religiously motivated offensive acts and prejudice against the Turkish-Muslim minority and its institutions persist.

The politicians and decision-makers usually ignore, or flatly deny, the problem of Islamophobia. The problems of anti-Muslim hate speech and negative attitudes as a result of religious affiliation are underestimated by the public, the media and at an institutional level. This report seeks to provide information about the main issues relating to Islamophobia in 2016, anti-Muslim hate crime and religious discrimination against Muslims in Bulgaria.

2. National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria, "Population and housing census 2011," *nsi.bg*, (2011), retrieved October 28, 2016, from http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final_en.pdf,

In the years after the democratic changes, several laws have been adopted and improvements have been made to existing legislature, mainly to fulfill the conditions for membership of the EU (January 2007). The Constitution[3] (adopted in 1991) and other laws and policies protect religious freedom and, in practice, the government has generally shown the required respect for religious freedom. The Constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the "traditional" religion,[4] exempting it from having court registration, a requirement for all other religious groups. To receive national legal recognition, the law requires groups other than the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to apply for official registration at the Sofia City Court. The Law of Religions establishes the right to religion and its protection, guarantees the legal status of religious communities and institutions, and outlines their relations with the state.[5] By law, public schools are required to offer optional religious education courses that cover Christianity and Islam as part of the elective curriculum[6] with explicit permission from the students' parents. The law also allows religious groups to open religious schools and universities.[7] With the permission of the Minister of Education and Science, religious institutions in the country may open religious schools for the ritual needs of children who have completed primary education.[8]

The state pays particular subsidies each year for traditional religious communities in the country on the basis of population percentage. In 2016, the subsidy intended for the Muslim religion was 360,000 levs[9] (approx. 180,000 Euros). The Muslim community received 150,000 levs of this subsidy (approx. 75,000 Euros) for reconstruction purposes. The sum is intended for the construction, repairing and maintenance of Muslim religious sites and mosques. The subsidy allocated to the Orthodox Church was over 3 million levs (1.5 million Euros); for the Catholic Church 50,000 levs; and for the Jewish community 50,000 levs. Bulgaria ratified an international convention for the abolition of all kinds of discrimination. It passed a special Act on Protection from Discrimination. The Law on Protection from Discrimination regulates the protection against all forms of discrimination and aims to contribute to its prevention. The Commission for Protection from

3. See articles 6, 13 and 37, The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (1991).

4. See article 13, The Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria.

5. See article 1, The Law of the Religions (2002).

6. See articles 48 and 76, The Law of Preschool and School Education (2015).

7. See article 33, The Law of Religions (2002).

8. Law of National Education, art.30 (2013) and Law of Preschool and School Education, art.48, 324 (2016).

9. State gazette, No.96/9.12.2015, sec./National Assembly, The Law for State Budget 2016, decree No.259, *parliament.bg*, (December 9, 2015), retrieved November 25, 2016, from http://dv.parliament.bg/DVWeb/showMaterialDV.jsp?idMat=99252.

Discrimination[10] is an independent specialized state body for the prevention of discrimination and ensuring equal opportunities.[11]

Bulgaria's laws that apply to hate crimes are a combination of specific penalty enhancements and substantive offences. Over the years, changes and improvements have been made to the Penal Code in the parts referring to hate crimes, including hate crimes on religious grounds, crimes against religious denominations, and on racial grounds.[12]

The Council for Electronic Media is an independent specialised body that regulates broadcasting activities in Bulgaria, the registering and issuing of licenses, and the supervising of activities of all broadcasters transmitting programmes in the country.[13] The Radio and Television Act regulates the media services of all radio and television stations in the jurisdiction of the Republic of Bulgaria.[14]A large number of Bulgarian media have signed a national Code of Ethics.[15]

The institution of the independent Ombudsman established by law in 2003 serves as an advocate for citizens who believe their rights and freedoms have been violated by the actions or inaction of public and municipal administrations, as well as by public service providers.[16]

Despite the existence of good institutional and legal framework, the practice shows that there is no tangibility on the effective functioning of the institutions and law enforcement practice.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

In everyday life, cases of intolerance and discrimination are still visible at all levels of Bulgarian society. Among employers there is a tendency to reject job applications of Muslims, ethnic Turks and Roma people. In recent years more and more young people have changed their Muslim names to Bulgarian ones in order to find appropriate jobs easily. Some of them are demotivated and reluctant to return to their original Muslim name, which was forcibly changed into Bulgarian during the so-called "revival process" in 1983-1989. With a Bulgarian surname, they have a fair chance of success in finding a better job

10. Website of *The Commission for Protection Against Discrimination*,, retrieved November 25, 2016, from http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/.

11. See Article 40, Law on Protection Against Discrimination (2003).

12. See Penal Code, Articles 116, 131, 162, 164, 165, 172, 419a.

13. Website of *Council for Electronic Media*, (not dated), retrieved January 18, 2017, fromhttp://www.cem.bg/.

14. Council for Electronic Media, "Radio and Television Act", *cem.bg*, (not dated), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.cem.bg/infobg/81.

15. Website of *National Council for Media Ethics*, (not dated), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://mediaethics-bg.org/index.php?do=17&lang=bg.

16. Website of *The Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria*, (not dated), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.ombudsman.bg/. See also *the Ombudsman Act*.

in Bulgaria or in Western Europe.[17] Two of the interviewees S. M. and E. R., whose ID cards do not carry Muslim names, confirmed this trend with their personal experiences.[18]

## Education

Sixteeen-year-old Emine Shamatareva, a student at Hristo Botev High School in Valkosel village, in the Blagoevgrad region, filed a complaint with the Administrative Court of Blagoevgrad against the school. Although the law does not prohibit the headscarf, the school director Mitko Dzhurkov removed the student from the school as she was wearing a headscarf under the pretex that it conradicts the school's internal rules. On 7 March, the Administrative Court rejected Emine's appeal.[19] After the categorical refusal of the student to remove her headscarf in school (with her parents' full support), in early March, the director issued an order for the transfer of Emine to a religious secondary school. Emine and her father Rasim Shamatarev appealed against the decision of the Administrative Court of Blagoevgrad. Emine's father filed a suit in court challenging the order of exclusion and the subsequent transfer of his daughter to another school. The next trial is set for 22 October 2017, at the Supreme Administrative Court.

According to the civil association of Turkish and Bulgarian Culture (TURKDER), besides the problems in education, Muslim women with headscarves face problems in the workplace. When it comes to the headscarf, discrimination exerts immense pressure on Muslim women. They find it impossible to begin education or to find well-paid skilled jobs, which are serious indications of discrimination.[20]

Another very serious problem in terms of Muslims in Bulgaria is the representation of Muslims and Turks in the school curriculum, particularly in history and literature textbooks which are studied at school from an early age. Bulgarian public opinion is led to believe that during the Ottoman rule Bulgarian people were subjected to "yoke" or "slavery" by Turks and/or Muslims. According to Harun Bekir, the president of the Association of the Turkish Language Teachers in Southern Bulgaria, the school experience instills in students a portrayal of Turks and Muslims as evil oppressors and dangerous enemies. This approach helps forge a negative image of Muslims and/or Turks in society.[21]

Earlier this year the Ministry of Education suggested the word "yoke" be replaced with another more suitable word, as well as some other changes in the curricula. This provoked a sharp reaction from nationalistic and "patriotic" organizations and political

17. Interview with Ismail Kyoseyumer (November 30, 2016).

18. The respondents did not give their consent for their names to be offered in this report. Interviews held on December 20, 2016.

19. EmineShamatareva from Valkosel lost the lawsuit against the school (See: EvgeniyaGigova, "ЗабуленатаЕминеотВълкоселзагубиделотосрещуучилищетоси," *actualno.com*, (June 11, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from https://www.actualno.com/society/zabulenata-emine-ot-vylkosel-zagubi-deloto-sreshtu-uchilishteto-si-news_544563.html).

20. Interview with Fahriye Murad, the representative of Civil Association of Turkish and Bulgarian Culture (TURKDER), (November 12, 2016).

21. Interview with Harun Bekir, president of the Association of Turkish Language Teachers in Southern Bulgaria (November 10, 2016).

parties in the country.[22] A civil petition was initiated for the resignation of the Education Minister.[23] According to the media, this planned change was one of the reasons the Prime Minister asked for the resignation of Education Minister Todor Tanev.[24]

## Politics

The political parties represented in the National Assembly in 2016 were the following: GERB (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria); BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party); MRF (Movement for Freedom and Rights); RB (Reformist Block) that consists of several small centre-right parties; ABV (Alternative for Bulgarian Renaissance), a small left-wing party; ATAKA, an ultra-nationalistic party in opposition, which is known for its public appearances instigating hatred and discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities, and its Islamophobic manifestations; a number of independent politicians; PF (Patriotic Front), a coalition of several parties with an ultranationalist identity and the BDC-NU (Bulgarian Democratic Centre – People's Union).

## Media

The television channel of the political party ATAKA, Alpha TV, and the television channel of the party NFSB (National Front for Salvation of Bulgaria), SKAT TV, continued to systematically initiate hate and intolerance on Islamophobic and racist grounds. In particular, the programme *Unveiling* of SKAT TV every Thursday at 18:30 produces and disseminates Islamophobic discourse.[25] Mustafa Izbishtali, regional mufti of Sofia, shared his opinion that it is a visible example of cooperation between media and political parties, alluding to the programme's coverage of the protest against the masjid in Lyulin, Sofia on 13 and 18 March, 2016. In his opinion the protests were organised by politicians, as members of the VMRO (a nationalistic political party in the National Assembly) were seen among the protesters on 13 March, the date of the first gathering. The media's distorted reporting on the "illegal masjid" and on Muslims in the country creates tension between Muslims and non-Muslims. In this manner, the media and politicians provoked the reaction and protest of a group of people against the prayer room in Lyulin.[26]

The Office of the Grand Mufti published a book under the title *Pork Meat in the Light of Religion and Medicine* as part of its publishing activities. The media described this book

22. Adrian Kulev,"Родопските хайдути също скочиха срещу промените в учебниците по история и литература," *Darik News*,(January 28, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=1547299.

23. Grajdanskapeticia.com, "НезабавноотстраняванеТодорТаневкатоминистърнаобразованието," *grajdanskapeticia.com*, (not dated), retrievedJanuary 18, 2017, fromhttp://grajdanskapeticia.com/pview.aspx?pi=BG31417

24. Mediapool.bg: "Премиертпоискаоставкатана ТодорТаневзарадискандалите с учебнитепрограми," *mediapool.bg*, (January 28, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://www.mediapool.bg/premierat-poiska-ostavkata-na-todor-tanev-zaradi-skandalite-s-uchebnite-programi-news244831.html.

25. Website of TvSkat, (not dated), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.skat.bg/preda.php?predID=3.

26. Interview with Mustafa Izbishtali (December 2, 2016).

as a provocation, while members of the nationalistic parties described it as a dangerous phenomenon.[27] News about the book is included with news on radical Islam and amendments in legislation, proposed by the nationalists in parliament. Although there are a number of legislative acts and a Code of Ethics, certain media and journalists disrespect both.

## Justice System

One of the most controversial legislative issues in 2016 was the adoption by the National Assembly of Bulgaria of the "Law Prohibiting the Wearing of Clothing Concealing One's Face in Public Spaces", the so-called "Burqa Law".[28]

Public debate on the burqa ban started in April with the case of Ahmed Musa in Pazardzhik who was accused of preaching radical Islam and whose female followers wear the nikab and burqa. The ultra-nationalistic political parties talked about banning the burqa, and the mayor of Pazardzhik took the initiative for legislative measures in this direction.[29] On 27 April, 2016, Pazardjik municipality council became the first to ban the burqa in Bulgaria,[30] followed by other towns such as Stara Zagora on 28 April, Sliven on 25 May, and Burgas on 1 June.[31] In May 2016, the first fine was given to a woman in Pazardzik.[32] In the following months the number of fined women increased.[33]

On 20 April, 2016, the Patriotic Front made a bill proposal for banning the burqa. The proposal was outrageous and caused heated debate. Human rights organisations, experts and the Office of the Grand Mufti spoke strongly against this project and expressed the opinion that it is unconstitutional and violates the religious freedom of Muslims.[34] The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee referred a letter to the office of the Ombudsman.[35] In the course of the public debates on the burqa ban, the members of the Patriotic Front stated that there should not be any religious symbols

27. BTV, "Главномюфтийстворазсъждавазасвинското в книга," *btvnovinite.bg*, (April 7, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://btvnovinite.bg/video/videos/news/glavno-mjuftijstvo-razsazhdava-za-svinskoto-v-kniga.html.

28. Adopted and passed on second reading in the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria on 30 September 2016, retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.parliament.bg/bg/laws/ID/42106.

29. Vesti, "The mayor of Pazardjik on the way to ban the burqa (translated)," *vesti.bg,* (April 12, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/obshtestvo/kmetyt-na-pazardzhik-na-pyt-da-zabrani-burkite-6052511.

30. Vesti, "Pazardjik banned the burqa (translated)," *vesti.bg,* (April 27, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/obshtestvo/kmetyt-na-pazardzhik-na-pyt-da-zabrani-burkite-6052511.

31. Plovdiv24.bg, "Решено: Забранихабуркитенапубличниместа в България," *plodiv24.bg*, (September 30, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from https://www.plovdiv24.bg/novini/Bylgaria/Resheno-Zabraniha-burkite-na-publichni-mesta-v-Bulgariya-673175.

32. Vesti, "The first fine for burqa wearing in Pazardzik (translated)," *vesti.bg*, (May 16, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/obshtestvo/pyrva-globa-za-burka-v-pazardzhik-6053818.

33. CROSS, "Ten people were fined for wearing burqa in Pazardzik (translated)," cross.bg, (October 22, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.cross.bg/globeni-pazardzhik-bili-1523465.html#.WD8f-fl95dg.

34.The Office of the Grand Mufti expressed its indignation (see: BoryanaParlova, "Мюфтийстводосевъзмути: Какщенизабраняватебурките?,"*dnes.bg*, (June 16, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2016/06/16/miuftiistvoto-se-vyzmuti-kak-taka-shte-ni-zabraniavate-burkite.305959).

35. *Bulgarian Helsinki Committee* wrote a letter to Maya Manolova, the Ombudsman on the burqa banning (October 12, 2016, retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.novini.bg/news/383599).

like burqa in the public space, and that all religious symbols and material related to religion should be removed and banned, including the burqa.[36] Earlier, this view was shared by the Prosecutor General and the Education Minister Meglena Kuneva.[37]

The adopted law underwent changes before being passed on the second reading – this followed the acute response of human rights defenders[38] including the Office of the Grand Mufti and some political parties such as the MRF (Movement for Freedom and Rights) and independent members of Parliament such as Lutvi Mestan, Huseyin Hafizov and Korman Ismailov, a member of the Reformist Block (RB).[39] The Office of the Grand Mufti expressed the worry that the law would pave the way for other bans, as we already see with the subsequent draft laws and amendments to other laws.[40]

The law prohibits the wearing of clothing, concealing the face partially or fully in public places and provides fines for violators, as well as for instigators and those who allow it, reaching up to 2,000 levs (1,000 euros).[41]

The political party GERB, which also supported the submitted amendments by the Patriots (members of the Patriotic Front), stated that the ban is not directed against religious groups. But the nationalists, however, consistently made it clear that their primary objective is the famous burqa as a symbol of Islamization.

In 2016, different political parties in the Parliament of Bulgaria made several proposals for amendments to the Law of Religions, including the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The proposals were sent to the relevant committees of the Parliament. According to the members of the Bulgarian Socialist Party the amendments provide for strict state control over religious institutions,[42] and guarantee national security.[43] A declaration against the restriction of freedom of religion was published on 22 March

36. VMRO asks for the prohibition of burqa in the capital (See: IvaïloAnev, "ВМРО исказабрананосенетонабурки в столицата," actualno.com, (May 9, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from https://www.actualno.com/sofia/vmro-iska-zabrana-na-noseneto-na-burki-v-stolicata-news_538651.html).

37. Bulgarian National Radio, "Остраполемика – дасезабранилибурката в България, илине?," bnr.bg, (April 6, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://bnr.bg/radiobulgaria/post/100677847/ostra-polemika-da-se-zabrani-li-burkata-v-balgaria-ili-ne.

38. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, "Забранатазазабулваненямадапомогненаживотазаедно, а щенасадиксе нофобия," *bghelsinki.org*, (October 2, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.bghelsinki.org/bg/novini/bg/single/zabranata-za-zabulvane-nyama-da-pomogne-na-zhivota-zaedno-she-nasadi-ksenofobiya/.

39. *The Plenary Session at the Parliament of Bulgaria* on September 30, 2016, retrieved January 18, 2017, fromhttp://www.parliament.bg/bg/plenaryst/ns/51/ID/5704.

40. Interview with DzhelalFaik (December 1, 2016).

41. The Law Prohibits the Wearing of Clothing, Concealing the Face, National Assembly of Bulgaria, 30 September 2016 - http://www.parliament.bg/bg/laws/ID/42106

42. The amendments provide for strict state control over religious institutions (See: Aleksandra Markaryan, "Пр оектозаконналагажелезендържавенконтролнадвероизповеданията," *offnews.bg*, (March 9, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://offnews.bg/news/Obshtestvo_4/Proektozakon-nalaga-zhelezen-darzhaven-kontrol-nad-veroizpovedaniiata_625421.html.

43. The amendments guarantee national security (See: YuliyaKulinska, "ВасилАнтонов: Промените в Законазаве роизповеданиятасагаранциязанационалнатасигурност," *duma.bg*, (March 21, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://duma.bg/node/120285.

by a group of religious figures and human rights activists, following the proposal for amendments of the Bulgarian Socialist Party on 1[44] and 14[45] March. According to the authors of the declaration, the proposal was unconstitutional and restricts the freedoms of speech and assembly, as well as other human rights. The declaration was addressed to the National Assembly, the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the media and human rights organisations in Bulgaria and abroad.[46]

The most severe reactions were the proposals of extreme nationalists in Parliament. On 20 July, the extreme nationalistic political party ATAKA introduced amendments to the Law of Religions in which religious organizations and communities are obliged to use only the Bulgarian language during worship and religious rituals.[47] On 21 July, 2016, the coalition "Patriotic Front" (VMRO and NFSB) submitted another proposal for amendments to the Law of Religions, according to which, among other restrictions on freedom of religion, religious communities and institutions will be restricted in the use of their mother tongues or other languages during worship and religious rituals, in the acceptance of donations, and their involvement in joint activities with other organisations. Furthermore, the proposal aims to introduce a prohibition on foreign citizens from reading sermons.[48]

Representatives of the Patriots told the media that religious communities will have services only in the Bulgarian language and that the aim is to restrict the religious communities that have political goals.[49] Another aspect worth mentioning is that the mother tongue of a large portion of the Muslims in Bulgaria is not Bulgarian. In this case the prohibition breaks a number of international conventions, constitutional rights, and the Act on Discrimination. The Chief Secretary of the Office of the Grand Mufti Dzhelal Faik shared the opinion that these changes also target other religions apart from Islam, and the prohibition of receiving donations and financial aid deprives the Muslim community of its resources and will isolate it and lead to its annihilation. The prohibition to carry out joint activities with other organisations from foreign countries also breaks major rights of freedom of religion.[50]

44. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, "The amendments to the Law of Religions (translated)," *parliament.bg*, (March 1, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/42014.

45. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, "The amendments to the Law of Religions (translated)," *parliament.bg*, (March 14, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/42026.

46. The religious workers and churches condemn the proposal for amendments to the Law of Religions (See: Marginalia, "Религиознидейци и църквиостроосъждатвнесени в НС проектозаконизаизповеданията," *marginalia.bg*, (March 23, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.marginalia.bg/novini/religiozni-dejtsi-i-tsarkvi-ostro-osazhdat-vneseni-v-ns-proektozakoni-za-izpovedaniyata/).

47. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, "The amendments to the Law of Religions (translated)," *parliament.bg*, (July 20, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/42280.

48. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, "The amendments to the Law of Religions (translated)," *parliament.bg*, (July 21, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/42281.

49. Bulgarian National Television, "Патриотитевнасятпромени в законазавероизповеданията," *news.bnt.bg*, (July 21, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://news.bnt.bg/bg/a/patriotite-vnasyat-promeni-v-zakona-za-veroizpovedaniyata.

50. Interview with Dzhelal Faik (December 1, 2016).

Another proposal for amendments to the Law of Religions is the prohibition of loud speakers, submitted by the Patriotic Front. The motives behind the draft act claim that the loud speakers on mosques threaten national security.[51] All these proposals are currently in the relevant committees and have not been discussed in the plenary yet.

On 23 June, the Parliament adopted by a large majority at the first reading the amendments to the Penal Code submitted by the coalition Patriotic Front, despite the reservations of the Muslim community and human rights activists. The expression "radical Islam" was added to Article 108 of the Penal Code. The article names "radical Islam" as the driving force behind terrorism.[52] Generally Bulgarian Muslims are not hostile and have never participated in provocative rallies or riots. That is no reason for such an amendment to the law.

According to the Grand Mufti Dr. Mustafa Hadji, religion must be separated, on the whole, from ideologies. In the proposed bill the expression "radical Islam" is equated with ideologies such as fascism and anti-democratic thought. But at the same time it offends the feelings of Muslims. It is Islamophobic and discriminatory. These amendments allow the abuse of human rights and religious freedoms and open doors for arbitrariness and the violation of human rights; they also open the doors to interpretations regarding the nature of "radical Islam".[53]

Members of the Nationalists in the Parliament argued that such an amendment is necessary, because most countries enacted similar laws after being attacked by terrorism. Members of some political parties (RB and MRF), scholars (Simeon Evstatiev)[54] and the Office of the Grand Mufti[55]criticised these amendments.[56]

Another issue of serious concern is the construction of a second mosque in Sofia. Around 70,000 Muslims currently live in Sofia and they have only one mosque built several centuries ago. It has a seating capacity of 500-600 people. However, on Fridays more than 700 worshippers enter the mosque and around 250-300 people remain outside. The situation is most striking during both Feasts when about 2,500-

51. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, No. 654-01-99, (July 28, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/42288.

52. National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, No.654-01-54, (April 7, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/42090.

53. Interview with the Grand Mufti of Bulgaria Dr. Mustafa Hadji (November 23, 2016).

54.Maria Petkova, "Криминализирането на „радикалния ислям" е мисия невъзможна", *Capital*, (September16, 2016) retrieved November20, 2016, from http://www.capital.bg/politika_i_ikonomika/obshtestvo/2016/09/16/2828339_kriminaliziraneto_na_radikalniia_isliam_e_misiia/?sp=3#storystart.

55. Office of the Grand Mufti, "ротестнадекларациясрещуопититезаограничаваненарелигиознитесвободи в РепубликаБългария," *grandmufti.bg*, (June 13, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/2805-protestna-deklaratziya-sreshtu-opitite-za-ogranichavane-na-religioznite-svobodi-v-republika-balgariya.html.

56. Plenary Session at the National Assembly of Bulgaria on June 23, 2016, retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.parliament.bg/bg/plenaryst/ns/51/ID/5673.

3,000 Muslim men congregate and unsuccessfully try to hear the sermons, to pray and perform the prayer together with those who are inside for nearly 2 hours. Construction of a second mosque is not permitted by the municipality, although the Muslim community has had a ground plot for years. According to the Grand Mufti, the Office of the Grand Mufti has not received clear and adequate answers that justify the prevention of the construction of a second mosque.[57] According to the chief architect of the municipality Zdavko Zdravkov it is necessary that this decision be taken by the Sofia Municipal Council.[58]

Figure 1: Friday prayer at Sofia mosque

Moreover, in 2016 and in previous years, the Sofia municipality periodically imposed restrictions and fines for the washrooms next to the mosque with the pretext that the structure is illegal and must be demolished; the water is also often cut off on Fridays.[59] Currently a significant part of Muslims pray in temporary shelters in the capital.

In 2016, the issue of halal food for Muslim children in kindergartens and primary schools remained unresolved. In June 2015, the Initiative Committee of Civil Association Altay sent a letter to the National Assembly, the Council of Ministers, the Prosecutor's Office, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Office of the Grand Mufti, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, the European Commission in Brussels, and foreign diplomatic missions in Bulgaria insisting that in Bulgarian municipal schools, kindergartens and hospitals, Muslims have the right to receive alternative halal food that is acceptable to them.[60] The Office of the Ombudsman supported the initiative in its written answer to the Altay Association, and stated

57. Interview with Murat Pingov, deputy of the Grand Mufti of Bulgaria (November 23, 2016).

58.Diana Popova,"Главният архитект на София Здравко Здравков: Ще действам само по закон," *Bulgaria Utre*, (June 14, 2016), retrieved November 25, 2016, fromhttp://www.bulgaria.utre.bg/blogs/2016/06/14/2221-glavniat_arhitekt_na_sofia_zdravko_zdravkov_shte_deystvam_samo_po_zakon.

59.Interview with Dr. Mustafa Hadji (November 23, 2016).

60.Blitz.bg, "МюсюлманиотКърджали с жалбадоБрюксел - давалисвинско в ясли и детскиградини," *blitz.bg*, (June 24, 2015), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.blitz.bg/obshtestvo/regioni/myusyulmani-ot-krdzhali-s-zhalba-do-bryuksel-davali-svinsko-v-yasli-i-detski-gradini_news344392.html.

that the constitutional rights of Bulgarian citizens are being violated.[61] The Office of the Grand Mufti regularly receives complaints from the Muslim community, particularly in Kardzhali region, where the majority of the population is Muslim, about food with pork being offered to Muslims, without the knowledge of the parents in kindergartens, municipal schools and hospitals. According to Ismail Kyoseyumer, this even happens in schools where more than 80% of children are Muslims.[62]

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

Hate rhetoric against Muslims continued to be widely manifested in media, social media and by politicians and public figures. According to a survey of the Open Society Institute on public attitudes toward hate speech in Bulgaria, there is a significant increase of hate speech in 2016.[63]

The parliamentary-represented coalition Patriotic Front announced during the presidential election campaign in the media in November that one of the main points of their election programme is to prevent ethnic-based parties from assuming power.[64]

On 7 and 21 October, extreme nationalistic groups and football fans in Sofia, Varna, Yambol and other towns in Bulgaria protested against the refugees and the insufficient measures taken by the authorities to deal with illegal migration. During the protest in Sofia organized by Natsionalna Saprotiva (National Resistance), an extreme nationalistic movement, the nationalists chanted slogans against the Turks and Muslims such as "Send Allah to the Gallows", "Death to Turks" and other offensive Islamophobic and racist insults; posters reading "Our ancestors did their duty! Now it is our turn!" were held, together with depictions describing epic battles between Turks and Bulgarians in the past.[65] The same slogan was used during the protest against the refugees on 19 November in Sofia.[66] The protests were covered by all national media.

61.24 Rodopi, "Омбудсманът подкрепи кърджалийците, които искат „хелал храна" да замени свинското в училищата," *rodopi24.blogspot.bg*, (September 12, 2015), retrievedJanuary 18, 2017, fromhttp://rodopi24.blogspot.bg/2015/09/blog-post_37.html.

62. Interview with Ismail Kyoseyumer, the deputy president of the Civil Association for Turkish Culture, Art and Interaction (November 30, 2016).

63. Open Society Institute, "Общественинагласиспрямо речта на омразата в България през 2016 г.,"*osf.bg*, (July 12, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://www.osf.bg/cyeds/downloads/Hate%20speech%20BG%202016%20interact.pdf.

64.Fokus Agency, ""Обединенипатриоти – НФСБ, АТАКА и ВМРО": Оставяменашитеизбирателидагласуватна вториурпосвояпреценка,", *focus-news.net*, (November 10, 2016), retrieved November 15, 2016, from http://www.focus-news.net/news/2016/11/10/2328211/obedineni-patrioti-nfsb-ataka-i-vmro-ostavyame-nashite-izbirateli-da-glasuvat-na-vtori-tur-po-svoya-pretsenka.html.

65.Protests against the Refugees Blocked "Lions' Bridge" in Sofia (See: DesislavaDimitrova, "Протестсрещубежан цитеблокираЛъвовмост в София," *dnes.dir.bg*, (October 7, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://dnes.dir.bg/news/protest-bezhanskiat-natisk-24131564).

66.24Chasa, "Стотинадушинатретиянационаленпротестсрещубежанците," *24chasa.bg*, (November 19, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from https://www.24chasa.bg/novini/article/5884500.

During the protest against the refugees on 21 October in Varna one of the protesting citizens stated on the television channel "BTV" that weapons had been stored in Bulgarian mosques, that there was proof of this, and that, as a result, the official request of the protesters was to search all mosques in Bulgaria.[67] This is one of the requests of the movement Natsionalna Saprotiva that organised the protests in Sofia and other towns across the country on 7 and 21 October. Petar Nizamov, who is known as a "refugee hunter", sent an open letter to the Prime Minister where he requested that the mosques in Bulgaria be searched because they functioned as illegal storages for weaponry.[68]

On 13 and 18 March, a civil protest was held against the masjid in the Lyulin residential area in Sofia**.** According to media coverage, the protesters were voicing their concerns on the illegal masjid and the preaching of radical Islam in it.[69] The Grand Mufti's Office made it clear that the prayer house was registered with the Department of Religions at the Council of Ministers and in the registries of Sofia Municipalities in conformity with the valid legislation three years ago; the Grand Mufti's Office had appointed an imam there and had been monitoring the sermons and

Figure 2: Islamophobic graffiti on the wall of the Mosque in the town of Yambol

Figure 3: Islamophobic and racist graffiti at the entrance of Mosque in the city of Varna

Figure 4: Entrance of Karlovo Mosque

67.BTV, "В София, Варна и Ямболизлизатнапротестсрещубежанците," *btvnoinite.bg*, (October 21, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, fromhttp://btvnovinite.bg/article/bulgaria/v-sofija-varna-i-jambol-izlizat-na-protest-sreshtu-bezhancite.html.

68.LalkaDimitrova, "Перата: Джамиите са складове за оръжия, има и в Бургас," *DarikNews*, (October 6, 2016), retrievedJanuary 18, 2017, fromhttp://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=1612059.

69.KalinaPetrova, "Жители на „Люлин" ще протестират срещу незаконен ислямски молитвен дом", *Faktor.bg*, (March 15, 2016), retrievedDecember 1, 2016, fromhttps://fakti.bg/bulgaria/177700-jiteli-na-lulin-shte-protestirat-sreshtu-nezakonen-islamski-molitven-dom-.

preaching in the prayer house.[70] According to regional mufti of Sofia Mustafa Izbishtali, the protest was organised by extreme nationalists as permission for the first protest held on 13 March, was received after the intervention of the nationalistic political party VMRO.[71] Protesters were carrying posters with slogans such as "Stop the Islamization, Save Bulgaria" and were chanting patriotic songs.[72] With a published declaration the Grand Mufti's Office appealed to the worshippers visiting the prayer house not to succumb to the provocative behavior of the protesters.[73]

Figure 5: Anti-migration rally in Sofia (October 21, 2016)

The Chair of the Regional Association of the Thracian Unions in the Stara Zagora Region Odrinska Epopeya (Odrin Epos) Mrs Petra Filipova Mecheva and Mrs Desislava Kostova from the association of the Thracian Unions in Dimitrovgrad, in their open letter published on 26 February, 2016, in the fourth edition of *Thracia* newspaper (a periodical of the Association of Thracian Unions in Bulgaria), stated that "jihad" was being studied in Bulgaria with textbooks written in Bulgarian and a crusade was being carried out against Christianity. The authors appealed to the authorities to exert efforts to orient Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks) towards their Bulgarian self-consciousness.[74] The regional prosecutor's office was informed by the Muslim community about the case.[75]

In an interview for *Trudnewsaper* on 1 November, 2016, Mr Mohd Abbuasi, the director of the Centre for Middle East Research in Sofia, claimed that 15 imams of the Grand Mufti's Office who studied abroad were preaching ideologies new to Bulgaria and that there was a big concentration of Wahhabis in many towns, namely Velingrad, Kardzhali, Gotse Delchev and Smolyan. Mr. Abbuasi stated that the preaching of radical Islam (Wahhabi, Salafi, and Muslim Brothers) was the policy of the Grand Mufti's Office.[76] According to Dzhelal Faik from the Office of the Grand

70. Interview with Mustafa Izbishtali, regional mufti of Sofia (December 2, 2016).

71. Interview with M. Izbishtali (December 2, 2016).

72.Vera K.Aleksandrova, "Мюсюлмани, протест... Ипризив: 3 джамиивСофия," *dnes.bg*, (March 18, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from: http://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2016/03/18/miusiulmani-protest-i-priziv-3-djamii-v-sofiia.296524.

73.News.bg, "Мюфтийството се опасява от нападения срещу мюсюлмани в София", *news.bg*, (March 17, 2016) retrievedDecember 1, 2016, fromhttps://news.bg/society/myuftiystvoto-se-opasyava-ot-napadeniya-sreshtu-myusyulmani-v-sofiya.html.

74.Open letter by Petra Filipova Mecheva and DesislavaKostova (In: *Trakia Newspaper*, "We Ask for the Truth (translated)", February 26, 2016.

75. Interview with Dzhelal Faik (December 1, 2016).

76.DilyanaGaytandjieva, "Д-р Мохд Абуаси, директор на Центъра за близкоизточни изследвания, пред "Труд": 15 имами от Главното мюфтийство проповядват радикален ислям в джамиите," trud.bg, (November 1, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, fromhttps://trud.bg/д-р-мохд-абуаси-директор-на-центъра-за/.

Mufti, this is a provocation and such allegations stained the good name of the Office of the Grand Mufti and the Muslim community in Bulgaria.[77]

- In June the facade of the mosque in Yambol was painted with threatening words.
- On 8 August, 2016, unknown people desecrated the hearse of the Regional Mufti's Office in Pleven with offensive inscriptions. The following inscriptions were visible on the car: "You Carried out Genocide in Bulgaria!", "Murderers", "Islam Destroys Europe".[78]
- During the Muslim holiday from 12 to 15 September, 2016, the wall of the Office of the Grand Mufti, on 27 Bryatya Miladinovi Street, was painted with nationalistic symbols and threats (see picture below).[79]
- At the beginning of October 2016, unknown people wrote profanities on Kurshum Mosque in Kralovo. The inscription was written above the entrance. The mosque is a cultural monument of Bulgaria.[80]
- The mosque in Medovets village, Dalgopol Municipality, in the Varna region, was the target of an Islamophobic attack. On the morning of 4 November, 2016, the local Muslims spotted the inscription "Death to Turks" on the wall and a pig's head hanging from a tree near the entrance.[81]

Figure 6: The hearse of the Regional Mufti's Office in Pleven

Figure 7: The facade of the Office of the Grand Mufti: *"Cause personal: the awareness gives strength to the Bulgarians and Bulgaria. Sofia Municipality"*

77. Interview with Dzelal Faik (December 1, 2016).

78. Elina Kyurkchieva, "Вандали оскверниха катафалката на Районното мюфтийство в Плевен," *PlevenZaPleven*, (August 8, 2016), retrieved November 25, 2016, from:http://plevenzapleven.bg/blog/2016/08/08/%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%B4%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%B8-%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%80%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%85%D0%B0-%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%84%D0%B0%D0%BB%D0%BA%D0%B0%D1%82%D0%B0-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D1%80%D0%B0-124117/

79. Office of the Grand Mufti, "За пореден път оскверниха сградата на главно мюфтийство," *grandmufti.bg*, (September 26, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, fromhttp://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/3098-za-poreden-pat-oskverniha-sgradata-na-glavno-myuftiistvo.html.

80. Office of the Grand Mufti, "Неизвестни лица оскверниха „Куршум джамия" в град Карлово"," *grandmufti.bg,* (November 2, 2016), retrievedNovember 27, 2016, retrieved http://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/3098-za-poreden-pat-oskverniha-sgradata-na-glavno-myuftiistvo.html.

81. Office of the Grand Mufti, "Оскверниха джамия във Варненска област," *grandmufti.bg*,(November7, 2016), retrievedNovember27, 2016, from http://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/3261-oskverniha-dzhamiya-vav-varnenska-oblast.html

- On the day of the presidential election in Bulgaria on 6 November, offensive inscriptions were found on the mosque in Pleven. On one of the walls of the mosque the unknown perpetrators had written "Allah is a p**".[82]

Figure 8: Graffiti on the Pleven Mosque. The insults have since been covered.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society organizations, such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC),[83] have continued their long-standing work of countering Islamophobic, racist, xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes and ideas. In its annual report on human rights in Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee allocates space for the Muslim community, violations of religious freedom, hate crimes and discrimination against Muslims. The committee also provides expert opinions on individual cases of violation of the rights and freedoms of Muslims. The President of the Committee Mr. Krasimir Kanev became a target of physical assault by unknown persons in Sofia in October as a result of his activities.

The only Islamic organization, dealing with religious issues is the Institution for Religious Affairs of the Muslim Community in Bulgaria *(Muslimansko izpovedanie* or Muslim denomination in Bulgaria) lead by the head office, the Office of the Grand Mufti.[84] It is a religious institution and represents the Muslim religious minority in Bulgaria. The Office of the Grand Mufti is one of the organizations that has been collecting and preparing an annual report of anti-Muslim hate incidents and manifestations since 2010. Since 2010, 100 incidents have been documented, a two-fold increase since 1990.[85]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Despite the high degree of integration and relatively good legislation, the Muslim community in Bulgaria faces problems and challenges. According to the people interviewed, the main sources of these problems are the ethnic and religious confronta-

82. Office of the Grand Mufti, "Главно мюфтийство: „С оскърбителни надписи осъмна джамията в Плевен"," *grandmufti.bg*, (November 7, 2016), retrievedNovember 27, 2016**,** from http://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/3269-s-oskarbitelni-nadpisi-osamna-dzhamiyata-v-pleven.html.

83.Website of the *Bulgarian Helsinki Committee*, (not dated), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.bghelsinki.org.

84.Website of *The Office of the Grand Mufti* (MuslumanskoIzpovedanie), (not dated), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.grandmufti.bg.

85. Interview with Dzhelal Faik, chief secretary of the Office of the Grand Mufti (December 1, 2016).

tions; the attempts of the extreme nationalist political parties and movements for the political isolation of the representatives of the ethnic Turks; and the Muslim community being considered a foreign element in Bulgarian society and being viewed with distrust. The Office of the Grand Mufti (*Muslumansko izpovedanie*) is often criticized by the nationalists for disloyalty to the state and is accused of trying to Islamize society and minorities. While most of the Muslims are Bulgarian citizens and therefore formally have equal rights, the most harmed group in Bulgaria are the undocumented immigrants.

Although the Criminal Code contains elements against hate crimes, these are rarely applied in practice. Public understanding of issues such as social marginalization of minority groups and the difficulties faced by refugees and victims of hate speech and crime remains very limited. Many Muslim individuals are unaware that Islamophobia and discrimination against them is illegal. Moreover, even more people are not aware of any organisation in the country that could help them if they become victims of a biased act and discrimination. The proof is the rising voice of representatives of extreme nationalists and neo-Nazi groups on cyberspace, and the organisation of protests and other demonstrations. Combating Islamophobia and intolerance of Muslims in Bulgaria is a slow and difficult process.

As a general observation, the lack of adequate knowledge about Islam, the tendency to spread false and distorted information about Islam and Muslims in the public domain by pseudo-experts on Islam, and malevolent public figures seem to have created the space for an increasing number of Islamophobic utterances that remain uncontested in the country's current political atmosphere.

On a positive note, civil society is conducting relatively numerous efforts to combat racism and related discrimination. There is also relatively good interfaith dialogue in Bulgaria. Representatives of the major religious organisations, including the Muslim leaders of the country, maintain a good dialogue and try to set a good example to society.

## Recommendations

- The Members of Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria must respect human rights and religious freedoms when adopting laws and amendments, which are guaranteed by international treaties and the Constitution, including the adoption, in conformity with the constitution and the international obligations of Bulgaria, of such laws which can be necessary in order to provide protection against any acts that constitute incitement to hatred and violation of fundamental rights.
- To observe the constitutional rights of citizens and to defend democracy and fundamental freedoms in Bulgaria.

- To ensure that public officials at all levels, including ministers and politicians, refrain from making statements that incite violence and discrimination.
- To train the municipalities so as to increase their awareness of the problems of integration of individuals seeking and receiving asylum.
- To develop codes of conduct for political representatives to condemn unequivocally all manifestations of hate in public discourse and acts of violence based on bias and refrain from making discriminatory statements.
- To launch public awareness activities disassociating terrorism and violent extremism with Muslims and Islam.
- To develop comprehensive education policies and awareness-raising strategies to combat discrimination and promote tolerance and mutual understanding. Education must be the essential platform of every strategy. Overcoming prejudices requires education, community engagement and dialogue.
- To design guidelines and compile examples of good practices to combat manifestations of Islamophobia in political discourse, including the media and political speech.
- To undertake measures to ensure that the Council for Electronic Media combats the explicit forms of racism and discrimination committed through media and the Internet.
- To guarantee that public broadcasting services avoid the stereotyping of religious and ethnic groups and report fairly on such groups in conformity with the highest professional and ethical standards including during election periods and public gatherings.
- To engage in partnerships with private media, including Internet providers, in order to prevent dissemination of information which includes prejudice, stereotypes and hatred.
- To continue providing the training programme for law enforcement officers and prosecutors to combat hate crime and intolerance against Muslims and other groups and enhance its scope so as to be comprehensive and practically applicable.
- In the current climate of fear and insecurity, community leaders and civil society have a vital role to play in speaking out against discrimination, non-tolerance and promoting the principles of multiculturalism and social inclusion.
- Positive public statements can be extraordinarily powerful and send a vital symbolic message to the community that non-tolerance and discrimination is never acceptable.
- Overcoming prejudice requires education, civil society and community engagement and dialogue.
- To develop analytical studies on possible relations between hate crimes and manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in public discourse, as well as cooperate with the government and vulnerable groups and minorities.
- To support the government in monitoring, reporting and countering discrimina-

tory speech in the media including on the Internet, in particular through monitoring and reporting of Islamophobic speech.
- To play a more active role in the monitoring of hate speech and crimes, intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, including in the media; as well as in monitoring the irregularities in government and legislative policies.
- To observe closely the process of combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, as well as the freedom of religion of the Muslim minority.
- To engage with mediation and educational programmes for the integration of migrants, such as accessing public services, employment, education and health services.
- To organise media discussions, debates and sustainable campaigns to overcome the negative attitudes against ethnic, migrant and religious communities.

## Chronology

- **26 February**: The Regional Association of the Thracian Unions in the Stara Zagora Region stated that "jihad" was being studied in Bulgaria and a crusade wasbeing carried out against Christianity.
- **1 March:** Members of Bulgarian Socialist Party made proposals for amendments to the Law of Religions in Parliament.
- **7 March:** The director of a high school ordered student Emine Shamatareva to be transferred to a religious school because of her headscarf.
- **13 March:** A civil protest was held against the masjid in Lyulin, Sofia, organised by extreme nationalists.
- **14 March:** Other members of the Bulgarian Socialist Party made different proposals for amendments to the Law of Religions in Parliament.
- **18 March:** A civil protest was held against the masjid in Lyulin, Sofia, organised by extreme nationalists.
- **22 March:** A group of religious figures and human rights activists published a declaration against the proposed amendments of the Bulgarian Socialist Party to the Law of Religions.
- **7 April:** The coalition Patriotic Front made proposals for amendments to the Penal Code, according to which the expression "radical Islam" will be included in the law.
- **20 April:** The coalition Patriotic Front brought a bill proposal to Parliament for banning the burqa.
- **27 April:** The municipal council of Pazardjik banned the burqa and the nikab.
- **28 April:** The municipal council of Stara Zagora banned the burqa and the nikab.
- **25 May:** The municipal council of Sliven banned the burqa and the nikab.
- **30 September:** Adoption of the "Law Prohibiting the Wearing of Clothing Concealing One's Face in Public Spaces", the so-called "Burqa Law".
- **1 June:** The municipal council of Burgas banned the burqa and the nikab.

- **16 May:** The first fine for wearing a burqa was given to a woman in Pazardzik.
- **June:** The facade of the mosque in Yambol was painted with threatening words.
- **23 June:** The Parliament adopted at first reading the amendments to the Penal Code submitted by the coalition Patriotic Front.
- **20 July:** The extreme nationalistic political party ATAKA introduced amendments in Parliament to the Law of Religions.
- **21 July:** The coalition Patriotic Front submitted to Parliament proposals for amendments to the Law of Religions.
- **28 July:** The coalition Patriotic Front submitted to Parliament another proposal for amendments to the Law of Religions.
- **8 August:** Unknown people desecrated the hearse of the Regional Mufti's Office in Pleven with offensive inscriptions.
- **September:** The wall of the Office of the Grand Mufti was painted with nationalistic symbols and threats.
- **October:** Unknown people wrote profanities on the Kurshum Mosque in Kralovo.
- **7 October:** Extreme nationalistic groups and football fans in Sofia, Varna, Yambol and other towns in Bulgaria protested against the refugees, during which they chanted Islamophobic slogans.
- **21 October:** Extreme nationalistic groups and football fans in Sofia, Varna, Yambol and other towns in Bulgaria protested against the refugees, during which Islamophobic slogans were chanted.
- **1 November:** The director of the Centre for Middle East Research in Sofia claimed that imams in Bulgaria were preaching radicalism, Wahhabism and Salafizm.
- **4 November:** Unknown people wrote "Death for Turks" on the wall of the mosque in Medovets village and hanged a pig's head at the entrance.
- **6 November:** On the day of the presidential election offensive inscriptions were found on the mosque in Pleven.
- **19 November:** Extreme nationalistic formations in Sofia protested against the refugees, during which they chanted Islamophobic slogans.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN CROATIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

In 2016, Islamophobia in Croatia was present but less intense than in 2015, which saw the explosion of media materials which expressed anti-Islamic attitudes in response to the pan-European so-called immigrant crisis that also affected Croatia. An opinion poll in 2016 showed that the Croatian population is highly concerned about the terrorist threats and is negatively disposed towards immigration despite the fact the Croatian soil has not been attacked in the last two decades by terrorist groups and that immigration is very low. On the other hand, the Islamic Community in Croatia enjoyed, as in previous years, very good relations with the state and the majority of the population, as well as with the leadership of the Catholic Church in Croatia, the country's predominant denomination. Only two possible major Islamophobic incidents stand out in 2016: the extremely critical treatment of Minister of Culture Zlatko Hasanbegović by the media, seen by some as motivated by anti-Islamic sentiment, and the violent attack on two asylum seekers from Muslim countries in December in Zagreb. Mainstream media were not directly Islamophobic, although their widespread use of the adjective "Islamic" to refer to DAESH, al-Qaeda or similar terrorist groups may contribute to the stereotyping of all Muslims as potential security threats. The main supporters of anti-Islamic positions, the Croatian extreme right-wing politicians and Internet media, focused on targeting non-European immigrant Muslims to Europe – as opposed to the existing community of Croatian Muslims of mainly Balkan origin. Some biased and provocative anti-Islamic texts were present in marginal conservative Catholic media. Open Islamophobic hate speech was also heavily present on social media, commentary sections of online media and internet forums.

## Sažetak

U 2016, islamofobija u Hrvatskoj bila je prisutna ali s manjim intenzitetom nego u prethodnoj godini, 2015., kada se dogodila eksplozija medijskih materijala koji su, uglavnom indirektno, izražavali anti-islamske stavove u kontekstu paneuropske imigrantske krize kojom je bila pogođena i Hrvatska. Istraživanja javnog mnijenja su u 2016. pokazala da je hrvatsko stanovništvo vrlo zabrinut zbog terorističkih prijetnji, a negativno raspoloženo prema imigraciji, unatoč činjenici da je Hrvatska zemlja nije bila napadnuta je u posljednja dva desetljeća od strane terorističkih skupina te da je imigracija vrlo niska. S druge strane, Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj uživala je, kao i prethodnih godina, vrlo dobre odnose s državom i većinom stanovništva, kao i s vodstvom Katoličke crkve u Hrvatskoj, prevladavajuće vjeroispovijesti. Jedina dva moguća veća islamofobna incidenta bila su izrazito kritički medijski tretman ministra kulture Zlatka Hasanbegovića, koji su neki pripisali anti-islamskim osjećajima, i nasilni napad na dvojicu azilanata iz muslimanskih zemalja u prosincu u Zagrebu. *Mainstream* mediji nisu direktno poticali islamofobiju, iako njihova raširena upotreba pridjeva "islamski" za kvalifikaciju ISIS-a, al-Qaide ili sličnih terorističkih skupina može doprinijeti stereotipu o muslimanima u cjelini kao sigurnosnoj prijetnji. Glavni zagovornici anti-islamskih stavova, ekstremno desni političari i internetski mediji, fokusirali su se na neeuropske muslimanske imigrante u Europu - ne na postojeću zajednicu hrvatskih muslimana uglavnom balkanskog porijekla. Neki pristrani i provokativni anti-islamski tekstovi bili su prisutni u marginalnim konzervativnim katoličkim medijima. Osim toga, otvoreni islamofobni govor mržnje bio je prisutan na društvenim medijima, u sekcijama komentara online medija i na internetskim forumima.

# Introduction

Islamophobia has played an important role in Croatian history. The presence of Muslims in Croatia, a predominantly Roman Catholic country, until the 20th century has had no continuity to this day due to the breaks caused by persecution and annihilation, which was justified and largely motivated in Islamophobic discourses that have been historically present in the Catholic Church and secular institutions shaped by the latter.

The first presence of Muslims was recorded in eastern parts of the contemporary Republic of Croatia in the 12th century. These Muslims were pressured by the Hungarian (simultaneously Croatian) ruler and the Catholic Church to convert to Catholicism, but managed to survive in some numbers until the end of 14th century, when they were finally religiously assimilated. During the 16th century, Ottomans established their rule over roughly half of the territory of contemporary Croatia. Ottoman rule in Croatia ended after the Reconquista by the Catholic powers, the Habsburg Empire and Venice at the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century. The Muslim population left Croatia or was expelled, killed or enslaved. All Islamic religious infrastructures, including graveyards, were destroyed or converted to serve other purposes. The third period of Muslim settlement in Croatia starts in second half of 19th century, when Muslims started to return to Croatia. The Muslim settlement in Croatia grew steadily during the 20th century (from 4,750 residents in 1931 to 62,000 in 2011).

The number of Muslims rose especially after the 1960s when Muslims, predominantly of Bosniak ethnicity, immigrated from Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia as part of inter-Yugoslav economic migrations. The negative stereotypes of Islam and Muslims based on the historical perceptions of the Ottoman danger dominated Croatian academia and the educational system as well as the Catholic Church throughout the 20th century. The Croatian nationalist political elite, however, in the first half of the 20th century - due to its plans to attract Muslim Bosniaks for the Croatian national project - considered Muslim Bosniaks as part of the Croat nation and accepted Islam as part of the country's national heritage. At that time, the nascent Muslim community in Croatia was able to profit from these positive attitudes which helped their quick social integration and protected them from the Islamophobia prevalent in cultural institutions and the Church. The culmination of this positive attitude based on political calculation was the patronising of pro-Muslim behaviour by the Croatian Nazi puppet state ruled by the extreme nationalist and Fascist-like *Ustaše* movement between 1941 and 1945. After the communist-dominated federal Yugoslavia emerged after World War II, some political representation was given to the ethnic groups with Muslim culture, especially Bosniaks, and their culture started to be appreciated, at least in theory, all across Yugoslavia in accordance with and within the boundaries of the proclaimed ideological principles of "brotherhood and unity". Following these principles, socialist Croatia, removed

some of the worst features of pure Islamophobia from history textbooks and academic productions; however. anti-Islamic attitudes associated with the extreme negative perception of Ottomans, continued to be reproduced in Croatian historiography and the school system, partly as a result of Marxist influences and the anti-Ottoman discourses of other Yugoslav historiographies.

Although more discretely than before, Croatian academia and the educational system continued to build discrete resentment towards Muslims, which influenced the outburst of the state-sponsored Islamophobia of the 1990s (to be explained later in the report). During and after the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the newly awakened Croatian nationalism temporarily revived the pro-Islamic tradition. Nevertheless, the Croatian nationalist Islamophilia collapsed during the 1993–1994 period, the so-called Bosniak-Croat war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was an armed conflict in the shadow of Serbian agression against both Bosnia and Croatia. The conflict started after the leadership of newly independent Croatia attempted to annex parts of Bosnia with the help of the Bosnian Croats, to distance itself from its former allies, the Bosniaks, and to forge closer relations with Bosnian Serbs and Serbia. This led to war between the Croats and the official Bosnian army, largely Bosniak. The Croatian media and academia launched a brief, but harsh, Islamophobic campaign trying to blame the Bosniak side and its Islamic religion for the war with Bosnian Croats, reinventing for this purpose the centuries-old images of Ottoman and Islamic danger. In contrast to Bosnia, where this conflict led to ethnic cleansing and the persecution of the Muslim population, Croatian Muslims didn't suffer state or other persecution, although a smaller number of violent Islamophobic incidents against Bosnian Muslim refugees and local population did occur.

The anti-Muslim campaign ceased in 1994 with the creation of a new alliance between Croatia, the official Bosnian government, and Bosnian Croats. As the nationalists left power in 2000, the positive attitude of the Croatian political elite and media toward Croatian Muslims helped to create an accepting amosphere for Croatian Muslims in the public domain as well as in academia and the educational system. The linguistic and cultural proximity between the Croatian Catholic majority and Croatian Muslims, as well as a relatively low overall number of Muslims, are seen as major factors enabling this largely successful integration. The diminished migration from other post-Yugoslav countries since the establishment of Croatian independence in 1991 and the growing number of Muslims born and raised in Croatia, contributed to the ever-growing identification of the Muslim population with Croatia.

Nevertheless, the legacy of historical demonization of Islam enhanced by the Catholic retraditionalization of society and the living memory of the 1990s war in Bosnia, kept alive by the huge immigration of Bosnian Croats, have helped Islamophobia to survive. Several polls in 2000s indicated that the social distance between Catholic Croats and Muslim Balkan ethnicities still exists and that some of the anti-Muslim prejudic-

es continue to influence part of public opinion. Since 2001, the general anti-Islamic prejudices were also strengthened by the Western war against al-Qaida, the Taliban and DAESH causing a continuous stream of superficial and unnuanced news representations of Islam. The media discourse in Croatian media, in the very media that sympathetically covered Croatian Muslims, has been saturated by news that associated Islam in other countries with terrorism and atrocities as well as violence and ignorance in general.

Until very recently, Croatia due to its long history of isolation and economic hardship, had no experience with any significant number of Muslims immigrating from outside of Europe. The debates about cultural integration of Muslim immigrants were non-existent. According to the 2011 national census, Muslims in Croatia represent a small portion of the Croatian population, only 1.47% (or 62,977 persons). There is only one Islamic religious community, the Islamic Community in Croatia, which enjoys a good relationship with the state that recognises sharia marriage, provides salaries for imams and financially supports its educational activities. In addition to the good relationship between the state and the Islamic religious establishment, currently there are no visible significant tensions between the resident, mostly Balkan-rooted, Muslim population and the majority Croatian Catholic population. Violent anti-Muslim acts are rare.

Nevertheless, some indicators point to the fact that anti-Muslim sentiment may be influencing the majority population more significantly when dealing with the non-European Muslim population; this is also reflected in some governmental policies. For example, the firm stance of the Croatian government during 2016 towards halting the possible new influx of refugees and migrants was aimed at reassuring the Croatian public which, despite the non-existent terrorism on Croatian soil and the extremely low number of persons who decided to seek asylum or to immigrate, was highly concerned about these issues. According to the Eurobarometer opinion poll research for 2016, funded by the European Commission, terrorism (48%) and immigration (44%) are the two most important concerns of Croatian citizens. The level of concern for terrorism is among the highest in the EU, with only Poland, Cyprus, and Ireland (50%), and Romania (49%) having higher scores concerning this issue in 2016.[1]

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

Employment and work-related discrimination based on religious affiliation or belief, as well as discrimination based on ethnic or political background is prohibited by

1. European Commission, "Standard Eurobarometer 85," ec.europa.eu, (July 2016), retrieved January 28, 2017, from http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2130.

law in Croatia.[2] There is no data on specific cases or statistics pertaining to any type of discrimination based on Muslimness in the job market for 2016, as for previous years, but the limited existence of this type of anti-Islamic discrimination, especially of recent immigrants, cannot be excluded. According to a 2012 poll of the general population, employment and work discrimination is the most widespread discrimination in Croatia. The same poll concluded that religion is the third common cause of discrimination (after ethnicity and social status).[3] A 2013 poll of Croatian citizens published by the Centre for Peace Studies found that the majority of Croatian citizens are unfavourably disposed towards equal rights for employment of immigrants.[4] According to the 2015 national Ombudsman's report, work and employment are the most common areas in which citizens complain about discrimination. Out of the 124 complaints that were received, only three were based solely on grounds of religious discrimination. Another 13 were based on nationality and ethnicity, and 26 on multiple (unidentified) reasons.[5]

## Politics

In recent years, the issue of Islam and Muslim immigrants outside of the Bosnian context was not of great importance to the Croatian conservatives and nationalists. This changed suddenly in the second half of August 2015 after Syrian, Iraqi and other refugees and migrants on their path from Turkey towards Germany and Northern Europe started entering Croatia which after Hungary closed its borders became the only passage for them on the Balkan route. Until mid-December, 505,000 refugees and migrants entered Croatia and virtually all of them proceeded towards the North. At the time, Croatian authorities treated refugees and migrants in a very supportive way, assisting them with food and shelter, and enabling them to cross to or transporting them to the Slovenian or Hungarian borders. Several organised initiatives and a multitude of individuals volunteered in relocation camps, collected humanitarian aid or helped transport people to border crossings.

On the other hand, a large part of the Croatian right-wing political spectrum started expressing unease about the large presence of mostly Muslim foreigners and the lack of control over the national borders. A previously non-existent debate about Muslim immigration and the possibility of Muslim integration into Croatian society

2. Zakon.hr, "The law on prevention of discrimination," *zakon.hr*, (Mai 9, 20008), retrieved October 29, 2016, from http://www.zakon.hr/z/490/Zakon-o-suzbijanju-diskriminacije.

3. Dijana Jurasić, "Diskriminacija najveća na poslu i pri zapošljavanju," *Večernji list*, (June 27, 2012), retrieved October 29, 2016, from http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/diskriminacija-najveca-na-poslu-i-pri-zaposljavanju-424981.

4. Centar za mirovne studije, "Vrijeme za suočavanje sa ksenofobijom u Hrvatskoj," *cms.hr*, (September 20, 2013), retrieved January 28, 2016, from http://www.cms.hr/hr/suzbijanje-diskriminacije/vrijeme-je-za-suocavanje-sa-ksenofobijom-u-hrvatskoj.

5. Pučki pravobranitelj (People's Rights Defender), "Izvješće pučke pravobraniteljice za 2015. Godinu," *ombudsman.hr*, (March 31, 2016), retrieved November 30, 2016, from http://ombudsman.hr/hr/component/jdownloads/send/67-2015/745-izvjesce-pp-2015-pdf.

followed, with right-wing politicians and media claiming that most of the newly arrived people are actually not genuine refugees, that integration of non-European Muslims is impossible, their arrival is unwanted, etc. Nevertheless, prominent racist statements were largely condemned by the Croatian political mainstream and debates started by the right-wing media in the wake of the so-called immigrant crisis have never gained ground in mainstream media. Still, these developments from 2015 announced that the Croatian right wing, previously preoccupied with the ethnic rivalries in the post-Yugoslav context, has finally appropriated the topics present in other European right-wing discourses: principally the supposed danger of Islam for the Christian and white identity of Europe.

During 2016, the influx of refugees and migrants coming from Turkey to Croatia via the so-called Balkan route almost completely ceased, while the border control remainded strict and the government expressed a firm stance that further uncontrolled immigration or transit of such persons will not be allowed. The public debate on the immigration of Muslims to Europe and, possibly to Croatia, which was very much alive - with partially Islamophobic overtones - in 2015, diminished in 2016. The Croatian government accepted a very small number of refugees and migrants in accordance to the agreement with other EU states. The first four migrants arrived to Croatia in the framework of this cooperation in July 2016 and were welcomed by the Croatian Interior Minister Vlaho Orepić, who publicly greeted them with "*Salaam alaikoum*!"[6]

Generally, much of this year Croatia was politically unstable. In January, two months after the elections, the government based on the alliance between the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and "Most" political group was established. From its very start, the government was broadely critised for the extreme right-wing outlook of some of its members, causing widespread protests in the country and international criticism. The coalition was shaky and prone to internal fighting, which resulted in the early demise of the government and the leadership of the HDZ party in June. The period between January and September was marked by an unusually high level of ideological division and tension between the Left and Right. After new elections were held in September, a new, more moderate, leaderhip of the HDZ, together with "Most" were able to form a government and change the tenor of public discussion towards economic issues avoiding ideological partisanship. In January 2016, Zlatko Hasanbegović, a historian and member of the local board of the Islamic community in Zagreb, became Minister of Culture in the Croatian government. His public statements and previous political associations, described by most of media as extreme right-wing and Croatian nationalist, were subjected to unprecedented and vehement media and social media criticism from mainly liberal and leftist circles expressing outrage that a person

6. HINA, "Prvi migranti stigli u Hrvatsku," *Jutarnji list*, (July 1, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/foto-prvi-migranti-stigli-u-hrvatsku-orepic-ih-pozdravio-sa-selam-aleikum-oni-se-odusevili/4488722/.

with such views could become a government minister. While political and media critics of Hasanbegović did not use his religious adherence to discredit him, some of the anonymous attacks on Hasanbegović in social media and in commentary sections of online media targeted, occasionally in vulgar fashion, his Islamic background.

Željka Markić, the well-known leader of the conservative Catholic NGO *U ime obitelji* (In the name of family), with whom Hasanbegović had previously collaborated, was first to attempt to defend him by publicly interpreting widespread criticism of Hasanbegović as motivated by Islamophobia; however, she didn't specify whether in her view this was only partially or generally so.[7] Zagreb's main imam, Alili, defended Hasanbegović during the Friday sermon in the Zagreb Mosque claiming that media criticism of his views was, among others, "based on anti-Islamic sentiment and Islamophobia"; this was later reported in the media.[8] The Mufti of the Islamic Community in Croatia Aziz Hasanović responded to Alili's claims with a statement claiming that Alili's views are not the official views of the Islamic Community, stressing that the qualification of the criticism against Hasanbegović as anti-Islamic and Islamophobic is "baseless and detrimental", and that criticism of his views is only a product of "his own ideological opinions". [9]

## Media

Some of the practices of Croatian mainstream media during 2016 may be seen as contributing to anti-Muslim sentiment. The coverage of jihadi terrorism and the crises in the Islamic world, especially the war in Syria, very often focused on the possible threats and the examples of extreme violence, some of which were presented in a sensationalist fashion with the aim of increasing readership or audience. The sources of such news were usually major international news sources or statements by important international political actors. Within these reports, violent extremist acts were generally associated with Islam, very often by using phrases such as "Islamic terrorism", "Islamic terrorists", "Islamic radicalism", without contextualising such behaviour as only specific to certain smaller groups and as marginal in the framework of mainstream Islam practiced by the majority of Muslims. This type of discourse effectively contributed to stereotyping Islam and Muslims as possible security threats. For example, the report by a major, conservative, daily newspaper *Večernji list* on security threats listed by the

7. Željka Markić, "Zabrinjava islamofobija kojom se krenulo na ministra Hasanbegovića," *Večernji list*, (February 2, 2016), retrieved November 29, 2016, from http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/zeljka-markic-zabrinjava-islamofobija-kojom-se-krenulo-na-ministra-hasanbegovica-1056808.

8. Tomislav Mamić, "Zagrebački imam brani Hasanbegovića," *Jutarnji list*, (February 12, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/zagrebacki-imam-brani-hasanbegovica-dezurni-moralni-panicari-pokusavaju-ga-ocrniti-i-diskvalificirati-najbezocnijim-lazima/99220/.

9. VijestiDana.hr, "Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj: Napadi na Hasanbegovića nisu islamofobija,"*vijestidana.hr*, (February 17, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.vijestidana.hr/islamska-zajednica-u-hrvatskoj-napadi-na-hasanbegovica-nisu-islamofobija/.

Croatian Security and Intelligence Agency named "Islamic terrorism" as a major danger for the country.[10]

In September, popular daily newspaper *24 sata* highlighted the statement by the chairman of the NATO military committee, Peter Pavel, about "Islamic terrorism" as a contemporary threat to the Balkans.[11] The weekly magazine *Nacional* reported the statement by the French Prime Minister Manuel Valls who said that "Europe will be hit by Islamic terrorism again".[12] Mainstream media, from time to time, featured articles that commended the Islamic community in Croatia for its successful integration in Croatian society, the cooperation with the authorities in radicalism prevention and its public condemnations of terrorism and violence, but also reported on the Islamic community's appeals not to use adjective "Islamic" in relation to such crimes.[13] A major theme in the reporting by mainstream media of terrorist threats to Croatia in 2016, as in previous years, was the existence of Salafis and jihadi sympathisers in neighbouring Bosnia or the activity of Bosnians in terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria.

Presented as a source of imminent danger for Croatian soil and Bosnian Croats this topic was often treated in a sensationalist way. Still, while the terrorist attacks from and in Bosnia remain possible, until now there haven't been any jihadi terrorist attacks in Croatia and against Bosnian Croats; also, the number of Salafis, but especially jihadis, in Bosnia is very low and they do not possess any political influence or significant resources. For example, in October 2016, *Večernji list*, citing highly questionable Bosnian Serb security sources with a clear record of anti-Muslim bias, reported on the return to Bosnia of "about a hundred persons" who fought "on the side of Islamic terrorist groups in Syria" and who constituted "a real threat".[14] This perceived threat, expectedly, hasn't materialised as of the beginning of December. Ivica Šola, a commentator of *Slobodna Dalmacija*, seems to be the only person in mainstream Croatian media who in 2016 openly criticised Islam and Muslims, including Islamic representatives in Croatia. He insisted that there is a tendency by some Muslims to silence critics of Islam by using the notion of Islamophobia and alleged lack of

10. Davor Ivanković, "Sigurnost nacije: Hrvatska na oprezu zbog džihadista, velikosrpskih ekstremista i huligana," *Večernji list*, (June 26, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://www.vecernji.hr/hrvatska/javno-izvjesce-soa-e-islamski-terorizam-iz-okruzja-najveca-je-prijetnja-sigurnosti-1094962.

11. HINA /24sata, "Petr Pavel: Balkan još uvijek potencijalni izvor ratnih sukoba," *24 sata*, (September 17, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://www.24sata.hr/news/petr-pavel-balkan-jos-uvijek-potencijalni-izvor-ratnih-sukoba-491592.

12. HINA /24sata, "Valls: Islamski terorizam ponovo će udariti ali će Europa pobijediti," *Nacional*, (November 12, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://www.nacional.hr/valls-islamski-terorizam-ponovno-ce-udariti-ali-ce-europa-pobijediti/.

13. See for example, Mirua Ef. Delic, "Ne postoji islamski terorizam, postoji gnjusni terorizam grupe nevjernika," *Glas Slavonije*, (January 15, 2015), retrieved January 28, 2017, from http://www.glas-slavonije.hr/258187/1/Ne-postoji-islamski-terorizam-postoji-gnjusni-terorizam-grupe-nevjernika.

14. HINA, "Teroristička prijetnja u BiH je realnost", *Večernji list*, (October 1, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://www.vecernji.hr/svijet/teroristicka-prijetnja-u-bih-je-realnost-u-zemlju-se-vratilo-stotinjak-gradana-koji-su-se-borili-za-islamisticke-teroriste-u-siriji-1117863.

self-criticism by Muslim representatives who, as he saw it, use double standards when they talk about the West and fail to recognise radicalism in their own ranks. [15]

## Internet

The Internet news sites associated with the Croatian populist right-wing spectrum are currently the main agents in spreading Islamophobic stereotypes in the Croatian media landscape. This type of messages are usually conveyed not through open Islamophobic discourse, but through selective and sensationalist coverage of controversies related to immigration, terrorism and foreign policy. Islamophobic views are spread in a much more direct fashion through social media, online media commentary sections and Internet forums. The wave of anti-immigrant sentiment and the associated Islamophobia started in the wake of the 2015 so-called refugee crisis which faced Croatia with the possibility – until know unrealised – of a significant influx of non-European Muslims. The Croatian right-wing scene was previously mainly unconcerned with Islam, outside the Bosnian context. Nevertheless, since the summer of 2015, articles on the incompatibility of Islam with Europe, Muslim immigrant criminality in Western European countries, the growing number of Muslims in Europe, the supposed dangers of the Turkish influence in the Balkans, the supposed risks of the Turkish accession to the EU and similar themes started to appear regularly in right-wing websites or social media sites (for example *direktno.hr*, *dnevno.hr*, *maxportal.hr*, Velimir Bujanec's Facebook fan page). Paradoxically, while casting Islam and Muslims with non-European origins as threats to Europe and Croatia, these media outlets have been publicly supportive of the established Islamic community and the predominantly Balkan-rooted Muslim minority in Croatia, as well as the controversial Muslim (and Croatian nationalist) Culture Minister Zlatko Hasanbegović. While populist right-wing Croatian media expressed Islamophobic racism mostly indirectly, usually through coded messages, since the so-called immigrant crisis of 2015, the commentary sections of online news media, both mainstream and right-wing, as well as Internet forums, exploded with open and vicious Islamophobic hate speech. These messages by anonymous individuals seem to be not only influenced by Western European Islamophobic topics and vocabulary, but very often also by Croatia's own Islamophobic discourse which often refers to rather archaic anti-Ottoman attitudes and the armed conflict in Bosnia in the 1990s. Although the frequency of the publishing of Islamophobic articles by populist right-wing online media diminished in 2016, reporting that highlighted possible or supposed dangers coming from Muslims remained persistent.

15. Ivica Šola, „Ja islamofob? Zašto ne!," *Slobodna Dalmacija*, (November 29, 2015), retrieved November 29, 2016http://slobodnadalmacija.hr/misljenja/agora/clanak/id/294484/ivica-sola-ja-islamofob-zasto-ne.

In 2016, the conservative Croatian Catholic news site *Bitno.net* published several articles that focused on the supposed threat posed by Islam to Christian Europe. It published, without any critical distance, excerpts from the sermon by the Austrian Cardinal Cristoph Schönborn, in which he claimed that there are many Muslims who want the Islamic conquest of Europe.[16] This news portal also published excerpts from an interview by Camillo Ballin, an apostolic vicar in Northern Arabia, who accused mainstream Islam ("moderate") for supposedly failing to criticise sincerely or to any extent jihadi terrorism.[17] Paradoxically, this site also published several articles that called for and promoted religious dialogue between the Catholic Church and Islam.

## Central figures in the Islamophobia Network

Croatian Islamophobia's focus on the possible arrival of non-European Muslim immigrants in 2016 has been mainly fostered by populist and extreme right-wing media which largely operate online. This current does not have clear political representation and is fragmented; it has been associated with a minority extreme nationalist faction within the ruling, officially centre-right, HDZ Party. The political right-wing spectrum, however, operates at the moment chiefly outside of the political mainstream encompassing different factions such as smaller right-wing and conservative parties (for example, the *Hrast* Party) and NGOs, as well as single personalities like TV host Velimir Bujanec.

Anti-Islamic sentiments are also present marginally within the Catholic Church in Croatia. Yet, they were not expressed or supported by major personalities and official media who cooperate with the Islamic community in Croatia and insist on dialogue with Islam. The anti-Islamic statements that came from marginal actors in the conservative faction of the Church range from criticism of the mainstream Islamic response to terrorism and the notion of Islam as a "religion of peace" to subtle pointing to Muslims as possible threats to the Christian identity of Europe (see the example of *bitno.net* in the chapter on the Internet). Open Islamophobic hate speech coming from clergy and activists, such as the 2015 Youtube statement by Franciscan Friar Danijel Maljur about Islam being "worse than Nazism",[18] have been extremely rare in the recent period and were not recorded in 2016.

16. Bitno.net, "Svjedočimo li novom pokušaju islamskog osvajanja Europe? Mnogi muslimani to žele …," *bitno.net*, (September 14, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from https://www.bitno.net/vijesti/svijet/islamsko-osvajanje-europe-kardinal-schoenborn/.

17. Biskup Ballin, "Zar mi trebamo uvjeravati svijet da islam nije nasilan? Što su ikad rekli 'umjereni' muslimani?," *bitno.net*, (August 22, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from https://www.bitno.net/vijesti/svijet/biskp-camillo-ballin-umjereni-muslimani-islam-nasilje/.

18. YouTube video, "Islam je gore zlo od nacizma", (September 29, 2015). Available from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQnkgxCC1ew (retrieved January 28, 2017).

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

In 2016, public debate on the National Plan for Fight Against Discrimination, including discrimination against the immigrant population and that based on religion, was held with very little interest. Also, the Centre for Peace Studies (*Centar za mirovne studije*) in Zagreb prepared and published a yearly report for 2015 on racism and xenophobia. During 2016, the same organisation continued its implementation of the project "Racism and Xenophobia: For Refugee and Ethnic Equality (RAX FREE)" financed by the Croatian government and the EU which started in 2015. This projects aims to create a knowledge base as a contribution to the creation and control of policies relating to combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination; to deal with legal and psycho-social assistance to refugees and persons who are in the process of obtaining international protection; and to devise ways to monitor right-wing radical groups in society.[19]

The Croatian establishment in 2016 was involved in activities that affirmed Islam's presence in Croatia, although the stress of these activities focused on the historically established and numerically small Bosnian-rooted Muslim community. The possible diversification and growth of the Muslim community by the significant influx of non-European Muslims hasn't been addressed. The Islamic community in Croatia celebrated on 27 April the 100th anniversary of the state recognition of Islam in Croatia. The lavish ceremony was held in the Croatian National Theatre with the attendance of Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović, Prime Minister Tihomir Orešković and other major politicians, as well as Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Bosniak member of the Bosnian State Presidency Bakir Izetbegović, and representatives of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The event featured speeches affirming the Islamic presence in the country and calling for cooperation across civilisational boundaries by the Croatian and Turkish Presidents, and Croatian Mufti Aziz Hasanović. The event was reported in a positive fashion by virtually all Croatian and most of Bosnian media.[20] A very important development in 2016 for the Islamic community in Croatia and for its collaboration with authorities and the general public, was the beginning of the construction of the mosque in Sisak (the Islamic Cultural Centre in Sisak) which is planned as the fourth mosque in the country. This was marked by a foundation stone-laying ceremony on 12 October, which was attended by local politicians and Islamic dignitaries from Croatia and Bosnia. The event was reported in a neutral fashion by all major Croatian media.

19. Centar Za Mirovne Studije, "Rasizam i ksenofobija: za izbjegličku i etničku jednakost," *cms.hr*, (November 3, 2015), retrieved December 1, 2016 http://www.cms.hr/hr/suzbijanje-diskriminacije/rasizam-i-ksenofobija-za-izbjeglicku-i-etnicku-jednakost.

20. See for example, tportal.hr/HINA, "Ne govorimo o suživotu, već živimo život," *tportal.hr*, (April 27, 2016), retrieved November 30, 2016, from http://www.tportal.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/426268/100-godina-islama-u-Hrvatskoj-Ne-govorimo-o-suzivotu-vec-zivimo-zivot.html.

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Research points to the conclusion that anti-Islamic incidents in Croatian media and politics seem to be fewer than in 2015 due to the easing of the so-called refugee crisis. Nevertheless, public opinion research supports the fact that anti-Islamic stereotypes aimed at non-European Muslims remain strong and that they are, at least partially, reflected in the support of restrictive governmental policies towards the influx of refugees and immigrants from Muslim countries. While open Islamophobia thrives only in the political and societal margins, negative stereotyping and unfair criticism of Islam and Muslims is still present in the mainstream media. Violent incidents towards Muslims are rare.

There are factors which contribute to the difficulty of tracking Islamophobia in Croatia. In addition to the small numbers and low visibility of Muslims, the lack of data and research, it must be stated that the attitude of the political elite and the general public towards Islam and Muslims is inconsistent and paradoxical. The Croatian political elite – but also the Croatian political right wing - actively supports and promotes the established Islamic community in Croatia, whose members have by and large roots in the Balkans and which is a small community in terms of numbers. On the other hand, the Croatian political establishment as well as the general public seem to be unwilling to support the permanent settlement of non-European Muslims in any significant numbers.

The international protection and immigration of non-European Muslims, who rarely migrate or seek asylum in Croatia, should be more openly embraced and not blocked due to pressure by public opinion. The number of persons from Muslim countries who are accepted in Croatia on humanitarian and economic grounds should be increased.

The political factors in Croatia should work to foster in the indigenous population a greater degree of acceptance of ethnic and religious diversity, especially towards non-European Muslims. The widespread expectations of preserving the highly monolithic ethnically and religiously Croatian Catholic society, which contributes to anti-immigration and Islamophobic feelings, should be addressed by local media, scholarship and civil initiatives.

The funding for civil initiatives that support refugees and combat racism should be increased. The instances of Islamophobia and other types of racism should be considered a public priority, and should be addressed immediately and adequately by the relevant bodies that monitor the media and by court authorities.

The Ombudsman's office and Centre for Peace Studies should publish their reports for previous years as soon as possible and start to record and publish data on crimes against specific ethnicities and religions. More resources should be allocated to the recording and publishing of reports on possibly undocumented violent hate-related attacks and the groups and/or individuals that may be responsible for them.

## Chronology

- **February 2:** Statement by Catholic activist Željka Markić that widespread criticism of Minister of Culture Zlatko Hasanbegović is motivated by Islamophobia.
- **February 12:** The Chief Imam of Zagreb Aziz Alili claims in the Friday sermon that attacks on Hasanbegović are indeed Islamophobic.
- **February 17:** The mufti of the Islamic community in Croatia, Aziz Hasanović, issues a statement insisting that public criticism of Hasanbegović shouldn't be seen as Islamophobic and is in no way connected to his religion and activism in the community; instead it is a mere reflection of his political positions.
- **31 December :** The only violent incident that can possibly be linked to Islamophobia that was documented in the media or elswhere was a violent assault on two asylum seekers (from Syria and Libya resceptively) in Zagreb near the accommodation facility for asylum seekers in Novi Zagreb borough. The victims were lightly wounded and the relevant criminal investigation is ongoing.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN CZECH REPUBLIC

## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

The most significant developments in 2016 related to Islamophobia in the Czech Republic are the continuation of display of aggressive intolerance in the form of demonstrations, which are getting more intrusive and are prompting debates about the limits of freedom of assembly; the failure of the attempt of Islamophobic parties to create coalitions for regional elections, which led to the fragmentation and proliferation of smaller Islamophobic initiatives; and the increased anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric and policies within the mainstream political establishment across all parties. The line separating xenophobic and anti-xenophobic perspectives no longer runs between various parties but is often drawn between different individual politicians within the same party. The polarization on the issue of immigrants (most often perceived to be Muslims) has spread to wider society dividing it into blocks of those who oppose the "foreign threat" and call for national consolidation and those who advocate for compassion and, often as volunteers, help asylum seekers and immigrants. The deeper the polarization the more obvious it becomes that what is at stake is not only attitudes to immigration but that the two blocks (divided into sub-blocks) are in opposition regarding overall understanding of freedom, and the rights and responsibilities in Czech society. This is illustrated by the instance when a prominent member of the Czech parliament for the Social Democrats, Jeroným Tejc, proposed changes in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms to limit its article guaranteeing right of asylum. Another similar example comes from a well-known constitutional lawyer and vice-rector of Charles University, Aleš Gerloch, who proposed inserting the term nation into the Czech Constitution as the basis of statehood. All this could lead to unprecedented changes in the fundamental documents on which Czech society is based; if one change is allowed, others may follow easily and this time these changes may not be against asylum seekers or non-Czechs but might target other randomly chosen groups. The role of the media continues to be controversial, further contributing to the chaotic situation invoking alleged imminent dangers, which play well into the hands of Islamophobic attitudes. It is, however, important to stress that resistance also continues and involves individuals, initiatives and organizations, both formal and informal, and is particularly manifested in the form of volunteering in helping asylum seekers and immigrants.

## Shrnutí

Nejdůležitější vývojové trendy v oblasti islámofobie v roce 2016 jsou: pokračování demonstrací, které svědčí o agresivní netoleranci. Tyto demonstrace se stávají čím dál tím více extrémní a vyvolávají otázky o limitech práva na shromažďování; selhání islámofóbních stran při pokusu o vytvoření koalice před volbami, což vedlo k proliferaci a fragmentaci menších islamofóbních iniciativ; posílení proti-uprchlické a proti-muslimské rétoriky a politik v rámci mainstreamového politického establishmentu. Dělicí čára oddělující xenofobní od nexenofobní perspektivy nevede už mezi jednotlivými stranami, ale často vede mezi jednotlivými politiky bez ohledu na stranickou příslušnost. Polarizace tykající se problematiky migrantů/tek (kteří jsou téměř vždy vnímáni jako muslimové) prorůstá celou společností a rozděluje jí na bloky těch, kteří se staví proti „ohrožení cizinci" a těch, kteří se přimlouvají za soucit a často, v roli dobrovolníků/c, pomáhají žadatelům o azyl a migrantům/kám. Čím silnější polarizace, tím více se stává zřetelným, že to o co jde, není pouze vztah k migraci ale, že uvedené dva bloky (rozdělené dál na menší bloky) jsou v opozici, pokud jde o celkové chápání svobod, práva a odpovědnosti v české společnosti. Toto tvrzení lze ilustrovat na příkladu návrhu předního zástupce České strany sociálně demokratické a poslance, Jeronýma Tejce, který navrhoval upravit Listinu základních práv a svobod, aby omezil povinnosti státu vyplývající z článku tykající se práva na azyl. Podobným příkladem je i návrh známého ústavního právníka a prorektora Univerzity Karlovy, Aleše Gerlocha, který navrhuje do Ústavy České republiky zařadit pojem národa jako nositele státnosti. Podobné inciativy mohou vést k bezprecedentním změnám základních dokumentů, na kterých je česká společnost postavena a pokud umožníme podobné změny, nic nebrání tomu, aby byly požadovaný další a další – tentokrát neomezující práva žadatelů o azyl a ne-Čechů, nýbrž jiné libovolně vybrané skupiny. Role médií zůstává kontroverzní, často přispívající k chaotické situaci připomínající údajnou bezprostřední hrozbu a tímto nahrávající islámofóbním postojům. Je však důležité zdůraznit, že odpor též přetrvává. Do něj se zapojují jak jednotlivci, tak i iniciativy a organizace, formální či neformální, zejména v oblasti dobrovolné pomoci žadatelům o azyl a migrantům.

# Introduction

The Islamophobic way of thinking is inseparable from intolerance, hate and fear of immigrants. This way of thinking takes place even without the rise of immigration levels in the Czech Republic. Unlike other EU countries, the Czech Republic has not been a target country for refugees, whose numbers are in decline.[1] The first five months of 2016 saw 17% decline in asylum applications. It's noteworthy that the main country of origin of asylum applicants was Ukraine, followed by Iraq[2] and China. During the same period only 122 persons were given asylum and 137 were given subsidiary protection.[3] In 2015, 1.525 persons applied for international protection in the Czech Republic, 71 got refugee status and 399 received temporary protection. Top applicants came from Ukraine, Syria and Cuba.[4]

The numbers and some of the countries of origin are quite untypical for the rest of EU. In other words, even though there was enormous movement of people during 2015 and partly in 2016, none of it affected the Czech Republic and it had no impact on the reduction of hate and intolerance towards refugees and immigrants. On its part, the state keeps scores of people in detention camps for crossing the border without documents. The detention centers have been repeatedly criticised for their prison-like regime, the separation of families, the lack of provision of medical care but also for stripping the detainees of their belongings and then releasing them without money and with deportation orders.[5]

# Significant Incidents and Developments

Since the number of Muslims is low in the Czech Republic, most of the hate speech directed towards them occurs online; the victims outside of cyberspace are Muslims, those perceived as Muslims, and activists or even some politicians advocating for a tolerant and inclusive society. Such activists and politicians are pejoratively called the "welcomers", i.e. those who welcome refugees instead of stopping them from arriving to the country. Thus a group of roughly 50 people, including some described as neo-Nazis, walked through the second biggest city in the Czech Republic, Brno,

1. For more information about numbers and countries of origin of Muslims in the Czech Republic see: Selma Muhic Dizdarevic (2016): *Islamophobia in the Czech Republic: National Report 2015*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016.

2. This is mainly due to a programme run by a Czech NGO focused on moving Iraqi Christians to the Czech Republic.

3.Alena Fendrychová, "Počet žadatelů o azyl v ČR klesá," prouprchliky.cz, (September 15, 2016), retrieved January 9, 2016, from http://prouprchliky.cz/pocet-zadatelu-o-azyl-v-cr-klesa/.

4.ČLOVĚK V TÍSNI, "Často kladené otázky,"*clovekvtisni.cz*, (not dated), retrieved November 11, 2016, from https://www.clovekvtisni.cz/cs/migrace/info/casto-kladene-dotazy, accessed

5.Jaroslav Ožana, "Martin Rozumek: Detence v Česku je nelidská a ponižující," *ČESKÁ TELEVIZE*, (October 8, 2016), retrieved October 5, 201, from http://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ct24/domaci/1598069-martin-rozumek-detence-v-cesku-je-nelidska-a-ponizujici.

looking for the deputy mayor and subsequently going to his house. After failing to find him, the group dispersed.[6] The reason he became a target was that he had advocated for the rights of immigrants, refugees, Muslims, Roma and other vulnerable groups. Some reactions on Facebook accused the deputy mayor of treason.

In the political field, two trends are important to mention: one is a failed attempt of various Islamophobic, xenophobic and nationalistic initiatives, parties and groups to form a coalition before regional elections, and the other is the increasing penetration of those groups' agenda into mainstream politics. Sometimes, it's impossible to tell whether certain statements come from what is still regarded as the xenophobic fringe or from mainstream politicians. Thus, the First Deputy Prime Minister for the Economics and Minister of Finance Andrej Babiš, despite being of immigrant origin himself, said that the Czech Republic should not admit any immigrants, that they should be kept in Turkey or other surrounding countries so they can return to Syria, and that the example of Western countries showed that they can't be integrated.[7]

Martin Konvička's movement made an agreement with a parliamentary party called "Dawn-National Coalition" and tried to call it the "Dawn with Block Against Islam". However, the Ministry of Interior did not allow the use of the name citing that it violates equal rights and the freedoms of believers in Islam. The Dawn Party also submitted a proposal to the government to introduce a law that would ban "political Islam". Both parties promised to sue the Ministry, however, before elections the coalition fell apart mostly for financial reasons. Following this, the Block Against Islam also fell apart and gave rise to an association called "Martin Konvička's Initiative". Another former member of Block Against Islam founded another party called "Alternative for the Czech Republic 2017" named after the German original.[8] In the regional elections, where the issue of immigration is less relevant, none of the

6.Idnes.cz, "Desítky "holých hlav" v Brně hledaly náměstka primátora Matěje Hollana," *idnes.cz*, (September 5, 2016), retrieved October 20, 2016, from http://brno.idnes.cz/radikalove-pronasledovali-hollana-dtn-/brno-zpravy.aspx?c=A160905_185505_brno-zpravy_lva.

7.Echo24.cz, "Uprchlíci se nedokáží integrovat, žádné nepřijímeme, vyzývá Babiš," *echo24.cz*, (July 26, 2016), retrieved September 5, 2016, from https://echo24.cz/a/w9GRL/uprchlici-se-nedokazi-integrovat-zadne-neprijimejme-vyzyva-babis.

8.Idnes.cz, "Blok protiislámu se rozešel s Úsvitem. Nejsouslíbenédesítkymilionů," *idnes.cz,* (April 25, 2016), retrieved October 8, 2016, from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/blok-proti-islamu-vypovedel-smlouvu-s-usvitem-flr-/domaci.aspx?c=A160425_074507_domaci_hro; Idnes.cz, "Blok protiislámu se rozešel s Úsvitem. Nejsouslíbenédesítkymilionů," *idnes.cz,* (April 25, 2016), retrieved October 16, 2016, from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/blok-proti-islamu-vypovedel-smlouvu-s-usvitem-flr-/domaci.aspx?c=A160425_074507_domaci_hro; Idnes.cz, "VnitrozakázalospojeníÚsvitu a Konvičkykvůliprávůmvyznavačůislámu," *idnes.cz*, (March 22, 2016), retrieved October 16, 2016, from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/zakazte-islam-a-predcasne-volby-at-jsou-hned-zadaji-usvit-a-konvicka-11p-/domaci.aspx?c=A160322_112614_domaci_kop; Idnes.cz, "Blok protiislámuužneexistuje. VzniklanováIniciativa Martina Konvičky," *idnes.cz*, (May 28, 2016), retrieved November 1, 2016, from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/blok-proti-islamu-konvicka-alternativa-pro-cesko-fb7-/domaci.aspx?c=A160528_130350_domaci_pku; Idnes.cz, "OdpůrciislámuzaložiliAlternativu pro ČR 2017, podpořil je iJakl", *idnes.cz*, (June 26, 2016), retrieved November 5, 2016, from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/hampl-se-stal-predsedou-alternativy-pro-ceskou-republiku-2017-pl6-/domaci.aspx?c=A160626_215155_domaci_fka.

parties exclusively focusing on stopping the "foreign threat" succeeded. However, a strongly anti-immigrant party of an ex-immigrant Tomio Okamura called "Freedom and Direct Democracy" was rather successful. Okamura's party had separated from what became the aforementioned Dawn Party.

All this shows the strong proliferation in the political realm of groups hoping to capitalize on hate, fear and intolerance toward various groups, mostly Muslims, immigrants and Africans but also Roma, feminists, etc. Due to the reservoir of fear and hate, many members of mainstream parties adopted the same discourse as extremists. In addition to those mentioned above, the leading person in this regard continues to be President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman, who proposed in October that all refugees get transferred from Europe to "empty spaces in northern Africa" or to "uninhabited Greek islands", which would, as a bonus, reduce the Greek debt. In the same interview, Zeman said that he is against "Islamic immigration" specifically because it is incompatible with European culture and particularly when it comes to attitudes to women. He also stressed there is a strong connection between the wave of immigrants and the wave of "jihadis" and compared himself to a prophet for warning against the radicalization of immigrants. The minister of Foreign Affairs in reaction to the interview said that relocating refugees to Greek islands is not the official Czech policy.[9] A somewhat comical situation occurred when Zeman labeled the Workers Party of Social Justice, a long-standing far-right party of the more traditional type which existed before Islamophobia became prominent, as neo-Nazi. The party's president responded by saying that his statements are part of mainstream politics and that he speaks in the same manner as President Zeman and if that's being extreme and neo-Nazi, then he welcomes the president on the same boat.

Among numerous incidents, three stand out as particularly spectacular:

- The burning of the Quran accompanied by drinking beer, eating pork goulash, and promenading women dressed in swimming suits in front of the mosque in Brno organised by the Martin Konvička Initiative (MKI) in July 2016. He was later tried in court for the act of burning the Quran but was acquitted.[10]
- To commemorate 9/11, the MKI organised a happening in front of the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Prague where the participants were dressed the way they imagine Muslims dress and brought a mobile toilet, draped it in black and threw stones at it in imitation of stoning of Kaaba. The happening was called "With Humor to Mecca" and included a banner that read "The one who lived with a little girl is a pedophile" in allusion to Muhammad's marriage to Aisha. There were only 50 participants, who

9. Neil Buckley, "Czech president calls for economic migrants to be deported," *Financial Times*, (October 1, 2016), retrieved October 15 2016, from https://www.ft.com/content/8bae2ec6-8725-11e6-bbbe-2a4dcea95797.

10.LenkaJandáková, "KonvičkapálenímKoránunespáchaltrestnýčin,"*romea.cz*, (September 27, 2016), retrieved November 10, 2016, from http://www.romea.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/domaci/konvicka-palenim-koranu-nespachal-trestny-cin-pri-policejnim-vyslechu-mluvil-o-duvodu-spojeni-bpi-a-usvitu.

also attacked journalists and yelled "Gestapo, Gestapo" when police forced them to disperse. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the incident in strong terms.[11]

- In August, the MKI staged an Islamic State invasion at the Old Town Square in Prague. Konvička, dressed in the white garb of a Muslim imam, drove into the tourist-packed Old Town Square in a jeep, accompanied by a camel and a group of "DAESH soldiers" dressed in army fatigues, brandishing imitation firearms and shouting "Allahu Akbar". Prague Metropolitan Police Spokesperson Tomáš Hulan confirmed that the organisers had received permission for a "performance" to take place from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., including the use of imitation firearms. Interior Minister Martin Chovanec described the stunt as "an expression of political and civic cretinism."[12]

Figure 1: Far right MKI stages Islamophobic shows in Bruno and Prag.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Education

The issue of wearing a veil at school became a polarizing topic in two different cases. In the first case, a 17-year-old woman whose family immigrated to the Czech Republic from Yemen when she was 5 became the target of a hateful letter spread via Facebook, which demanded from the school principle to suspend her. The young woman decided to wear the hijab against her father's advice and was also an activist

11. Zdeněk Ryšavý, "Úřednici rozpustili Konvičkovu akci kvůli znevažování islámu," *romea.cz,* (September 11, 2016), retrieved November 15, 2016, from http://www.romea.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/domaci/urednici-rozpustili-konvickovu-akci-kvuli-znevazovani-islamu.

12. Dominik Jůn, "Populist politician stages "Islamic State Invasion" in Old Town Square," *radio.cz*, (August 22, 2016), retrieved November 10, 2016, from http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/far-right-politician-stages-islamic-state-invasion-in-old-town-square.

mediating between the Teplice Arab community – Teplice is a very popular spa town particularly for people from Arab countries - and Czech society. She cleaned the parks after Arab visitors and from her own pocket printed leaflets explaining to Arab visitors the way things work in Czech society. For this activity she received an award from the principal. The letter, written anonymously and spread by copy and paste on Facebook read:

> "I am Czech and I'm afraid for my country and its future. This future is our children and our youth. I don't want my children to be in danger from Islam and Muslims…Your school is attended by a Muslim woman Eman Ghaleb…we are inviting you, dear principle, to exclude her from your school since she represents danger for other students by spreading pro-Islam views at school... and for covering her head." The principle and many of her schoolmates stood firmly by Ghaleb completely rejecting the initiative suggested in the letter, an initiative that was thus totally defeated.[13]

In 2013, a young woman from Somalia and one from Afghanistan (both in their mid-20s) left Prague Health College because the principle (a woman) prohibited them from wearing veils. The women thought they would be allowed to wear a headscarf during lectures (not during the practical part of the curriculum); however, they found out it was impossible. The principle argued it's against the school rules - each school in the Czech Republic creates its own set of regulations. In 2014, the Czech Ombudswoman issued an opinion that the school in question engaged in indirect discrimination by not allowing students to express their religion and that the school rules violate the Czech Constitution, school and antidiscrimination laws. For this opinion the Ombudswoman was brutally attacked online.[14] In 2016, one of the students sued the school for discrimination; the case is still in progress.

## Politics

It is not possible to cover all or even the majority of incidents regarding Islamophobia in politics within the scope of this report. Many of the incidents and processes from the realm of politics have already been mentioned. The focus of this report is on the most significant incidents both for Muslims as potential or real targets and for the basic freedoms and rights of Czech society. Thus a lawyer advocating Roma rights turned rabid Islamophobe, Klára Samková, at a seminar in the Czech Parliament in May entitled "Should We Fear Islam", stated the following: "Islam assumes the right to build a parallel legal system, the foundation of Islam is criminal, Islam is the same as Nazism, fascism, and communism, it's a state crime and criminal ideology". When the Turkish and some other ambassadors stood up to leave, Samková added:

13.Echo24.cz, "Vyhoďtemuslimku z gymnázia, ředitelodstaldesítkymailů,"*echo24.com*, (April 15, 2016), retrieved November 15, 2016, from http://echo24.cz/a/i5csj/vyhodte-muslimku-z-gymnazia-reditel-dostal-desitky-mailu.

14.Idnes.cz, "Studentkazažalovalapražskoustředníškolukvůlizákazunosithidžáb,"*idnes.cz*, (March 26, 2016), retrieved November 15, 2016, fromhttp://zpravy.idnes.cz/hidzab-stredni-zdravotnicka-skola-praha-zaloba-studentka-muslimka-1dx-/domaci.aspx?c=A160326_134002_domaci_fer.

"You are on the path of murderers, nothing will be left behind you, the name of your religion will be pronounced with aversion".[15] In June, the same person demonstrated in front of the Turkish embassy in Prague: she cursed the Turkish ambassador three times and said "If you meddle in our affairs, we will send our sons after you". It is noteworthy that she wasn't indited because her words were perceived as being within her right to freedom of speech. She was reported to the Czech Bar Association for allegedly breaking their codex but was acquitted for the seminar statements and the second incident is still being decided.[16] The Samková case is also significant because of her reaction in regard to an incident on her Facebook profile: when confronted with the fact that she posted totally fake information on something related to Islam, a pure hoax, she responded "It is not true, but it could be true." In my opinion, this is very challenging for those opposing Islamophobia as the primary focus of Islamophobes is not to establish facts but to express hate.

In November 2016, the most exposed Islamophobic figure, Martin Konvička, attacked his colleague from the University of South Bohemia, Salim Murad, on Facebook for an interview given by the latter. In the attack, Konvička, among other things, claimed that Murad, who has a Muslim-sounding name, was a fake Christian who is essentially lying about being Christian. It must be stressed that it is quite rare for Czech academics to lash out so openly and without any arguments against each other – the incident only shows how Islamophobic discourse expands the limits of various forms of violence. Almost 300 students signed the petition in support for Murad.[17] In October 2016, in regional elections there were at least seven parties that presented themselves as anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, anti-Islam and nationalist. The Party of Direct Democracy was the only successful one; others competing were the Dawn movement, the far-right Workers' Party of Social Justice (the Workers' Party, its previous manifestation, was banned by a Czech court for spreading Nazi ideology), and the Republicans but also some completely new initiatives with almost undistinguishable names such as "No Illegal Immigrants - Let Money Go to Our People" and "No Illegal Immigrants - Let Money Go to Our Children".

## Media

Printed media is divided into the mainstream yellow press, which publishes usually sensationalist information mostly on refugees but generally emphasizes news related

15.Josef Kopecký, "Islám je jako nacizmus, řekla Samková. A turecký velvyslanec odešel," *idnes.cz*, (May 18, 2016) retrievd November 10, 2016, from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/islam-je-jako-nacismus-rekla-samkova-a-turecky-velvyslanec-odesel-p9l-/domaci.aspx?c=A160518_122208_domaci_kop.

16. Idnes.cz,"Islám jako nacizmus? Svoboda projevu, odložila police výroky Samkové," *idnes.cz*, (November 4, 2016), retrieved November 15, 2016, from http://zpravy.idnes.cz/policie-odlozila-vyroky-samkove-islam-nacismus-svoboda-projevu-pxi-/domaci.aspx?c=A161104_065356_domaci_hro.

17.Ludmila Mlsová, "Studenti podali petici proti Konvičkovi kvůli zostuzování kolegy," *idnes.cz*, (November 8, 2016), retrieved November 15, 2016, from http://budejovice.idnes.cz/konvicka-osocil-kolegu-z-univerzity-na-facebooku-f7g-/budejovice-zpravy.aspx?c=A161108_101119_budejovice-zpravy_khr.

to Muslims; to the mainstream media, which provide some context information; and to the minority press, which tries to transmit a more nuanced and complicated message, plus supports groups that advocate help to refugees and learning about Islam.

However, sometimes even so-called mainstream media display manipulative attitudes. Thus Prima TV, the third most-watched TV station in the Czech Republic, through its management gave producers clear instructions on the angle they must take on the refugee "crisis" - it must be born in mind that most refugees are seen as Muslims. The instructions were formulated by the vice-chairman of the board of the holding which runs the station and the editor-in-chief. At the first meeting the editors and reporters were told that a clear approach to the refugee "crisis" must be taken by reporters, namely, refugees represent a threat, "we" are concerned about Islamization, and "we" do not want to receive refugees. The message was also sent that editors and reporters must identify with this approach and that anybody who did not intend to accept it would henceforth be unable to work at FTV Prima. During the second meeting the instructions in this regard were even more concrete. Certain editors in the course of the meeting objected by stating that to dictate ahead of time what their reporting should sound like would contravene the code of journalistic ethics; such objections were rejected with the message that there was to be no balance in the reporting and that ethics or objectivity were not to be issues at least for several months to come. One reporter quit immediately after the meeting, while another left this spring in connection with this "immigration edict".[18] The scandal of blatantly manipulating news was discovered by the Czech non-governmental watchdog, Hlídací pes.[19] The same TV station earlier had published a report which sparked hatred against Christian refugees from Iraq.[20]

In general, cyberspace is the worst place for media manipulation. Thus, in June a hoax was spread by employees at a gas station when they mistook Slovak Roma who were heading back home to Slovakia after seasonal agricultural work for undocumented migrants. They called the police but once the police arrived there was nothing for them to do. Meanwhile the hoax took the form of a video on Facebook which stated:

> "More relocation of immigrants without the awareness of the broader public. We deduce this because they are moving around at 1 a.m., without the assistance of police. Naturally the media and the press are silent. Share so everybody can see

18.Robert Břešťan/HlidaciPes.org, "Czech Republic: Prima TV station told reporters to depict refugees as a risk and a threat or they would be fired,"*romea.cz*, (May 31, 2016), retrieved November 15, 2016, from http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-republic-prima-tv-station-told-reporters-to-depict-refugees-as-a-risk-and-a-threat-or-they-would-be-fired.

19.Hlídací pes at hlidacipes.org.

20.ZdeněkRyšavý, "Manipulative television report sparks hatred against Christian refugees from Iraq,"*romea.cz*, (February 12, 2016), retrieved November 12, 2016, fromhttp://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-republic-maniuplative-television-report-sparks-hatred-against-christian-refugees-from-iraq.

> what is actually going on in our country and how migrants behave here. Fortunately our staff was alert and managed to lock the door to the sales area in time."

The video was viewed 370.000 times and shared 12.000 times.[21]

Another form of Islamophobia in media is the constant spread of information on alleged imminent terrorist attacks. To illustrate this trend, we can refer to a story about a man who finds a wallet, gives it to his owner who turns out to be a Muslim. The Muslim, as a sign of gratitude, tells the man not to go to some place or use public transport or a specific metro line. People get scared by such false news and often notify the police.

The Berlin Christmas market terrorist attack was reported heavily in the Czech press. The parallel attack in Zurich was mentioned, too. It attracted less attention, in my opinion, because there were no fatal casualties. The situation was different in social media, where the Islamophobic groups expressed joy that the incident happened because it shows, what they've been claiming all along, that it is impossible to live with Muslims and that the German Chancellor's policy of accepting immigrants is wrong.

## Justice system

As mentioned in the 2015 report, the Muslim community is the only religious community that has been registered in the Czech lands since the 1930s but whose registration was not automatically extended in 1991. This means that although every Muslim is free to believe in his or her faith and enjoys the freedom of assembly the Muslim community has no so-called special rights recognized by the state such as teaching at schools, concluding marriages, establishing religious schools, sending religious representatives to the army and having access to public finance according to a special law. In order to attain these special rights a religious organization has to be present on Czech territory for at least 10 years (something Islam meets already for decades) and have 10.000 registered members.[22]

There is, however, a case that stands out: in 2014, police officers from the Department of Combat Against Organised Crime barged into a prayer room and a mosque during Friday prayers in Prague. They invited women, children and diplomats to leave, and ordered the remaining men to lie facing the floor and pointed weapons at them. The reason for the raid was the search for a man who was responsible for publishing a book a couple of years ago called *Fundamentals of Tawheed* by Bilal Philips. The book has been available online for years in many languages. It remained unclear why suddenly the police was looking for a representative of the Islamic Foundation and the book publisher, a Czech Muslim by the name of Vladimír

21.ZdeněkRyšavý, "Czech Republic: Anti-refugee hoax online after gas station attendants mistake Roma from Slovakia for "refugees"," *romea.cz*, (June 10, 2016) retrieved November 1, 2016, from http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-republic-anti-refugee-hoax-online-after-gas-station-attendants-mistake-roma-from-slovakia-for-refugees.

22.Ministerstvo Kultury, "Zvláštní práva církví a náboženských společností," *mkcr.cz*, (not dated),retrieved February 8, 2016, from http://www.mkcr.cz/cz/cirkve-a-nabozenske-spolecnosti/zvlastni-prava-cirvi/zvlastni-prava-cirkvi-a-nabozenskych-spolecnosti-223918/.

Sáňka, and what was the need for such dramatic measures. The prayer room is also used by many diplomats due to the centrality of its location. An Indonesian embassy employee later complained to the Czech Foreign Ministry for breach of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. To make things more absurd, in 2004, Sáňka had received an official appreciation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for his role in the release of Czech journalists kidnapped in Iraq. A commando from the aforementioned department went to Sáňka's home and insisted that he came out of the shower to open the door, whereupon he was immediately handcuffed. Government officials spent 12 hours messing up Sáňka's home and left with his computers, flash discs, CDs, DVDs and all the cash they found, which they never returned. They lead him to his car handcuffed so his neighbors could see what was happening. He was taken to the police station where they took his photo and fingerprints, put him in a detention cell and interrogated him the whole next day. The case against Sáňka's publication of the aforementioned book lingered for 2 years, during which time he was labeled a dangerous Islamic radical. In 2016, Sáňka was acquitted by a court; however, the state prosecutor complained so the process still continues.[23]

Leading human rights NGO, Czech Helsinki Committee, holds that the mosque and prayer room raids and indictment of Vladímir Sáňka represent violations of the fundamental right of freedom of religion.[24]

## Internet

The bastion of Islamophobia is online. Due to anonymity (or difficulties in establishing the identity) and to cyberspace's interactive nature, Islamophobes, racists and other proponents of hate speech and advocates of collective punishment have found a thriving environment online. The limited nature of this report allows us to focus on only a few instances and those that are most visible.

The most important Facebook page for mobilization and action, 'We Don't Want Islam in the Czech Republic (IVCRN)'[25] grew from 50.000 to 70.000 followers within the last year.

There are also many Islamophobic events online that are not organised and often these events are amplified by the nature of cyberspace. For example *The Czech Organization for Aid to Refugees* (OPU) has lodged a complaint against an unknown offender over a list of allegedly Muslim entrepreneurs seated in Teplice that has appeared on the Internet.

23.Neovlivni.cz, "Dva roky s nálepkou islámského radikála, tady je Sáňkova zpověď,"*neovlivni.cz*,(September 21, 2016), retrieved November 25, 2016, from http://neovlivni.cz/dva-roky-s-nalepkou-islamskeho-radikala-tady-je-sankova-zpoved/.

24.Helcom.cz, "Tisková zoráva: Stanovisko Českého helsinského výboru kporušení svobody vyznání, "*helcom.cz*,(February 2, 2016), retrieved November 12, 2016, from http://www.helcom.cz/cs/tiskova-zprava-stanovisko-ceskeho-helsinskeho-k-poruseni-svobody-vyznani/.

25.Facebook-Page of *iscrn news*, retrieved February 8, 2016, from https://www.facebook.com/ivcrn.news/.

Martin Rozmek, the OPU director, said the author of the list has illegally handled other people's private data, which could jeopardize the entrepreneurs and their families. The OPU received the list of more than a hundred names of Teplice entrepreneurs, including their addresses, by e-mail. The list was headlined "Islam – Entrepreneurs".

"The list, together with the hate e-mail text and some xenophobic supplements, has been spread via the Internet. In addition, it includes a map on which the houses and work premises of owners with Arab-sounding names are marked in red. This may facilitate a possible attack on these persons and their homes," the OPU said.[26]

Some online media, such as eurabia.cz, which is hosted by another generally extreme media channel called Parlamentnílisty, focused exclusively on the threat of Islamization. Eurabia claims to be neutral but its content focuses on selecting any news or analysis seeing Muslims and/or Islam as source of danger. Like other Islamophobic media, it also engages in bashing pro-refugee Czechs who are called by nationalists "the sunny people" (alluding to their hippy naïveté), Havlists (followers of the late president Václav Havel) and "those who believe in truth and love" (alluding to Havel's words that truth and love must defeat lies and hatred uttered during the Velvet Revolution of 1989).

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Apart from Martin Konvička, associate professor of entomology at South Bohemian University in České Budějovice, who's only agenda is to combat Islam and the perceived threat of Islamization, we should mention his long-term companion Petr Hampl, who is a sociologist and who founded the Alternative for the Czech Republic 2017 and who is sometimes called Konvička 2. As stressed before, there is a lot of Islamophobic discourse in society and the biggest danger is when it becomes part of mainstream ideology, which is, unlike Konvička and similar people, not focused exclusively on Islam. The examples of Islamophobic behavior by of the president, minister of finance and others are examples of this worrisome trend.

Another important propagator of xenophobia and Islamophobia is Member of Parliament Tomio Okamura, who is half-Japanese half-Czech. His party and coalition was the only openly and systematically anti-Muslim and anti-refugee party to gain votes in the regional election in 2016.

Another interesting phenomenon related to Islamophobia is its complex relation to issues of women in general and feminism in particular. This phenomenon deserves a deeper analysis and not only in the Czech Republic. Women can be found on both sides of the Islam debate and as an example of the Islamophobic side we can name a blogging page turned online movement called Angry Mothers, which can also be

26. Prague Monitor, "List of Czech town Muslim's entrepreneurs appears on Internet,"*praguemonitor.com*, (October 26, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://praguemonitor.com/2016/10/26/list-czech-towns-muslim-entrepreneurs-appears-internet.

regarded as the women's section of We don't Want Islam in the Czech Republic, the main online hub for Czech Islamophobia. The argument of Angry Mothers is that they are best qualified to warn about the dangers of Islamization and refugee influx because they are mothers and Czechs. They fetishize the role of mothers capitalizing on the special position that motherhood allegedly automatically brings. They claim that pro-refugee "sunny people" have no children, that's why they don't care who will live in the Czech Republic. In addition to this lie, they often repeat hoaxes, like other Islamophobic sources. Their founder, Eva Hrdinová, claims that they feel compassion for poor oppressed Muslim women but at the same time she thinks Muslim feminists can't exist. Her target is Czech feminists who, in her view, welcome Islam. At the same time, she has no compassion for actual Muslim women/mothers fleeing violence often perpetrated by other Muslims.[27]

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

A good source for following the issues related to Islamophobia both in Czech and English is website called Romea.[28] The Czech prime minister recently replaced the Minister for Human Rights Jiří Dienstbier who has been vocal about the rights of everyone including refugees and Muslims with a new minister, Jan Chvojka, whose positions are not well known.

It's noteworthy that many demonstrations organised by nationalists, xenophobes and Islamophobes are countered by people from civil society, including antifascists, civil society representatives and others. But sometimes individuals play a key role in countering Islamophobia: after the court session with the aforementioned Muslim student of a health school a group of protesters against Islam spotted a woman in hijab and promptly invited her to go back to Africa. When she replied in perfect Czech that she was born here, the group started inviting her to take the veil off but she responded that precisely because of people like them, she wouldn't do it adding that she doesn't judge people by how they dress and that one can be a good nurse with and without a veil adding that the Czech health system has bigger problems than the dress code among nurses. She finished by saying, the fact that we live in Prague, in Europe, means we can wear what we want on our heads and that that was the meaning of freedom. It turned out she was the representative of the management of the Green Party Monika Horáková.[29]

27. Anna Řezníčková, "Naštvanématky, péče a nenávist,"*a2larm.cz*, (July 29, 2015), retrieved November 1, 2016, fromhttp://a2larm.cz/2015/07/nastvane-matky-pece-a-nenavist/.

28.http://www.romea.cz/, retrieved November 15, 2016.

29.Marek Pokorný, "Odešla ze školy, protože nesměla nosit hidžáb. Nikdy studentkou nebyla, bránila se u soudu ředitelka,"*aktualne.cz*,(November 11, 2016), retrievedNovember 16, 2016, from https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/skola-chtela-aby-divka-nenosila-hidzab-ta-radsi-odesla-nyni/r~20501c9ca0cb11e687f70025900fea04/.

Also worth mentioning is the Charles University program that offers refugees the opportunity to join study programs in English for free (studying in Czech if free, studying in English is not). The university also offers to pay for refugees' accommodation. Four faculties joined the initiative initially: the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Faculty of Humanities, and the Philosophical and Pedagogical Faculties. Later, the Medical and Natural Sciences Faculties joined.[30] The program started in 2015 and it was not possible to find out if any refugees are participating.

Some Catholic Church representatives, such as Tomáš Halík, showed exceptional understanding for refugees and generally displayed great support, tolerance and compassion. Halík is seen as one of the most prominent Catholic intellectuals - he is also a Catholic priest - within and beyond the Czech Republic. However, Cardinal Dominik Duka, who holds the highest position in the Czech Catholic Church, has warned against underestimating the danger of Islam and an open-door policy for refugees from the Islamic world. The question of whether Islam presents a danger to Europe and European values continues to divide the Czech Catholic community. In the wake of the murder of Catholic priest Jacques Hamel, Cardinal Duka wrote an article in which he says the act should serve as a memento to those who underestimate the danger of Islam and attribute terrorist acts to frustrated or mentally deranged individuals. The Catholic weekly failed to print the article, which then appeared on the Cardinal's blog, and Tomáš Halík openly criticised Duka for failing to make a distinction between Islam and Jihadist terrorists.[31] On their part, members of the Czech Muslim Community gathered outside a Catholic church in Prague in August to denounce violence and express solidarity with the victims of terrorist attacks, most particularly French priest Jacques Hamel murdered in France by Islamic militants. Many carried banners saying "Terrorism is not a religion" and some silently attended mass at the Church of the Most Sacred Heart of Our Lord in a show of respect for Christians.[32]

The book entitled *Atlas of Muslim Straw Men* by the eminent Czech Orientalist Bronislav Ostřanský was published in 2014. Its aim was to collect the most frequently mentioned Islam-related topics in the media and to show how they are distorted by critically examining them from the perspective of the more nuanced academic study of Islam. The book lost nothing of its urgency in 2016.

30.Charles University, "UK nabídne uprchlíkům/imigrantům studium zdarma,"*cuni.cz*,(August 24, 2016), retrieved November 12, 2016, from http://www.cuni.cz/UK-6311.html?news=1414&locale=cz.

31. Daniela Lazarová, "Cardinal Duka warns against dangers of Islam",*radio.cz*,(August 9, 2016), retrieved November 10, 2016, from http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/cardinal-duka-warns-against-dangers-of-islam.

32.DaniealLazarová, "Muslims attend Catholic mass in show of solidarity," *radio.cz*, (August 11, 2016) retrieved November 12, 2016, from.http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/muslims-attend-catholic-mass-in-show-of-solidarity.

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Based on the report the following recommendations can be formulated:[33]

- It is necessary to diversify information about Islam and Muslims in general and particularly information pertaining to local Muslims. This is an area that media and civil society organisations are already partly engaged in but where they can play a decisive future role. This should be an assignment for the Czech Muslim community as well.
- Politicians and publically engaged persons should be held responsible for their statements. If someone is advocating for concentration camps for anyone, including Muslims, that person should be held legally and socially responsible for their words.
- Czech volunteers, who have shown enormous courage and willingness to serve, should become more visible in public space, their stories and motivations studied and shared more widely.
- The system of monitoring incidents of hate toward Muslims online should be established following the example of the UK-based system called 'Tell Mama'. With the help of such a system it would be possible to monitor and study trends in Islamophobia in the Czech Republic.

# Chronology

Many incidents of Islamophobia have been mentioned throughout this report; this is a small selection of other such incidents.

- In April, 16 Christian refugees from Iraq who were brought to the Czech Republic by the Generation 21 Foundation and who have been living in Brno decided to leave the Czech Republic. They retrieved their passports from the Czech authorities and wanted to go to Germany. Later the Czech Police arrested them several kilometres from the border with Germany. The group visited the Czech Interior Ministry in person to request that their status as protected refugees be revoked.
- In June, militant Bulgarian nationalists, who are infamous for hunting refugees on the Turkish-Bulgarian border, were guests in the Czech Parliament. They were invited by two MPs from the Dawn Party.
- In August, in Teplice, Martin Konvička distributed roses to Muslim and non-Muslim women together with a short letter warning against the enslavement by Islam. The majority of women rejected his offerings.
- In September, roughly 250 people, according to Czech Police estimates, assembled for a "Saint Wenceslas demonstration" in Prague on 28 September, a state holiday officially known as the Day of Czech Statehood. The event protested the alleged "Islamization" of Europe. Other demonstrations on the same theme

33.These recommendations remain the same as those in the 2015 report.

were convened by the Bloc Against Islamization and the Úsvit (Dawn) political movement in the towns of Most, Ostrava and Plzeň that same day. The largest demonstration, estimated at 400, was in Most. In the other cities approximately 100 people attended these events.

- In September, the Prague Police proposed charging four people for their role in a February incident on Thunovská Street in Prague during which a group of masked men assaulted demonstrators marching in support of immigrants.
- In September, opponents of Islam assembled in the upper part of Wenceslas Square in Prague. An event called "Solidarity with Refugees" took place in the lower part of Wenceslas Square at Můstek at the same time. The roughly 20 participants marched up the square under police supervision to watch the anti-EU demonstration.
- In November, someone threw a pig head in a plastic bag at the doors of the Brno mosque.
- In December, an audit of the security situation in the Czech Republic was published. The audit was commissioned by the Czech prime minister and was written by the most prominent Czech security scholars. They concluded that the threat of Islamic radicalism is low in the Czech Republic; however, they identified risks coming from "lonely wolves" and the merging of anti-refugee, anti-Muslim right-wing extremism with mainstream politics and society.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN FINLAND NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

In 2016, the political atmosphere in Finland has been greatly influenced by far-right movements and ideologies. The strong presence of populist and nationalist movements that are well connected in the Europe-wide Islamophobia network has grown stronger by numerous public demonstrations and hate speeches. The government party "Finns" maintains a *laissez-faire* attitude towards its members and representatives who have made public comments that have led to persecutions and convictions based on incitement to hatred.

The grassroots-level hatred and bigotry expressed by elected representatives of the nation from the perceived safety of their positions further fuels the Islamophobic discourse in online environments where members of the public engage in discussions on platforms such as Facebook. It appears that the public has become almost immune to Islamophobic hate speech. Moreover, several studies and research reports have provided findings that show an alarming increase of hate crime targeting Muslims and people who can easily be identified as Muslim. The authorities have promised measures to fight far-right extremism and hate speech, partly due to international pressure from high-level institutions.

Biased news reporting on certain social phenomena in Islam can be said to exacerbate negative images of Islam and is in line with the discourse used by the Islamophobia network. Muslims are legally protected to freely exercise their religion, while in the fields of education and employment, international laws on counterterrorism measures have been accepted for implementation in Finland - their social consequences will be seen in the future.

# Tiivistelmä

Vuonna 2016 äärioikeistolaiset järjestöt ja ideologia ovat vaikuttaneet Suomen poliittiseen ilmapiiriin näkyvästi. Euroopan laajuisessa islaminvastaisessa verkostossa hyvin kytköksissä olevat populististiset ja nationalistiset liikkeet ovat vahvistaneet läsnäoloaan julkisuudessa mielenosoitusten ja julkisen vihapuheen kautta. Hallituspuolueen *Perussuomalaiset* laissez-faire-asenne omien poliitikkojensa ja edustajiensa kommenteiden ja kirjoitusten osallisuuteen kiihottamisessa kansanryhmää vastaan on huomattava. Ruohonjuuritasolla sekä kansakunnan edustajien taholta ilmaistu viha sekä kiihkoilu on huomattavasti lietsonut myös islaminvastaista keskustelukulttuuria verkkoympäristössä peruskansalaisten taholta siten, että suomalaisten voisi melkein sanoa tulleen immuuniksi islaminvastaiselle vihanlietsonnalle. Lisäksi useiden tutkimusten ja raporttien tulokset ovat näyttäneet, että muslimeihin ja henkilöihin, joiden ulkonäkönsä perusteella oletetaan olevan muslimeja, kohdistuneet viharikokset ovat lisääntynyt hälyttävissä määrin. Viranomaiset ovat kuitenkin luvanneet ja suunnitelleet toimenpiteitä oikeistolaisia ääriliikkeitä ja vihapuhetta vastaan, mikä johtuu osittain korkean tason instituutioiden kansainvälisestä painostuksesta Suomessa tapahtuvan syrjinnän ja vihapuheeseen kitkemiseksi. Islamin sosiaalisia ilmiöitä ja Suomen muslimeja koskevan puolueellisen uutisraportoinnin voidaan sanoa edesauttavan sellaisten vääristyneiden mielikuvien muodostamista islamista, joka on islamofobisen verkoston diskurssiin sopivaa. Vaikka muslimien vapaa uskonnon harjoittaminen esimerkiksi työpaikoilla ja kouluissa on laissa suojattu, kansainvälisesti muslimeja koskevia lakeja terrorismin vastaisiin toimiin liittyen on hyväksytty pantavaksi täytäntöön myös Suomessa ja niiden sosiaaliset seuraukset tullaan näkemään tulevaisuudessa.

# Introduction

Following developments in 2015,[1] in terms of manifestations of Islamophobic behaviour and incidents both online and in public spaces of everyday life, in 2016, the spread of hate speech and anti-Muslim bigotry has been further fueled by the rising far-right politics and popular movements, often connected to negative sentiments about immigration and refugees. A survey by the nationwide tabloid magazine *Iltalehti* asked 1,008 participants whether they believed that immigrants coming from countries with an Islamic cultural background could integrate into Finnish society. Results show that 57% answered negatively, whereas only 11% answered positively.[2] The connection of such prejudices with populist politics can be regarded as strong, since 95% of the negative answers stemmed from voters of the right-wing party *Perussuomalaiset* (Finns Party) whose involvement in spreading and contributing to Islamophobic discourse continues to be dominant in 2016, as will be shown in this report.

Further numbers concerning the manifestation of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim resentment in Finnish society can be retrieved from the analysis of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman (*Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu*) as well as the yearly report on hate crimes in Finland published by the Police University College.[3] Whereas in 2015, the police handled in total 1,250 suspected hate crimes, the amount has increased by 52% from 2014. The report emphasises a significant increase in suspected hate crimes based on religion and especially Islam with 71 cases in 2015 in comparison to 14 cases in 2014. Most frequent examples of suspected hate crimes are incitement to hatred and slander while this also indicates the influence of social media and the normalization of hate speech that has been pushed forward by some politicians. Furthermore, as the report also includes statistics on "racist motivated" hate crimes for which the most frequent complainants were either born in or are citizens of countries such as Somalia, Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan, it is safe to argue, that people of Muslim background – or people who are easily identified as Muslims – fall victim to hate crime more often than people from other cultural backgrounds. Moreover, a report by the Ministry of Justice from March 2016 (Korhonen et al.) observes that Muslims are targets of hate speech and crimes.[4] The Non-Discrimination Om-

1.For a detailed description see Linda Hyökki, "Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2015", Enes Bayraklı/Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2015* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016).

2.Juha Ristimäki, "IL-kysely: Suomalaiset epäilevät islamilaisten sopeutumista", *Iltalehti*, (October10, 2016), retrieved November 26, 2016, from http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/2016100922439779_uu.shtml.

3.The report ("*Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2015"*) can be considered for this study retrospectively; at the end of each calendar year a report regarding suspected hate crimes for the previous year is published. Thus, the target year of the report relevant to our current study was 2015. See: Tero Tihveräinen, "Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2015," *Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 10,* Tampere, (October 2016), retrieved November 26, 2016, from http://polamk.fi/julkaisut.

4.NitaKorhonen/Laura Jauhola/Olli Oosi/Olli-Pekka Huttunen,*Usein joutuu miettimään, miten pitäisi olla ja minne olla menemättä* (Helsinki: Oikeusministeriö, 2016).

budsman reported[5] that in 2016 the office had been contacted in total for 26 cases pertaining to some sort of criticism, or bigotry against certain Islamic practices and phenomena. Out of the 26 cases, 11 were registered as suspected discrimination cases (1.5% of all suspected discrimination cases) and were connected among other things, to the use of the burkini in swimming halls; the refusal to rent spaces to Muslim communities; discriminative behaviour in a job interview towards a female Muslim wearing the headscarf; discriminative behaviour of security personnel in restaurants; and discrimination of Muslim individuals during flights. Nevertheless, attacks with racist or Islamophobic motives against Muslims, such as a physical assault against a female librarian at a Helsinki library,[6] are rarely reported in press venues. Therefore, without raising awareness about the amount and nature of Islamophobic hate crimes the gravity of the situation in terms of everyday racism and Islamophobia easily goes unnoticed by the general public.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Starting their activities at the end of 2015 with a strong spread of subchapters in diverse cities throughout 2016, the vigilante group "Soldiers of Odin" blamed refugees for the increase of crime and harassment. They claimed their presence was in order to "protect the streets and Finnish women" and have been active with marches and street patrols; their activities have been supported by Finns Party politicians such as MP Laura Huhtasaari.[7]

Despite the increasing public presence of Islamophobic organisations, positive developments in combating anti-Muslim hostility can be observed. In September 2016, diverse members of Parliament addressed the government in a question hour[8] regarding the (national socialist) extremist groups and their violent behaviour.[9] MP Antti Rinne (SDP), for instance, emphasised the importance of political parties refraining from any support and protection of such groups. Apart from MP Huhtasaari's endorsement of Soldiers of Odin's activities, other connections between

5.Customised report by Senior Officer Aija Salo and researcher Toni Tuomi, received by the author through e-mail 25.11.2016. Numbers based on statistics retrieved from the database until 23.11.2016.

6.Karin Filén, "Bibliotekarie misshandlades vid lånedisken – 'hon hotade döda mig om jag inte far tillbaka dit jag kom ifrån," *Svenska.yle.fi* (December 29, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2016/12/29/bibliotekarie-misshandlades-vid-lanedisken-hon-hotade-doda-mig-om-jag-inte-far.

7.Antti Laakso, "Perussuomalaisten kansanedustaja katupartioista: "Onhan poliitikoillakin rikostaustaa"," *Yle.fi*, (January 8, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8579622.

8.See the verbatim transcription of the question and subsequent comments in Finnish (archives of the Parliament) https://www.eduskunta.fi/pdf/PTK+88/2016+2.2.pdf *(retrieved December 1, 2016).*

9.The discussion was motivated by the death of a civilian by a member of the nationalist movement *Suomen Vastarintaliike* during a demonstration organised by the movement in front of the central railway station in Helsinki (Ossi Mansikka, "Poliisi: Helsingin asema-aukion pahoinpitelyn uhri kuoli todennäköisesti saamaansa kallovammaan," *Helsingin Sanomat*, (November 10, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000002929591.html.

members of the Finns Party and extreme-nationalist movements like *Suomen Vastarintaliike* (Nordic Resistance Movement in Finland), *Rajat Kiinni* (Close the Borders) and *Suomi Ensin* (Finland First) have been affirmed.[10] The *Suomi Ensin* movement has gained publicity, for example, by their demonstration against an Eid event prepared by the popular shopping mall Itis in Helsinki.[11] The Minister of Interior Paula Risikko, however emphasised in the Parliament's discussion that hate speech and violent extremism should be dealt with zero tolerance and promised that the government will re-evaluate the current legislation and its possible faults in relation to banning and restricting the activities of extremist groups and movements.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

Discrimination in the labour market in Finland is monitored by the Regional State Administrative Agencies (*Aluehallintovirasto*), which has established that prohibiting clothing that is in accordance with one's religion is against the Non-Discrimination Act (*Yhdenvertaisuuslaki 1325/2014*).[12] In January 2016, there was some debate about employees in the education sector in Helsinki using the niqab, motivated by similar discussions in Sweden. The only restriction pertaining to work uniforms in the Finnish context are related to hygiene and work safety; otherwise employees are free to choose their clothing in the workplace.[13]

## Education

A PhD dissertation entitled *Westerners and others in Finnish school textbooks* by Pia Mikander from the University of Helsinki, which was defended in October 2016, demonstrates discursive ethnocentrism in history, social studies and geography textbooks in Finland.[14] According to Mikander, the textbooks present the West as being threatened by the Muslim "Other". People in Afghanistan and Iraq, are referred to in dehumanizing terms such as "fanatical Muslims", and the 9/11 attacks in one text-

10.Laura Halminen/Tommi Nimeninen, "Perussuomalaisten kovalla siivellä yhteyksiä ainakin viiteen äärinationalistiseen liikkeeseen," *Helsingin Sanomat* (September 20, 2016), retrived November 27, 2016, from http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1474345942668. See also the EIR country report Finland 2015 on the role of the Finns Party member Olli Immonen in spreading Islamophobic hate speech.

11.YouTube, *Suomi Ensin* demonstration, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4B5IpEVw2Jk&feature=youtu.be (retrieved November 27, 2016).

12.For the Finnish version of the Act, see http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/2014/20141325 (retrieved December 4, 2016); for the unofficial English translation of the same act (PDF), see www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/kaannokset/2014/en20141325.pdf (retrieved December 4, 2016).

13.Arja-Riikka Nikkilä, "Helsinki sallii työntekijöiden kasvohunnut – Göteborgissa niqabista syntyi riita," *Helsingin Uutiset*, (January 6, 2016), retrieved December 4, 2016, from http://www.helsinginuutiset.fi/artikkeli/352455-helsinki-sallii-tyontekijoiden-kasvohunnut-goteborgissa-niqabista-syntyi-riita.

14.For a comprehensive summary of the thesis in English see https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/167465 (retrieved December 4, 2016).

book are referred to as being part of a campaign whose final goal is the destruction of Western culture. According to the author, the latter statement "can be seen as an expression of Islamophobia, since it suggests a Muslim conspiracy that has an intention to crush Western society, [which is] remarkably different from the core values of the curriculum"[15]. Islam as a subject in elementary education at the comprehensive school level has undergone certain changes and although the right to receive teaching in one's religion is still protected, the renewal of the national curriculum has introduced, for instance, joint education in the subject of religion for all students.

## Politics

In 2016, several politicians from the Finns Party have been charged for their bigoted online comments on Muslims and Islam, which as such is a positive development in terms of public and state attitudes towards hate speech.[16]

Terhi Kiemunki, an assistant to the True Finns MP Lea Mäkipää, has been in the headlines twice for her racist comments. First, during the Easter holidays in March, Kiemunki wrote on her Facebook page how she had seen hijab-wearing Muslim children participating in a Finnish Easter tradition dressed as witches reciting a traditional poem outside doors and receiving sweets in return. Kiemunki wondered "whether it was a sign of integration or whether Allah had some kind of an anniversary day". She also wondered whether the children would recite "Allahu Akbar" at her door. As a consequence, the party district office fired Kiemunki from her position as a vice-spokesman for the district. However, a week later, Kiemunki wrote in the online news publication of the Finns Party, *Suomen Uutiset*,[17] stating "A culture, a religion and a law for which cruelty against disbelievers is self-evident, has landed in Finland and in Europe. (...) Our old Europe cannot get rid of terrorism as long as we continue accepting the teachings of Islam. All Muslims are not terrorists but these days all terrorists in Europe are Muslims." In December, the second incident led to Kiemunki's conviction for incitement to hatred with a financial penalty of 450 Euros.[18]

15.Pia Mikander, "Westerners and Others in Finnish School Textbooks", *University of Helsinki, Institute of Behavioural Sciences, Studies in Education 273*, (Helsinki: Unigrafia, 2016), p.62. Retrieved December 4, 2016, from https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/167465.

16.It should be noted, that although the Finnish Criminal Code does not include hate speech as an offence, it includes articles for instance on acts of incitement to hatred and slander, which are parts of hate speech when it is understood as "expressing, advocating, encouraging, promoting or inciting hatred of a group of individuals distinguished by a particular feature or set of features. It implies hostility, rejection, a wish to harm or destroy, a desire to get the target group out of one's way, a silent or vocal and a passive or active declaration of war against it." (Parekh Bikhu, "Hate Speech. Is There a Case for Banning?", *Public Policy Research*, Vol. 12, (2006), p. 214.)

17.The text has since been deleted from the website: https://www.suomenuutiset.fi/.

18.Jouni Tanninen, "Terhi Kiemunki sai tuomion kiihottamisesta kansanryhmää vastaan," *yle.fi*, (December 1, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9327902; Tuomas Rimpiläinen, "Tämä kohta Kiemunginblogissa ylitti syytekynnyksen – Kyseessä ei ole "muslimipenskakirjoitus"," *Aamulehti*, (October 6, 2016), retrieved December 4, 2016, from http://www.aamulehti.fi/kotimaa/tama-kohta-kiemungin-blogissa-ylitti-syytekynnyksen-kyseessa-ei-ole-muslimipenskakirjoitus-23981886/.

The Finns Party MP Teuvo Hakkarainen, who has appeared on national news in various other contexts for his anti-Muslim, bigoted comments,[19] was charged for incitement to hatred in November.[20] After the violent attack in Nizza in July, MP Hakkarainen posted on his Facebook page a statement very similar to that of Kiemunki, which led to her conviction. Hakkarainen wrote "Get Muslims out of this country! Not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims."[21]

A third political figure from the True Finns party with current charges for incitement to hatred[22] is Sebastian Tynkkynen,[23] long-time chairman of the party's youth division. In July, on his Facebook page Tynkkynen criticised Finland's asylum politics and stated that "Islam should be stamped out of Finland". He also argued that "[o]f course not all Muslims comply to the teachings of their prophet. But civil peace can be disturbed nonetheless by a few attacks against disbelievers inspired by Muhammad."[24] Shortly after Tynkkynen's post, the youth division of the Finns Party published a position statement[25] suggesting that the articles on incitement to hatred and freedom of worship should be removed from the Finnish Criminal Law. Tynkkynen argues that unlike Hitler who can be criticised, Muhammad cannot be criticised due to the article on freedom of worship.

## Media

The Finnish mainstream media follow quite laudably the ethical guidelines for journalists established by the Council for Mass Media.[26] In general, reports do not focus on Islam/Muslims in an explicitly Islamophobic way. However, every now and then biased reports about Islam, which emphasise specific events and phenomena, in a negative way, appear and create a distorted image of the religion fitting in with Islamophobic discourse. Such reports mostly lack counter narratives that would offer a more balanced view on the issue at hand. Some examples follow below.

First to mention are news and reports about Muslims in Finland who have left their faith and who describe the social antagonism and seclusion from their religious

19.The verbatim transcription of the discussion at the plenary session can be retrieved at https://www.eduskunta.fi/pdf/PTK+80/2016+17 (retrieved December 1, 2016).

20.Sanna Savela, "Kansanedustaja Teuvo Hakkarainen saa syytteen – epäillään vihapuheen levittämisestä," *yle.fi*, (November 1, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9264566.

21.https://www.facebook.com/teuvo.hakkarainen.3/posts/1173401296016171 (retrieved December 1, 2016).

22.Mikael Mikkonen, "Sebastian Tynkkynen syytteeseen kiihottamisesta kansanryhmää vastaan ja uskonrauhan rikkomisesta," *yle.fi* (November 11, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9286543.

23.Tynkkynen's previous Islamophobic attitudes have also been analysed in the EIR 2015 country report for Finland.

24.https://www.facebook.com/sebastian.tynkkynen/posts/1073979526020252 (retrieved December 1, 2016).

25.ps-nuoret.fi, "Kannanotto: Laista poistettava pykälät kiihottamisesta kansanryhmää vastaan sekä uskonrauhan rikkomisesta", *ps-nuoret.fi*, (July 21, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from https://www.ps-nuoret.fi/uutiset/kannanotto-laista-poistettava-pykalat-kiihottamisesta-kansanryhmaa-vastaan-seka-uskonrauhan-rikkomisesta/.

26.http://www.journalistiliitto.fi/in-english/ground-rules/guidelines/ (retrieved November 27, 2016)

communities which they have experienced as a result.[27] Articles and reports have also been written specifically about Muslim refugees converting to Christianity. These articles are mainly built on narratives emphasising the threatening situation these Muslim individuals experience when they change their religion. The interviews[28] highlight the presupposed violent nature of Islam (against disbelievers); the lack of mercy and love for other people among Muslims; and the Shia-Sunni clashes and killings as opposed to the peacefulness of Christians ("Christians do not kill anyone"). Hence, the reader is left with a generalised impression that Islamic communities shun "Ex-Muslims" or that even death threats are the general way to deal with such situations, fitting the Islamophobic discourse about definite death for apostates. One such article focuses especially on the work of the Christian organization "One Way Mission" - the distorted discourse on Islam in the organization's publications is worth mentioning.[29]

A second example is an article[30] on foreign fighters in Syria which takes findings from a report published by the Ministry of Interior (September 2016) on violent extremism[31] and argues that a significant number of foreign fighters in Syria are ethnic Finns. However, the article mainly expands its headline "Muslims worry about Ethnic Finnish Muslims who do whatever they are told" based on interviews from a book on jihadism to argue that convert Muslims are fanatics of whom born-Muslims are afraid of, and that of those women who "most strictly" cover themselves most are ethnic Finns. When such accounts on convert Muslims are singled out for the sake of "hot topics", the Islamophobic rhetoric of (convert) Muslims as brainwashed, fanatical and traitors of their country contributes to a perception of Islam as an oppressive, fundamentalist and threatening religion – a narrative used by anti-Muslim groups.

27.Panu Vatanen, "Fatima luopui islamista, mutta ei voi riisua huivia – islamista eroaminen on Suomessa tabu," *yle.fi*, (May 28, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8903751.

28.Juha Veli Jokinen, "Yli 1000 muslimia kääntynyt kristityiksi Suomessa - kokeneet uhkailua ja kiristystä: "7-vuotias tytär kidnapattiin Irakissa"," *Iltalehti*, (November 27, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/201611252200032390_uu.shtml; Kati Siponmaa, "Turvapaikanhakijoita kääntyy kristinuskoon – halveksunnasta ja vaarasta piittaamatta," *yle.fi*, (January 7, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8576329; Eero Mäntymaa, "Kolme muslimia, joiden usko loppui," *yle.fi*, (November 19, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9285266.

29.Statements by members such as "According to their beliefs a woman goes to hell for even a smallest disobedience of her husband, forgiveness is not known neither between people nor in the man-God relationship" perpetuate images of Islam as a cruel religion lacking women's rights. See *Raportti 4/2016*, p.34, retrieved from https://issuu.com/onewaymission/docs/raportti_4-2016 (retrieved November 28, 2016)

30.Mattinen Johanna, "Kantasuomalaiset käännynnäiset huolestuttavat muita muslimeja - "Tekevät täsmälleen niin kuin heille sanotaan"," *Iltalehti*,(October14, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.iltalehti.fi/uu tiset/2016101322418828_uu.shtml

31.Report in the Finnish language retrieved from www.intermin.fi/julkaisu/232016 (retrieved November 28, 2016). Another study "Suomesta Syyrian ja Irakin konfliktikentälle suuntautuva liikkuvuus" (Marko Juntunen/Karin Creutz-Sundblom/Juha Saarinen) relevant to foreign fighters was published by the Prime Minister's Office in October 2016. This study includes an extensive ethnographical part and interviews with relatives of foreign fighters and offers an in-depth understanding of the sociological causes and consequences of the decisions of individuals to become foreign fighters. The study (PDF) in the Finnish language is available online from http://tietokayttoon.fi/julkaisu?pubid=14202 (retrieved November 28, 2016).

## Justice System

In terms of law proposals, the year 2016 has witnessed a discussion on the domestic prohibition of the Islamic face veil, the niqab/burkha, and a proposal on ethnic profiling on European level; both were promoted by politicians from circles of the Finns party.

In October, the MP Vesa-Matti Saarakkala (Finns Party) submitted a proposal for a law amendment to the government suggesting the addition of an article on the prohibition of face veils in public spaces on pain of a fine in accordance to Finnish criminal law. The arguments by MP Saarakkala as well as other MPs of the Finns Party drew on the violation of gender equality in the instances where usage of the face veil is allowed. Especially the statement "[… ] there are reasonable grounds to believe that Muslim women in Finland or elsewhere in Europe in principle do not wear the face veil out of their own will and thus the law amendment would not violate the article on the right to liberty and integrity of the person in the Finnish Constitution" is a classic case of Islamophobic rhetoric where Muslim women are stripped of their agency and presented as subjects of their male relatives.[32]

In October, the national news reported on the written question by Member of the European Parliament Jussi Halla-aho (also a member of the Finns Party),[33] who proposed that police officers in EU member states should be able to apply ethnic profiling "aimed particularly at people whose ethnic roots are in the Middle East, North Africa, or Central Asia", as an instrument to prevent Islamic terrorism in Europe. Alarmingly, Halla-aho's proposal openly undermines the basic human rights of certain population groups as he states that "combating Islamic terrorism efficiently in Europe requires open-minded attitudes among authorities. To apply ethnic profiling in the prevention of Islamic fundamentalism should be seriously considered regardless of the basic and human rights problems connected to profiling." The chairwoman of the Finnish League for Human Rights, Reetta Toivanen, commented in a newspaper interview that the nature of Halla-aho's proposal is populist and against Islam because it includes the idea that those individuals who potentially could be taken to be Muslims are more likely to be terrorists.[34]

32. The PDF of the law amendment proposal can be retrieved at https://www.eduskunta.fi/pdf/LA+41/2016 (retrieved December 1, 2016). Also of relevance are the subsequent comments during the presentation of the amendment by other MPs of the Finns party. Comments such as "How can an immigrant woman wearing a face veil make friends with members of the ethnic Finns if the latter does not know whether the person behind the veil is the same person with whom she/he was talking with before?" indicate the degree of ignorance regarding the everyday life of Muslim women in Finnish society. For the verbatim transcription of the discussion see https://www.eduskunta.fi/pdf/PTK+99/2016+5 (retrieved December 1, 2016)

33. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+P-2016-007682+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=en (retrieved December 1, 2016)

34.Henripekka Kallio, "Halla-aho esittää EU:lle salakuuntelun ja kotietsintöjen kohdistamista etnisin perustein," *Aamulehti* (October11, 2016), retrieved December 1, 2016, from http://www.aamulehti.fi/kotimaa/halla-aho-esittaa-eulle-salakuuntelun-ja-kotietsintojen-kohdistamista-etnisin-perustein-23993556/.

Moreover, suggested changes in the national criminal law, based on the UN Security Council's Resolution 2178(2014) and the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (2015), have been criticised in the Finnish context by Amnesty International[35] and Professor of International Law and Human Rights Martin Scheinin.[36] Concerns regarding racial and religious profiling have been raised, but regardless of these, the law was passed in October 2016 without the additions required by human rights actors.

## Internet

A report by the Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, published on 6 October 2016, commented in length on the problem of online hate speech in Finland. The recommendations for immediate action made by the EC addressing the Finnish authorities included the requirement to intensify the efforts and mechanisms connected to combating hate speech especially in social media; raising public awareness through public campaigns and school education programmes; and the strengthening of the role of law officials and the judiciary to detect and sanction hate speech.[37] Although the report was written in regard to national minorities, the measures to be taken, which are of a general nature and examine hate speech within the greater context, would without a doubt affect Islamophobic hate speech that takes place in online environments as well.

The well-known platforms that spread hate speech and Islamophobic discourse continue to be the fake news website *MV-Lehti* (MV-Magazine) and its sister-site *Überuutiset*; both have been under investigation with the police succeeding in temporarily closing down the websites in July 2016 and with a current European arrest warrant on the website editor Ilja Janitskin. He has so far refused to appear in court hearings regarding his indictments.[38] Other websites that promote hate speech and Islamophobia are the blogs *Paavo Tajukangas* and *Islamin aikapommi*.[39] A further initiative by international networks promoting anti-Muslim bigotry and nationalist politics is the Finnish Defence League with an active Facebook page[40] and over 11,000 followers. The blogger James Gonzo's posts count among the most verbally and visually expressive forms of Islamophobic texts found online. In his hate post-

35.www.hare.vn.fi/upload/asiakirjat/21401/Amnesty.pdf (retrieved December 1, 2016)

36.http://www.hare.vn.fi/upload/asiakirjat/21401/Martin%20Scheinin.docx (retrieved December 4, 2016)

37.Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, "Fourth Opinion on Finland - adopted on 24 February 2016 Published on 6 October 2016," *Council of Europe*, (February 24, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, from http://www.coe.int/en/web/minorities/finland.

38.Paavo Teittinen, "MV-lehden perustaja on ilmeisesti paennut pidätysmääräystä Andorraan – Professori uskoo, että Janitskin luovutettaisiin Suomeen," *Helsingin Sanomat*, (November 7, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, from http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1478494663274.

39.For an analysis see the Country Report on Finland in the EIR 2015.

40.https://www.facebook.com/finnishdl/ (retrieved November 28, 2016).

ings James Gonzo deploys a strategy also known to the *MV-Lehti*, which is to create a new narrative on an event regarding Muslims using news from mainstream media as a source. Hence, for example, he took a piece by Reuters[41] about Muslims in Italy protesting the closure of mosques by praying by the Colosseum, and reframed it with the heading "Italy says: Islam is not a religion!". His Islamophobic text then argues, for instance, that Muslims are telling the Italian authorities that it is their right to call for hate and death to all Jews and others whom they define as "disbelieving dogs of citizens".[42]

So far, online hate speech in Finland has been monitored by the "Virtual Police" (*Nettipoliisi*)[43] of the Finnish Police Forces, but the resources of this unit have been very limited and its efficiency is disputable given the vast quantities of Islamophobic discourse spread by diverse initiatives, blogs and websites. The pressure by the EC on the Finnish authorities to intensify the combat against hate speech seems to have been effective.[44] The Finnish Police was prompted by the publication of the aforementioned report to publicly announce that based on a memorandum of understanding with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights signed by the National Police Board a training programme on hate crime prevention with a capacity of 50 police officers as trainees will start by the end of 2016.[45]

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In 2016, several anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim demonstrations were held mostly by two popular movements: *Rajat Kiinni* (Close the Borders) and *Suomi Ensin* (Finland First). Whereas *Rajat Kiinni* slowly fell apart, one of its leading figures, Marco de Wit founded *Suomi Ensin.* De Wit, a former mortician with a dual Finnish-Dutch citizenship leads the nationalist movement together with Panu Huuhtanen, who left *Rajat Kiinni* as well after its downfall. *Suomi Ensin*

41. Isla Binnie/Gabriele Pileri, "Muslims pray at Colosseum, protesting against Rome mosque closures," *Reuters*, October 22, 2016, retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.reuters.com/article/us-italy-mosques-idUSKCN12L2AU.

42. James Gonzo, "Italian kanta islamiin on selkeä: Islam ei ole uskonto!", j*amesgonzo.wordpress.com*, (October 24, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from https://jamesgonzo.wordpress.com/2016/10/24/italian-kanta-islamiin-on-selkea-islam-ei-ole-uskonto/.

43.https://www.poliisi.fi/virtual_police (retrieved November 23, 2016)

44.See: Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, "Comments of the Government of Finland on the Fourth Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities by Finland," Council of Europe, (October 6, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, from https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016806ae117.

45.STT, "Vihapuhe kuriin: 50 poliisia koulutetaan uusiin tehtäviin," *Keskisuomalainen*, (October 14, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, fromhttp://www.ksml.fi/kotimaa/Vihapuhe-kuriin-50-poliisia-koulutetaan-uusiin-teht%C3%A4viin/855181.

requires[46], among other things, Finland's exit (Fixit) from the EU; military and cultural independence; enforced border controls; and targets not only immigrants (in the form of demonstrations against refugee centres) and Muslims (by demonstrating against particular mosques) but also ethnic Finns who are supportive of immigration and refugees.[47] With the current efforts of the Ministry of Interior to establish juridical means for banning violent extremist movements it remains to be seen, whether *Suomi Ensin* will reach their goal of 5,000 signatures for registering as an official party. In any case, the movement aims to have candidates in the upcoming municipal elections in April 2017.[48]

The frequent demonstrations held all over the country by the movement include vocal Islamophobic expressions. For instance, during the demonstration organised by Marco de Witt where the *Suomi Ensin* movement demonstrated against Ramadan festivities in July 2016, Panu Huuhtanen spoke of an Islamization of Finland and criticised the shopping mall for facilitating the Ramadan event and contributing to the spread of Islamic culture in the country. The movement is internationally connected to like-minded groups such as its British counterpart "Britain First" and their demonstrations host international speakers such as Mona Walter, an ex-Muslim from Sweden who frequently speaks against Islam.[49] Moreover, in August 2016, the former French diplomat Michel Paulath held an expressive hate speech in one of the demonstrations organised by *Suomi Ensin* in Helsinki. The video was also shared by the far-right politician Ignaz Bearth (Austria, FPÖ Party member) with the words "Strong words but true. Islam is not tolerant". In his speech, Paulath explicitly addressed the Muslims in the audience and called them, among many things, stupid and "out of this world", and denied their right to existence.[50] The Professor of Criminal Law Matti Tolvanen has analysed the speech as a clear case of incitement to hatred, which thus means that at least some of the activities by *Suomi Ensin* can be regarded as violating Finnish law.[51]

46.The ideological programme of the movement is available online from the public Facebook group https://www.facebook.com/groups/1694153787526571/files/ (retrieved November 28, 2016).

47.Jussi Korhonen, "Johtohahmo paljasti: Suomi ensin -liikkeen taktiikkana pelottelu ja painostus," *Seura*, (July 8, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://seura.fi/isanpikajuna/2016/07/08/johtohahmo-paljasti-suomi-ensin-liikkeen-taktiikkana-pelottelu-painostus/?shared=6671-4320590d-1.

48.Jari Pietiläinen, "Suomi ensin -ryhmän puoluehanke takkuaa – Koossa vasta viidennes korteista," *Tamperelainen*, (September23, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://www.tamperelainen.fi/artikkeli/436850-suomi-ensin-ryhman-puoluehanke-takkuaa-koossa-vasta-viidennes-korteista.

49.*Suomi Ensin* demonstration on 10.9.2016 in Helsinki with Mona Walter https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAwj-D0Eiy8 (retrieved December 4, 2016)

50.https://www.facebook.com/I.Bearth/videos/740450916092824/# (retrieved December 4, 2016)

51.Eero Mäntymaa, "Rikkooko Suomi Ensin -liike rikoslakia? Asiantuntija vastaa", *yle.fi*, (September 13, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9162661.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

The association for Muslim youth in Finland *Nuoret Muslimit ry* (NUMU) organised in Helsinki workshops on Islamophobia at the Anti-Racism Forum in October 2016 as well as at the *Ei Vihapuheelle* ("No to Hate Speech") seminar in December 2016. Furthermore, NUMU conducted a survey to monitor experiences of Islamophobic incidents in autumn 2016.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The survey conducted by NUMU, the report by the Ministry of Justice and the statistics from the police indicate that Islamophobic incidents have increased, but there is still a lack of knowledge regarding the extent to which Finnish Muslims experience hate crimes. Hence, there is a need for systematic investigation. Furthermore, the authorities should outline a definition of the concept of Islamophobia, and its relation to hate crime and discrimination, as several Finnish politicians from one of the government parties (Finns Party) have been sentenced for incitement to hatred due to Islamophobic statements. An officially outlined definition would ease the work of other authorities (police, etc.) to detect and monitor Islamophobic incidents. We recommend that a working committee is appointed by the Ministry of Interior for these purposes.

There is also need for a systematic overview of the level of knowledge of Islam within different societal sectors (education, police, etc.). If authorities are found to be lacking knowledge, there should be efforts through training to combat prejudice and misunderstandings. Furthermore, Islamophobia, hate speech and crimes should be combated through campaigns and continuing training. We recommend this measure is taken in cooperation with NGOs, Islamic communities and civil society actors. Also, efforts to increase media literacy need to be encouraged, as Islamophobic propaganda is widely circulated in websites that produce fake news. Islamic associations should be supported in their work to emancipate young Muslims, and initiatives to provide information on rights and channels of reporting incidents should be encouraged. These associations could also provide support to victims of Islamophobia, and systematically register Islamophobic incidents.

# Chronology

## January

- Debates in the press about the usage of the face veil by employees in the education sector; however, no restrictions were imposed.

## March

- MP Lea Mäkipää's (Finns Party) assistant Terhi Kiemunki writes an insulting text on Facebook about Muslim children. She also publishes another text including incitement to hatred against Muslims on the Finns Party's online publication platform *Suomen Uutiset*.

## July

- MP Teuvo Hakkarainen (Finns Party) comments on the attacks in Nizza on his Facebook page and states "Get Muslims out of this country! Not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims."
- Sebastian Tynkkynen, the chairman of the Finns Party youth division, writes on his Facebook page, among others, that "Islam should be stamped out of Finland".
- Police temporarily succeed in closing the Islamophobic platforms *MV-Lehti* and *Überuutiset* run by Ilja Janitskin.
- An Eid event is organised by a shopping mall in Helsinki. The *Suomi Ensin* movement organises a demonstration against the festivities.

## August

- The French ex-diplomat Michel Paulath speaks at one of the demonstrations organised by *Suomi Ensin.* A video of his speech gains global publicity and is shared amongst others by the Austrian far-right politician Ignaz Bearth.

## October

- MP Vesa-Matti Saarakkala (Finns Party) submits a proposal for a law amendment suggesting a prohibition on the usage of the face veil.
- MEP Jussi Halla-aho suggests ethnic profiling in EU member states.

## November

- MP Teuvo Hakkarainen is charged for incitement to hatred due to his comments on Facebook in July.

## December

- Terhi Kiemunki is convicted for incitement to hatred with financial penalties due to her text on *Suomen Uutiset* in March.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN FRANCE NATIONAL REPORT 2016

YASSER LOUATI

## The Author

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# Executive Summary

France entered 2016 in a state of shock after a series of terrorist attacks that culminated in November 2015 with mass shootings that left over 130 victims and more than 200 injured. Later in the year, further attacks targeted the country like the Bastille Day attack that left 86 dead or the murder of two police officers in June.

In a country where Islamophobia has been a growing societal challenge for the past thirty years, it was anticipated that rampant racism, combined with terrorist attacks and a broken socio-economic model, would unleash hostilities towards a minority that is perceived as a foreign body that cannot be integrated even after four generations.

Structural discrimination against Muslims was demonstrated by the National Institute of Demographic Studies (INED) which concluded that integration was a "one way street", that immigrants are structurally cast aside despite efforts to integrate.[1]

Under the state of emergency which is still in effect, over 4,000 raids have been carried out with only 6 leading to investigations for terrorism. French anti-Islamophobia NGO C.R.I (Coordination Against Racism and Islamophobia) along with Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch all denounced the deliberate targeting of Muslims and the ineffectiveness of the government's antiterror strategy. They were further supported by a leaked document from the country's domestic intelligence urging the government to switch strategy and stop the stigmatisation of Muslims.

In a climate of fear and exacerbated tensions, hate towards Muslims reached a peak during the burkini controversy with several seaside towns banning access to public beaches to women wearing it. Emboldened by recent events, anti-Muslim racist discourse was employed not only by traditional Islamophobes but also by the candidate running for presidency in 2017.

The Berlin attack in a Christmas market has so far not led to Islamophobic retaliation in France unlike during the aftermath of the Cologne attack which led to a violent ideological backlash following Kamel Daoud's claim in *The New York Times* that Arabs are prone to sexism.

1.INED, *Trajectoires et Origines. Enquête sur la diversité des populations en France* (Paris: INED, 2016). See: https://www.ined.fr/fr/publications/grandes-enquetes/trajectoires-et-origines/ (retrieved December 23, 2016)

# Résumé

La France est entrée en 2016 dans un état de choc après une série d'attaques terroristes qui ont culminé en novembre 2015 avec plusieurs fusillades qui ont laissé plus de 130 victimes et plus de 200 blessés. Mais d'autres attaques ont visé le pays comme l'attaque du 14 Juillet qui a laissé 86 morts ou le meurtre de deux policiers en juin à Magnanville.

Dans un pays où l'islamophobie est un défi sociétal de plus en plus important depuis trente ans, on s'attendait à ce que le racisme endémique, combiné à des attaques terroristes et à un modèle socio-économique brisé, déclenche des hostilités envers une minorité perçue comme un corps étranger qui ne peut pas être intégré même après quatre générations.

La discrimination structurelle contre les musulmans a été démontrée par l'Institut national d'études démographiques (INED) qui a conclu que l'intégration était une «voie à sens unique», que les immigrants sont structurellement abandonnés en dépit des efforts d'intégration.

Avec l'état d'urgence toujours en vigueur, plus de 4000 perquisitions ont été effectuées, souvent de manière brutale, mais seulement 6 d'entre eux ont mené à des enquêtes pour terrorisme. La Coordination Contre le Racisme et l'Islamophobie (CRI) ainsi qu'Amnesty International et Human Rights Watch ont tous dénoncé le ciblage délibéré des musulmans et l'inefficacité de la stratégie antiterroriste du gouvernement. Ils ont de plus été appuyés par un document confidentiel divulgué par les services de renseignements, demandant au gouvernement de changer de stratégie et d'arrêter la stigmatisation des musulmans.

Dans un climat de peur et de tensions exacerbées, la haine envers les musulmans a atteint un sommet avec l'hystérieautour du burkini avec plusieurs villes balnéaires interdisant l'accès aux plages publiques à toute femme qui le porte. Cela a libéré le discours raciste anti-musulman non seulement par les promoteurs traditionnels de l'islamophobie, mais aussi par les candidats candidats à la présidence en 2017.

L'attaque de Berlin sur un marché de Noël n'a jusqu'à présent pas conduit à des représailles islamophobes en France contrairement à la suite de l'attaque de Cologne qui a conduit à une réaction idéologique violente exacerbéepar la tribune de Kamel Daoud dans le New York Times arguant que les arabe-musulmans ont un problème avec les femmes.

# Introduction

France is home to the largest Western Muslim minority yet has managed to become the laboratory for Islamophobia by inspiring other Western countries with debates on religious neutrality in public space, adopting discriminatory laws and justifying the social death sentence of Muslim women wearing headscarfs who are excluded from schools, work and potentially from universities. With a deeply rooted, yet ignored colonial past French elites have been manufacturing the Muslim problem for decades with mainstream media confining the French Muslim community to the position of a "foreign body within the nation" and a justice system that fails to meet Islamophobic attacks with proper sanctions.

Year after year, statistics point to an ever-increasing number of such attacks from physical assault to daily "silent" cases like discrimination. Yet the state has not engaged in concrete steps to tackle Islamophobia and to give life to the French Republic's claims of "Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood". After an explosive 2015, 2016 was the year of state-sponsored Islamophobic violence under the state of emergency and the urge to find culprits after each terror attack.

# Significant Incidents and Developments

## A Year of State Retaliation: Mosques, Homes and Beyond

After the November 2015 terrorist attacks, the French state engaged in a brutal counterterror campaign that deliberately targeted Muslims, in addition to the systematic backlash from ordinary people and the hysteric news coverage. The state of emergency which was declared on the night of November 14, began with a series of brutal police raids, house arrests and ransacking of private spaces including mosques.

Throughout the year, Muslim places of worship were under constant attacks. After brutally raiding several mosques, the government engaged in a series of mosque closures under the pretext of radical teachings without ever providing tangible proof to support the accusations.

Several mosques were attacked despite the state of emergency and a plan to protect religious sites as demanded by President Francois Hollande in July 2015 failed to provide adequate protection.

On 8 January, the Perpignan Mosque was tagged with "Get Out" graffiti, swastikas and desecrated with boar parts. A week later, the newly built mosque of Fréjus continued its year-long struggle against National Front Mayor David Rachline who ordered its closing. The General Prosecutor went even further and required that it be demolished. Nevertheless, the prefect ordered the mosque to be opened and put an end to the legal battle.

A few miles away, the Nice Mayor Christian Estrosi (*Les Républicains*) illustrated his hostility to the local Muslim community by engaging in a long battle with the En-

nour Islamic Institute which involved trying to have the institute shut down despite an initial agreement to go ahead with the project and after the mosque was ready to open. The face-off can be partly explained by the pressure from the National Front and its supporters who are violently opposed to it and in the context of local elections.

The battle was declared a lost one after the prefect and the administrative court dismissed the mayor's appeal. Nevertheless, Christian Estrosi even managed to secure the support of the local Muslim umbrella organisation, the Regional Council of the Muslim Faith (CRCM), in order to launch a rival project.

From interviews with the Ennour Institute Imam Mahmoud Benzamia, it turned out that when the mayor of Nice supported their project, opposition to the project was not as loud because, at the time, it was located in a remote area. But as the area gained value because of real estate and commercial developments, the mosque found itself at the heart of a newly developed sector.

Furthermore, the continuous demonisation of mosques and Islamic institutions in the name of fighting "radicalisation" - a term that remains undefined to this day - and with several of them being ransacked by the police or gendarmerie in night raids, attacks against Muslim places of worship have become legitimised by the current discourse. According to the Domes & Minarets website, 40 mosques were attacked in 2016 and 20 were shut down by the government.

## State Violation of *Laïcité*: The Arbresle Mosque Case

On 26 November, Michel Delpuech, prefect of the Rhone Alpes Department, decided to shut down the mosque without any justification. Such a decision was made possible thanks to the powers given to him by the state of emergency and the only documents he put forward were intelligence white papers accusing the mosque of being frequented by "radical Salafi preachers". As highlighted by news website Lyon Mag, "the prefect omitted to mention that the Salafi preacher he referred to had spoken up against the attacks: 'It is incumbent upon preachers, speakers and other journalists to unite their discourse by clearly announcing that they are disavowing themselves from these criminal acts. In the same way, I will say to my children and Salafi brothers of France: ... Warn against them, make clear to the people about their misguidance, their deviance, their evils and their dangerousness'".[2] Nevertheless, Prefect Delpuech demanded that the organisation dissolves, and elects a new board before allowing it to reopen. This resulted in members of the city hall becoming members of the board of the cultural association heading the mosque. Like in numerous cases around the country, such interference of the state in religious affairs raises serious concerns about *laïcité* and how it is constantly used to promote strict state neutrality.

2.Slim Mazni, "Fermeture de la mosquée de l'Arbresle : une dérive de l'état d'urgence ?," *Lyon Mag*, (February 18, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2016, from https://www.lyonmag.com/article/78614/fermeture-de-la-mosque-de-l-arbresle-une-drive-de-l-tat-d-urgence.

The year 2016 was marked by another terrorist attack which was carried out by a truck driver that ploughed through a crowd watching the Bastille Day fireworks on 14 July. Eighty-six people were killed during the attack, a third of which were Muslims. Despite the toll taken by the local Muslim community, the attack unleashed a wave of racist retaliation against them and opened the door for further discriminations.

A documentary was shot in order to give voice to the local Muslim community entitled "Nice, grief and disgrace. Facing hatred while mourning the dead". The imam shared his powerlessness after spending "a week burying people, sometimes two generations at a time".[3]

## From Theory to Practice: Increase of Attacks Against Muslims

In comparison to the exceptionally high level of Islamophobic attacks in 2015, 2016 marked a relative decrease in attacks declared by the victims. In an atmosphere of state of emergency and brutal retaliation from the state and the lack of will from the government to act, victims of Islamophobia are not given incentives to make their cases known either to the government or to NGOs which are themselves not capable of reaching out to every single victim.

According to the Observatory of Islamophobia, from 1 January to 30 June, 2016 (before the Bastille Day attack in Nice), 29 Islamophobic attacks and 40 threats were registered against 79 attacks (63% decrease) and 197 threats (79.7% decrease) for the same period in 2015. A total of 69 acts were reported.

For Lamia Guene, head of the Association Against Islamophobia and Racisms (ALCIR):

> "the first targets of Islamophobia are Muslim women who suffer verbal and physical attacks because of their visibility. Muslim men are also discriminated against but more so at work.
>
> The danger faced by Muslim women in this hostile and discriminatory climate is that they are excluded from debates, school and work, that they are considered provocative by the simple fact of wearing a veil and are no longer considered French citizens but as Muslims and completely dehumanised."[4]

In a recent interview,[5] Abdel Aziz Chaambi, president of the Coordination Against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI), declared that they recorded a 130% increase in attacks against Muslims, while the proportion of women being attacked went from 80% to 90%. Furthermore, "the year 2016 was marked by the normalisa-

3.Joseph Paris/Yasser Louati, "Nice: Grief and disgrace. Facing hatred while mourning the dead," (July 26, 2016), retrieved October 15, 2016, from https://vimeo.com/176410896.

4.Interview with Lamia Guene (December 7, 2016).

5.Interview with Abdel Aziz Chaambi (December 21, 2016)

tion of the state of emergency and police brutality that we could do nothing about. The number of victims that have come to us has been multiplied by three and none of the cases led to an investigation on terror charges."

**The 2016 Islamophobia statistics from the CRI are as follows:**

- 576 cases of Islamophobic attacks
- 356 cases are related to the state of emergency; 53 are currently being processed
- 95 cases are related to public services and administrations: schools, universities, city halls, hospitals, social services
- 87 cases are related to the labour market and training
- 38 cases involved verbal and physical assault in public spaces, which according to the CRI have spiked in the wake of the state of emergency

At the international level, the Council of Europe warned the French government about the normalisation of hate speech targeting Muslims. Thorbjorn Ragland, its general secretary, said "Hate speech, through its normalisation in the public sphere, remains a matter of concern"[6]. The pan-European organisation further put pressure on France to sign Protocol 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights which prohibits any form of discrimination.[7]

Eric Fassin, professor of Political Sciences at the University of Paris VIII, declared in an interview for the weekly *Politis* that "what is increasing is official racism.... Ordinary racism is being allowed from the top." He went on to accuse Prime Minister Manuel Valls of "downplaying Islamophobia by refusing to use the term".[8]

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

In its report "The Economic Cost of Discrimination",[9] *France Stratégie*, a think tank under the authority of the Prime Minister, concluded that men of North African descent are among the most discriminated individuals in France with an unemployment rate of 18%. For M. Pisani-Ferry, the report

6. European Comission against Racism and Intolerance, "ECRI Report on France,"*coe.int*, (March 1, 2016), retrieved October 20, 2016, from https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/France/FRA-CbC-V-2016-001-ENG.pdf.

7.European Comission against Racism and Intolerance, "ECRI Report on France,"*coe.int*, (March 1, 2016), retrieved October 20, 2016, from https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/France/FRA-CbC-V-2016-001-ENG.pdf.

8.Eric Fassin, "Ce qui se banalise, c'est le racisme d'État," *Politis*, Vol.1426 (November 3-9, 2016).

9.France Stratégie, "Le Cout Economique des Discriminations,"*strategie.gouv.tr*, (September 20, 2016), retrieved September 17, 2016, from http://www.strategie.gouv.fr/sites/strategie.gouv.fr/files/atoms/files/dp-discrimination-20-09-2016.pdf.

allows to allocate responsibility on structural discrimination for its social and economic costs.

The economic cost of discrimination is estimated by *France Stratégie* at €150 billion or 0.3% of the GDP. Further questions remain in terms of the destruction of talent for those who never get the job they trained for on taxpayers' money, or in terms of lost investment when a trained individual is pushed towards expatriation and puts skills acquired in French schools at the service of rival economies like the U.S. or the Gulf.

The systemic and structural nature of discrimination if further highlighted by Jacques Toubon, the country's Ombudsman in his latest report:

> "Far from being an isolated phenomenon, discrimination linked to the origins when applying for internship or employment occurs "often" or "very often" for more than 60% of the respondents. Being perceived of Muslim descent increases the frequency of declared discriminations, especially for men."[10]

> "Religious beliefs are much more often cited as grounds for discrimination by those seen as Arab (42%) than as Black (8%), even when they are also perceived as Muslim. Respondents are aware of the links established between Arab origin and supposed affiliation to the Muslim religion: persons seen as Arab think very largely that they are also considered Muslim."[11]

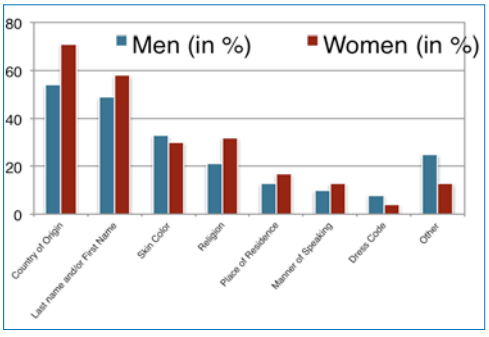


Figure 1: The "Defender of Rights" report 2016 "Discrimination in employment"

As in the previous years, the French state has not shown any real commitment to confront discrimination. A year later, studies from both government agencies and research centres confirm the structural nature of discrimination in France and how Muslims are by far the most targeted group. Yet, and as confirmed by the March 2016 report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), France «does not intend in the near future to accede to Protocol No. 12" which sets out a general prohibition of discrimination; fully applying the existing criminal and civil law provisions to combat racism and racial discrimination; reinforcing the legal framework in civil and administrative law aimed at combating racial discrimination; and raising the awareness of members of the judicial service to the problem of racial discrimination and the difficulty of legally proving its existence.[12]

10.Defenseur Des Droits, "Discrimination à l'embauche: résultats de l'appel à témoignage," *defenseurdesdroits.fr*, (September 19, 2016), retrieved October 19, 2016, from http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/fr/actus/actualites/discrimination-lembauche-resultats-de-lappel-temoignage.

11.Defenseur Des Droits, "Discrimination à l'embauche: résultats de l'appel à témoignage," *defenseurdesdroits.fr*, (September 19, 2016), retrieved October 19, 2016, from http://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/fr/actus/actualites/discrimination-lembauche-resultats-de-lappel-temoignage.

12.ECRI, "ECRI Report on France».

Despite the converging reports from civil society and state-sanctioned human rights institutions on the alarming situation of racism and particularly Islamophobia, the French government's position on racism differs. So far, the only visible initiatives were a series of communication campaigns aimed at raising awareness. The campaign can be seen on the government's website.[13]

## Education

Schoolbooks have been examined by academics Béatrice Mabilon-Bonfils and François Durpaire in their book *Fatima moins bien notée que Marianne* (Fatima getting lower grades than Mariane)[14] where both criticised the misuse of *laïcité*, the rewriting of history, the constant negative portraying of Muslims and how school grades are affected by pupils' religion. According to the authors, the Islamophobic bias is blatant and the state cannot be exempted from criticism.

According to Sociology Professor Raphael Liogier "No, anti-Muslim racism is not an invention of a sociologist but an empirically traceable reality."[15] In a country where 90% of Muslim students go to public schools, the study confirmed what was already being claimed by activists in terms of systemic discrimination and the fact that nothing was being done to make France's public schooling system more effective in terms of developing an inclusive identity.

France's schooling system is bound to remain an ideological battlefield. If Islamophobia is a violent topic today in France, it is also because the contribution of Muslims to France's modern day achievements has been obliterated from common memory beginning with school history books. Be it from the wealth extracted from the colonies, the indigenous struggle against the Nazis, all the way to the liberation of Paris, the postcolonial struggles in France, or the first generations' battles to demand equal treatment, young French Muslims are deprived of a sense of identity or a reason to believe they do belong to France just as much as France belongs to them.

## Politics

The burkini hysteria which made headlines in the summer turned out to have been sparked by Nicolas Sarkozy. Indeed, according to members of his own political party *Les Républicains,* it was Sarkozy who called and pressured mayors from the party to issue the bans so he could spark a national debate.[16] The timing was indeed perfect

13.Republic of France, "Tous Unis Contre La Haine," *gouvernement.fr,* (March 20, 2016), retrieved October 22, 2016, from http://www.gouvernement.fr/tous-unis-contre-la-haine

14.Béatrice Mabilon-Bonfils/François Durpaire, *Fatima moins bien notée que Marianne* (La Tour-d'Aigues:Éditions L'aube, 2016).

15.Raphael Liogier,"Fatima moins bien notée que Marianne, un livre choc sur les rapports islam/école," *Le Huffington Post*, (January 7, 2016), retrieved October 21, 2016, from http://www.huffingtonpost.fr/raphael-liogier/ecole/.

16.Eric Mandonnet, "Sarkozy a appelé des maires pour qu'ils signent des arrêtés anti-burkini," *L'Express*, (September 6, 2016), retrieved September 6, 2016, from http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/lr/primaire-a-droite-la-bonne-conduite-n-empeche-pas-les-coups-bas_1827619.html.

for occuping media space and making headlines : it was two weeks after the Bastille Day attack and during the month of August when there is very little political news and the country was still in shock.

The burkini hysteria has had permanent effects as it has further normalised racist rhetoric aimed at Muslims and made identity politics the centre of the upcoming presidential campaign. With the exception of Cecile Duflot (Green Party) and Benoit Hamon (Socialist Party), all candidates from the far left to the far right have jumped on the bandwagon and contributed to fuelling the debate on protecting *laïcité* against "Muslim demands" or to reasserting the superiority of French culture in regards to others.

For instance, former Prime Minister Francois Fillon, who is now running for the presidency, declared during a speech (28 August, 2016, Sablé sur Sarthe) for the right-wing primaries that France "should not feel guilty about exporting its civilisation to the peoples of Africa, North America and Asia" while the burkini hysteria was still raging.[17]

The debate further polarised French society and a climax was reached when four policemen surrounded a Muslim woman wearing a burkini and demanded she takes off her shirt on a public beach while the crowd was watching. The picture which went viral on social media and made headlines around the world. David Thompson, a French journalist specialised in terrorism, was prompted to condemn the act as he believed it would feed the narrative of DAESH for "decades to come".[18] (Figure 2)

The ground was already set for the burkini controversy to ignite. The terrorist attacks were not the only pretext to justify it. Once again, politicians and the media had already heavily contributed to exacerbate tensions and turn communities against one another.

Figure 2: Policemen surrounded a Muslim woman wearing a burkini and demanded she takes off her shirt on a public beach in Nice while the crowd was watching.

On 13 April, in an interview to *Libération*, the Prime Minister once again sparked the debate on prohibiting the Muslim headscarf in universities. His position appeared to be isolated within his own government as the Minister of Education and the Secretary for Higher Education both expressed their

17.L'Express, "Pour François Fillon, la colonisation visait à «partager sa culture"" *L'Express*, (August 31, 2016), retrieved August 31, 2016, from http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/politique/pour-francois-fillon-la-colonisation-visait-a-partager-sa-culture_1825773.html.

18.Vincent Mantalon/David Thomson, "Arrêtés anti-burkini: «Les photos de Nice vont alimenter des années de propagande jihadiste»," *francetvinfo.fr*, (August 24, 2016), retrieved August 28, 2016, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/societe/religion/laicite/polemique-sur-le-burkini/arretes-anti-burkini-les-photos-de-nice-vont-alimenter-des-annees-de-propagande-jihadiste_1793163.html.

opposition to the idea. Nevertheless, with the idea having already been suggested in 2015 by then State Secretary for Women's Rights Pascale Boistard and given the continuous extension of the application of "religious neutrality" in a growing number of places, the ground is set for a possible banning of the headscarf in universities especially with France's political centre of gravity shifting further to the right.

In order to have a (new) state approved representation for Muslims, the French government decided to establish the Foundation of the Deeds of Islam without consulting Muslims themselves. The government went even further by appointing Jean Pierre Chevènement, a former member of the colonial administration in Algeria, as its head. As the burkini debate was raging, his asking of Muslims "to remain discreet"[19] further widened the gap between the Muslim community and the government that is perceived as perpetuating colonial practices and denying Muslims the right of self-representation.

## Media

French Media have been part of the problem of rising Islamophobia for decades. As in other Western countries, French Muslims are traditionally portrayed as a foreign entity even when it comes to third- and fourth-generation French citizens. In his landmark investigation "The Imaginary Islam, the Media Construction of Islamophobia in France, 1975-2005",[20] Thomas Deltombe demonstrated that when dealing with Islam and Muslims in general, French media outlets always made sure that the subject is linked with international events such as the Iranian Revolution in the early 80s, the Algerian Civil War in the 90s and after 2001, with global terrorism.

Coverage of the 2015 attacks followed the same pattern. The question is no longer about confronting "religious extremism" but confronting "Islam" as such and its supposed inherent threat to French identity and the safety of France's citizens.

Even as Muslims were brutally murdered by terrorists as was the case for Ahmed Merabet who was killed at gunpoint by one of the Kouachi brothers nearby the Charlie Hebdo building in January, Amine Ibnolmobarak, Salah Emad El Gebaly, the Saadi sisters Halima and Hodda or the 33 victims of the Bastille attack in Nice, few thought against putting terrorists and their victims in the same basket.

The idea that Muslims are by far the first targets of global terrorism and are not spared even when terrorism hits Western countries, does not weigh much in media reports. Given the traditional refusal to see Muslims as full-fledged citizens and instead viewing them either as refusing to assimilate or as incapable of becoming truly

19.Le Parisien, "Aux musulmans, Chevènement conseille la «discrétion» dans une «période difficile",» *leparisien.fr*, (August 15, 2016), retrieved August 15, 2016, fromhttp://www.leparisien.fr/flash-actualite-politique/aux-musulmans-chevenement-conseille-la-discretion-dans-une-periode-difficile-15-08-2016-6042551.php.

20.Thomas Deltombe, *L'Islam Imaginaire, la construction médiatique de l'islamophobie en France, 1975-2005*, (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 2005).

French, and associating them with foreign threats, the biased coverage of the 2015 and 2016 attacks only magnified what was already being expressed until then.

The Eric Zemmour example is the most prolific in terms of unapologetic Islamophobia by state-owned and private media outlets. Despite a series of condemnations for hate speech on public and private news outlets, he nevertheless remains one of the top polemists to be invited on French media.

In 2016, he was again invited for a book tour promotion for *A Quinquennium for Nothing (picture above), Chronicles from a Clash of Civilisation* with a spot by France 5 (public service) which according to cultural weekly *Télérama* "offered a boulevard to the delusions of Eric Zemmour". The host, Anne Sophie Lapix, offered a platform to the polemist without the presence of a Muslim person to contradict him when he singled them out for being followers of a "dangerous book" and when he claimed that such a "dangerous book can only be followed by the letter without any precautions".[21]

His publisher, Albin Michel, even boasted about Eric Zemmour being called an Islamophobe so as to promote the book which confirms the potential profitability of the Islamophobia niche. In 2016 alone, the company published *Will Bells Still Ring Tomorrow?* by far right leader - and notorious critic of the presence of Muslims in France - Philippe de Villiers, in which he claims France is being Islamised and lost to a conquering Muslim population. The same company also published *Overcoming Islamic Totalitarianism* by former Prime Minister François Fillon and right-wing runner for the 2017 presidential election. All these books had aggressive book tours on private and state-owned media alike. This contribution from mainstream media which is met with complete silence from state officials, further confirmed the existence of state racism fuelled by normalised Islamophobia.

## Justice System

Since the early eighties, several laws have been passed specifically targeting Muslims. Two topics emerge when analysing their content: the debate they sparked before being adopted and the end results once they were applied. These topics are identity and anti-terrorism.

The 2004, 2010, 2011 bans on the headscarf in public schools, the full-face veil ban and veiled caregivers respectively have set the necessary precedent to target Muslims on an arbitrary basis. The cases of schoolgirls being expelled for wearing long skirts in 2015 happened again in 2016 as expected, given the initial support offered by the Minister of Education Najat Vallaud Belkacem to the school principals behind the decisions.

21.Samuel Gontier, "Quand France 5 offre un boulevard aux délires d'Eric Zemmour," *Télérama*, (September 9, 2016), retrieved September 10, 2016, from http://television.telerama.fr/television/france-5-offre-un-boulevard-aux-delires-d-eric-zemmour,147107.php.

Tensions in schools confirms that they are at the heart of the battle for a new *laicité*; this battle is being extended to the labour market with the labour reform (*loi travail*) that was passed in August 2016. The religious factor (*fait religieux*) has been included in vague terms such as "religious neutrality" at the workplace, leaving the door open for employers to restrict the religious freedom of their employees. The CNCDH (National Consultative Commission on Human Rights) along with the Observatory of *Laïcité* have both blasted the bill and reminded the government "that secularism (*laïcité*) is a constitutional principle which implies the neutrality of the state, public services and local authorities but which guarantees citizens freedom of conscience and freedom to express their convictions within the limits of respect for public order."[22]

Furthermore, the French judicial system so far has failed to apply existing laws against racist discourse. According to Vanessa Codaccioni, professor of Political Sciences at the University of Paris 8, "the 1972 law against racism is outdated and must be reviewed in order to include Islamophobic hate speech and attacks."[23] This position comes in light of a series of acquittals of various figures who deliberately targeted Muslim citizens with racist speech.

France has been living in a state of emergency for over a year. Passed on the night of the 13 November attacks, the regime of exception grants special powers to the executive branch. As of November 2016, over 4,000 raids have been carried out leading to only 6 investigations based on terror-related elements. By far, Muslims were the main targets of the state of emergency.

Confirming Vanessa Codaccioni's declarations, the Loiret Prefect Chief of Staff Frederic Clowez admitted in an interview to the *L'Echo Républicain* daily, that they were indeed targeting Muslims whose "religious practice is very assiduous, who change behaviour or dress code".[24] To him, such raids were carried on a preemptive basis after a denunciation by neighbours or mere suspicion.

One highly symbolic measure taken in the aftermath of the November attacks, was the proposal to change the Constitution and include a permanent state of emergency and to strip individuals who are convicted of terrorism of their French citizenship if they hold dual citizenship. This measure was seen as a de facto establishing of two levels of citizenship: those holding two citizenships and therefore likely to lose

22.National Consultative Commission on Human Rights, "L'observatoire de la laïcité et la CNCDH dénonce une disposition du projet de loi sur la modernisation du travail,"*cncdh.fr*, (July 19, 2016), retrieved November 22, 2016, from http://www.cncdh.fr/fr/publications/lobservatoire-de-la-laicite-et-la-cncdh-denonce-une-disposition-du-projet-de-loi-sur-la.

23. Interview with Vanessa Codaccioni (December 5, 2016).

24.L'Echo Républicain, "Avec l'état d'urgence, les perquisitions en Eure-et-Loir se font «dans une optique préventive»,"*lechorepublicain.fr*, (December 10, 2015), retrieved November 22, 2016, from http://www.lechorepublicain.fr/eure-et-loir/actualite/pays/pays-drouais/2015/12/10/avec-l-etat-d-urgence-les-perquisitions-en-eure-et-loir-se-font-dans-une-optique-preventive_11700447.html.

the French one; and those holding only French citizenship who will not be stripped of it. In other words, when faced with the same accusation, people holding only French citizenship would be allowed to retain it. Observers made the direct connection with French Muslim citizens who hold citizenships from the country of birth of their parents.

This time, President François Hollande and the rest of the government faced harsh criticism even from their own political party. Justice Minister Christiane Taubira openly expressed her opposition to such a measure declaring it "unwelcome and coming with paltry effectiveness" against terrorism.

On 30 March and following four months of controversy, President Francois Hollande decided to abandon the constitutional reform project after failing to secure support from both chambers of Parliament. But the effects of the project brought back the idea of ranking between citizens as it was practiced under the Vichy government of the 1940s that had collaborated with the Nazis. According to Amnesty International, "the (state of emergency ed.) measures were applied in a discriminatory manner. Some Muslims were targeted mainly on the basis of their religious practice, with no evidence pointing to their involvement in any criminal offence."[25]

Human Rights Watch, on the other hand, went further and declared that "France has carried out abusive and discriminatory raids and house arrests against Muslims under its sweeping new state of emergency law. The measures have created economic hardship, stigmatised those targeted, and have traumatised children."[26]

Still according to the Human Rights Watch team sent to France for investigation "The vast majority of those placed under house arrest or whose homes were searched are Muslims and persons of North African descent. All the measures that the Human Rights Watch documented targeted Muslims, Muslim establishments, or halal restaurants."[27]

Such blatant targeting of individuals because of their real or assumed adherence to the Muslim religion convinced human rights lawyers such as Arié Alimi that state-sponsored racism is a reality but also that "there is a state doctrine that puts a continuum between Islam and terrorism".[28]

If France's war on terror were to be assessed according to the ratio between the number of repressive laws adopted and their results, failure is the only realistic conclusion. Since 1986, over thirty antiterror laws have been adopted ; their only conse-

25.Amnesty International,"France:Upturned lives: The disproportionate impact of France's state of emergency," *amnesty.org*, (February 4, 2016), retrieved October 22, 2016, from https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur21/3364/2016/en/.

26.Human Rights Watch, "France: «Abuses Under State of Emergency»," *hrw.org*, (February 3, 2016), retrieved October 22, 2016, from https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/02/03/france-abuses-under-state-emergency.

27.Ibid.

28.Arié Alimi, "Combattre le racisme d'Etat," *Le Club Médiapart*, (August 17, 2016), retrieved October 22, 2016, from https://blogs.mediapart.fr/arie-alimi/blog/170816/combattre-le-racisme-detat.

quences have been the weakening of the rule of law and empowering terrorist groups that they can bring down "Western democracies" without sending an invading army.

Even within the country's intelligence apparatus, criticism is the norm. The country's domestic intelligence agency SGDSN (Secretary General for Defense and National Security) in a 2013 confidential report[7] which was leaked in January 2016, called for a proactive strategy that avoids singling out communities but instead brings representatives of the Muslim community to the table.[21] Calls from those dealing with terrorism like the SGDSN, however, are far from being heard as shown by the closing of dozens of mosques and the handing of each terrorist attack.

On 28 July, David Lisnard, mayor of Cannes, issued a ban on the burkini in public beaches located in his town on the grounds that the swimsuit - mostly worn by Muslim women - "shows a religious affiliation in a conspicuous manner while France and religious places of worship (in reference to the Saint Etienne de Rouvray beheading of a priest in his church ed.) are under terrorist attacks, [and] are such that they create risks of trouble to public order (rioting, scuffles) which must be prevented"[29].

Fines of €38 were to be given to "any person not wearing decent clothes, respectful of good morals and *laïcité* (secular law), respectful of other people's hygiene and safety in the maritime public domain."[30]

This sparked international controversy as the ban targeted dress codes in public beaches and thus public spaces. The danger of such a measure meant that a precedent was set for future banning of religious signs in public spaces as is being advocated by right and far right political figures such as former president Nicolas Sarkozy or national front leader Marine Le Pen.

Benedicte Jeannerod, the director of France's Human Rights Watch, declared that "all these bans serve to do is create a dangerous and absurd confusion between how some Muslim women choose to dress and the despicable terrorist attacks that French people, of all religions, have suffered."[31]

At the international level the United Nations Human Rights Council demanded the immediate suspension of the ban and declared through its spokesperson Ruper Coalville that:

> "It is frankly a stupid reaction to what we are having, facing, in terms of terrorist attacks. It does nothing to increase security, it does nothing to improve

29.Le Monde, "Burkini: le maire de Cannes interdit les vêtements religieux à la plage," lemonde.fr, (August 11, 2016), retrieved October 23, 2016, from http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2016/08/11/le-maire-de-cannes-interdit-les-vetements-religieux-a-la-plage_4981587_3224.html.

30.Le Monde, "Burkini: le maire de Cannes interdit les vêtements religieux à la plage," lemonde.fr, (August 11, 2016), retrieved October 23, 2016, from http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2016/08/11/le-maire-de-cannes-interdit-les-vetements-religieux-a-la-plage_4981587_3224.html.

31.Benedicte Jeannerod, "France's Shameful and Absurd Burkini Ban," *Human Rights Watch*, (August 28, 2016), retrieved October 23, 2016, from https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/08/25/frances-shameful-and-absurd-burkini-ban.

public order, if anything, it stimulates friction, and therefore undermines public order. If anything, it is having a counterproductive effect".[32]

| TABLE 1: IN TOTAL, 29 MAYORS PROHIBITED THE BURKINI ON THE SAME GROUNDS | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer (LR) | 16 | Vallauris-Golfe-Juan (UDI) |
| 2 | Cassis (LR) | 17 | Cagnes-sur-Mer (LR) |
| 3 | La Ciotat (LR) | 18 | Le Lavandou (LR) |
| 4 | Mandelieu-la-Napoule (LR) | 19 | Cavalaire-sur-mer (DVD) |
| 5 | Cap d'Ail (LR), Menton (LR) | 20 | Cogolin (Front National) |
| 6 | Cannes (LR) | 21 | Sainte-Maxime (DVD) |
| 7 | Villeneuve-Loubet (LR) | 22 | Fréjus (FN) |
| 8 | Nice (LR) | 23 | La Londe-les-Maures (LR) |
| 9 | Saint-Laurent-du-Var (*divers droite*) | 24 | Cagnano (*sans étiquette*) |
| 10 | Beaulieu-sur-Mer (LR) | 25 | Sisco (PS) |
| 11 | Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat (DVD) | 26 | Ghisonaccia (DVD) |
| 12 | Villefranche-sur-Mer (LR) | 27 | Leucate (LR) |
| 13 | Eze (DVD) | 28 | Le Touquet (LR) |
| 14 | Roquebrune-Cap-Martin (LR) | 29 | Oye-Plage(PS) |
| 15 | Théoule-sur-Mer (DVD) | | |

Human rights organisations including the French Human Rights League (LDH) turned to the administrative court of Nice to challenge the ban. According to Hervé Lavisse, attorney for the LDH:

"The Mayor (of Cannes ed.) has worn the uniform of a perfect recruiter for radical groups, how can we not be afraid that some of our fellow countrymen and women will feel excluded from the city by such exclusive and repressive attitudes? It is time for the region's public office holders to calm their discriminatory ardor and to defend the spirit of the Republic".[33]

On 22 August, the Administrative Court of Nice sided with the mayors and justified the burkini ban by making a direct connection between wearing a burkini and being on the side of terrorist groups:

"As illustrated by the murder of a Catholic priest in his church in Saint Etienne du Rouvray on July 26, 2016, a few days before the August 5, 2016 municipal bylaw in dispute, the coexistence of religions, which is a constituent element

32.Euronews, "French burkini ban "stupid reaction", UN human rights office says," *euronews.com*, (August 30, 2016), retrieved October 23, 2016, from http://www.euronews.com/2016/08/30/french-burkini-ban-stupid-reaction-un-human-rights-office-says.

33.Nice Matin, "Burkini interdit sur la plage: la LDH dénonce un «abus de droit» et envisage des poursuites," nicematin.com, (August 12, 2016), retrieved October 23, 2016, from http://www.nicematin.com/vie-locale/burkini-interdit-sur-la-plage-la-ldh-denonce-un-abus-de-droit-et-envisage-des-poursuites-70760.

> of the principle of secularism (*laïcité* ed.), is opposed by Islamic religious fundamentalism which advocates a radical practice of religion, incompatible with the essential values of the French community, and the principle of gender equality. In this context the wearing of a garment on beaches to display a religious convictions in an ostentatious manner that could be interpreted as belonging to this religious fundamentalism is (…) to be felt by some as a mistrust or provocation exacerbating the tensions felt by the population following the succession of Islamist attacks suffered in France, including that of Nice on 14 July 2016 and of 26 July 2016 which directly targeted the Christian religion."[34]

Meanwhile, the whole country was engaged in a bitter hysteria targeting burkini-clad women. Several assaults were reported against women wearing it and evenagainst women wearing a headscarf. In some cases, the police was even sent to fine them, demanded they undress or that they stay away from beaches.

In Corsica, a Muslim family was assaulted by a group of native Corsicans after a verbal dispute escalated following the presence of a burkini-clad woman. Others were assaulted by angry crowds as was the case in Nice, Villeneuve Loubet and Cannes. In his analysis of the situation, renowned French sociologist Said Bouamama expressed his condemnation of such behaviour, "the worst part is not police officers being sent to a beach to fine a headscarf-wearing woman but the crowd pointing to her and asking the police to come for her".[35]

By 26 August, the Council of the State invalidated the burkini ban in a decision that formed jurisprudence, hence demanding that all bans be lifted.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Manuel Valls who declared he was in favour of the burkini ban, insisted that the debate, despite being ended by the country's highest administrative court, "must continue". Echoing such positions, only two mayors accepted to conform with the arbitration, prompting François Dumont, president of the French Human Rights League (LDH) to write to the Prime Minister in order to enforce the lift.

On 13 July, the Court of Justice of the European Union issued a press release declaring that the "Advocate General Sharpston considers that a company policy requiring an employee to remove her Islamic headscarf when in contact with clients constitutes unlawful direct discrimination".[24] The release relates to the dismissal of a French Muslim woman who was dismissed by her employer following her refusal to remove her headscarf while at work. The decision, which is unique when dealing with Islamophobic discrimination in France, still awaits the necessary backup to be enforced in the context where women wearing a headscarf have a 1% chance of securing a job.

34.Website of Nice Administrative Tribunal: http://nice.tribunal-administratif.fr/A-savoir/Communiques/Le-port-de-la-tenue-vestimentaire-denommee-burkini-sur-les-plages-de-Villeneuve-Loubet (retrieved January 17, 2016).

35. Said Bouamama at the ALCIR Meeting Against Islamophobia (September 26, 2016), retrieved March 1st, 2017 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azLmKoyLrMw

### Internet

Adding to the media role in promoting Islamophobia, the Internet has become one of the most effective places for doing so with almost total impunity. Several websites have managed to become the traditional relays of Islamophobes both from the left and the right.

For instance, *FDesouche, Riposte Laïque, Boulevard Voltaire*, or *Riposte Républicaine* are the specialised hotspots for Islamophobia with the theory of France being besieged by "rampant Islamization". Pro-Israeli websites such as Europe-Israel are joining forces with the far right and contributing to feed the "Muslim threat" narrative and the "natural" convergence between Israelis and French nationalists in the face of a clash of civilisation with Muslims. This can also be explained by the fear of seeing Muslims promoting an anti-occupation agenda and influencing French foreign policy in order to support the right of Palestinians for self-determination.

In March 2001, right-wing weekly and profitable *Valeurs Actuelles* made a significant move to reach out to far right conspiracy website *FDesouche* and increase its legitimacy by purchasing advertising space. This move was spotted by French journalist Claude Asklolovitch, according to whom *Valeurs Actuelles* is trying to bridge the gap between younger social media users and older traditional readers of the magazine.

The far right cyberspace is bound to grow in size and in influence with the arrival of U.S. pro-Trump website *Breitbart* which had Steve Bannon at its head, offered to help the National Front for the upcoming election.

In reaction to the sustainability of cyber hate speech, the National Observatory Against Islamophobia noted the "strong progression" of online targeting of Muslims. Its president Abdellah Zekri declared that "since the 14 July attacks in Nice, there has been a more worrying rise in calls for murder against French Muslims and their representatives [...] These calls for hatred that flourish on the Web risk jeopardizing national cohesion which is what DAESH wishes as well as some politicians who have been making irresponsible declarations".[26]

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

That the government is the number one contributor to Islamophobia in France comes as no surprise. The "Lepenisation" of the minds is a reality and is the direct result of rampant racism within French society inherited from the colonial era, but also from the weight and power of far right ideology. The far right is far from being a marginal group but represents a structured movement with institutional actors like the Front National, theorists, armed wings, media outlets and funders.

There are traditional mechanisms for the promotion of Islamophobia in France. Since the French Muslim population settled in the early 70s and their descendants became visible citizens, and given the discredited thesis that some races are superior

to others, identity, culture, values and later on terrorism have constantly been used to legitimise racist discourse targeting Muslims, whether they are new immigrants or have been established for several generations.

*Laïcité* or the French secular law is the archetype of laws that have been perverted for the purpose of excluding Muslims and passing regular laws of exception. Adopted in 1905 in order to separate religion from politics and to grant state neutrality, it was brought back as a pretext in the 1980s in order to clamp down on the visibility of Muslims with the argument that public space must be neutral and protected from religious visibility.

However, this went against the spirit and the letter of the law. What is being used as "*laïcité*" by the left and the right to legally challenge Muslims' religious freedom, is actually the "new *laïcité*" as theorised by MP François Baroin from the mainstream political party *Les Républicain*s in 2003. In his report "*Pour une nouvelle laicité*" (For a new *laicité*) to Prime Minister Jean Pierre Raffarin, Baroin considered that the target of this new *laïcité* was the rising visibility of Muslims after, according to Baroin, "the struggle against Catholicism was won". Knowing that restricting people's religious expression in public space was in clear violation of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and even the French Constitution, Baroin concluded in his report that, at some point "*laïcité* and human rights are incompatible".[36]

## The Rise of the "Identitarian Left"

The continuous misuse of *laïcité* for ideological and political ends prompted the official Observatory of *Laïcité* to enter into a public confrontation with Prime Minister Valls following the *#NousSommesUnis* (We are united) clash with the head of the observatory, Jean Louis Bianco, for signing the call along with various Muslim organisations and activists.

During the night of the 13 November attacks, Samuel Greybowski - who had previously founded interfaith NGO COEXIST- launched the *#NousSommesUnis* (We are united) call on Twitter which went viral and rallied thousands of people. The call was then shortly transformed into a text calling for the unity of the French people in the face of terrorism. Signatories included representative organisations and individuals from the Catholic, Muslim, Protestant and Jewish faiths, who were later joined by organisations of various backgrounds.

As stated on the *Noussommesunis.com* website "A trap is being set up for us! We must refuse to succumb to it! Division, denunciation, stigmatization are at the heart of this sneaky trap. Whenever we hurry to designate the culprits of this crime, of which only the perpetrators are guilty, we fall into the trap of a programmed and orchestrated division."[37]

36.François Baroin, "Pour une nouvelle laïcité,"*voltairenet.org*, (June 2003), retrieved November 12, 2016, from http://www.voltairenet.org/rubrique506.html?lang=fr.

37.Website of Nous Sommes Unis: http://noussommesunis.com/(retrieved November 12, 2016).

Despite its success within communities and much earned support by the public opinion, Prime Minister Manuel Valls denounced it on the grounds that Muslim activists, who he disagreed with, had been allowed to add their names to the list.

Valls was not alone to attack the "Nous Sommes Unis" initiative. He was joined by the traditional promoters of secular fundamentalism which range from the identitarian left (adherent of full assimilation, anticlericalism) to the far right and pro-Israeli lobbies such as the CRIF and American Jewish Committee. In a series of columns, all agreed on the exclusion of specific Muslim representatives based on the accusations of being part of the Muslim Brotherhood and being Muslim fundamentalists.

During a dinner organised by the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions (CRIF), a France-based Zionist lobbying group, Prime Minister Valls made headlines by declaring "The Observatory of *Laïcité* - which is under my responsibility - can not be anything that distorts the reality of this secularism. It must be clear about the calls that are signed: you can not sign calls, including condemning terrorism, with organizations that I consider to be participants in a (nauseating) climate, this is not possible."[38]

Commentators from the right and the left side of France's political spectrum understood this as an attack against the Muslim activists whom had signed alongside the observatory's head. Furthermore, Prime Minister Valls stood in support of Elizabeth Badinter who declared on 6 January that "One must not be afraid of being called an Islamophobe" prompting an immediate answer by the Observatory of *Laïcité* Rapporteur: "A three-year pedagogical work destroyed by an interview".

Jean Louis Bianco brought the controversy to an end by first refusing to resign as requested by Manuel Valls and his entourage, and second by standing firm and reminding the public that "there are not two versions of *laïcité*, one prior and one after Islam".[29]

Given the little action taken by the government and the highly criticised official initiatives such as that of the state's anti-racism body (DILCRA) marketed as *#TousUnisContreLaHaine* (All united against hatred), activists have turned to political autonomy and self-reliance.

Many concluded that attempts by the French state to deal with racism were not sincere enough but rather were initiated to hamper any effort by radicalised groups engaging in the activist and political arena and bringing about change by their own means.

Official responses to racism are discredited by the overwhelming majority of radicalised groups and are tagged as "moral" anti-racism, i.e. based on moral condemnation but without real enforcement of existing laws or intentions of bringing the culprits to justice.

38.LCI, "Valls s'attaque à l'Observatoire de la Laïcité et se fait rabrouer," *lci.fr*, (January 19, 2016), retrieved November 26, 2016, from http://www.lci.fr/politique/valls-sattaque-a-lobservatoire-de-la-laicite-et-se-fait-rabrouer-1502029.html.

For instance, a "decolonial camp" was setup during the summer of 2016 in order to allow Arab and African minorities to share common space, exchange ideas and experiences and learn about how the struggle against racism can be taken forward. The event, which was reserved for "racialised people only" was intended to be a platform for emancipation, self-determination and to empower those who are the daily targets of hate speech, discrimination, police brutality or structural exclusion.

## National Identity

National identity debates on the back of French Muslims have had deep and violent effects at the local and national levels. The city of Nice, which is home to one of the biggest communities of former settlers from North Africa is also a national hub for what is commonly referred to as the "Identitarian Right". Its mayor, Christian Estrosi, made headlines on multiple occasions with declarations such as "a third world war is being declared by an Islamic fifth column".[39]

Robert Menard, another mayor, this time in Béziers, burst into fame after leaving Reporters Without Borders and engaging with the far right and winning the Municipal elections of 2012.

Robert Menard had already sparked outrage in 2015 after declaring that he had established a list of all the Muslim pupils in his city - but was later acquitted. As a staunch supporter and promoter of extreme right wing ideas, his public appearances are synonymous with hostile positioning towards Muslims, immigrants and refugees.

Figure 3: The fearmongering campaign of the mayor of Béziers "The state dictates them to us, enough, they are coming, immigrants are in the centre of our cities»

In an already hostile environment, the mayor of Béziers launched his fearmongering campaign "Immigrants, they are coming" with an explicit message that Béziers, just as France as a whole, is being invaded by Blacks and Arabs.

Such refusal to welcome refugees is best expressed by France's statistics in terms of treatment of those already on French soil and facing daily harassment by the police and minors being denied proper protection. According to film-making activists Radical Cinema, the French Red Cross rejects about 9 out of 10 minors on a purely arbitrary basis.

Overall, France has welcomed less migrants or refugees than the rest of Europe by far. For instance, according to figures made available by the country's Office for the Protection of Refugees and Apatrides (OFPRA), France has welcomed only 10,000 Syrians out of the 5 million that have fled the country.

39.France 3,"Estrosi dénonce des «cinquièmes colonnes» islamistes en France,"*francetvinfo.fr*, (April 26, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/terrorisme/attentat-dejoue-a-paris/video-estrosi-denonce-des-cinquiemes-colonnes-islamistes-en-france_887303.html.

Yet, despite such low figures and an internationally known unwelcoming stance, public discourse towards migrants and refugees is ever more violent. The National Front plays the traditional leading role in terms of rejecting non-white individuals but a new level was reached when its Vice President Florian Flippot refused to condemn hate speech targeting them on social media. When asked whether he supported such racist discourse, he replied that "making French people feel guilty, is a little easy. French elites have been doing so for the past 30 years by saying 'You are racist because you refuse immigration' [...] The French are tired of being made feel guilty."[40]

Such positioning is no longer restricted to the far right. The mainstream right-wing party adopted identical positions as was expressed by its President Nicolas Sarkozy who declared that only "5% of migrants are eligible to stay in France",[41] a figure contradicted by the Minister of Housing Emmanuelle Cosse who had previously declared that "80% of the migrants are eligible for asylum".[42]

Even within the left, Prime Minister Manuel Valls declared "France's opposition" to any "permanent relocation mechanism"[43] between European countries.

The racist discourse Muslims face on a daily basis has regular platforms in public and private media outlets as much as in politics. An example of profitable Islamophobia in the media and the biased treatment of Islamophobes by the latter, is that of conservative Eric Zemmour.

After making a name for himself for holding openly Islamophobic, mysoginist and xenophobic positions on radio station RTL and through his books which regularly top France's sales, he was convicted for "incitement of hatred towards Muslims" and fined €3,000 after giving an interview to Italian daily *Courier Della Sera*.

The condemnation, along with another one that dates back to 2011 (for declaring that "most thugs are Blacks and Arabs" in 2010)[44] did not prompt news outlets to boycott him as would have been done in the case of hate speech targeting other

40.Michel Soudais, "Propos racistes sur les migrants: Florian Philippot tombe le masque," *Politis*, (October 28, 2016), retrieved November 28, 2016, from http://www.politis.fr/articles/2016/10/propos-racistes-sur-les-migrants-florian-philippot-tombe-le-masque-35678/.

41.France Télévisions,"Pour Sarkozy, seuls 5% des migrants de la «jungle» de Calais sont éligibles au droit d'asile en France,"*francetinfo.fr*, (October 24, 2016), retrieved November 24, 2016, from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/politique/les-republicains/primaire-de-la-droite/video-pour-sarkozy-seuls-5-des-migrants-de-la-jungle-de-calais-sont-eligibles-au-droit-d-asile-en-france_1888065.html.

42.FranceInfo "VIDEO. Pour Sarkozy, seuls 5% des migrants de la «jungle» de Calais sont éligibles au droit d'asile en France" (September 24, 2016), retrieved March 1st, 2017 from http://www.francetvinfo.fr/politique/les-republicains/primaire-de-la-droite/video-pour-sarkozy-seuls-5-des-migrants-de-la-jungle-de-calais-sont-eligibles-au-droit-d-asile-en-france_1888065.html

43.Radio France International,"France not favourable to Germany's refugee proposal", *fri.fr*, (February 13, 2016) retrieved December 15, 2016, from http://en.rfi.fr/france/20160213-france-not-favourable-germany-s-refugee-proposal-says-french-pm.

44.Saphirnews, "Les Noirs et les Arabes dans le viseur d'Eric Zemmour: le dérapage en video," *saphirnews.com*, (March 8, 2010), retrieved December 22, 2016, from http://www.saphirnews.com/Les-Noirs-et-les-Arabes-dans-le-viseur-d-Eric-Zemmour-le-derapage-en-video_a11228.html.

minorities. His regular employer RTL maintained him as a daily chronicler and he was welcomed on public television to promote his latest book, where he again targeted Muslims as an unwelcome minority.

The case of Eric Zemmour is far from being isolated. Several figures have kept their positions on public radio and television service while continuously feeding the general public with racist rhetoric. For instance, Alain Finkilekraut is a notorious self-proclaimed philosopher who has been feeding Islamophobia since the late eighties. The "clash of identities" within France remains his speciality. In a bestselling book *L'identité malheureuse* (The Sad Identity) published in 2011, his focus was on the inherent threat represented by Muslims to France, the impossibility for Muslims to integrate and the deep-rooted hatred of Muslims towards France's values. On top of holding a weekly radio talk show on France Culture - a public radio station - he also managed to enter the Académie Française (French Academy), the pre-eminent French council for matters pertaining to the French language. The nominations of a notorious Islamophobe to some of the most prestigious institutions in the country did not spark any controversy within the French elites.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

The Coordination Against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI) has been one of the oldest organisations dealing with the specific issue of Islamophobia. Given the current climate of post terror attacks and normalised Islamophobia, a

A number of public meetings have been held in 2016 in order to denounce and hold the government responsible for not doing enough. The *Association de Lutte Contre Le Racisme et l'Islamophobie* (ALCIR) organised their fall meeting in the aftermath of the burkini scandal and the participants, from sociologist Said Bouamama to the Teacher's Collective for the Repeal of the 2004 Law (*Collectif des Enseignants pour l'Abrogation de la Loi de 2004*), have drawn the same picture of structural racism that can only be faced with further mobilisation from grass-roots organisations and a distancing from mainstream ones.

On the other hand, student organisations have been mobilised with a series of lectures being held despite state censorship – as at the University of Evry, for example, where a conference on police brutality and Islamophobia was canceled.

For instance, students at the Institute for Political Studies (Sciences PO) organised a hijab day[45] in order to deconstruct the permanent demonisation of headscarf-wearing women. Although criticised by the traditional promoters of Islamophobia, the initiative received rather positive welcome and raised questions on the

45.Elvire Camus, "Hijab Day à Sciences Po: «Je ne pensais pas que c'était à ce point électrique»," *Le Monde*, (April 20, 2016), retrieved December 21, 2016, from http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2016/04/20/le-hijab-day-organise-a-sciences-po-pour-sensibiliser-sur-le-voile-divise_4905430_3224.html.

structural exclusion in France of Muslims wearing a headscarf. The initiative was launched in reaction to the Minister for Women's Rights Laurence Rossignol who declared that veiled Muslim women were comparable to "American Negroes who were in favour of slavery".[46]

Farhad Khosrokhavar, Director of Studies at the EHESS (School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences) had previously declared "We have chosen to demonise the Muslim headscarf".[47] Students replied to Prime Minister Valls's willingness to ban the headscarf in universities, with the hashtag *#VraisProblemesUniversite*[48] (Real Problems in Universities) in order to denounce his focusing on headscarves at the expense of addressing the lack of means and equipment at universities.

The European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion (EMISCO) based in Strasbourg has been acting to bring the Islamophobia question before international institutions such as the OSCE HDIM meeting of 2016[49] but also to offer a platform for activists to face the French government in what can be described as rare opportunities to confront policy makers face to face. Along with a coalition of European NGOs including ENAR, FEMYSO and EFOM, EMISCO is engaged in current talks with David Friggieri, the European Commission's coordinator against anti-Muslim hatred.[50]

The Council for Justice Equality and Peace (COJEP) launched its "National Conference on Islamophobia"[51] which aims to become a platform for activists and organisations alike and to further mobilise stakeholders at the grass-roots level.

The online counter-attack is probably the most aggressive and the most visible one so far. Several alternative information websites have been launched with the publicly announced objective of giving voice to the voiceless, deconstructing the myth of the domestic enemy and further normalising the presence of Muslims as full-fledged citizens.

46.Gaëlle Dupont "Les propos de Laurence Rossignol comparant le voile à l'esclavage soulèvent un tollé, Le Monde, (March 31, 2106) retrieved March 1, 2017 from http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2016/03/31/laurence-rossignol-les-negres-et-le-voile_4892777_3224.html

47.Emilie Lanez, "En France, "on a choisi de diaboliser le foulard islamique»," *Le Point*, (January 12, 2016), retrieved December 22, 2016, from http://www.lepoint.fr/politique/en-france-on-a-choisi-de-diaboliser-le-foulard-islamique-12-01-2016-2009177_20.php.

48.Emilie Millez, "#VraisProblemesUniversite, la réplique des étudiants aux propos de Valls sur le voile," *Le Monde*, (April 14, 2016), retrieved December 22, 2016, from http://www.lemonde.fr/campus/article/2016/04/14/vraisproblemesuniversite-la-replique-des-etudiants-aux-propos-de-valls-sur-le-voile_4902223_4401467.html.

49.European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion (EMISCO), "EMISCO's recommendations for Working Session 12,"*Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe*, (October 3, 2016), retrieved October 3, 2016, from http://www.osce.org/odihr/271311.

50.European Commission, "EU Commission appoints Coordinators on combating antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred," *ec.europa.eu*, (December 1, 2015), retrieved December 21, 2016, from http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/fundamental-rights/news/151201_en.htm.

51.COJEP, "Les assises contre l'islamophobie," *cojep.fr*, (November 12, 2016), retrieved December 10, 2016, from http://cojep.fr/conference-les-assises-contre-lislamophobie-lyondecines/.

In response to their constant demonisation by the media and the subsequent attacks, French mosques organised a national "Open Mosque Day" in order to invite people of other faiths and worldviews to visit, meet religious staff, answer questions and dispel any doubt on what happens inside mosques and on the nature of their mission. Abdembi El Hamraoui, imam of the Colomiers Mosque for 17 years, declared to the *Provence* daily "All those who want to know Islam better are welcome. Bringing people together overcomes psychosis".[52]

Launched by journalist Nadia Henni Moulaï, alternative news website Meltingbook.com aims at being "a counter-voice" and a platform for "inspiring profiles, accomplishments for the youth and a counter-discourse to French mainstream media".[53] In a similar segment but rather focused on more political topics and by being engaged in promoting the "halal way of life beyond the meat consumption question",[54] LeMuslimPost.com is already registering 1 million visitors per day and aims at becoming the number one online media for French Muslim-related questions.

Another website is becoming a central reference in terms of mosque-related news. According to its founder, Brahim Zardoua, Domes & Minarets was launched in order to deconstruct "their [Muslims'] frightening image in public opinion, because of disinformation and propaganda from fascists." With 2017 approaching, the founder wants to "develop Domes & Minarets by making it a little more generalist to cover as widely as possible French Muslim- related news".[55]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Tackling Islamophobia is bound to be a long and tenuous road. We hence recommend that the French state meets its obligation to protect human rights and civil liberties by:

- Lifting the state of emergency.
- Banning the use of white papers which have no legal ground but are still used to violate fundamental rights under the pretext of the war on terror.
- Implementing *laïcité* and a strict separation between the state and religious affairs. The French state must stop interfering in Muslim affairs but rather, be a facilitator for Muslims to build mosques that will be autonomous and fully controlled by the community.
- Launch a nationwide assessment on the effects of the 2004 headscarf ban on the girls who had to stop going to public school and on the girls who are obliged to take their headscarves off before entering school buildings.

52.La Dépêche, "La mosquée n'a rien à cacher," *ladepeche.fr*, (February 24, 2016), retrieved December 10, 2016, from http://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2016/02/24/2283206-la-mosquee-n-a-rien-a-cacher.html.

53.Interview with Nadia Henni Moulaï (December 24, 2016).

54.Interview with Frederic Gheldof (December 24, 2016).

55.Interview with Brahim Zardoua (December 25, 2016).

- Repeal the 2004 ban on the Muslim headscarf.
- Repeal the 2010 full-face veil ban which was deemed unconstitutional as such but passed on security grounds.
- Repeal the Chatel Ministerial Circular banning veiled Muslim pupil mothers from attending school fieldtrips.
- Assess the effects of the state of emergency on the innocent people who have been unjustly targeted.
- Update the 1972 law on discrimination and include Islamophobia.
- Train state employees, especially magistrates, law enforcement, education and social services personel on the realities of Islamophobia and on their duty to tackle it.
- Implement the training of public servants (especially those of the Ministry of Justice, law enforcement and the Ministry of Education) to the realities of Islamophobia and its effects on individuals as well as national cohesion.
- End payment of state subsidies to news outlets promoting Islamophobia.
- Empower victims of Islamophobia through state-supported class actions against discrimination or hate speech.
- Put pressure on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in order to effectively tackle hate speech targeting Muslims.
- Update schoolbooks in order to include the historic contribution of the Muslim community to France.
- Prosecute companies found guilty of discrimination.

# Chronology

### January

- **01/1/16:** Vitrolles Mosque files lawsuit after arson attempt.
  - Man attacks military personnel stationed before the Valence Mosque.
- **06/1/16:** Elizabeth Badinter states "One shouldn't be afraid of being called an Islamophobe".
- **07/1/16:** Pig legs are thrown inside the mosque of Perpignan.
- **09/1/16:** Mayor of Beaucaire is sued for demanding that shops close their doors after 11pm. The measure targeted Muslim-owned shops.
- **10/1/16:** Satire show "Groland" issues a video mocking former rapper and Muslim convert Diam's for wearing the hijab: "I f-ck you under my niqab".
- **13/1/16:** Senate holds hearing on the "Organization, establishment and funding of Islam in France and its places of worship".
  - A boar head is thrown inside a mosque in Corsica.
  - Minister of Interior dissolves 3 Muslim organisations in Lagny sur Marne.
- **19/1/16:** Minister of Interior Bernard Cazeneuve states "Anti-Muslim acts have tripled and reached 400 for the year 2015" - this only includes lawsuits and

declarations to the police, not administrative disputes such as discrimination.
- Three children are assaulted and racially insulted by the parent of a schoolmate who threatens to kick the door down while their parents are away.
- Racist graffiti on the Blois Mosque.

- **28/1/16:** A court acquits the murderer of a Muslim man in 2015 after declaring him "irresponsible".

### February

- **01/2/16**: The French Human Rights League publishes a renewed text calling for canceling the constitutional reform which includes the stripping of citizenship of binational citizens convicted of acts of terror and a permanent state of emergency.
- **02/2/16:** The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights publishes its report on racism.
- **09/2/16:** Minister of Interior Bernard Cazeneuve recognises the police's wrong-doing while raiding the Aubervilliers Mosque.
  - A Muslim mother is assaulted in front her son's school.

### March

- Minister of Interior Bernard Cazeneuve declares that he is in favour of schools giving classes on religion in the region of Alsace-Lorraine.

### May

- **01/5/16:** The French Human Rights League holds a commemoration for Brahim Bouarram who was thrown into the Seine River by National Front militants and killed.

### June

- **30/6/16:** Elderly Muslim verbally and physically assaulted in the city of Rouen.

### July

- **14/7/16:** Truck attack in Nice.
- **26/7/16:** A priest is murdered in the town of Saint Etienne du Rouvray.

### August

- **16/8/16:** IFOP Survey entitled "How Catholics Perceive Islam".

### October

- **3/9/16:** The Observatory of *Laïcité* publishes its reminder of what is and what is not legal under the French secular law.
- **13/3/16:** IFOP Survey on the place given to Islam in public debates and the presidential campaign.

## November

- Gilles Kepel publishes the lengthy article "La Gauche et l'Islam" in which he accuses the left of being too friendly towards Islam.
- The head of one of France's oldest anti-racist organisations (LICRA) expresses his opposition to using "Islamophobia" as a term and denies its existence as such; he claims "It is a sham".

## December

- **17/12/16:** Chateau Thierry Mosque is targeted by arsonists.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN GERMANY NATIONAL REPORT 2016

ALEKSANDRA LEWICKI

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# Executive Summary

The year 2016 stands for several concerning developments in Germany. Germany experienced its first series of successful terrorist attacks by supporters of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (DAESH). The salience of anti-Muslim racist discourses and practices has reached an unprecedented scale.

Anti-Muslim sentiments are supported by roughly half of the population in Germany. It has become apparent that a significant proportion of about 20% are now also prepared to translate these views into political action. The right-wing populist party, *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), whose political leadership explicitly mobilised around Islamophobic sentiments in 2016, parachuted into five regional parliaments, achieving between 12 and 24% of the vote. Furthermore, a quarter of the population in former East and former West Germany approve the political agenda of the social movement PEGIDA ('Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident'), with several marches each week across the country. The number of violent attacks against refugee shelters, which quadrupled in 2015, remained at an alarming peak in 2016. Seventeen assaults per week were registered by the authorities, and an average of thirty-seven attacks per week was reported in local media.

Just as other group biases that are salient in a society at a time, Islamophobia is – often unintentionally – reproduced through institutional processes in various areas of public life. This report discusses quantitative and qualitative evidence for systematic patterns of both direct and indirect structural discrimination in the German labour market, the education and criminal justice systems, as well as within print and social media. Diverse datasets in these areas indicate either persistence or an increase in differential treatment of Muslims and individuals who do not necessarily self-describe as Muslim, but are perceived by others as belonging to the Islamic faith.

The trends outlined in this report are expected to significantly impact on the election campaigns and the outcomes of the German national election in 2017.

# Zusammenfassung

Das Jahr 2016 steht für eine Reihe besorgniserregender Entwicklungen in Deutschland. Zum ersten Mal wurde eine Serie von Anschlägen von Unterstützern des „Islamischen Staates im Iraq und Levant" (DAESH) erfolgreich durchgeführt. Zudem hat die Salienz antimuslimischer rassistischer Diskurse und Praktiken ein bisher unbekanntes Ausmaß erreicht.

Islamfeindliche Einstellungen finden bei der Hälfte der Bevölkerung Unterstützung. In 2016 wurde deutlich, dass ca. 20 % dieser Personen nun auch bereit ist, diese Haltung in ihrer Wahlentscheidung auszudrücken. Die rechtspopulistische Partei Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), deren politische Führungsriege in 2016 explizit mit islamfeindlichen Aussagen mobilisierte, erzielte in Regionalwahlen zwischen 12 und 24 Prozent der Stimmen, woraufhin sie in fünf Länderparlamente einzog. Ein Viertel der Bevölkerung in den neuen und alten Bundesländern unterstützt zudem die Ziele der Protestbewegung PEGIDA („Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes"). In 2016 gab es pro Woche mehrere Demonstrationen dieser oder ähnlicher Gruppierungen. Die Zahl fremdenfeindlicher Anschläge auf Unterkünfte für Geflüchtete, die sich in 2015 im Vergleich zu den Vorjahren vervierfacht hatte, blieb 2016 auf einem ähnlich alarmierend hohen Niveau: öffentliche Statistiken sprechen von einem deutschlandweiten Durchschnitt von 17 Anschlägen pro Woche, während eine Auswertung von Berichten in Lokalzeitungen sogar einen Durchschnitt von 37 Angriffen pro Woche verzeichnet.

Institutionelle Abläufe schreiben – häufig unbeabsichtigt – Islamfeindlichkeit, wie auch andere zeitgenössische Formen der Voreingenommenheit, in verschiedenen Lebensbereichen fort. Der vorliegende Bericht diskutiert den quantitativen und qualitativen Wissensbestand zur Manifestation von direkter und indirekter struktureller Diskriminierung im deutschen Arbeitsmarkt, dem Bildungssystem, dem Rechtssystem wie auch in der Berichterstattung in den Print- und Sozialen Medien. Die Datenlage in diesen Bereichen des öffentlichen Lebens verdeutlicht entweder einen Fortbestand oder sogar eine Zunahme der Ungleichbehandlung von Menschen, in deren Selbstbeschreibung Zugehörigkeit zum Islam eine Rolle spielt, oder die von anderen als Muslime wahrgenommen werden.

Es ist zu erwarten, dass die in diesem Bericht ausgeführten sozialen Entwicklungen den Wahlkampf und den Ausgang der Wahlen zum deutschen Bundestag im Herbst 2017 nachhaltig beeinflussen werden.

# Introduction

Anti-Muslim racism is not a novel phenomenon in Germany. Generalised, derogatory and Orientalist depictions of Islamic populations can be traced back to Germany's colonial history and beyond.[1] Contemporary manifestations of anti-Muslim racism have become particularly salient in German public debates in the 21st century. Anti-Muslim tropes, as this report will show, currently gain mainstream approval to the degree that Islamophobia has become the most commonplace expression of racist prejudice in Germany. And while xenophobic sentiments are not novel either,[2] there is now considerable evidence that a growing proportion of the population in Germany not only holds these views, but is prepared to translate them into multiple forms of political action. This report will sketch the events and trends of 2016, give evidence of the notable rise in Islamophobic attitudes and practices, and sketch how structural and everyday anti-Muslim racism is reproduced in key areas of public life, including education, employment, politics, the media or the criminal justice system.

# Significant Incidents and Developments

The content of anti-Muslim tropes can currently be traced most prominently in the public debate that emerged in response to the human rights crisis at the European border. This crisis had reached one of its climaxes in September 2015, when the German government agreed to receive an additional 800,000 refugees from Syria. Faced with the choice to either reintroduce heavily policed border controls in post-Schengen Europe, or to suspend the Dublin regulations temporarily, Chancellor Merkel decided for the latter. This initiative was very much ad hoc and constituted an emergency response that had been negotiated with the Hungarian and Austrian political leadership. The German government subsequently argued that a higher intake of Syrian refugees not only reflected the international humanitarian commitment of one of Europe's wealthiest countries, but was also instrumental in helping to close demographic shortages in specific sectors of the labour market, such as, for instance, the provision of care for older people. While Chancellor Merkel's liberal response to the humanitarian crisis at the European border turned out to be unique within Europe, it certainly was responsive to the receptive social climate in Germany at the time.

In 2016, unprecedented levels of hands-on volunteering, assistance and political support for the settlement of Syrian refugee communities in Germany continued. However, the political debate around the social consequences of Chancellor Merkel's refugee policy also mobilised high levels of critique and political protest. This issue

1. Iman Attia, *Die ‚Westliche Kultur' und ihr Anderes. Zur Dekonstruktion von Orientalismus und antimuslimischem Rassismus*(Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009); Yasemin Shooman, *'…weil ihre Kultur so ist' Narrative des anti-muslimischen Rassismus* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014).

2.Oliver Decker/Johannes Kiess/Elmar Brähler (eds.), *Die enthemmte Mitte. Die Leipziger Mitte Studie 2016* (Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag, 2016).

continues to polarise German society, which also found expression in the reactions to the events of 2016. The beginning and the end of the year thereby stood out in terms of public and media attention.

The New Year's celebrations in 2015/2016 marked a tensing of the atmosphere. Women attending public festivities in several German cities, most prominently Cologne, were subject to a series of violent assaults including theft, sexual attacks and rape. Public debates immediately connected these events to the ongoing discussion on immigration from Muslim-majority countries, and new arrivals from Syria were alleged responsible before any arrests had taken place.[3] Arbitrary depictions of the perpetrators as 'Muslim men' maintained a discursive link between the events and immigration policy, notably hardening anti-Muslim prejudice.

The polarisation became also noticeable when the Southern German states of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg experienced a series of violent attacks in July 2016, two of which were attributed to supporters of the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (DAESH). A teenager wounded five people on a train in Würzburg, and a man in his twenties whose asylum claim had been rejected, blew himself up outside a music event in Ansbach injuring 15 people. Both had been radicalised via the Internet, obtaining guidance and advice from DAESH online. The other cases involved a teenager who killed nine people in a mass-shooting in a shopping centre in Munich, and another man in his twenties who killed a woman in a domestic argument in Reutlingen. The public debate focused largely on the relevance or irrelevance of the perpetrator's links to or origin in Muslim-majority countries, and Chancellor Angela Merkel's receptiveness of refugees was subject to heightened critique.

Towards the end of the year, in December 2016, this debate resurfaced, when a 17-year-old man raped and stabbed a woman in a park in Freiburg. As with the discussion staged in summer, there was a controversy as to whether the Afghan refugee's cultural background was accountable for the crime. This perspective rests on a racialisation of violent behaviour which is constructed as more 'intrinsic' to Islamic cultures. Political party representatives from the Christian Social Union (CSU) of Bavaria and the *Alternative für Deutschland*, the AfD, reproduced this assumption in their narration of the incident as a direct outcome of immigration from Muslim-majority countries.

Finally, the year came to a mournful conclusion when an attack was launched against the Christmas market on Berlin's Breitscheidplatz, whereby 12 visitors were killed and 53 people wounded by a lorry that crashed into the stalls. Before anything

3. 183 individuals were subsequently arrested in connection with the mob violence. They were of varying formal status, including 73 applicants for asylum, 36 not formally legalised individuals, and 11 with a residence permit; the majority was of North-African origin, thus from refugee communities who due to the attention on Syrian refugees hardly had a chance to obtain asylum in Germany (55 were of Moroccan, 53 of Algerian, 22 of Iraqi, 14 of German, and 14 of Syrian origin), see M. Amjahid/C. Fuchs/V. Guinan-Bank/A. Kunze/S. Lebert/S. Mondial/D. Müller/Y. Musharbash/M. Nejezchleba/S. Rieth,"Was geschah wirklich?," *Zeitmagazin*, Nr. 27, 23.06.2016.

was known about the political background of the attack, or the victims had been identified, the event was instrumentalised for political purposes: Markus Pretzell of the AfD spoke of 'Merkel's dead' on Twitter, and CSU party leader and Bavarian Prime Minister Horst Seehofer demanded 'reconsidering the entirety of our immigration and security policies'.[4] Upon raiding the refugee accommodation in Berlin's former airport Tempelhof, the Police admitted that the Pakistani refugee who they had arrested on the spot was innocent. With considerable delay, DAESH claimed responsibility for the attack. The man whose DNA was subsequently found in the driver's cabin turned out to have held a criminal record in Tunisia, Italy and Germany, and had been under the security services' watch for a good chunk of time. The public debate that followed rehearsed a series of by then well-known generalisations that directly link current immigration policy to rising levels of violence: 'Why would Europe, most notably Germany, admit hundreds of thousands of people who originate from backward, paternalistic, partly pre-enlightened regions to our high-end society? Why do we saddle ourselves with people who have been brutalised and traumatised, who are likely to suffer from a cultural shock, repulsion and religious radicalisation upon their arrival?'[5] Typically, this 'us vs. them' narrative reproduces perceptions of a sense of superiority and cultural inclination to non-violent behaviour of those who formally are members of German society; refugees, in contrast, are stereotyped as originating in less civilised parts of the world, on which grounds they are attributed a higher propensity to delinquency.

Thus, several of the events in 2016, notably the individuals who acted in the name of DAESH in July, as well as those involved in the attack on the Berlin Christmas market in December, constituted a sad novelty in that they marked the first successful series of terrorist acts in Germany. What they have in common with the number of not explicitly politically motivated incidents of violence, such as the rampage of Munich or the murder of Freiburg, is that any of these developments triggered a knee-jerk discussion of the appropriateness of the current government's receptiveness of refugees, which is underpinned by unsustainable and stigmatising assumptions about cultural drivers of violence.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

An arson attack on a mosque and verbal abuse directed at Dresden's major Dirk Hilbert and Chancellor Angela Merkel during the national celebrations of Germany's reunification in Dresden attracted high levels of public attention in October 2016. These instances reflect an alarming broader trend, namely the high currency

4. S. Braun/N. Fried/C. Gammelin/W. Wittl, "Konjunktiv einer Katastrophe," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21.12.2016.

5. J. Bittner, "Das Gegenteil von Dankbarkeit," *Die Zeit*, 25.12.2016. (Translated by the author)

of anti-Muslim hatred-inspired political action in 2016. Compared to the events described in the previous section, and apart from singular instances such as the national celebrations in Dresden, anti-Muslim racist political violence, despite its weekly occurrence across the country, hardly receives related levels of media coverage, and does not stimulate speculations about a 'cultural proneness' to violence.

Pronouncedly Islamophobic social movements, such as the 'Patriotric Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident', which have gained prominence within the local movement of PEGIDA in Dresden, retained their prominence in 2016. They mobilised particularly successfully in the context of the events of New Year's Eve and the terrorist attacks of July and December. In the first half of 2016, public authorities noted 129 Islamophobic marches across the country,[6] which adds up to an average of 3 – 4 demonstrations per week. PEGIDA in Dresden, as well as its less well-known offshoots such as MAGIDA in Magdeburg, LEGIDA in Leipzig, BÄRGIDA in Berlin, HAGIDA in Hannover, KÖGIDA in Cologne, DÜGIDA in Düsseldorf, BOGIDA in Bonn to just name a few, appeal to mainstream milieus within the local population, many of whom have not previously turned up to right-wing extremist gatherings.[7] Despite these movements' local focus, survey data shows that the aims of Dresden's PEGIDA are supported by about a quarter of the German population across the country.[8] Research has also established links between the endorsement of a movement like PEGIDA and approval of violence for political means.[9] Participants of PEGIDA and related marches have also been charged for physical attacks on mosques and refugee shelters.

The disproportionate rise of violent assaults directed at asylum shelters or Islamic worship facilities that was noted in 2015 remains at an alarming peak in 2016. The Federal Criminal Police Office (*Bundeskriminalamt*, BKA) had registered 199 violent attacks on asylum shelters in 2014. By 2015, the number of attacks quadrupled to 1,031. This trend continued in 2016, when 921 attacks were officially recorded by December.[10] The Amadeu-Antonio Foundation that documents right-

6. Welt.de, "Weniger Angriffe auf Moscheen und Muslime in Deutschland," *Die Welt*, (August4.2016), retrieved January 9, 2016, from https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article157480290/Weniger-Angriffe-auf-Moscheen-und-Muslime-in-Deutschland.html.

7. Gudrun Hentges, "Pegida – Deus ex Machina?" Karim Fereidooni/Meral El (eds.), *Rassismuskritik und Widerstandsformen* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), p. 689-708; Alexander Häusler/Jan Schedler, "Neue Formen einer flüchtlingsfeindlichen sozialen Bewegung von rechts," Aleksandra Lewicki (ed.), Bürgerschaft in Europa: Grenzziehungen und soziale Bewegungen in der Einwanderungsgesellschaft, *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (2016), p. 11-20.

8. O. Decker/J. Kiess/E. Eggers/E. Brähler, "Die ‚Mitte' Studie 2016: Methode, Ergebnisse und Langzeitverlauf," O. Decker/J. Kiess/E. Brähler (eds.), *Die enthemmte Mitte. Die Leipziger Mitte Studie 2016* (Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag, 2016), p. 64.

9. A. Yendell/O. Decker/E. Brähler, "Wer unterstützt Pegida und was erklärt die Zustimmung zu den Zielen der Bewegung?," O. Decker/J. Kiess/E. Brähler (eds.), *Die enthemmte Mitte. Die Leipziger Mitte Studie 2016* (Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag, 2016), p. 150.

10. "BKA Statistik: Mehr als 900 Angriffe auf Flüchtlingsheime," *Tagesschau*, 28.12.2016.

wing extremist violence reported in national but also local media, counted 1,963 attacks directed at refugees and accommodation facilities in 2016, 102 of which were arson strikes. These figures add up to an average of 17 violent assaults per week that have been registered by the authorities, and an overall of 37 of attacks per week reported by local media.

Violent assaults against Muslim worship facilities had risen from 23 to 75 in 2015. In 2016, the Federal Criminal Police Office accounted for 91 attacks directed at mosques in Germany, which suggests an average of one to two attacks per week.[11] According to Muslim associations in Germany, many assaults remain unreported, which means the actual number of incidents may be even higher. These figures do also not include hate crimes against individuals, which are not systematically documented.

Anti-Muslim attitudes do not only find expression in right-wing populist Islamophobic marches and extremist political violence, they have also reached a concerning level of support among the mainstream population in Germany. Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess and Elmar Brähler's representative 'Mitte' studies (centre studies), that have been conducted every other year since 2002, draw a detailed picture of the German population's approval of nationalist, chauvinistic and xenophobic views. In their most recent edition of this research, Decker, Kiess and Brähler note a very modest rise in this attitude set across the country; however, they find a notable strengthening of focus onto hostility towards asylum applicants and Muslims.[12] In 2016, every other person, thus 50% of the population, 'felt like a stranger in their own country due to the large number of Muslims', while 40% would 'prohibit Muslim immigration to Germany'.[13]

Such hostile attitudes towards Islam, the 2016 study shows, directly account for the support of the right-wing populist party AfD, *Alternative für Deutschland*, or of social movements like PEGIDA: 85.9% of those who said they felt like a stranger in their own country due to the high Muslim presence, and 80.3% of those who want to prohibit Muslim immigration to Germany, also stated that they would vote for the AfD. Similarly, 80% of those respondents who supported the aims of PEGIDA also scored highly on the two Islamophobia items.[14]

Thus, quantitative surveys show that anti-Muslim racist attitudes appeal to a growing number of the population in Germany; a significant amount of those who

11. Deutscher Bundestag, 18. Wahlperiode, Drucksache 18/9310, Antwort der Bundesregierung, 01.08.2016, Bundesministerium des Inneren, Schriftliche Fragen Monat Januar 2017, retrieved February 2, 2017 from http://www.monika-lazar.de/fileadmin/user_upload/dokumente/schriftlichefragen/AW_SF_168_169.pdf.

12. O. Decker/E. Brähler, "Vorwort," O. Decker/J. Kiess/E. Brähler (eds.), *Die enthemmte Mitte. Die Leipziger Mitte Studie 2016* (Gießen: Psychosozial Verlag, 2016), p. 8.

13. In 2014, these items were at 43% and 36.6% respectively. Decker, Kiess, Eggers and Brähler 2016, p. 49.

14. The data indicates overlapping concerns between AfD and PEGIDA, in that the AfD is the most popular party among those who support PEGIDA, while 70% of AfD voters also supported PEGIDA. A. Yendell et al. 2016, p. 140.

hold Islamophobic opinions, the data also indicates, are now prepared to translate their views into political action, for instance by voting for a political party, supporting social movements and in some cases even justifying political violence that focuses specifically on this issue. However, as the following sections will discuss, Islamophobia not only finds expression in explicit political choices, demonstrations and extremist violence. Just as other group biases that are salient in society at a time, it is also – often unintentionally – reproduced through institutional processes in various areas of public life.

## Employment

Compared to other European contexts, we have less systematic knowledge about discrimination in the German labour market. A 2010 study into discrimination on grounds of ascribed Islamic religiosity and an 2013 evaluation of unequal treatment in the labour market by the Federal Antidiscrimination Agency (*Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes*, ADS) both highlighted the lack of officially collected representative datasets on religious affiliation which posed an obstacle to tracing patterns of discrimination beyond selective qualitative case studies.[15] These studies indicated that individuals who are perceived as Muslims tend to find themselves in a particularly disadvantaged position in the labour market, especially in comparison to other post-migration population groups. Both evidence bases point to a tendency among employers to attribute lower abilities to Muslim applicants, as well as a prevailing disinclination to employ hijab-wearing Muslim women. Both studies relied, among other sources, on the number of discrimination cases reported to the Federal Antidiscrimination Agency as well as to regional and local Discrimination Advice Agencies. More recent figures indicate that the number of complaints in relation to anti-Muslim discrimination in the labour market has further increased in recent years, at least in large cities such as Berlin.[16]

A representative survey of 5,000 individuals with migration experience collected by the Institute for Employment Research (*Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung*, IAB) showed that respondents from Muslim-majority countries report significantly higher levels of discrimination experiences in comparison to respondents from European Union member states.[17] Unfortunately, the novel dataset generated by this study hardly remedies the aforementioned data gaps, as it largely focuses on the effect of language skills or professional qualification on labour market mobility,

15. M. Peucker, *Diskriminierung aufgrund der islamischen Religionszugehörigkeit im Kontext Arbeitsleben – Erkenntnisse, Fragen und Handlungsempfehlungen* (Berlin: Antidiskriminierungstelle des Bundes, 2010). *Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, Diskriminierung im Bildungsbereich und Arbeitsleben* (Berlin: Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes, 2013).

16. *Antidiskriminierungsnetzwerk Berlin des TBB, Antidiskriminierungsreport 2014 – 2015* (Berlin: ADNB, 2016).

17. I. Tucci/ P. Eisnecker/ H. Brücker, "Wie zufrieden sind Migranten mit ihrem Leben?," *IAB Kurzbericht* (Nürnberg: Institut für Arbeitsmarkt und Berufsforschung, 2014).

while discrimination figures as self-reported indicator of life satisfaction. Systematic disadvantages such as the ethnic or religious penalty, which have been documented for other European contexts, remain unaccounted for, not least due to deficits in official data collection.[18]

A 2016 correspondence testing study closed some of these knowledge gaps by offering representative evidence of the occurrence of discrimination against Muslim women in the labour market. Weichselbaumer investigated the effects of discrimination on multiple grounds such as ethnic origin and Islamic religiosity.[19] 1,474 responses to comparable announcements of vacancies in white-collar office jobs were sent out, including to adverts for positions requiring lower, higher and management skills. All applications contained a picture of the same model. In one third of the applications, the woman had a German name, in the second third she had a Turkish name but did not wear a hijab, while in the final third she was given the same Turkish name and wore a hijab. The hijab was tied in a modern binding that did not cover her throat to suggest she 'was not particularly strict with her religion'. The experiment revealed that the veiled candidate had to send 4.5 as many applications as the same woman with a German name and identical qualifications.[20] The applicant with the Turkish name but no hijab was consistently by 5-6 points less successful in her efforts, while the veiled candidate was 15% less likely to be invited to a job interview. The difference was even more significant across different occupations: applying for a management role, the applicant wearing explicitly Islamic garments had to send 7.6 times as many applications as the candidate with the German name. Weichselbaumer's study verified that veiled women faced significant discrimination in the German labour market, and that Islamic religious attire is apparently particularly likely to be considered inappropriate for roles of higher occupational status.

Beyond the way in which Islamophobic attitudes underpin systematic biases in recruitment decisions, there is also evidence of regional and sector-specific institutional discrimination. In Berlin, for example, public servants employed in the education or the criminal justice system are legally bound to refrain from publicly displaying religious symbols, which discriminates against veiled Muslim women and effectively imposes a ban of these occupations on those who consider the wearing of a hijab as an expression of their religiosity. Anti-discrimination agencies highlight

18. See also: Linda Supik, "Statistik und Diskriminierung," Albert Scherr (ed.), *Handbuch Diskriminierung* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2017).

19. D. Weichselbaumer, "*Discrimination against female migrants wearing headscarves,*" IZA Discussion Paper 10217 (Bonn: Institute of Labour Economics, 2016).

20. The applicant with the German name received positive feedback from 18.8 % of the companies she applied to; the applicant with the Turkish name without a headscarf was contacted by 13.5 % of the employers; and the woman wearing a hijab received 4.2% positive resonance. Ibid., p. 12.

that the ban has a normative spill-over effect on other sectors of the labour market, as employers openly reject hijab-wearing women's applications, even if the job profile is outside the law's remit.[21]

Another example is a national legal barrier within the welfare sector. A significant proportion of health and social care services are provided by the two main Christian Churches' welfare organisations, Caritas and Diakonie. Together the Christian Churches therefore constitute the second largest employer (after the state) in Germany. They successfully lobbied for the inclusion of Article 9 into the General Equal Treatment Act (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz*, AGG), which allows them to discriminate on grounds such as religion in the entirety of their employment practices, including in professions that do not involve the propagation of faith.[22] This legal discrimination privilege constitutes a significant obstacle for health practitioners of non-Christian faith, especially in locations where Christian faith-based organisations offer the only available employment in this line of work. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed its concern about the indirect discriminatory effect of Article 9 AGG on groups such as Muslims, who are currently particularly affected by discrimination.[23] This constellation is aggravated in that Germany faces considerable labour shortages in the care sector due to its current demographic 'ageing'. The German government, as well as the Christian welfare organisations have therefore taken to financially supporting targeted programmes to further qualify recently arriving refugees to work in senior care. Those who decide to pursue such a career are likely to experience difficulties in accessing suitable employment or will be unable to progress to leadership positions in faith-based organisations.

In summary, there is considerable evidence for systematic patterns of both direct and indirect discrimination in the German labour market, which, due to the salience of anti-Muslim stereotypes particularly affects Muslim communities and whose who may be perceived as belonging to the Islamic faith. There is a need for further qualitative and especially quantitative research into discrimination on grounds of actual or perceived Muslim religiosity; for instance, we need to know more about its dynamics within different sectors of the labour market, and learn about the gender variation of the bias.

21. „Antidiskriminierungsnetzwerk Berlin des TBB", p. 14. See also: Y.Shooman, "Wie neutral ist das Berliner Neutralitätsgesetz?" in IQ (ed.), *Alles schon fair? Mit Recht zu einem inklusiven Arbeitsmarkt* (München: Fachstelle Interkulturelle Kompetenzentwicklung und Antidiskriminierung, 2016), p. 59.

22.Aleksandra Lewicki, "Das Christentum als kulturelle Wiege der Demokratie und Gleichbehandlung? Die deutschen Kirchen und das Allgemeine Gleichbehandlungsgesetzes (AGG),"*Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegungen*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2015), p. 122-129.

23. Institut für Menschenrechte, Vereinte Nationen Ausschuss zur Beseitigung von Rassendiskriminierung, Schlussbemerkungen zu 19. Und 22. Staatenberichten der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, (not dated), retrieved January 6, 2017, from http://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF-Dateien/Pakte_Konventionen/ICERD/icerd_state_report_germany_19-22_2013_CoObs_2015_de.pdf.

## Education

The German education system continues to be subject to critique regarding the discriminatory effects of several of its structural features. Research has highlighted that socially dominant stereotypes were particularly likely to influence opportunities of access to education, mechanisms of assessment, or transition to secondary schooling. The Federal Antidiscrimination Agency's triennial report, for instance, indicated that that the capacities and achievements of Muslim girls who wore the hijab were frequently underestimated in school and higher education settings.[24] The current legal situation too is not satisfactory in that the German Equal Treatment Act does not offer protection from discrimination in education.

The German Institute for Human Rights has recently shown that, if adopted, International Human Rights laws offer some legal protection from discrimination. It published a research report in 2016 that further elaborated on the institutional reproduction of salient forms of discrimination in the German education system, specifying structural barriers impeding the availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability of education under conditions of growing ethnic and religious diversity.[25] The study recommended a more explicit anchoring of equal treatment within educational procedures, the curriculum or teacher training.

Research into the content of curricula has demonstrated that German schoolbooks predominantly contained negative depictions of Muslims, which involved distancing attributes such 'strange', 'premodern', 'traditional' etc., that reinforce perceptions of inferiority and otherness.[26] The Federal Commissioner for Immigration, Refugees and Integration, Aydan Özoğuz, published a study in 2016 that confirmed these findings.[27] Focusing particularly on narratives of migration and integration, the study noted that immigration as well as the Islamic religion tended to be depicted as a problem, e.g. as a source of conflict.[28] Instances in which the Muslim minority's right to exercise their religion is contested are narrated as 'conflicts emanating from the Islamic faith', including the 'hijab controversy', local resistance to mosque building plans or Islamic holidays. The study also found that discrimination, racism or structural barriers found hardly any mention in German schoolbooks.

24. "Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes 2013", p. 16.

25. M. Niendorf/S. Reitz, *Das Menschenrecht auf Bildung im deutschen Schulsystem. Was zum Abbau von Diskriminierung notwendig ist* (Berlin: Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte, 2016).

26. S. Kröhnert-Othman/M. Kamp/C. Wagner, *Keine Chance auf Zugehörigkeit? – Schulbücher europäischer Länder halten Islam und modernes Europa getrennt; Ergebnisse einer Studie des Georg-Eckert-Instituts für internationale Schulbuchforschung zu aktuellen Darstellungen von Islam und Muslimen in Schulbüchern europäischer Länder* (Braunschweig: Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung, 2011).

27. Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, Flüchtlinge und Integration, Schulbuchstudie Migration und Integration (Berlin: Bundeskanzleramt, 2016).

28. Ibid.,p. 28.

Karakaşoğlu and Wojciechowicz's research traced how anti-Muslim racism is institutionally reproduced within qualification programmes for young teachers.[29] Germany's Constitutional Court, as elaborated in last year's Islamophobia report, has ruled that regional headscarf bans were unconstitutional, and clarified that teachers could be prohibited from wearing headscarves in exceptional cases.[30] However, stigmatising perceptions about hijabs as expressions of either 'religious fundamentalism' or as a 'symbol of oppression' prevail in wider society and continue to shape teacher's everyday experiences in schools. Karakaşoğlu and Wojciechowicz describe how individual teachers or parents consider it their entitlement or even their civic obligation to verbalise their disapproval of the hijab and impose an elaboration of the significance they attribute to it.[31] Beyond being objectified, classified and lectured about the associations others connect with their religious practice, young women are further subject to specific control and supervision.

In summary, there is considerable evidence for structural impediments to equal treatment in education, and an array of studies that have pointed to a variety of ways in which socially dominant stereotypes limit the educational progression and professional development of post-migration minorities in general and Muslim communities in particular.

## Politics

The *Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD, scored momentous results in five regional elections that took place in 2016, and parachuted into regional parliaments with a significant number of seats. Originally a political party targeting Eurosceptic audiences, the AfD repositioned itself over the course of the last two years and now mobilises specifically around issues in relation to Islam in Germany. Alexander Gauland, co-founder and deputy spokesperson of the AfD, has for instance demanded the immediate restriction of Muslim immigration.[32] Party leader Frauke Petry suggests that recent 'mass migration seriously endangers achievements of the reformation and the enlightenment, such as religious tolerance, women's rights and civic freedom'.[33] Besides provocative statements, AfD representatives, similar to other right-wing populist movements across Europe, seek to gain media attention with small performances that are to 'break with the taboos of political correctness'. Wiebke Muhsal, for instance, disrupted a session of the regional parliament in Thuringia by entering the parliamentary debate in a full-face

29. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu/Anna Aleksandra Wojciechowicz, "Muslim_innen als Bedrohungsfigur für die Schule – die Bedeutung des antimuslimischen Rassismus im pädagogischen Setting der Lehramtsausbildung," Karim Fereidooni/Meral El (eds.), *Rassismuskritik und Widerstandsformen* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), p. 507-528.

30. Anna Esther Younes, Islamophobia in Germany: National Report 2015, Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2016* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016), p. 180-198.

31. Ibid.,p. 516.

32. J. Burger/J. Simon, "Neue deutsche Welle," *Zeitmagazin*, Nr. 52 (January 5, 2017), p. 45.

33. E. Finger/S. Schirmer, "Populismus ist kein Schimpfwort", *Die Zeit* , Nr. 40 (October 22, 2016), p. 50.

veil and taking it off in front of the MPs. 39,000 viewers subsequently watched her performance on YouTube, in which she 'expressed her concern of the Islamization of Germany' and demonstrated 'what it meant to be faceless'.[34] Beyond reinforcing negative stereotypes of Muslims, scenarios of a 'cultural take over' invert actual proportions of the distribution of the population in Germany (4.7 million Muslims live amongst a population of 80.6 million inhabitants),[35] and deliberately misrepresent Muslim communities' economic, political or cultural capacities to influence public life.[36]

The AfD strives to limit the rights of Muslims in Germany, including the most fundamental ones: Hans-Thomas Tillschneider, who prior to his parliamentary career taught Islamic Studies at the University of Bayreuth, suggested for example that the 'German basic law has not been made for Islam'.[37] The AfD also passed a new manifesto in 2016, in which it stated that 'Islam did not belong to Germany', objected to recognising Islamic organisations as 'corporations of public law' (a status that the Christian Churches and the Jewish community hold), demanded the closure of all University Institutes of Islamic Theology, called for a ban of 'symbols of Islamic domination in the public', such as minarets, the call to prayer, or full-face veils, and recommended to prohibit public servants from wearing hijabs.[38]

In spring 2016, the AfD made it to second place by mobilising 24% of the vote in the regional parliamentary election in Saxony-Anhalt. In Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Palatinate, the party achieved 15% and 12% respectively. In Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, the Chancellor's home-state, the AfD came second with 20%, beating Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats to third place. Even in Berlin's state elections, where the Social Democrats, the Green Party and the Post-Socialist *Die Linke* continued to receive high support and formed the regional government, the AfD mobilised significant votes in the outskirts of the city, entering Berlin's Senate with 14% of the vote.

In all instances, it was largely the mainstream parties of the Christian or the Social Democrats, who lost voters to the AfD. These shifts in the German party system, as longitudinal research on political attitudes in Germany documents, can hardly be explained with a disproportionate increase in racist or nationalist orientations. Rather, those segments of the population who expressed such views in the past but

34. Burger and Simon 2016, p. 41.

35. A. Stichs, *Wie viele Muslime leben in Deutschland? Eine Hochrechnung über die Anzahl der Muslime in Deutschland zum Stand 31. Dezember 2015 (Nürnberg: Bundesamtfür Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2016), p. 11.*

36. For an analysis of the role of apocalyptic invasion scenarios within Anti-Muslim narratives see also: Shooman 2014, p. 150.

37. M. Machowecz, "Wir sind dagegen", *Die Zeit*, (August 25, 2016), retrieved January 12, 2017, fromhttp://www.zeit.de/2016/36/afd-sachsen-anhalt-landtag-erfahrungen.

38. Alternative für Deutschland, Programm für Deutschland, "Programm für Deutschland. Das Grundsatzprogramm der Alternative für Deutschland", (not dated), retrieved September 19, 2016, fromhttps://www.alternativefuer.de/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2016/05/2016-06-27_afd-grundsatzprogramm_web-version.pdf, p. 49-50.

located themselves in the centre of the political spectrum now feel increasingly inadequately represented by mainstream political parties and therefore support a political platform that foregrounds such concerns in its political mobilisation.[39] At the end of the year 2016, 20% of the German population stated that they would vote AfD, if national elections were taking place then.[40] It is thus highly likely that the AfD's political agenda will have an impact on the electoral campaigns of all political parties in the run-up to the national election in autumn 2017.

## Media

The previously mentioned polarisation of German society can similarly be noted in media reporting. In recent years, German news media have increasingly engaged critically with their contribution to spreading negative stereotypes of minority groups, and the implications of relating incidents of crime to information about ethnicity, for example, are now more widely considered as problematic. However, as anti-Muslim racism is salient in wider society, its narratives are also reflected in news accounts.

Popular tropes in this regard are an alleged incompatibility of what is dichotomously constructed as 'Islamic' and 'European' values, customs and lifestyles, the perception that individuals from countries in which Islam constitutes a majority religion cannot be 'integrated' into German society, and predictions of a possible demise of German culture. Following the events of New Year's Eve 2015/2016, the tabloid press, but also high standard newspapers reproduced such stereotypes by engaging in a debate on cultural explanations for violent attacks. Even in instances where such claims were critically evaluated, the investigation of the question itself was rendered worthwhile. The weekly high quality paper *Die Zeit*, for instance, asked in its title 'Under Suspicion: Who is Arabic man?'[41] Several contributions to this edition then reflected (in many instances critically) on the question whether and how Arabic culture upheld a coherent cultural script that is specifically instructive of violent and aggressive behaviour.

The centre-left national paper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*'s weekend edition printed a drawing of a white female shadow whose genitals were covered by a black hand that reached between her legs.[42] (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Front cover of Süddeutsche Zeitung.[44]

39. Decker/Brähler 2016, p. 8.

40. Bittner 2016.

41. *Die Zeit*, 14.01.2016, p. 1.

42. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 03.01.2016.

43. Spiegel, '"Süddeutsche" entschuldigt sich, "Focus" nicht', *Spiegel Online*, (January 12, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017, from http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/focus-und-sueddeutsche-zeitung-eine-entschuldigung-eine-rechtfertigung-fuer-titel-a-1071334.html.

The image was accompanied by a citation suggesting that 'many young Muslim men are not able to have a relaxed encounter with the other sex. Such encounters are always highly sexualised'.[44] The paper then offered a critical reflection on arbitrary attributions of the label 'Muslim' and of deterministic reifications of culture, but nevertheless chose to draw attention to its treatment of the subject with an illustration that is suggestive of filthy dark paws that smear the purity of the white woman. A similar image was used by the weekly magazine *Focus* that had a photograph of a naked female body on its cover, who was covered in black handprints. The title suggested: 'Women accuse. After the sex-attacks of migrants: Are we still tolerant or already blind?'[45] (Figure 2) Linking the message 'dark hands' and sexual abuse directly to the terms of integration policy, this title also racialised a group of individuals' behaviour as representative of wider cultural religious collectives.

Figure 2: Focus front cover of 8 January, 2016.[47]

This reflex also resurfaced following the DAESH inspired attacks in summer 2016. In response to the incidents in Southern Germany, the country staged what remained a controversial media debate about the introduction of a new ban on 'symbols of Islamic oppression', such as full-face veils (niqabs or burkhas) or full-body swimming costumes (burkinis) in the German public. The context within which this issue became salient points to contradictory discursive links between what is stereotyped as a tendency within Islam to reject 'basic democratic values', such as gender equality, and the attempt to reassert these values by limiting the rights of movement of those who in this narrative are at the receiving end of the oppression, thus women who wear the garment. Invisibility is further equated with a loss of the ability to assess and control the assumed outlaw hiding underneath. Anne Will, the presenter of an evening TV talk show, invited a fully veiled woman to her studio, who indeed took a fundamentalist religious stance in the television debate. Will's

44.Meedia Redaktion, "Schwarzer Mann bedrängt weiße Frau", *Meedia.de*,January 8, 2016, retrieved January 9, 2017, from http://meedia.de/2016/01/11/schwarzer-mann-bedraengt-weisse-frau-sz-chef-wolfang-krach-entschuldigt-sich-fuer-illustration/.

45.*Focus*, 09.01.2016, p. 1.

46. Available from http://meedia.de/2016/01/08/schwarze-haende-auf-nackter-blonder-frau-focus-wegen-populistischem-cover-im-shitstorm/ (retrieved February 14, 2017).

reflections of their encounter show that not just the statements, but rather the dress itself is associated with the refusal of basic rules that determine social co-existence in Germany as well as a personal rejection: 'It is more than weird to talk to a fully veiled woman. And I personally perceive the full-face veil as a rejection. I get the impression that my collocutor denies a real conversation – to me and all other viewers. This is highly disturbing. (…) What Ms Illi demonstrates this way is that she rejects one of the basic principles of our open society. Because it is a feature of our open society to literally show your face.'[47]

While this debate has not yet lead to legislation, it has had an impact on women's rights, for instance in the case of a student who was denied access to an educational facility. The evening school in the State of Lower Saxony had initially accepted the woman but then reversed its decision when it became apparent that she wished to cover her face in class. In August 2016, the Osnabrück Administrative Court requested that the woman was to appear in person at the hearing to present her case. The incident received extensive media coverage, on which grounds the woman did not want to appear in public and did not attend the hearing in person. The court subsequently argued that, under the circumstances, the only action possible was to deny her claim. It decided that she was not allowed to wear a full-face veil in class.[48]

In summary, while journalists increasingly critically engage with their possible contribution to reproducing prejudice, anti-Muslim racist images and narratives continue to shape media debates. It should be added that media debates reflect rather than create a spectrum of views that are socially dominant at any given time.

## Justice System

Modalities of law enforcement, and specifically the work of the police forces in Germany has received heightened attention over the course of the last years, particularly in the context of the ongoing trial against Beate Zschäpe, a member of the right-wing extremist group 'Nationalist Socialist Underground' (NSU). In the case of nine politically motivated murders in which the NSU targeted ethnic minority victims, most of whom were of Turkish origin, various regional German police forces suspected the victim's kin- and friendship networks, rather than considering the possibility of a racist crime. It became obvious that police officers' generalising presuppositions of ethnic minority delinquency prevented them from treating the victim's families with respect, impeded them from bringing the series of racist murders to a halt, and precluded the perpetrators' arrest. Although the police's inability to identify the murders in question as racist crimes involved police teams in several federal states and

47. I. Radisch, "Anne Will: Man macht mit einer solchen Sendung eine Gratwanderung,"*Die Zeit*, Nr. 47, (November 10, 2016), p. 57.

48. C. Bleiker, "Court verdict: no niqabs in German school", *Deutsche Welle*, (August 22, 2016), retrieved January 12, 2017, from http://www.dw.com/en/court-verdict-no-niqabs-in-german-school/a-19492907.

stretched over the period of a decade, the systematic differential treatment of victims depending on their background was characterised by the first Federal Parliamentary Select Committee in 2013 as a series of glitches and errands of individual officers, as opposed to an institutional failure of equal treatment in police investigations.

In 2016, while the Zschäpe trial continues to unfold at Munich's Higher Regional Court, as well as federal and regional inquiries by Parliamentary Select Committees are ongoing, Amnesty International has revisited this issue by publishing recent research findings from a study of hate crime investigation procedures in Germany.[49] This report shows that police officers across the country continue to give insufficient attention to the possibility that violent incidents may have a racist background. This is detrimental in the current climate of anti-Muslim racism, in which, as outlined above, Islamophobic marches and hate crimes directed at refugee accommodation or Islamic places of worship are particularly frequent.

Amnesty's report highlights that, although the German police had considerable experience with securing facilities that are particularly likely to become a target of political hate crimes, such as synagogues, risk analysis mechanisms and subsequent perimeter protection are less effective in cases of potential attacks on mosques or asylum shelters.[50] The report further specified institutional procedures that systematically impede due regard to racist political violence, including the German classification system of political crimes that includes a high threshold for the local police to recognise, classify and pass a case on to the responsible department. The report presents case studies, in which victims of racist and anti-Muslim hate crimes have tried to alert the police or the courts to direct abuse uttered by the perpetrators, but where not taken seriously or even reprimanded. A research report by the NGO *Inssan e.V.* further assembled research findings that relate racialised accounts of delinquency to a higher likeliness to face arrest, higher charges and heavier sentences.[51]

Significant media attention turned to the practice of racial profiling at the end of 2016. In response to the events on New Year's Eve 2015/2016, Cologne police adopted preventive measures during the 2016/2017 New Year's celebrations. The deployment of pointedly higher numbers of officers was widely appreciated. Participants arriving at the celebrations, however, were looked up and down, whereby a majority was asked to use the left entrance, while about 2,000 individuals with 'North African appearance', if not accompanied by a woman, were asked to step to the right for a background check, where they were held for hours. The police announced

49. Amnesty International, *Leben in Unsicherheit. Wie Deutschland die Opfer rassistischer Gewalt im Stich lässt* (London: Amnesty International, 2016).

50. Ibid., p. 53.

51.A. Y. Arani, "Anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia in Germany," *Netzwerk gegen Diskriminierung und Islamfeindlichkeit*, (March 2015), retrieved January 10, 2017, from http://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF-Dateien/Pakte_Konventionen/ICERD/icerd_state_report_germany_19-22_2013_parallel_INSSAN_2015_en.pdf.

on Twitter that they were currently 'systematically checking up on several hundred NAFRIS at the main station'. The term NAFRI was explained as a 'police procedure internal terminology' that stood for '*Nordafrikanischer Intensivtäter*' (North African intensive perpetrator). While the police leadership admitted that the term was an 'unfortunate choice of words' and expressed their regrets, the selection on the basis of ethnic attributes as opposed to grounds of behaviour was defended as justified.[52] Commentators observed that just the 'internal use' of the term *NAFRI* within policing procedures indicated the institutional reproduction of racist distinctions.[53] Observers highlighted that racial profiling was illegal and deviated from the Basic Law's equal treatment provisions,[54] while others, among them Beatrix von Storch from the AfD suggested on Twitter that it was either 'racial profiling or mass rape of German women'. In response to this debate, Amnesty International, whose aforementioned report noted a more systematic occurrence of racial profiling within policing practices in Germany, reminded the police of the requirement to further embed equal treatment in their daily routines and procedures.[55]

In summary, there is considerable evidence that anti-Muslim racism is structurally reproduced in policing procedures. Significant institutional barriers to recording right-wing extremist attacks persist even if hate crimes directed at religious groups will be specifically accounted for from 2017 onwards. Practices such as racial profiling, as well as the prevailing perceptions of 'foreigners' or 'Muslims' as particularly disposed to criminal behaviour, thereby impede impartial investigations.

## Internet

International networks of so-called 'Cyber Hate' distinctly contribute to spreading anti-Muslim racism. An in-depth study of these networks' argumentation and mobilisation strategies observed that they created a separate 'information universe'. In Germany, blog posts on 'Politically Incorrect' or 'Michael Mannheimer' present themselves as mouthpieces of 'ethnic Germans'. They gather and repost fake news to provide evidence of what they narrate as impending infiltration and subjugation of Europe through Muslims. Shooman's study traced some of the prevailing narratives in these German blogs: bloggers describe established media, political and economic elites as complicit in paving the way for an imminent 'genocide' of the German people; they conflate Islam and Islamism in equations of DAESH with 'authentic

52. Die Zeit Online, "Polizeipräsident bedauert Begriff 'Nafris'," *zeit.de*, (January 2, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2017, fromhttp://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-01/koeln-silvesternacht-polizei-nafris-vorwuerfe.

53. M.Storkowski, "Fragen bleiben erlaubt", *Spiegel Online* (January 3, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2017, fromhttp://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/koeln-und-nafri-debatte-fragen-bleiben-erlaubt-kolumne-a-1128365.html.

54. e.g. G. von Randow, "Auf den ersten Blick", *Die Zeit* (January 5, 2017), p. 6.

55. Amnesty International, "Kölner Polizeieinsatz ist eindeutiger Fall von Racial Profiling,"*Amnesty International Online*, (January 2, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2017, fromhttp://www.amnesty.de/2017/1/2/koelner-polizeieinsatz-ist-eindeutiger-fall-von-racial-profiling.

Islam'; they further draw on culturally deterministic narratives that ascribe backwardness and inferiority to Islamic communities, but at the same time reproduce biologistical arguments by attributing disproportionate fertility rates and political supremacy to Muslims.[56]

Attempts to politically mobilise supporters via social media have gained significant traction. Shooman's 2016 study notes up to 120,000 daily visitors on one of the German blogs. She also highlights that Islamophobic movements such as PEGIDA tend to assemble their supporters via Facebook. The Federal Office of Justice's statistics, which at the time of the completion of this report were only accessible for 2015, show that online incitement to racist hatred has disproportionately increased. In 2015, the number of persecuted criminal offences on grounds of incitement to racist hatred (*Volksverhetzung*) and depictions of violence (*Gewaltdarstellungen*) increased by 130% in comparison to 2014. A majority of these instances involve online based crimes, which rose from 500 to 2,300 per year.[57] The figures also indicate that only a third of the charges that are pressed actually lead to criminal convictions, as the identity of the perpetrators can rarely be established.

In summary, the anonymity of the Internet enables right-wing extremists to share and spread otherwise marginalised views, to build networks and to mobilise supporters for political action. Despite an explosion of online incitement to hatred, only a small proportion of these instances can be brought to court.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Just as they are being used for spreading anti-Muslim racist narratives, social media have provided a forum for the struggle against racism. Racist depictions of violence against women that appeared on the covers of mainstream news outlets in early 2016, for instance, generated a lively protest on social media that inspired Wolfgang Krach, the *Süddeutsche* Zeitung's chief editor, to publicly apologise.[58]

The Berlin based '*Netzwerk gegen Diskriminierung und Islamophobie*' (Network Against Discrimination and Islamophobia), established by *Inssan e.V.*, a non-governmental organisation that specifically focuses on the struggle against anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia, documents the occurrence of discrimination,[59] offers advice to victims of anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination, assists in bringing cases and precedents to court, and reaches out to Muslim communities to increase

56. Ibid., p. 139-142.

57. M. Meisner, "Hetze im Netz nimmt zu. Oft kommen die Täter straflos davon", *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 28, 2016, retrieved January 10, 2017, from http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/rechtsextremismus-hetze-im-netz-nimmt-zu-oft-kommen-die-taeter-straflos-davon/14903238.html.

58.Meedia Redaktion 2016.

59. See for instance: Arani 2015.

their awareness of their rights. Furthermore, *Inssan e.V.* organises various events and meetings to strengthen social dialogue. In 2016, the NGO developed new training materials and delivered a 'train-the-trainer' workshop for individuals who wish to offer education sessions on issues in relation to anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia. The individuals involved in this initiative also work with local authorities to reduce discrimination in public services, another area that is not covered by German anti-discrimination legislation. A wide array of Muslim organisations in Germany also regularly bring discrimination against Muslims to the attention of political representatives and the media.

In summary, awareness of the implications of racism seems to have increased in German public debates, whereby social media provide a platform to publicly express concerns about racist practices. Apart from those affected by it, Islamophobia tends to be less widely recognised as a contemporary manifestation of cultural racism.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report presented research evidence of the currently alarming rise of Anti-Muslim hatred and discrimination in Germany, which is manifested in significant levels of violence against refugee shelters and mosques, participation in demonstrations across the country, high electoral support for right-wing populist parties such as the AfD, and soaring attempts to incite hatred online. Anti-Muslim racist views, held by roughly half the population, increasingly inform political action, but also influence the ways in which public institutions operate. Research has found that socially dominant stereotypes influence procedures and outcomes in educational settings, shape employment opportunities and career progression, are reflected in media reporting and lead to biases in policing procedures. In many of the instances and processes described above, discrimination occurs on several grounds at a time, including perceived ethnicity, religiosity, age, gender and so on. The following policy recommendations therefore focus on sensitising the overall population through instigating processes of institutional learning and embedding measures of equal treatment in various areas of public life.

- Systematically collect official statistics on ethnicity and religion, conduct analyses of disadvantage in various areas of public life.
- Extend national and regional anti-discrimination laws, legislate specifically for legal protection from discrimination in public services, law enforcement, education and welfare provision, adopt and adjust protection from religious discrimination in line with European Union laws.
- Include critical engagement with contemporary manifestations of racism and discrimination in textbooks and teacher training.
- Incorporate positive measures of non-discrimination and equal treatment in hiring and career progression procedures.

- Provide training sessions, workshops and specific briefing materials for the implications of discrimination to a variety of professional groups, including health professionals, staff in all sectors of education, public administration, police, the criminal justice system, journalists etc.
- Extend risk assessment mechanisms and police presence for refugee accommodation and facilities of Islamic worship.
- Diversity mainstreaming initiatives in various areas of institutional life should explicitly include the prevention of religious discrimination and anti-Muslim racism.

# Chronology

### January

- New Year's celebrations in 2015/2016 evoke a debate about sexual violence.

### May

- Publication of the AfD *Manifesto Programm für Deutschland.*

### July

- Violent attacks in Southern Germany, two of which involved supporters of DAESH.

### August

- Osnabrück Administrative Court rules that wearing of full-face veil is not allowed in an educational setting.

### October

- Reunification celebration in Dresden disrupted by abuse and violent attacks.

### December

- Terrorist attack on the Berlin Christmas Market on Breitscheidplatz; racial profiling during New Year's Eve celebrations in Cologne.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN GREECE
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

ALEXANDROS SAKELLARIOU

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# Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Greece in 2016 taking into consideration all the important developments on national, European and global levels. The material presented was collected primarily from the media (electronic and printed), the Internet (e.g. websites of political parties and other groups), and social media. In addition, reports conducted by NGOs and international organisations were taken into consideration; these reports, it must be noted, referred to 2015, since the ones for 2016 are not yet published. Finally, the author corresponded and was involved in discussions with Muslim groups and communities.

The main outcome of the report is that Islamophobia in Greece is at the same level as described in last year's report. Islamophobia manifests itself primarily on the discursive level (hate speech) and to a lesser extent on the level of exercising violence. However, attacks against hot spots for immigrants and refugees took place in 2016, as well as, demonstrations and public discussion on the danger of Greece's Islamization, which were organised by various groups. The most important issues that caused Islamophobic reactions were the refugee issue and the inclusion of refugee children in the Greek schools; the establishment of a Department for Muslim Studies at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki; the construction of a mosque in Athens; and international developments (e.g. terrorism, DAESH).

Islamophobia is found in certain political groups of the extreme-right (e.g. Golden Dawn, New Right) as well as in the Greek Orthodox Church as evidenced by the public discourse of some of its metropolitans. With the available data Islamophobia is marginal or non-existent in the fields of employment and justice. On the other hand, it seems that it is strong and on the rise in certain media but mainly on the Internet and social media which are still fertile places for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and ideas. As far as efforts to combat Islamophobia are concerned, a central state policy is lacking and only secondary and fragmented actions by private or public agents are taking place. The latter occur only on the level of analysis and do not involve any type of prevention or intervention.

# Περίληψη

Η παρούσα έκθεση εξετάζει την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα για το 2016 λαμβάνοντας υπόψη όλα τα σημαντικά γεγονότα σε εθνικό, ευρωπαϊκό και παγκόσμιο επίπεδο. Το υλικό που παρουσιάζεται στην έκθεση συγκεντρώθηκε ως επί το πλείστον από τα ΜΜΕ (ηλεκτρονικά και έντυπα), το διαδίκτυο (π.χ. ιστοσελίδες ομάδων και πολιτικών κομμάτων) και τα κοινωνικά δίκτυα. Επίσης, ελήφθησαν υπόψη εκθέσεις ΜΚΟ και διεθνών οργανισμών, οι οποίες, όμως αφορούσαν, κυρίως το 2015 καθώς για το 2016 ακόμα δεν έχουν δημοσιευθεί. Επιπλέον, έλαβαν χώρα επαφές και συζητήσεις με Μουσουλμανικές ομάδες και κοινότητες.

Το κύριο συμπέρασμα της έκθεσης είναι ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα κινείται στα ίδια με το 2015 επίπεδα. Διαπιστώνεται κυρίως σε επίπεδο λόγου και ρητορικής (hate speech) και λιγότερο σε επίπεδο άσκησης φυσικής βίας. Παρατηρήθηκαν, βέβαια, επιθέσεις σε κέντρα φιλοξενίας μεταναστών και προσφύγων, καθώς και συγκεντρώσεις και δημόσιες συζητήσεις από διάφορους φορείς σχετικά με τον κίνδυνο Ισλαμοποίησης της Ελλάδας. Τα κυριότερα θέματα τα οποία προκάλεσαν Ισλαμοφοβικές αντιδράσεις ήταν το προσφυγικό και η ένταξη των παιδιών των προσφύγων στα ελληνικά σχολεία, η ίδρυση κατεύθυνσης Μουσουλμανικών Σπουδών στο Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο, η κατασκευή του Ισλαμικού τεμένους στην Αθήνα και βεβαίως οι διεθνείς εξελίξεις (τρομοκρατία και Ισλαμικό Κράτος).

Η ισλαμοφοβία εντοπίζεται κυρίως, σε συγκεκριμένους πολιτικούς κύκλους, όπως για παράδειγμα στους χώρους της ακροδεξιάς (π.χ. Χρυσή Αυγή, Νέα Δεξιά), καθώς και σε χώρους, όπως η Ορθόδοξη Εκκλησία, όπου καταγράφεται στον δημόσιο λόγο ορισμένων Μητροπολιτών. Με τα υπάρχοντα δεδομένα, η Ισλαμοφοβία φαίνεται να είναι περιθωριακή έως ανύπαρκτη στους χώρους της εργασίας και της δικαιοσύνης. Από την άλλη μεριά φαίνεται να έχει ισχυρά ερείσματα και να αυξάνεται σε ορισμένα ΜΜΕ, αλλά κυρίως στο διαδίκτυο και στα μέσα κοινωνικής δικτύωσης, τα οποία συνεχίζουν να αποτελούν προνομιακούς χώρους για την ανάπτυξη και την καλλιέργεια αυτών των απόψεων. Ως προς την αντιμετώπιση της Ισλαμοφοβίας απουσιάζει μία κεντρική κρατική πολιτική και λαμβάνουν χώρα μόνο δευτερεύουσες και αποσπασματικές δράσεις από ιδιωτικούς και δημόσιους φορείς, κυρίως σε επίπεδο ανάλυσης.

# Introduction

Greece constitutes a specific case among European countries where memories of the past reverberate with experiences of the present, due to the country's common borders with Turkey and other Muslim-majority countries in the Mediterranean Sea. Being at the frontline of massive waves of immigration from the wider Muslim world has left the country particularly vulnerable to fears of the Muslim "Other". As a consequence, when talking about Islamophobia in Greece, it is crucial to keep in mind that debates on Islam are deeply rooted and strongly intertwined with the experience of the Ottoman occupation and its collective interpretations, on the one hand, and the current immigration and refugee flows, on the other. Despite the historical past with Turkey, Greece was never characterised as openly Islamophobic, but rather as Turkophobic. However, the international developments after 9/11 and the immigration and refugee waves have created a fertile ground for the emergence of Islamophobia in the last years.

If we divide Islamophobia in two main genres, one including physical attacks against Muslims and another including hate speech, then we could argue that the primary type of Islamophobia we find in Greece is the second. Systematic documentation of Islamophobic attacks is missing, but according to existing evidence Islamophobia in Greece is mainly reproduced through discursive practices. This, however, in no way implies that there is no danger of someone who embraces the Islamophobic ideology and discourse to proceed to the next level of Islamophobic actions. Similarly to last year's report,[1] the three main fields that have played a crucial role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public sphere in 2016 are the following: politics, i.e. political parties and organisations mainly of the right and the extreme-right; religion, i.e. certain figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece; and finally the media and the Internet.

Compared to the previous year no significant changes have been documented regarding Islamophobia in Greece. In some areas (e.g. workplace, justice) there is a lack of data, either because a mechanism that would monitor Islamophobic incidents is absent or because there is actually no such data to mention. This report is based on data that was collected in 2016 and takes into consideration international events that might have influenced the appearance or the rise of Islamophobia. The main goal of this report is to map Islamophobia in Greece covering the main fields (education, media, the Internet and politics) where such evidence exists; to examine the gaps in policies towards countering anti-Islamic discourse and attitudes; and to make relevant suggestions. The material was mainly collected from printed and electronic media, websites and blogs, reports of NGOs, international organisations

1. Alexandros Sakellariou "Islamophobia in Greece: National Report 2015," Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2015* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016).

and state authorities, and formal or informal communication with members of the Muslim communities.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

There were four important incidents and developments that impacted Islamophobia in 2016. For a second year the so-called "refugee crisis" played a crucial role in the advance of Islamophobia. While thousands of immigrants and refugees crossed the Greek border and went to Germany and other EU countries, more than 60,000 have stayed in Greece after the closing of the Balkan road in 2015. A side effect of the so-called "refugee crisis" was the need to incorporate refugees' children into the Greek school system. This caused public debates varying from complete acceptance to total rejection, and created a climate of Islamophobia in some parts of Greece since late August when the first discussions started. Another issue that is pending in the last years is the construction of an official mosque in Athens. In 2016, the government made the final decision on the issue and Parliament voted for the necessary amendments. In autumn, the contract with the construction companies' consortium was signed and the first construction work commenced. Of course, extreme right-wing and right-wing parties disagreed with this development and reacted against the mosque's construction. The third important issue was the establishment of a Department for Muslim Studies at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, at the School of Theology. The fourth, similarly to previous years, was the international developments, i.e. the terrorist attacks around the world (in Nice, in Orlando, in Berlin and elsewhere) that have been used by certain circles to boost Islamophobia.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Education

There is no presence of Islamophobia in the Greek educational system in terms of curricula and/or school textbooks. On the contrary, this year the Ministry of Education proceeded with a change in the curriculum of the school subject of religion in order to transform it into a more open and inclusive topic with more references to other religions such as Islam. However, there were two other issues that created Islamophobic reactions and these were the incorporation of refugee children in the Greek educational system[2] and the establishment of the Department for Muslim Studies in Thessaloniki.

2. Epirus Post, "How schools for refugee children will function, the decision," *epiruspost.gr*, (October 4, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.epiruspost.gr/reportaz/politics/40531-2016-10-04-16-12-16.html. See also the decision of Ministry of Education, "Οργάνωση και λειτουργία των Δομών Υποδοχής για την Εκπαίδευση των Προσφύγων (ΔΥΕΠ)," *minedu.gov.gr*, (September 23, 2016), retrieved 5 January, 2017, from http://www.minedu.gov.gr/eidiseis/23823-23-09-16-organosi-kai-leitourgia-ton-domon-ypodoxis-gia-tin-ekpaidefsi-ton-prosfygon-dyep.

While the majority of the population accepted the decision to incorporate refugee children in the educational system, in some cases groups of people manipulated by the right and the extreme-right, reacted and opposed it. In Oraiokastro (Thessaloniki) a demonstration of approximately 100 people was organised against the Islamization of Greece in front of the town hall. (Figure 1) In another case (Volvi, Profitis), parents refused to send their children to school if refugee children were going to also be present.[3] Despite these reactions, refugee children are attending Greek schools throughout the country.

Figure 1: Announcement for the demonstration in Oraiokastro. Among others it states "Yes to the Greece of Greeks, No to Islamization" (October 2016).

The second issue that created Islamophobic reactions was the law on the establishment of a Department for Muslim Studies at the School of Theology of the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki. The reactions came mainly from the Orthodox Church and, to a smaller extent, from certain Muslim groups. In this spirit, the Metropolis of Thessaloniki, Orthodox Christian groups and the Panhellenic Union of Theologians organised an event in Thessaloniki against the Islamization of Greece and Europe, against the new university department and against the transformation of religious education in schools. (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Poster for the event in Thessaloniki "We remain Greeks and Orthodox", (February 2016)

Anthimos, the Metropolitan of Thessaloniki argued that "it is not acceptable to have such a department in the heart of Thessaloniki nowadays with all the information we have about this religion [Islam] that has disturbed the whole world".[4] Finally, the last issue related to Islamophobic reactions was the decision to accept Muslims of the Mus-

3. Left, "Shameful reactions for refugee children in Profitis, Volvi," *left.gr*, (October 11, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from https://left.gr/news/epaishyntes-antidraseis-gia-ta-prosfygopoyla-ston-profiti-volvis-den-esteilan-ta-paidia-toys and Fedra Bratou, "A domino of reactions for refugee children at schools," *kathimerini.gr*, (October 1, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.kathimerini.gr/877391/article/epikairothta/ellada/ntomino-antidrasewn-gia-ta-prosfygopoyla-sta-sxoleia.

4. TVXS, "'Crusader' Anthimos asks for a referendum for the cross in Rotonda," *tvxs.gr*, (January 17, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://m.tvxs.gr/mo/i/193969/f/news/ellada/o-stayroforos-anthimos-zita-dimopsifisma-gia-ton-stayro-stin-rotonta.html.

lim minority of Thrace in Firefighter Training Schools. This was a secondary incident that was primarily used by extreme-right circles who argued that it was unacceptable to have Muslims in these schools.[5] This decision is related to the general policy of the Greek state to incorporate the Muslims of Thrace by using positive discrimination decisions especially regarding education.

## Politics

The extreme-right party Golden Dawn is the most important player in politics regarding Islamophobia. In every occasion that implicitly or explicitly is related to Islam or immigrants and refugees the party expresses an openly Islamophobic discourse which is reproduced in Parliament, through the party's websites and through its official newspaper. This discourse propagates the fear of Islam for Greece and Europe (Islamization and Eurabia arguments)[6] and builds on the Ottoman past in order to cultivate the fear of Turkey as well. Among others, Golden Dawn opposed the law on the mosque of Athens and its amendments, reacted against the incorporation of refugee children at schools, and opposed the establishment of the Department for Muslim Studies in Thessaloniki.

Furthermore, the party has organised rallies and demonstrations against immigrants and refugees and against the construction of the mosque in Athens. In April, as a reaction to the refugee issue, Golden Dawn organised a rally in Piraeus, the port of Athens, against the Islamization of Greece. (Figure 3) In the party's promotional call it was mentioned that Greece's Islamization is progressing very quickly and that Greeks are becoming a minority in their country. According to the party's officials this is why "we [Greeks] need to resist this de-Hellinisation of our country".[7] In October, they organised a rally against the construction of the Athens mosque at the location where it is going to be built. (Figure 4)

Figure 3: Golden Dawn's demonstration in Piraeus: "NO to the Islamization of our country". (April 2016)

Figure 4: Golden Dawn's rally against the mosque in Athens (October 2016).

5. Stohos, "Unbelievable anti-Constitutional announcement," *stoxos.gr*, (April 4, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.stoxos.gr/2016/04/2_22.html.

6. Antepithesi, "Euro Arabia is near," *antepithesi.gr*, (August 4, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.antepithesi.gr/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=2274:i-euro-arabia-pro-ton-pylon&Itemid=288.

7. Golden Dawn, "Rally against the Islamization of our country," *xryshaygh.gr*, (April 8, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/sugkentrwsh-enantia-sthn-islamopoihsh-ths-patridas-mas-peiraias-paraskeuh-8.

However, it is not only Golden Dawn that reproduces Islamophobic discourses in the political field. Local officials of New Democracy, the main opposition right-wing party, have argued that Islamization is a danger for Greece. For example in Lesvos, a local official made a call through his Facebook page for the establishment of a citizen's movement against the policies promoting the Islamization of Greece and his island, Lesvos, in particular, due to the high numbers of refugees and immigrants.[8] In the same direction, another local official of New Democracy in Lesvos through her personal blog argued that "Lesvos is under attack; Lesvos is being Islamised; Lesvos is dying".[9] Even some of New Democracy's MPs have expressed their agony about the Islamization of Europe in general.[10] It should be noted that the party supported the construction of a mosque in Athens and voted in favour of the construction in Parliament.

It should be mentioned that in August the small populist right-wing party that participates in the government coalition (Independent Greeks) voted against the construction of the mosque in Athens and expressed its skepticism regarding the dangers that might come from such a development based on what is taking place in Europe after the recent terrorist attacks. In addition, in 2016, a new political party was founded by Failos Kranidiotis, a former member of the opposition right-wing party of New Democracy, called the "New Right". In the party's statutes it is clearly stated that the New Right will pursue among other things to "become a wall against the Islamic danger for Europe".[11]

## Media

There are not many media outlets in Greece that reproduce Islamophobic discourse. There are certain newspapers, particularly of the right and the extreme-right, that target Islam and Muslims as a threat to Greece. The official newspaper of Golden Dawn is clearly one of them by reproducing the party's public discourse and activities regarding Islam. (Figure 5)

ΧΡΥΣΗ ΑΥΓΗ

ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑΣ

ΧΙΛΙΑΔΕΣ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΕΣ

ΟΧΙ ΣΤΗΝ ΙΣΛΑΜΟΠΟΙΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΠΑΤΡΙΔΑΣ ΜΑΣ

ΔΥΝΑΜΙΚΗ ΣΥΓΚΕΝΤΡΩΣΗ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΓΑΛΗ ΕΘΝΙΚΙΣΤΙΚΗ ΝΙΚΗ ΣΤΟΝ ΠΕΙΡΑΙΑ

ΑΠΟ ΤΑ 45ΑΡΙΑ ΣΤΙΣ ΒΑΡΙΟΠΟΥΛΕΣ

Figure 5: Front page of Golden Dawn's newspaper: "NO to the Islamization of our country".

8. Avgi, "New Democracy official calls citizens against the Muslimisation of Lesvos," *avgi.gr*, (September 15, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.avgi.gr/article/10842/7446688/stelechos-tes-nd-kalei-tous-polites-enantia-ste-mousoulmanopoiese-tes-lesbo.

9. Moli Machaira, "Lesvos is under attack; Lesvos is being Islamized; Lesvos is dying," *malamamaxaira.blogspot.gr,* (February 20, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://malamamaxaira.blogspot.gr/2016/02/blog-post.html.

10. Golden Dawn, "They worry about the Islamization those who voted for the mosque," *xryshaygh.gr*, (September 26, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/aputhmeno-thrasos-apo-thn-nd-anhsuchoun-gia-thn-islamopoihsh-ths-eurwphs-au.

11. See the party's statutes, retrieved 16 November, 2016, from http://neadexia.gr/katastatiko/.

Other newspapers of the extreme-right like *Stohos*, *Eleftheri Ora* and *Makeleio* use similar rhetoric. (Figures 6, 7 and 8)

Figure 6: Front page of Stohos: "Islamists are looting the country!"

Figure 7: Front page of Eleftheri Ora: "Imam in a mosque of Attiki: 'Slaughter Christians'"!!!

Figure 8: Front page of Makeleio: "This is how Greece will be in a month. Armageddon, Hell, Slaughter".

Figure 9: Front page of Dimokratia "Shock! Tsipras promises a mosque and Muslim cemetery"

Finally, it should be mentioned that apart from these extremist newspapers, *Dimokratia*, which belongs to the right and is not considered to be extremist, also reproduces Islamophobic discourse. For example, when the Prime Minister promised that the mosque in Athens will be finally constructed and that a cemetery for Muslims will soon be available, the newspaper ran the following title on its front page: "Shock! Tsipras promises a mosque and a Muslim cemetery". (Figure 9)

Furthermore, the newspaper hosts editorials arguing that Greece is in danger by Muslim immigrants, that Islam and the West are incompatible concepts, and that "the colonisation of Greece from Muslims should end before control is completely lost!" because "Islam is Islam and it can't be placated. It wants to be imposed in any suitable way".[12] In addition, *Dimokratia* hosts articles by Failos Kranidiotis, founder of the political party the New Right. His articles are openly Islamophobic and target Muslim populations as a direct threat, opposing anything Islamic (mosques, cemeteries, etc.).[13] It is very interesting that even a left-wing news website has hosted articles of Islamophobic content, of a particular author, arguing that Islam is a warlike religion that wants to expand and conquer the world.[14]

Figure 10

Figure 11

## Internet

The Internet is a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia not only in Greece but worldwide. As in politics and the media, Golden Dawn is active on the Internet through the party's official website and the website of its youth division.[15] Both of them, as well as various other websites and blogs of the party's local organisations, are full of Islamophobic discourse and present the party's anti-Islamic demonstrations and rallies. There are some pages in social media that are openly Islamophobic, as well. For example, on Facebook there are pages under the following titles: "Stop

12. Dimokratia, "Our homeland in danger," *dimokratia.gr*, (October 4, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.dimokratianews.gr/content/67262/i-patrida-se-kindyno.

13. Failos Kranidiotis, "It's Islam, stupid, behind the massacre," *dimokratia.gr*, (July 17, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.dimokratianews.gr/content/64650/einai-islam-ilithie-piso-apo-ti-sfagi and Failos, Kranidiotis "Nazism with circumscription, the Militant Islam", *dimokratia.gr* (August 13, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.dimokratianews.gr/content/65510/nazismos-me-peritomi-mahitiko-islam.

14. Apostolos Diamantis, "The 'Step' of the Koran," *tvxs.gr*, (February 15, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://tvxs.gr/news/egrapsan-eipan/bima-toy-koranioy.

15. See http://www.xryshaygh.com/ and http://www.antepithesi.gr/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).

Islam in Greece"[16] , "I do not want a mosque in my country" [17] (Figure 11), "Multiculturalism? No thank you! "[18] (Figure 12), "No to the Islamizaion of Greece- Illegal immigrants-jihadists out of Greece".[19] (Figure 13)

Figure 12

Figure 13

It is difficult to describe in detail and extensively analyse existing Islamophobia on the Internet due to the limited space available. However, it is evident that the issues of the mosque in Athens, of multiculturalism, and immigration and terrorism appear most frequently. Of course, there are also the websites of the aforementioned newspapers, *Eleftheri Ora*, *Stohos*, *Makeleio*,[20] together with extreme-right websites like Ethnikismos.net[21] that continuously reproduce Islamophobic discourses and create a climate of fear and panic about anything related to Islam and Muslims, e.g. that all Muslims are barbarians, they rape women, they marry young children, they are violent, terrorists, etc.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As mentioned in the section on politics, Golden Dawn is one of the key political groups in the Islamophobia network as well as Failos Kranidiotis and his new political party, New Right. Another extreme-right group, Holy Company, which mainly consists of members of the reserve armed forces and friends of the special forces of the Greek army, has been openly against Islam, Muslims and immigrants and has organised rallies against the Islamization of Greece.[22] (Figure 14)

Another key figure is Nikos Heiladakis, a self-declared journalist, writer and

16. See https://www.facebook.com/STOP-Islam-in-Greece-657137137706110/?fref=ts (retrieved November 16, 2016).

17. See https://www.facebook.com/oxi.tzami/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).

18. See https://www.facebook.com/oximulticulti2/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).

19. See https://www.facebook.com/Εξω-απο-την-Ελλαδα-οι-Λαθρομεταναστες-Τζιχαντιστες-14350182-60112230/?fref=ts (retrieved 16 November, 2016).

20. See http://www.stoxos.gr/ and http://www.makeleio.gr/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).

21. See https://ethnikismos.net/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).

22. See their blog for more information http://ierosloxos2012.blogspot.gr/2016/03/2732016.html (retrieved November 16, 2016).

Figure 14: "No to the Islamization of our homeland" (March 2016).

Figure 15: "We don't want such a future for our children".

Turkologist (sic!), who through his website reproduces Islamophobic discourses[23] and also participates in rallies against the Islamization of Greece, like the aforementioned ones, where he was a keynote speaker. (Figure 15)

The Union of Free Greeks[24] is a political movement founded in 2012 by Dimitris Michakis, which also reproduces Islamophobic discourses and organises rallies against Islamization, against immigrants and refugees, and more particularly against the participation of refugee children in the educational system, like the protest held in Oraiokastro, Thessaloniki. In Samos, an island close to Turkey that receives large waves of immigrants and refugees, another organisation was founded called SAMOS SOS with a goal to "clean" the island from all foreigners.[25] According to their call they don't want to have a mosque and a Muslim cemetery in Samos and they want a "free and clean" Samos like the one their ancestors bequeathed them - at the same time they argue that they are not racists or nationalists.

Finally, we should make clear that central figures of the Greek Orthodox Church, like the metropolitans of Thessaloniki, of Kalavryta and of Piraeus, and others as well, have made Islamophobic comments regarding the mosque in Athens, the Department for Muslim Studies in Thessaloniki, immigrants and refugees, etc. More specifically, Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim continued this year, like in 2015, to publicly argue that Islam is a completely violent religion, incompatible with Christianity and the West, and that there is a clear threat of Islamization for Greece.[26] In the same spirit, Metropolitan of Kalavryta Amvrosios has written extensively about the danger of Islam arguing that Islam's expansion

23. See his website for more information http://nikosxeiladakis.gr/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).

24. See the movement's blog https://ellhnes2012.blogspot.gr/ (retrieved November 16, 2016).

25. TVXS, "The racist movement SAMOS SOS wants to clean up the island from refugees", *tvxs.gr,* (October 4, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/i-ratsistiki-kinisi-samos-sos-thelei-na-katharisei-nisi-apo-toys-prosfyges-binteo.

26. Serafeim, "Public announcement," *imp.gr*, (March 26, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.imp.gr/2012-03-27-20-22-23/1053 and Serafeim, "A response to the mayor of Thessaloniki," *imp.gr,* (February 25, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://www.imp.gr/2012-03-27-20-22-23/1034.

in Greece has already started.[27] Even Archbishop Ieronymos, considered by the media as a moderate, has argued that there is a danger of Islamization from the immigrants and refugees and that if these people finally stay in Greece, "the country will lose the Greek neighbourhood, this beauty of life, what we used to say, that we are a clean country…"[28]

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

Due to the lack of a central agency that would monitor Islamophobic assaults and violations there are not many incidents to mention. Unofficially, through personal discussions and interviews with leading figures of Muslim groups and refugee organisations there have been some references mainly regarding Muslim women and the veil. These references include exclusively verbal assaults about the veil but not physical attacks.[29] However, during the procedure of the establishment of refugee camps around Greece certain incidents took place. In February, an arson attack took place in Giannitsa, Northern Greece by unknown perpetrators in two former military camps that were listed as hosting camps for refugees.[30] Also, in February and March, three incidents were recorded with pig heads thrown at refugee camps in Shisto (Figure 16), Veroia (Figure 17), and Pella, Northern Greece.[31]

Figure 16: A cross and a pig head in Shisto hot spot (March 2016).

Figure 17: Pig heads thrown at a refugee camp site in Veroia (March 2016).

27. Amvrosios, "Islamization….started," *mkka.blogspot.gr*, (February 17, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://mkka.blogspot.gr/2016/02/blog-post_15.html and Amvrosios, "Islamization….started, part 3," *mkka.blogspot.gr*, (February 17, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://mkka.blogspot.gr/2016/02/blog-post_17.html.

28. TVXS, "This, your holiness, is called racism!," *tvxs.gr*, (March 28, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://tvxs.gr/news/blogarontas/makariotate-ayto-legetai-ratsismos%E2%80%A6 and for the interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eSJySedZ9M (retrieved November 16, 2016).

29. At the moment the data from the Racist Violence Recording Network and the special police department are not yet available.

30. TVXS, "They put fire in two military camps that refugees are going to be hosted," *tvxs.gr*, (February 28, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/ebalan-fotia-se-dyo-stratopeda-sta-giannitsa-poytha-stegasoyn-prosfyges.

31. Propaganda, "They impaled a pig head in Shisto hot spot," *propaganda.gr*, (February 23, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://popaganda.gr/pop-news/karfosan-gourounokefali-sto-schisto/; TVXS, "Tension at the hot spot in Veroia-They threw pig heads," *tvxs.gr*, (March 26, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/entasi-sti-beroia-gia-kentro-prosfygon-petaksan-goyroynokefali-binteo; TVXS, "Pella: They threw pig heads so that refugees don't go," *tvxs.gr*, (March 5, 2016), retrieved November 16, 2016, from http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/petaksan-goyroynokefales-se-stratopedo-gia-na-min-pane-oi-prosfyges&dr=tvxsmrstvxs.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

The fact that the current left-wing government, despite the fact that it collaborates with a right-wing populist party in a coalition, has been willing to solve some of the problems Muslims face in Greece has been a very important development. The legislation about the construction of the mosque in Athens has been put into force, the contract between the state and the construction companies has been signed, and the work has started. Of course, as we have seen, this has caused the reaction by certain political groups, but it is a positive step that could help in making Muslims visible in the public space and and help people overcome their prejudices and unwarranted fears. Furthermore, the curriculum change that was decided by the Ministry of Education regarding religious education is of great importance as it will help children at school learn more about Islam. In the same direction, the incorporation of refugee children in schools is another development that might prove of importance. Through such actions, people will have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with Muslims, to get to know them and perhaps understand them. This is certainly not a panacea, but it could be a useful tool in the area of breaking stereotypes and prejudices. Finally, the Ministry of Justice founded a National Board Against Racism and Intolerance with the goals of monitoring existing anti-racism legislation and ensuring it is implemented; of planning anti-racism policies in various fields (religion included); and of conducting studies on the relevant issues. The law on the foundation of the board was voted in December 2015 (Law 4356) but it started to function in the spring of 2016.

Public discussions on Islamophobia also took place in 2016. The author of this report participated in all three of them. The first one was a workshop on the island of Syros against religious discrimination, where the issue of Islamophobia was extensively discussed; the second was a radio programme on public radio (ERA) about Islamophobia; and the third was a public discussion about Islamophobia organised by the Bodosakis Foundation, which runs a project about hate speech. Groups of people, mainly of the Left, have been supportive of Muslim immigrants and refugees and have also participated together with Muslims in a demonstration in Athens against racism, the ban of the burkini in France, and against Islamophobia. (Figure 18)

Figure 18: Demonstration in Athens against Islamophobia. "Our dress code is our choice. No to racism."

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

According to the existing data it could be argued that Islamophobia in Greece is at the same level as in 2015. Islamophobia is mainly found in the public discourse of particular groups of the right and the extreme-right and of the Orthodox Church, in the media and on the Internet. An important development is the fact that the current government targets the elimination of religious prejudices and makes efforts in that direction. However, it should be noted that there are still many steps to be taken to combat Islamophobia. Based on previous opinion polls, the lack of knowledge about Islam seems to play a fundamental role in the emergence of Islamophobia; the absence of accurate information makes people turn to mass media or the Internet in order to be informed and this may have serious implications for their understanding of Islam. In a recent survey 40.8% of the interviewees said that they would be disturbed by the establishment of a mosque in Greece as opposed to 58.6% who said no and probably no. Furthermore, when people were asked if they would be disturbed by the construction of a mosque in the area they live 45.1% replied yes and probably yes, while 54.4% answered no and probably no.[32] Finally, according to another survey regarding the current so-called "refugee crisis" it appears that the words 'Islam, Muslim, Jihad' have negative connotations and that a terrorist attack in Greece is possible.[33] The above findings prove that Greek society is not fully aware of what Islam is and this has serious implications on how Muslims are viewed and treated, as well as providing the ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia.

Regarding policy recommendations those of last year's report are still relevant today. The main problem is the lack of a central policy on Islamophobia. The need for an observatory authority that will monitor and record every Islamophobic incident either of violent character or on the discourse level is of primary importance. Especially for schools and for the media this vacuum is crucial. This is a first step in order to officially map Islamophobia and then take policy action. Seminars should be offered to groups of civil servants who have contact with Muslims like school teachers, police officers, coastguards and migration officers - and, of course, journalists. These seminars should include information on Islam but also on how one should deal with Islamophobia. Furthermore, initiatives that would bring together Christians and Muslims, especially in schools could be useful. For example, discussions, visits to churches/mosques, and cultural events could help cultivate a climate of mutual understanding. Though this is not necessarily the solution to the problem,

32. See the survey at http://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/ti_pistevoun_oi_ellines_spreads_C.pdf (retrieved March 11, 2016).

33. See the survey at http://www.dianeosis.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/immigration_04.pdf (retrieved March 11, 2016). Similar negative views were reported in the latest Pew research http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/22/muslims-and-islam-key-findings-in-the-u-s-and-around-the-world/ (retrieved September 28, 2016).

it could help towards the breaking down of prejudices and stereotypes that exist among a large part of the population and could particularly help children and young people better understand the concept of 'religious difference'. The state should continue the implementation of the programme on the inclusion of refugee children in Greek schools and secure its proper function. In addition, the construction of the official mosque should be accompanied by the legitimisation of other prayer houses in Greece, which are now considered illegal by the state. Finally, the Orthodox Church of Greece could also play a crucial role through ceasing to reproduce and accept Islamophobic discourses by some of its clergy members, metropolitans and priests.

## Chronology

- **14 February**: Event in Thessaloniki "We Remain Greeks and Orthodox" against immigration and the Islamization of Greece.
- **23 February**: A pig head thrown at a hot spot for immigrants and refugees in Shisto.
- **27 February**: Event in Tyrnavos, Thessalia, against Islamization.
- **27-28 February**: Arson attack at hot spot for immigrants and refugees in Giannitsa, Northern Greece.
- **5 March**: A pig head thrown at a hot spot for immigrants and refugees in Pella, Northern Greece.
- **25 March**: A pig head thrown at a hot spot for immigrants and refugees in Veroia, Northern Greece.
- **27 March**: Demonstration in Thessaloniki against immigrants and Islamization.
- **8 April**: Demonstration in Piraeus against immigrants and Islamization.
- **16 June**: Demonstration in Kalamata, Southern Greece, against Islamization.
- **30 August**: Demonstration in Athens against racism, the ban of the burkini and against Islamophobia.
- **4-5 September**: Workshop in Syros discussing the issues of religious intolerance and Islamophobia.
- **19 September**: Discussion about the problem of Islamophobia in Greece for the first time on a radio programme on the public radio station ERA.
- **21 September**: Discussion about Islamophobia in Athens (Bodosaki Foundation).
- **7 October**: Demonstration against immigrants, refugees and Islamization in Oraiokastro, Thessaloniki.
- **22 October**: Demonstration against the construction of a mosque in Athens and Islamization in Votanikos, Athens.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN HUNGARY

## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

ZSOLT SEREGHY

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# Executive Summary

Until recently, there has been no considerable public or political interest in Islam per se or in Muslims in the country or elsewhere in the world. For the larger part of the 20th century, the image of Islam in Hungary had been largely formed by Orientalist essentialisations and imported stereotypes based on world affairs; however due to the lack of the country's colonial experience and following waves of Western-European style Muslim immigration, Islam stayed fundamentally more distant, exotic and less known. Today, Hungary is a country with a very small but well-integrated Islamic community and historically rather positive public attitudes towards Islam. However, as a result of global events and increasing exposure to Western European debates surrounding the religion and its followers, Hungary has been experiencing a slow but gradual shift towards adopting Islamophobic perceptions and discourses in the past decade. This slow process found new wind in its sails this year, as global events hit closer to home and Europe's unfolding so-called refugee crisis made the Hungarian public a direct witness of what it had hitherto been only a distant observer. Starting with the 'refugee crisis' of the summer of 2015, the debate on Islam became one of the most prominent and omnipresent topics in Hungarian media and politics. Competing with the far right, the ruling conservative *Fidesz* managed to portray Islam and Muslims as an existential threat to both the country and Western culture. Framed by a flagrant anti-Islamic rhetoric omnipresent by now in right-wing political and media circles, anti-Muslim narratives remain uncontested in the country's current political atmosphere and enjoy the unconditional support of an overwhelming portion of the population. Through the lack of popular knowledge about Islam and without any effective counter-narrative or defence strategy, this no-stakes situation has led to an openly anti-Islam rhetoric dominating the mainstreams of politics and the media and to an increasing number of physical attacks with a possibly Islamophobic motive. This report investigates discursive events in connection with anti-Muslim attitudes that occurred in Hungary in the past year and puts them into their domestic and transnational contexts. The report is based on a survey of relevant discourses taking place in Hungarian media outlets and the country's political arena as well as on a number of expert interviews from the fields of journalism and NGOs conducted in December 2016 in Budapest.

# Összefoglaló

Egészen a közelmúltig a magyar közvélemény nem mutatott különösebb érdeklődést sem az iszlám vallás, sem annak hazai vagy külföldi követői iránt. A XX. század legnagyobb részében a magyarországi iszlámképet leginkább az orientalista tradíció romantizáló leegyszerűsítései és a világ eseményein alapuló importált sztereotípiái formálták, viszont a magyar történelem a nyugat-európaival ellentétes fejleményei, mindenek előtt a gyarmatosítás és az azt követő nagyarányú muszlim bevándorlás elmaradása miatt nagyon sokáig egy távoli, egzotikus, kevéssé ismert vallásként kezelte az iszlámot. Jelenleg Magyarország, egy igen kis létszámú, ám általánosan jól integrálódott muszlim kisebbség hazájaként történelmileg inkább pozitívan tekintett az iszlámra. Azonban az elmúlt évtized globális eseményeinek, valamint a Nyugat-Európával való fokozottabb kapcsolat hatására a magyar közvélemény muszlimokról alkotott nézetei és a közélet iszlámról folytatott vitái lassan iszlámellenes irányba kezdtek elmozdulni látszani. Ezen folyamatot nagyban felgyorsították az elmúlt évek terrorcselekményei valamint európai menekültválsága, mely utóbbi Magyarországot immár az események színhelyévé változtatta. 2015-re az iszlámról, az esetek túlnyomó többségében a menekültválság és a tömeges bevándorlás kontextusaiban folytatott társadalmi viták a magyar média és politikai élet legfontosabb és leggyakoribb témáiává váltak. A magyar szélsőjobbal licitálva, a kormányzó konzervatív Fidesznek sikerült egy olyan narratívát szalonképessé tennie, mely az iszlámot és a muszlim bevándorlást mind a magyar, mind nyugati kultúrára való egzisztenciális veszélyként jeleníti meg. Ezek a jobboldali politikai körök és media által gyártott narratívák valamint a mára már a magyar közéletben mindenütt jelenlévő iszlámellenes retorika 2016-ra a magyar lakosság túlnyomó többségének vitathatatlan támogatását élvezi. Egy olyan társadalmi és politikai légkör, amelyben a lakosság nem rendelkezik semmiféle tényleges ismerettel az iszlámról egy olyan helyzethez vezet melyben iszlámellenes kirohanásokat mindennem0 tét és következmény nélkül lehet intézni a politikai élet bármely színpadán és a tömegsajtóban. Ezen jelentés számot vet az elmúlt év magyarországi iszlámellenes diszkurzív eseményeivel és azok hazai és nemzetközi kontextusával. A jelentés alapjául a hazai média és politikai élet meghatározó vitáinak elemzése illetve 2016 decemberében a sajtó, illetve hazai civil szervezetek egy-egy képviselőjével folytatott szakértői interjúk szolgáltak.

# Introduction

Islam in Hungary today has a very low number of followers and no historically indigenous community comparable to those of, for example, Romania or Poland.[1] During the most recent official census of 2011,[2] 5,579 - or 0.056% - of the country's legal residents indicated their affiliation to, almost exclusively, Sunni Islam.[3] Of these, 4,097 (73.4%) declared themselves Hungarian, while 2,369 (42.5%) as Arab by ethnicity.[4] However, various estimates put the number of the country's Islamic community between 25,000[5] and 50,000.[6] Even so, with a share of well under 1% (0.1 or 0.3% respectively) of the overall population, Islam can be considered a marginal and invisible religion in the country; Budapest, a city of more than two million, has only one mosque and merely a handful of prayer rooms. The last minaret was built almost 500 years ago by the occupying Ottoman Turks.[7] Currently, there are two officially recognised Islamic religious organisations, both Sunni, working in Hungary: the Hungarian Islamic Community (*MIK - Magyar Iszlám Közösség*) and the Church of Muslims of Hungary (*MME – Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza*).[8] Among these, the latter largely represents foreign-born Muslims, while the former is mainly dominated by Hungarian-born converts and is better represented in the media. Both organisations are too small in number to adhere themselves to a singular branch or *madhhab* (school of Islamic jurisprudence); the MIK declares itself to be open to both Sunni and Shia Islam and all of their *madhāhib.*[9] A formerly third organisation - but still the largest -, the Islamic Church (*IE – Iszlám Egyház*) had its status as an officially recognised church revoked in 2012. On the government level,

1. Renata Włoch, "Islam in Poland," *International Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2009), p. 58-67.

2. The Hungarian government does not collect official data on religious affiliation; however, the 2011 national census included an optional question on religious affiliation.

3. Népszámlálás 2011, *10. Vallás, felekezet* (Budapest: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, 2014), p. 160.

4. Hungary's Central Statistics Office allows the declaration of more than one ethnicity, thus the sum of residents declaring Hungarian and Arab ethnicity is higher than those declaring their affiliation to Islam. Also, there is no distinction made between the passport countries of residents with Arab ethnicity. See: Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, "A népességnemzetiségi, anyanyelv, családi, barátiközösségbenhasználtnyelvéskulturáliskötődésszerint,"*ksh.hu*, (April 17, 2013), retrieved December 29, 2015, from http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_teruleti_00.

5. Pew Research Centre, "Muslim Population by Country," *pewforum.org*, (January 27, 2011), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/table-muslim-population-by-country/.

6. Iszlam.com, "Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza," *islzlam.com*, (not dated), retrieved December 28, 2015, from http://iszlam.com/kerdes-valasz/altalanos-kerdesek/item/2093-magyarorszagon-hany-fore-teheto-az-iszlam-hivok-szama-es-a-tobbseg-siita-vagy-szunnita.

7. Zoltan Pall/Omar Sayfo, "Why an anti-Islam campaign has taken root in Hungary, a country with few Muslims," *Visegrád Revue*, (September 14, 2006), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://visegradrevue.eu/why-an-anti-islam-campaign-has-taken-root-in-hungary-a-country-with-few-muslims/#note-5351-1.

8. According to Hungarian legal practice, all religious organisations, Christian or not, seeking recognition by the state are referred to with the term 'church' (*egyház*) originating from Christian ecclesiastic practice.

9. MihályDobrovits, ""Amígkinemtöregyfelkelés" (BolekZoltán, a Magyar IszlámKözösségvezetője)," *Magyar Narancs*, (July 31, 2003), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://magyarnarancs.hu/belpol/amig_ki_nem_tor_egy_felkeles_bolek_zoltan_a_magyar_iszlam_kozosseg_vezetoje-66548.

the community is represented by the Islamic Council of Hungary (*MIT –Magyarországi Iszlám Tanács*), an umbrella organisation jointly created by the MIK and the MME in 2011 and recognised as one of the country's 32 churches by parliament in 2012.[10]

During the course of its history, Hungary has had frequent, mostly not very peaceful, encounters with the Muslim world. Traces of Hungary's Ottoman occupation (1541-1699) are still present in the country's collective memory, e.g. even 400 years later, Hungarian children can recite nursery rhymes about a stork wounded by a Turkish child and healed by a Hungarian one. The Ottoman era, however, is not interpreted through a religious lens as a Christian-Muslim conflict, but rather through an ethnic one as a foreign occupation. Hence, the Ottomans are not regarded any differently than the Catholic Austrians, or the atheist Soviets, who also occupied the country for longer periods of time. Since the Ottomans were more interested in collecting taxes from the Christian population than converting it to Islam, they are remembered mostly as occupiers in political terms. The 17th-century poet and military strategist, Miklós Zrínyi, for example, saw the Ottomans as an obstacle to Hungarian sovereignty, rather than a lethal threat to the Catholic faith.[11]

In 1916, the recognition of Islam as one of Hungary's official denominations is the second example of legislation of this kind in Europe after the Austrian part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire did the same in 1912. Both acts were the direct result of the incorporation of Muslim-majority Bosnia into the Empire in 1908 but remain in effect until today. Despite the memory of the Ottoman occupation, Hungarian Orientalist scholars have managed to contribute to the emergence of highly romanticised and essentialised, yet fundamentally positive images of the Orient and thus, of Islam.

During the four decades of communist rule, Hungary built strong political and economic relations with several 'brotherly socialist' countries of the Arab region. This was in accordance with the policies of the larger Soviet bloc. Thousands of Muslim students from secular Arab republics, such as Algeria, Syria, Palestine and Iraq, pursued their engineering or medical studies at Hungarian universities. Many of these students married Hungarians and permanently settled in the country. Thus, Hungary has had a fundamentally different experience with the integration of its Muslims than Western Europe due to their small number, their usually high educational level and for the most part their successful integration. It is important to note however that even if the upkeep of religious practices does play a significant role in the personal lives of foreign-born Hungarian Muslims, the external identification of these immigrant groups by the host society is more likely to be based on their ethnic

10. HVG, "Nyilvános a lista az elismert egyházakról", *hvg.hu*, (April 23, 2012), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20120423_elismert_egyhazak.

11. Pall/Sayfo, *Why an anti-Islam campaign has taken root in Hungary, a country with few Muslims.*

origin, not religious affiliation. Thus, good relations with one's 'Iraqi GP' or 'Syrian grocer' won't necessarily be translated into or seen as representative of the perceptions of Islam and Muslims in general. This, as well as the low number of Muslims, also means that the average Hungarian is likely to have little or no direct contact with Muslims on a daily basis.

Although Islamophobia was not dominant in the Hungary of the '90s and 2000s, it was nevertheless present in public discourse. Thus, American-style 'Born Again Christians', mainly members of the Hungarian branch of the Pentecostals, the Faith Church (with about 60.000 members), saw in Islam the manifestation of the Antichrist.[12]

Often styled as a case study of 'Islamophobia without Muslims',[13] Hungary has been increasingly showing cases of intolerance, negative attitudes, essentialisation and fear towards Islam. Also, not surprisingly, Hungary has not been exempt from the Europe-wide phenomenon of overestimating Islam's demographic strength within the population. The latest Ipsos MORI poll of late 2016 found that the Hungarian public has also greatly overestimated the portion of the country's Muslims putting their number at 6% against what in reality is well below 0.1%[14] and predicted their increase to 14% by 2020. According to experts, this portion is not likely to increase above the current number of 0.1%.[15]

According to a PEW Research Center study of spring 2016, Hungarians are the most fearful of refugees in the EU: 76% of the Hungarian respondents in the study think refugees increase the risk of terror attacks; 82% fear that refugees pose a burden to the economy; 69% say the large number of refugees leaving Iraq and Syria is a major threat to their country; 76% think that Muslims are unwilling to integrate and wish to lead a life distinct from the country's customs and way of life; while 72% has an unfavourable view of Muslims in general – the latter result being the highest in Europe. It is also remarkable that while elsewhere in Europe people on the ideological Right express more concerns about refugees, more negative attitudes toward minorities and less enthusiasm for a diverse society, this view is more strongly held by Hungarians on the ideological Left (76% as opposed to 69% on the Right).[16]

12. Website of Sándor Németh, founder and leader of Hungary's Faith Church: http://www.nemethsandor.hu/surusodo-tortenelem (retrieved February 5, 2017).

13. Michał Buchowski/Katarzyna Chlewińska, *Tolerance and Cultural Discourses Diversity in Poland* (Florence: European University Institute, 2010), p. 32-33.

14. The Data Team, "Daily Chart: Islam in Europe", *The Economist*, January 7, 2015.Available from http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2015/01/daily-chart-2 (retrieved February 5, 2017).

15. Ipsos MORI, "Perils of Perception," *ipsos-mori.com*, (2016), retrieved December 14, 2016, from https://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Polls/ipsos-mori-perils-of-perception-charts-2016.pdf.

16. Richard Wike/Brude Stokes/Katie Simmons,"Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs,"*PEW Research Center*, (July 11, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

As we know, the year 2015 was an unusually turbulent year for both the country and its Muslim communities with the unfolding of the so-called 'refugee crisis' and the resulting debates about resettlement quotas within the EU which dominated domestic discourses and brought about rapid changes in attitudes. Narratives of the Right in general and the government in particular were characterised by the effort to use Islam as one of the main arguments in the country's stand-off with Brussels on handling the 'refugee crisis', the government's refusal to accept the proposed EU-wide refugee resettlement quota system and to drive away domestic attention from the country's deep-running economic, societal, and political problems. Both towards domestic and foreign audiences Orbán and his allies developed an often repeated mantra referring to Islam in contrast to Christian/European culture and the PM often styled himself as the sole defender of Christian Europe. By selecting a tiny domestic community and a voiceless mass of newcomers as their 'scapegoat', which had no opportunity to offer a counter-narrative and to defend themselves, the government's strategy was set up for success. In general terms, the year 2016 was largely about strengthening and building upon the fundaments of this narrative. As a result, anti-Muslim and anti-migrant narratives enjoy an overwhelming consensus among the Hungarian population, despite the fact that the construction of a razor-wire fence along the country's southern borders has been successful in keeping refugees from entering the country and in rerouting the so-called Balkan route of migration to Croatia and Slovenia. The image of uncontrollable hordes of mainly Muslim immigrants that seek to Islamize Christian Europe and are being let into the EU by the decadent and weak liberal democracies of the West remains uncontested. Combined with narratives criticising the EU and Western democracies, the weakness of the country's left-wing opposition and the lack or discrediting of counter-narratives both from in- and outside, this narrative is used as a highly successful tool to demonize migrants and Islam as existential threats for Hungary and Europe. Global events of the year, such as the attacks in France and Germany or the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States were used as further justification for government policies and rhetoric targeting migrants and Muslims and blurring Islam with terrorism and the notion of an eminent threat.

Also telling is the government's usage of linguistic tools. Since the beginning of the 'refugee crisis' in 2015, the conservative media and the government have been exclusively referring to refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants as '*illegális bevándorlók*' (illegal immigrants) or '*migránsok*' (migrants) thereby playing down the root causes and humanitarian nature of the crisis.

Hungarian political discourses of this year were largely dominated by the referendum on whether to accept mandatory EU quotas for relocating migrants. In

September 2015, the European Union agreed to relocate an additional 120,000 migrants across its member states. Hungary opposed accepting 1,294 refugees, the number that would have been its share of the mandatory quota. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán argued that the quota system would "redraw Hungary's and Europe's ethnic, cultural and religious identities, which no EU organ has the right to do."[17] The prime minister's initiative gained parliamentary approval from governing *Fidesz* and KDNP (Christian Democratic) lawmakers, as well as MPs of the oppositional extreme-right *Jobbik*, while the majority of left-wing opposition boycotted the plenary session. Although the referendum's proposed question "Do you want the European Union to be able to mandate the obligatory resettlement of non-Hungarian citizens into Hungary even without the approval of the National Assembly?" has been legally challenged by a number of parties, the country's Supreme Court gave the green light to the initiative. In June, the Constitutional Court rejected all existing four appeals against the referendum[18] allowing President János Áder to set 2 October, 2016, as the date for the referendum. Deputy Prime Minister and KDNP leader Zsolt Semjén described the costs of the failed referendum as 'good investment' that will prevent Hungary from witnessing the Islamization of its population.[19]

The announcement of the referendum signalled the start of an intensive campaign calling for the rejection of the quota system. The government's 'information campaign', costing €34 million, featured large billboards with controversial messages, such as "Did you know? More than 300 people were killed in terrorist attacks in Europe since the start of the migrant crisis"; "Did you know? The Paris terrorist attacks were carried out by immigrants"; "Did you know? 1.5 million illegal immigrants arrived to Europe in 2015"; "Did you know? Almost one million immigrants want to come to Europe from Libya alone?" ;or "Did you know? Since the start of the immigration crisis, sexual harassment of women has increased in Europe?"After seven months of heated debates and campaign, an overwhelming majority of voters (98%) rejected the EU's migrant quotas; turnout, however, was too low to make the referendum valid. Regardless of the low turnout (44%) making the referendum invalid, the government declared the results as 'politically valid' and regarded them as a political mandate to "defend the country against the compulsory quota".

17. BBC News, "Migrant crisis: Hungary to hold referendum on EU quota plan",*bbc.com*, (February 24, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35652655.

18. Origo, "Zöldutatadott a kvótanépszavazásnakazAlkotmánybíróság," *origo.hu*,(June 21, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.origo.hu/itthon/20160621-zold-utat-adott-a-kvotanepszavazasnak-az-alkotmanybirosag.html.

19. HVG, "Semjén: 15 milliárdahhozképest, hogyrobbantásoklesznek?",*hvg.hu*, (02.10.2016), http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161002_Semjen_15_milliard_ahhoz_kepest_hogy_robbantasok_lesznek__video

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Education

There have been no major changes since 2015 in the field of education. Hungary's rich Islamic history and ties to Muslim-majority regions are still ignored and omitted from general history curricula; the overwhelming majority of history textbooks tend to be Eurocentric and are inadequate in terms of providing students with a balanced knowledge of Islam and Islamic societies. Even if reference is made to, for example the rise of Islam, the Ottoman Empire, or de-/colonisation, the portrayal of non-European regions remains marginal, schematic and lacking critical analysis.[20] Also, as István Tóth, vice president of MIK remarks, contrary to other churches, the Islamic community is still not allowed to review the content on Islam in curricula.[21]

Since the beginning of the 'refugee crisis', conservative and government-affiliated media outlets have been frequently featuring Hungarian Orientalist scholars styled as 'security policy analysts' and 'Middle East experts'. More often than not, their analyses quote from Islam's foundational texts, interpreting them as calls to use violence in order to conquer the land of unbelievers. Contemporary Muslims' interpretations or a deeper sociological analysis of the migrants' realities is rarely the subject of such 'expert opinions'.

Most of these Middle East experts are graduates of the Pázmány Peter Catholic University's Arabic faculty,[22] headed by an advisor to PM Orbán, Miklós Maróth, an academic well known for his Christian-Conservative views and philological approaches, which claim that all Muslims disregard the European legal system, following only Sharia law instead.[23] He also has suggested that the EU should not only bar Muslim migrants from entering Europe, but has even argued that European Muslims already living in European countries should be stripped of their citizenship, and that Muslim refugees and migrants 'should be wrapped in pork skin' if they do not accept European norms.[24]

Another set of scholars are employed by the Migration Research Institute, established in 2015, by organisations close to the ruling government. The institute's aim is to publish reports on the security risks posed by Muslims in Europe, and to provide 'academic' justification for the government's anti-migrant policies.[25]

20. Zsuzsanna Mikáné-Szolnoki, "Azarabvilágésaziszlám - A magyarközépiskolaitörténelemtankönyvekösszehasonlítóelemzése," *Elektronikus Könyvés Nevelés*, OrszágosSzéchenyiKönyvtár, (2003) 5:1

21. Interview with IstvánTóth, 2015

22. Pall/Sayfo, *Why an anti-Islam campaign has taken root in Hungary, a country with few Muslims*.

23. Viktor Attila Vincze, "Lehetetlen a muszlimokintegrálása," *Magyar Idők*, (Febuary22, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://magyaridok.hu/belfold/lehetetlen-muszlimok-integralasa-396238/.

24. Conference organised by Migrációkutató Intézet – Európamigrációbóleredőbiztonságpolitikaikihívásai, 11.02.2016. See You-Tube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N05zdOVJD2w.

25. *HVG*, "Migrációkutatóintézetetalapít a Századvég,"*hvg.hu*, (September 1, 2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150911_Migraciokutato_intezetet_alapit_a_Szazadv.

Despite increasingly hostile popular sentiments, the vast majority of Hungary's Islamic and Middle East Studies community managed to provide better, sociologically-founded analyses on the issues related to Islam, radicalism and migration. Scholars such as Zoltán Szombathy, professor of Islamic history at ELTE University; Zsolt Rostoványi, rector of Corvinus University; or Erzsébet N. Rózsa, a senior researcher at the Hungarian Institute of Foreign Affairs seek to highlight the sociopolitical reasons behind contemporary Muslim migration movements.[26] Also, some representatives of the Catholic Church, such as Péter Mustó, a Jesuit priest, or Csaba Böjte, a Franciscan monk, promote Pope Francis's peaceful approach highlighting a humanitarian responsibility towards refugees and advising against linking violence to any religion.[27]

## Politics

The seven months of this heightened intensity campaign surrounding the EU's refugee resettlement quotas dominated a large spectrum of domestic discourse both in the political arena and in the media. Outside events, such as the Brussels bombings in March, the Istanbul bombings in June, the summer attacks in Germany and France, the election of Donald Trump as president of the U.S., the ongoing wars in Syria and Iraq, as well as the Christmas attack in Berlin were framed as further justifications for the government's stance against immigration, the standoff with Brussels, the rejection of quotas and the aggressive 'No' campaign for the October referendum in government and conservative media outlets. These outside events and the way they were framed by overwhelming segments of the political arena and the media managed to further radicalise public opinion on Islam and immigration, establish uncontested *Islam-terrorism, immigration-crime-existential threat* nexuses building on the unprecedented public shock caused by the influx of refugees in the summer of 2015.

Within the framework of the quota referendum campaign, beside the aforementioned large-scale billboards, the government organised a series of public forums in order to mobilise rural voters. Attended by government ministers, state secretaries, *Fidesz* MPs, pro-government journalists, such as Zsolt Bayer and government security advisers, notably György Nógrádi and Georg Spöttle, these forums became infamous for hard-toned speeches and anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim statements.[28] In June, in a speech given at a Christian Democratic youth summer camp, Speaker of the National Assembly László Kövér warned his audience of the ongoing 'cultural disintegration of Europe', the "threat of 'unintegrable' migrants integrating indigenous Eu-

26. Pall/Sayfo, *Why an anti-Islam campaign has taken root in Hungary, a country with few Muslims*.

27. Böjte Csaba, "Lenne egy kérdésem a pápa kritikusaihoz!," *mandiner.hu*, (August 6, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://kereszteny.mandiner.hu/cikk/20160806_bojte_csaba_lenne_egy_kerdesem_a_papa_kritikusaihoz

28. JózsefSpirk , "Bayer Zsoltértkapkodtak a legjobban a fideszesfórumszervezők,"*Népszabadság*, (September 16, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://web.archive.org/web/20160917134528/http://nol.hu/belfold/bayer-zsoltert-kapkodtak-a-legjobban-a-fideszes-forumszervezok-1632183.

ropean populations" before closing his speech by asking 'Shall we be enslaved or free, Muslims or Christians?' evoking a sentimental 1848 revolutionary poem.

Figure 1: Government leaflet of some of Europe's 900 'no-go zones'. Source: *The Independent*, 21.09.2016

In the run-up to the quota referendum, the Hungarian government distributed an official leaflet that claimed that major European cities, such as London, Brussels, Marseille, Berlin, Stockholm and Malmö had become "no-go" areas due to high levels of immigration, that high levels of immigration have produced a spike in terrorism and violent assault, and that authorities are unable to impose order in 900 such areas in Western Europe. (Figure 1) While not explicitly Islamophobic, the leaflet, as well as an interview given by Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó to the BBC echoes a warning by a Fox News commentator last year that there were "no-go zones" across Europe "where Muslim density is very intense".[29]

The overall tone of the referendum campaign was condemned from numerous sides both domestic and international; Amnesty International, for example, said Orbán's campaign rhetoric 'replaced the rule of law with the rule of fear',[30] while the Brussels-based European edition of *Politico* described the event as 'Orbán's Potemkin referendum' arguing that the country 'actually needs migrants, even if it doesn't want them", citing the private sector to be suffering from skilled labour shortages.[31]

In November, László Toroczkai, the infamous mayor of Ásotthalom, a village of less than 4,000 souls lying on the southern borders, issued an order banning the construction of mosques or minarets, the Muslim call for prayer, the wearing of the chador, the niqab, the burqa and the burkini, as well as LGBT 'propaganda' and Gay Pride marches in the village. Toroczkai argued that he wished to set a positive example to other Hungarian municipalities in order to guarantee the 'centuries-old traditions' of local communities in the face of mass migration to the country.[32] Inter-

29. Henry Mance, "Hungary says London is a 'no-go' zone due to immigration,"*Financial Times*, (September 21, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttps://www.ft.com/content/a29fbf40-8000-11e6-8e50-8ec15fb462f4.

30. Al Jazeera News, "Hungary votes on EU refugee quotas referendum," *aljazeera.com,* (October 2, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/hungary-votes-eu-refugee-quotas-referendum-161002042908625.html.

31. Goran Buldioski, "Orbán's Potemkin Referendum,"*Politico*, (September 22, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-hungary-eu-refugees-referendum/.

32. HVG, "Toroczkaiodacsap a bevándorlóknak: megtiltják a mecsetépítéstÁsotthalmon," *hvg.hur*, (November 24., 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124_toroczkai_asotthalom_muszlim_tiltas.

estingly, there was no government reaction to this order that has been criticised for being anti-constitutional both by domestic and international commentators.

Outside of the ruling *Fidesz* orbit, the country's notoriously anti-Semitic and anti-Roma *Jobbik* has seen slow transformation. The party whose leader, Gábor Vona, once referred to Islam as the 'only light of civilisation in the darkness of Globalism',[33] is still maintaining strong international ties with Muslim countries, such as Turkey and Iran, and thus refrains from making openly anti-Islamic statements. This is, however, not the case with its core constituency, the wider Hungarian far right, a constituency that *Fidesz* also seeks to address. The grass roots of the movement sometimes even call for the massacre of the refugees on both Facebook and Twitter. With this, *Jobbik*'s support base is moving closer to the discourse exemplified by the far Right in Western Europe.[34]

## Justice System

Islam is one of the country's state-recognised religions since 1916. According to the president of the Church of Muslims in Hungary, Zoltan Sulok, Islam, being one of the country's long-recognised religions, faces no legal obstacles: Muslims are guaranteed freedom of religion and there are no Hungarian laws contradicting Islamic practices.[35] On the other hand however, there have been a number of smaller scale transgressions against Muslims (such as verbal abuse, pulling off headscarves), which however remained largely unreported.[36]

Also, the police and the notoriously underfinanced and under-prioritised Immigration Authority have no programmes to train personnel in intercultural interaction or sensitivity about cultural/religious background. Accordingly, dealing with Muslim women or with inmates, for example, during Ramadan remains problematic and there were minor incidents based on mocking religion or mishandling copies of the Quran However, the majority of such incidents are likely to remain unreported.[37] Also, since the beginning of the so-called 'refugee crisis' and the government's increasing Islamophobic reactions, both Muslim communities and NGOs sense a deterioration of formerly good and cooperative relations with state authorities.[38]

In an open letter, the president of the Hungarian Islamic Community asks PM Orbán for the physical protection of their mosques and families from hate crimes.

33. Index, "IszlámrajongókénttértvisszaVonaTörökországból,"index.hu, (November 11, 2013), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://index.hu/belfold/2013/11/11/iszlamhivokent_tert_vissza_vona_torokorszagbol/.

34. Pall/Sayfo, *Why an anti-Islam campaign has taken root in Hungary, a country with few Muslims*.

35. Gergely Szilvay, "A szeretet vagy háború vallása az iszlám?," *Mandíner,* (April 22, 2015), retrieved January 3, 2015, from http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20150421_a_szeretet_vagy_a_haboru_vallasa_az_iszlam.

36. Interview with Omar Sayfo on December 2, 2016.

37. Interview conducted with Júlia Iván, senior legal officer at the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, a human rights organisation working on the legal protection of refugees (Budapest, November 12, 2015).

38. Ibid.; and interview conducted with István Tóth, vice president of the Islamic Church of Hungary (MIK). 2015.

Zoltán Bolek mentioned the increasing amount of hate speech, threats and physical assaults targeting the community as reasons to 'be afraid'. In its reply, the government reassured the president that Hungary is there to protect all of its citizens.[39]

## Media

Similarly to the country's political landscape, Hungarian media is also characterised by a stark Left-Right divide where political and ideological allegiances are more or less the norm. Hungary's media environment, a privately owned sector that has suffered from increased state regulation since the *Fidesz* government's coming to power, continues to be under government pressure to influence coverage.[40] The sudden shutdown of *Népszabadság,* the country's largest traditional left-wing daily newspaper in October 2016, was the hitherto most serious blow against a media outlet providing a counter-narrative to the government's anti-Islam and anti-migrant rhetoric. The narrative that's been given rise since the intensification of the 'refugee crisis' in 2015 allowed for the securitisation of Islam and Muslim immigration to a level that is largely incontestable in today's political and media environment. In this environment, all balanced opinions are either ignored by popular media, or sidelined by nationalist clamor.

Self-declared 'experts' are frequent guests who provide simplistic and often highly populist and Islamophobic answers about current events and Islam itself. Many of these increasingly popular 'independent' commentators, who in reality express right-wing or pro-government ideas, such as György Nógrádi and Georg Spöttle, contribute to the spreading of essentialised anti-Islamic stereotypes and calculated fearmongering. They are almost omnipresent guests both in the media (including, conservative television and radio channels, print and online media outlets) as well as at *Fidesz* campaign events and local party forums.

## Internet

While there is no sign of organised anti-Islamic networks of media outlets or public figures, the 'refugee crisis' and the quota referendum campaign has increased the vehemence of right-wing, xenophobic Internet portals and popular so called 'like hunting' or 'like bait' news sites publishing fake news on Muslim refugees. Sites such as *kurucinfo.hu, meteon.hu, legfrissebb.info,* faith- and Church-affiliated *vigyazo.hu* or explicitly anti-migrant sites such as *napimigrans.hu* (lit. 'daily migrant') flood social media with content often bordering on hate speech.[41]

It is important to note that the language of the current anti-Islam discourse largely uses the tropes traditionally applied in anti-Gypsy (e.g. non-European ori-

39. HVG, "Félünk" - írtakOrbánnak a magyarmuszlimoknevében," *hvg.hu*, (September 24, 2016), retrieved 5, 2017, from http://hvg.hu/itthon/20160924_Felunk__irtak_Orbannak_a_magyar_muszlimok_neveben.

40. Freedom House, "Hungary: 5-year decline in press freedom," *freedomhouse.org*, (2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttps://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/hungary.

41. Interview with Omar Adam Sayfo (December 2, 2016).

gin, linking to crime, impossible integration, etc.), as well as those applied to Jews (e.g. self-perceived superiority, anti-Christian/European conspiracies, etc.). However, while by now, anti-Gypsy and anti-Jewish utterances are more or less considered to be taboo in mainstream discourses, anti-Muslim and anti-refugee rhetoric – both in a seemingly elevated, intellectual way, as well as in highly derogatory, racist and vulgar style – became acceptable throughout the larger parts of mainstream media. As a result, anti-Islam and indeed anti-Muslim viewpoints are 'no longer subject to condemnation–sometimes they are all but duties'.[42]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Given the absence of a sizable Muslim population, verbal Muslim-bashing has proven to be a conduit through which Hungarian society's frustrations can be channelled in politically and socially safe ways.[43] Without any effective counter-narrative or defence strategy, this no-stakes situation has led to an uncontested monopoly of an openly anti-Islam rhetoric dominating the mainstreams of politics and the media and enjoying the unconditional support of an overwhelming portion of the population. However, Islamophobia in this small, ethnically highly homogenous and in cultural-linguistic terms isolated Central European country lacking any recent direct experience of peaceful interaction with Islam or Muslim populations should be viewed through a domestic political lens. With high unemployment rates, widespread poverty and corruption, bleak economic prospects and an increasingly weakening middle class, large parts of Hungarian society are hard to be considered as winners of the country's transition from communism to democracy. By tapping into the population's irrational fear of what is an unknown religion and culture, the *Fidesz* government has been using Islamophobia as a political tool to drive away attention from the country's mismanagement and deep-rooted socioeconomic problems.

**To counter this, the following recommendations are formulated:**

- The political elite needs to stop framing Islam and Muslim refugees as an existential threat to the future of the country and Europe and using Islamophobic narratives as its primary political tool.
- There is an urgent need to fight the uncontested Islamophobic narratives of the political Right. Studying the root causes accounting for the almost universal acceptance of these anti-Muslim narratives by the overwhelming portion of the population is essential in developing strategies on numerous levels – the political, media-related, educational, academic, or cultural – to combat these narratives and to replace them.

42. Omar Sayfo, "On Islamophobia and on its beneficial effects," *Hungarian Free Press*, (March 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/03/20/omar-sayfo-on-islamophobia-and-on-its-beneficial-effects/.

43. Pall/Sayfo, *Why an anti-Islam campaign has taken root in Hungary, a country with few Muslims.*

- There is a genuine need to address the very existence of Islamophobia, define it as a form of racism and criminalise Islamophobic utterances as is the case with anti-Semitic utterances.
- Islam needs to be explained and made familiar both by its community and by qualified, non-partisan, politically neutral commentators. Also, Islamophobic utterances need to be countered in meaningful, professional ways both by the community and engaged NGOs or lobby groups.
- The Muslim community and NGOs cooperating with Muslims in the country should both strive for increased interreligious and intercultural exchanges and dialogues between Muslim and non-Muslim Hungarians on the grass-roots level in order to enable more personal and institutional contact.

## Chronology

- **24 February** – PM Viktor Orbán announces that the Hungarian government will hold a referendum on whether to accept the European Union's proposed mandatory quotas for relocating migrants. The announcement marks the beginning of a large-scale government billboard campaign often described as racist, xenophobic, and using violent language.
- **08 July** – In a speech given at a Christian Democratic youth summer camp, Speaker of the Parliament László Kövér warned his audience of the ongoing 'cultural disintegration of Europe', the "threat of 'unintegrable' migrants integrating indigenous European populations" before closing his speech by asking 'Shall we be enslaved or free, Muslims or Christians?' evoking an 1848 revolutionary poem.
- **20 August** – A tweet of *Fidesz* MEP György Schöpflin suggests installing pig heads on Hungary's border fence to scare off refugees. His tweet has been widely shared in British and Hungarian media.
- **6 September** – An under-secretariat within the Ministry of Human Resources is created in order to fight the persecution of Christians. The move is widely criticised because of the stark contradiction with how the Hungarian government tackled the 'refugee crisis' in the summer of 2015.
- **21 September** – Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó talks to the BBC about a controversial government leaflet which claims migrants have created "no-go zones" in the UK and elsewhere in Europe.
- **24 September** – In an open letter, the president of the Hungarian Islamic Community asks PM Orbán for the physical protection of their mosques and families from hate crimes.
- **2 October** – In the referendum announced in February, an overwhelming majority of voters rejects the EU's migrant quotas, although the 44% turnout was too low to make the poll valid.

- **11 October** – Hungary's largest broadsheet newspaper *Népszabadság*, a vehement opposition voice to the government and the quota referendum, shuts down suddenly, with journalists and the opposition alleging government pressure.
- **24 November** - The right-wing mayor of Ásotthalom, a village on the southern borders, bans mosques, minarets, the muezzin's call for prayer, burkas, niqabs and burqinis in the village.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN IRELAND NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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## The Author

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# Executive Summary

The data presented here evidence the realities of Islamophobia in Ireland detailing experiences of hostility and discrimination; continued exclusions in the education sector; political actors and central figures in the Islamophobia network in Ireland; media; the justice system and the Internet. This submission draws on a number of sources including data provided on anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination captured by the European Network Against Racism Ireland and a synopsis of a report published by the Immigrant Council of Ireland which documents Islamophobia in Dublin. The data provided in these sources provide insights on both the online and offline experiences of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland at the interpersonal level including verbal and physical abuse and cyber-hostility.

At the level of structural and institutional exclusion the educational context remains problematic. Despite some welcome steps being made by the Irish government, the education sphere continues to be an area of concern with the continued potential for exclusion on the basis of religious identity. The lack of hate crime legislation also remains an issue.

Media reporting on Muslim communities in the Irish context continues to be problematic. Two main themes can be identified in the analysis presented here. The first refers to the continuing notion of a 'cultural clash' between Islam and the 'West'; the second theme relates to the notion of Muslims as a pathological 'enemy within'. What is disappointingly notable, despite some nuance, is the manner in which these macro themes of the Muslim as Other continue to be regurgitated by media actors.

The past twelve months have witnessed, arguably the most worrying developments on the political level when it comes to anti-Muslim/Islam groups including PEGIDA and also the National Party among others; including pronouncements by mainstream political actors. This report will conclude with some recommendations on how to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland.

# Introduction

The European Islamophobia Report for Ireland for 2016 evidences the lived experiences of Islamophobia in Ireland. It is regrettable to report that in many ways nothing has changed and the areas of exclusion detailed last year persist;[1] indeed, the main notable change is that of the increased visibility of anti-Muslim political groupings. This submission is made up of six distinct sections which detail experiences of hostility and discrimination; continued exclusions in the education sector; political actors and central figures in the Islamophobia network in Ireland; media; and Islamophobia on the Internet. This report will conclude with some recommendations on how to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland.

# Significant Incidents and Developments

The report below provides detailed insights on the significant incidents and developments of 2016 vis-à-vis Islamophobia in Ireland. Space does not permit for a full additional adumbration of these issues here. Nonetheless, the events of most significance arguably centre on the emergence and increased visibility of anti-Muslim political parties over the course of 2016; including the increased relations between these groups and internationally renowned anti-Muslim protagonists. This is particularly worrying in that it indicates an emboldening of these groups in Ireland in that they are making their anti-Muslim message increasingly public; arguably, feeling legitimised in the current international context of increasingly successful far-right activity. The other point of significance is that of so little change. The problematic content of media reports around Muslim communities persists despite research recommendations to the contrary; the lack of hate crime legislation remains; and the potential for Muslim people and those of no/other religious groups to experience discrimination in education maintains. On a positive note, non-governmental groups such as the European Network Against Racism Ireland and the Immigrant Council of Ireland, among others, have come forward with research and recommendations to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland.

## Anti-Muslim Hostility and Discrimination

In 2015, *An Garda Síochána*, the Irish police service commenced recording of 'anti-Muslim' as a basis for criminal hostility on their Police Using Leading Systems Effectively (PULSE) database. Drawing on available data, media reports from September 2016 indicate that, despite under-reporting, there has been an almost double proportional increase in the rate of hate crime reported to Irish police when com-

1. James Carr, "Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2016," Enes Bayraklı/Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2016* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016). Available from http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/reports/2015/en/EIR_2015_IRELAND.pdf (retrieved December 2, 2016).

pared to 2015.[2] The data that were released to the Press Association were, however, not disaggregated by the religious background of the victim; instead the report noted the "number of racist incidents or those motivated because of someone's ethnic background or religion soared to 98 in the first six months of this year."[3] Given this situation and that the facility to specifically record anti-Muslim hostility has been in place for a year, a request was made by the author to the agency tasked with collation and analysis of crime data, namely the Central Statistics Office (CSO), for relevant figures; however, at the time of writing such data have not been made available. Indeed, somewhat worryingly when asked by the media the CSO "declined to give data on the exact number of incidents recorded under each of the 11 categories" lest it lead to the identification of those targeted and result in negative repercussions. Thus, despite the tools being available it is not possible to detail the numbers of anti-Muslim aggravated offences/incidents if any, reported to the police.

Given this paucity of data, the author utilised two alternative sources to provide insights on lived Islamophobia in Ireland. The first of these comes in the form of data provided by the European Network Against Racism Ireland (ENAR) derived from their online third-party reporting mechanism iReport, accounting for the first six months of 2016. The second source is a synopsis of report findings on anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Dublin, Ireland. In both cases the data presented are qualitative. The first comment detailed here was reported to ENAR by a South-Asian Muslim woman using public transport in Dublin. The second comment below demonstrates the importance of signifiers of Muslimness in experiences of anti-Muslim hostility. In this instance, the Muslim woman firmly believes that it is her Muslimness that is being targeted; this perception is supported by comments, similar to those below, that commonly co-locate Islamic identities with terrorism in extant research. Furthermore, the reference to 'foreigner' again underpins the belief that to be Muslim in Ireland one must be foreign as demonstrated in previous studies.[4]

> "Today, for the first time since I've been in Ireland, I've had the misfortune of experiencing, not one, but two anti-Islamic slurs. 1. As I stood at the bus stop to board the 46a from O'Connell Street, a woman looked me in the eye and said the following "are you f..king crazy, you f..king stupid foreigner, there's a f..king bus queue" to which I remained silent. When the bus arrived, I let everyone who came after me board the bus before I did, not one of them received any comment from this woman who waited to board the bus just before me (even though she was first in line) to which she told the bus driver, "these f..king foreigners, I f..king

2.The Irish Times, "One hate crime reported to Garda every day, figures show," *The Irish Times*, (October 16, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, fromhttp://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/one-hate-crime-reported-to-garda-every-day-figures-show-1.2831615.

3.Ibid.

4.James Carr, *Experiences of Islamophobia: Living with racism in the neoliberal era* (London: Routledge, 2016).

> hate them, they're just f..king young idiots" and shockingly, he agreed. 2) Whilst on the bus that I had just boarded, a woman at the back of the bus kept chanting "I'll f..king blow you, you f..king scum, get off the bus and take your packets and your bag with you (I had just been to the grocer)," and a whole lot of other slurs along those lines…"[5]

> "Coming from O'Connell St. we had attended the anti-racist demo at the GPO, we decided to walk our Irish Muslim friend, who wears a hijab, to Capel St. for her safety and as there were scuffles between the Garda and anti-racist protesters … There were two men standing in the laneway, Irish one in his twenties the other probably thirties. As we passed them they started making abusive remarks "Ireland for the Irish" "Muslims are child rapers" "Muslims go back to where you belong" and much more. What was striking about this incident was their vehemence and their aggression. They were literally roaring abuse, we walked past them and didn't look back. My Muslim friend told me after that her daughter, who also wears a hijab was subjected to similar abuse on another occasion."[6]

Other reports to ENAR included: the verbal abuse meted out to a young woman "At X UNIVERSITY Ball, person approached girl of Arab descent shouting "Allahu Akbar"";[7] and an assault upon an imam in Cork City when he "was on his way to Blarney Street mosque with his wife for Aisha prayers (11pm to 11.15pm) when he was set upon and forced to the ground…"[8]

In February, the Immigrant Council of Ireland published a report documenting experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Dublin.[9] Hostility manifested as verbal and physical abuse and damage to property. Participants recalled the manner in which verbal abuse directed toward them drew on racialised stereotypical constructions of Muslims and Islam. The experiences of anti-Muslim hostility recalled by the participants occurred on the street and/or using public transport with signifiers of Muslimness playing a key part in experiences of anti-Muslim hostility. The report notes that two mosques/prayer rooms were damaged with stones/bricks being thrown at them, while also being targeted with graffiti. A female participant also recalled how her home was broken into and exclusionary messages daubed on the walls. Apart from the sources referred to thus far, news reports in early May evidenced the reality of anti-Muslim racism hostility in Ireland. Two young men of Afghan origin (eighteen and twenty years of age) and their thirteen-year-old nephew were violently attacked by a group of five men in a South Dublin suburb. The three

5.Evidence derived from data kindly provided to the author by ENAR Ireland for the purposes of this report.

6.Ibid.

7.Ibid.

8.Ibid.

9.James Carr, "Islamophobia in Dublin: Experiences and how to respond," *Immigrant Council of Ireland*, (2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, fromhttp://immigrantcouncil.ie/files/publications/e9837-islamfinal.pdf.

were subjected to verbal and physical abuse, including anti-Muslim slurs, leaving two of those attacked unconscious. The Afghan men were said to be fearful of their safety in Ireland in the aftermath.

In terms of discrimination, participants documented exclusionary practices when accessing education, using public transport, in/and accessing employment, using shops and restaurants. The issue of education is discussed further below suffice to say that experiences were noted in/accessing education. When it comes to employment, participants recalled how they were discriminated against when looking for work with the wearing of the hijab particularly problematic for some employers. Participants also noted how their 'Muslim names' were also perceived as a basis upon which employers made discriminatory recruitment decisions. Of course, it is difficult to discern if employers are discriminating on the basis of perceived Muslimness or 'foreignness' – with Arabic names for example not being associated with Irishness.[10]

In public transport, participants in the Immigrant Council report recalled discrimination by staff manifest in poor service provision and racial/religious profiling.[11] Muslim men, but women in particular, recalled experiences of discrimination whilst shopping, manifesting in the form of being followed by security staff.[12] One particularly striking incident referred to in the report highlights the manner in which two young Muslim women, upon receiving their receipt after paying for a meal as part of a larger party, noticed that the receipt had the term 'go home Pakis' written on it by one of the restaurant staff. It is important to note that the response by management in this case was excellent and the women in question were fully supported.[13]

The report noted what can be perceived as discriminatory practices by members of the Irish police, *An Garda Síochána*. In one incident, a Muslim woman describes how she felt she was singled out on the basis of being identified as Muslim by a police officer for questioning whilst others were ignored; the incident happened near a school while parents were waiting to collect their children.[14] The second incident relating to the police is more implicit and refers to the perception held by some among Muslim communities that the Irish police service will provide a better level of service to those they deem to be 'really' Irish than that to those perceived as Other. The report notes the need for the development of stronger relationships between Muslim communities and rank and file members of the service.[15]

Members of the public who reported to ENAR's iReport system also noted experiences of discrimination by staff, for example by refusing entry to a venue or rude

10.Ibid.

11.Ibid.

12.Ibid.

13.Ibid.

14.Ibid.

15.Ibid.

and abrupt treatment. The following report demonstrates the manner in which even those can only be perceived as Muslim can experience discriminatory practices. Here the gentleman in question is assumed erroneously to be Muslim:

> "I was with my boyfriend at 'ANY' restaurant in Dun Laoghaire for lunch. My boyfriend is half Indian, half Irish and is an Irish Citizen who has lived here since he was 14. A man seated next to us made loud comments such as "here comes the muzzy (Muslim - although he is not)", "did he order batteries to blow the place up?" "He is with a pale girl though, he must be a doctor or have a big house in Dun Laoghaire", "oh he is having a burger, I thought he would just order a slab of pork". We decided to not engage with him but my boyfriend was incredibly upset after the incident. The man seemed to be after several drinks and thought this was funny and acceptable behaviour at Sunday lunch time in a busy family filled restaurant…"[16]

In March of 2016, in the aftermath of the attacks in Brussels, media outlets reported about the painting of anti-Muslim graffiti near the Croke Park stadium in Dublin. The graffiti which referred to 'all Muslims as scum' was subsequently altered to state that 'all Muslims are sound,' an Irish turn of phrase that subverts the original text to instead state that Muslim people are good people. The original and amended text was shared widely on social media.[17]

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Education

The issue of discrimination when it comes to accessing education in the Irish context for children of minority/no religion was documented in last years' report. As noted, the vast majority of schools in Ireland fall under the patronage of the Catholic Church. Experiences of discrimination in and accessing education in the Irish context by Muslim communities and others are well documented in the Irish context.[18] Despite ostensibly welcome steps at change being made by the Irish government, the education sphere continues to be an area of concern.[19]

16.Evidence derived from data kindly provided to the author by ENAR Ireland for the purposes of this report.

17.Samuel Osborne, "Anti-Muslim graffiti in Dublin quickly corrected in the most perfect way," (March 25, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/anti-muslim-graffiti-in-dublin-quickly-corrected-in-the-most-perfect-way-a6952381.html.

18.Carr, "Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2016".

19.See: Government of Ireland, "National report submitted n accordance with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 16/21*,"upr.ie*, (February 2, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, http://www.upr.ie/Website/UPR/uprweb.nsf/page/DOJL-A97JFV1512120-en/$file/National%20Report%20IE%20Cycle%202.pdf. In a recent strategy document the Irish government has committed to increase the number of non-denominational and multi-denominational schools in Ireland to four-hundred over the next fourteen years see http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Strategy-Statement/Department-of-Education-and-Skills-Strategy-Statement-2016-2019.pdf (retrieved December 2, 2016).

At the time of writing there are two relevant bills in train; namely the Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 and the Equal Status (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016. The Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 states that all schools must include a statement in their admissions policy that they shall not discriminate in the admission of students/applicants on the basis, inter alia, of their religion.[20] The Education (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016 must be read in conjunction with the Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016[21] and the proposed amendment therein of section 7(3)(c) of the established Equal Status Act 2000, which details the current situation in Ireland under which the refusal of admission to a school vis-à-vis non/minority religious communities shall *not* be deemed discriminatory if the school in question wishes to provide:

> "education to students in an environment that promotes certain religious values, it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others or refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination, and in the case of refusal, it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school."[22]

In other words, the 2000 Act provides schools with an exemption from equality legislation with the effect being that if the applicant is not of the same religious denomination as the school in question, the refusal of admission on the basis of their religious/non-religious background cannot be deemed discriminatory. The proposed amendment to Section 7 of the 2000 Act detailed within the new Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 provides for the substitution in subsection (3)(c) with the below paragraph wherein a school will not be deemed in violation of equality law under such circumstances:

"(c) where the establishment is a school supported by public funds providing primary or post-primary education to students and the objective of the school is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values—

(i) it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others, if it is proved that such a policy is essential in order to ensure reasonable access to education for children of that denomination within its catchment area in accordance with the conscience and lawful preference of their parents, or

(ii) it refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination, if it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school,"; and

(b) by inserting the following as subsection (3A):

20.Department of Education and Skills, "Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016",*education.ie*,(July 6, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Legislation/Education-Admission-to-Schools-Bill-2016.pdf.

21.Oireachtas, "Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016,"*oireachtas.ie*, (March 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, fromhttps://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/bills/2016/4816/b4816d.pdf.

22.Irish Statute Book, "Equal Status Act 2000,"*irishstatutebook.ie*, (April 26, 2000), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2000/act/8/enacted/en/html.

"(3A) In determining for the purposes of subsection (3)(c) whether an admission policy referred to in sub-paragraph (i) or a refusal referred to in sub-paragraph (ii) is essential for the purposes referred to, due regard shall be had to—

(a) the constitutional right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction at that school, and

(b) the concomitant obligation that every such school must be so organised as to enable that right effectually to be enjoyed."

At the time of writing the two proposed bills remain to be enacted. The change of government in Ireland in 2016 may account for this delay. Nonetheless, the changes proposed in the bills, in particular the Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 remain problematic and have been subject to criticism including on the delay in bringing the proposed amendments to enactment and the effect this will have on families.[23] The form of the amendment proposed in Equal Status (Admission to Schools) Bill 2016 has been subject to critique in that it permits for students to continue to be discriminated against by schools within a school 'catchment' area.[24] It is also argued here that the use of language such as "reasonable access" and "essential to maintain the ethos of the school" is not only ambiguous but maintains the facility for schools to discriminate against children accessing schools of choice on the basis of a child's religious/non-religious background. Such ambiguity needs to be removed in order to ensure discriminatory enrolment polices are not permitted de facto into the future. As discussed above, the vast majority of primary and over half of secondary schools in Ireland are under Catholic patronage; thus, the failure to adequately address discrimination accessing education is profoundly felt by members of minority/non-religious individuals/communities. Discrimination accessing school on the grounds of one's religious/non-religious background must be eliminated without caveat or question and this should be reflected in any new legislation.

Finally, in the education context, it was noted last year that the Irish government has failed to address the potential for discrimination against young Muslim women who wish to wear the hijab whilst in school. Nothing has changed in this regard. As stated last year, the "Irish government's 'policy to not have a policy' permits a context wherein young Muslim women are at the mercy of individual school policies and personalities when it comes to manifesting their faith."[25]

## Internet

Analysis of reports made to ENAR Ireland reveal the form that online ant-Muslim abuse can take. In terms of communication, a non-governmental organisation reported the content of an email they received which stated:

23.Education Equality, "Education Equality pleased to see the publication of an Action Plan for Education but fears it does not go far enough to vindicate religious rights,"*educationequality.ie*, (September 15, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://educationequality.ie/index.php/ap/.

24.Ibid.

25.Carr, "Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2016"*;* Carr, *"Islamophobia in Dublin".*

> "I am delighted that they are cutting down on the number of Muslims getting into this country. When are you people going to cop on. You can't mix oil and water. There [sic] women are dressed like there [sic] from outer space and the men probably wear ladies underware [sic] to go with there [sic] dresses on Friday. Now who wants that shit in our country. Its time people stood up, get organised and run these out of here.""[26]

Participants reported encountering comments on news websites, particularly in the comments section under news stories; on Facebook for example: "Ladies, in Islam you don't have rights, so shut the f..k up! Actually all Good believers are like trash and they can do…whatever they like with you you peace [sic] of meat." (Report to ENAR).

A number of white Irish nationalist organisations were referred to specifically in the ENAR data. The following images were located on social media platforms used by the groups. The identity of the groups involved has been removed. In Figure 1 the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman is again presented. Figure 2 is worrying in the manner in which it presents local Muslim communities in Dublin as a threat, resonating with international discourses of Muslim men.

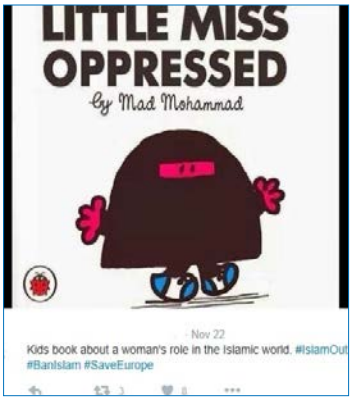


Figure 1: Stereotypical image of the oppressed Muslim woman as sourced on social media.

Figure 2: Dublin Muslim communities presented as a threat as sourced on social media.

## Media

In the analysis that follows it is clear that media reporting on Muslim communities in the Irish context continues to be problematic. While there was evidence of nuanced and reflective practice on the part of some in the media when it comes to reporting on Islam and Muslim communities, space remains for greater reflection in this regard. Indeed, even those articles that evidenced some nuance continue to co-locate the word 'Islamic' with terms such as "terror attack";[27] "terrorists";[28] "extremists".[29]

A detailed analysis of media reports relating to Muslim communities and Islam in Ireland is beyond the scope of this short report. The limited selection of articles

26. Evidence derived from data kindly provided to the author by ENAR Ireland for the purposes of this report.

27. David MacWilliams, "West finally needs to admit all radical roads lead back to Saudi Arabia," *Irish Independent*, March 23, 2016.

28. Pat Flanagan, "The State knows who paid water charges but not how many Jihadis are in Ireland;
In the past four years the threat from Islamic terrorism has not been high on the Government's priorities list, unlike ensuring people paid their water charges," *Irish Mirror,* March 25, 2016.

29. Conor Lally, "Garda must be ready in the event of Isis threats;
Faster, armed security response would be vital if any attack took place," *The Irish Times*, March 24, 2016.

chosen for this review was sourced using the Nexis media database search platform.[30] The following analysis is based on a review of print media articles published by leading Irish newspapers in the aftermath of five selected critical international events that occurred across 2016.[31] Articles published at other times that were particularly problematic are also discussed below. Two main themes can be identified. The first refers to the continuing notion that there is a 'cultural clash' between Islam and the 'West' with religion at the heart of the 'problem'; the second theme relates to the notion of Muslims as an 'enemy within'. What is disappointingly notable, despite some nuance, is the manner in which these macro themes of the Muslim as Other continue to be regurgitated by media actors.

Reports of an alleged 'cultural clash' emerged in the very first weeks of 2016 in the aftermath of the alleged sexual assaults that took place in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015. MacDonald starts by seemingly placing the blame for the attacks not on Islam but elsewhere: "To be clear: we can not and should not equate the attacks in Germany with Isil (regardless of its appalling treatment of women) or to Islam with its cultural subjection of women that seems alien and wrong to us in many respects."[32] This is accompanied by the following:

> "Western democracies, with their foundations in Christian and Judeo-Christian principles, are engaged not only in a physical war of terror with Islamic extremists… They are also been drawn and deliberately so, into a culture war…"[33]

Comments such as these present Muslim communities as the homogenous Other *de jour*; all diversity within Muslim communities is eschewed in the 'clash' context. McKinstry, writing in the *Irish Times* of the demographic changes he witnessed in a town in Southern France which he claims has become "Islamified", starts with the conditional caveat "let's be absolutely clear: most of the Muslim population were thoroughly decent people who wanted nothing more than to live their lives in harmony with other peaceful French people" before going on to note that in "modern France… there is a widening chasm between the indigenous, intensely nationalist French and the detached, often hostile, Muslim community" which has at its core

30.See: Lexis Nexis (2016), Home, online available from http://bis.lexisnexis.co.uk/products/newsdesk (retrieved November 21, 2016).

31.The publications chosen were *The Irish Daily Mail*; *The Irish Examiner*; *The Irish Independent*; *The Irish Times*; *The Irish Mirror.ie*; *The Sunday Business Post*; *The Sunday Independent*; and archival coverage (as noted by Nexis) from *The Evening Herald*; and the *Metro Herald*. The four events chosen for this report are (1) the alleged sexual assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2015/6; (2) the terrorist attack in Brussels in March of 2016; (3) the attack on the gay night club 'Pulse' in Orlando, Florida in June; (4) the terrorist attack in Nice in July of 2016; and finally, (5) the attack on the Berlin Christmas market on 19 December, 2016. The publication dates selected for analysis included the day the event happened and the seven subsequent days. The search terms used for each event were the same with only the location name changing: for example: Muslim! OR Islam! AND Nice.

32.Dearbhail MacDonald, "A strong show of Western justice is only response to sex-attack gangs in Germany," *Irish Independent*, January 8, 2016.

33.Ibid.

"a clash of two different cultures."[34] Ian O'Doherty refers to "backward 'cultures'" wherein "even the most perfect Muslim woman is still a second-class citizen."[35] In a later piece, ostensibly in defence of the burkini, O'Doherty again notes the alleged cultural incompatibility between 'atavistic Islam' allegedly alien to the 'West':

> "The burka has no place in civilised society… Its defenders say that it is merely a statement of belief but the problem is that those beliefs are utterly anathema to Western values… Putting a bin liner over a woman and forcing her to walk around dressed like a character from Pacman is not something which should be encouraged… The burka is unacceptable because, in our culture, we expect to see someone's face when we deal with them… The burka signifies a refusal to integrate and a contempt for the host country…"[36]

The cure to this alleged cultural clash resides in the need for Muslim communities to integrate; any perceived failure to do so is laid squarely on Muslims and Islam. "Wait a minute. Maybe it is time for the Muslims to integrate and assimilate to Western values;"[37]"Rather than the burqa ban alienating Muslims in Europe, is it not far more relevant that the act of wearing a burqa alienates the wearer from wider society and any hope of integration?"[38]

For some, the faith of Islam itself is the determining issue at the heart of this alleged 'cultural clash'. O'Doherty is certain that "all the touchy feely nonsense about us 'not being at war with Islam' ignores the rather obvious fact that plenty of them are at war with us."[39] While overall nuanced, McWilliams writing in the post-Brussels attacks context use phrases such as "soldiers of Allah" while making repeated references to "strict" or extreme versions of "Islam" *de facto* laying the blame for the attacks on Islam.[40] A headline published in the *Irish Daily Mail* in the aftermath of the attack on the gay nightclub in Orlando is unequivocal: "We need to admit Islam was behind the club attack;"[41] a person in the letters section of the same publication notes that "After Orlando, we need to talk about the dark side of Islam."[42] Brenda Power places the root cause of terrorism in Islam, albeit starting with a conditional caveat:

34.Leo McKinstry, "How I've seen the France I love torn apart by hatred;
LEO MCKINSTRY - who has l decade and witnessed the locals and Muslim hardliners - lived there for over a growing tensions between - despairs for the future," *The Irish Daily Mail,* July 16, 2016.

35.Ian O'Doherty, "The lessons Europe is learning way too late," *Irish Independent,* January 17, 2016.

36.Ian O'Doherty, "Burka Ban Makes Sense. Burkini? Not so much," *Irish Independent,* August 28, 2016.

37.Irish Examiner, "Reader's views," *Irish Examiner,* July 19, 2016.

38.The Irish Times, "Letters and editorial comment," *The Irish Times,* July 21, 2016.

39.Ian O'Doherty, "Their greatest strength is our weakness," *Irish Independent,* March 26, 2016.

40.MacWilliams, "West finally needs to admit all radical roads lead back to Saudi Arabia,"*Irish Independent,* March 23, 2016.

41.Irish Daily Mail, *"We need to admit Islam was behind club attack", Irish Daily Mail,* June 18, 2016.

42.Irish Daily Mail, *"We need to admit Islam was behind club attack", Irish Daily Mail,* June 16, 2016.

> "The vast majority of Muslims are peaceful, but if you take the time actually to read the Koran, you will see for yourself that many verses preach that infidels deserve death or enslavement, and that it is the duty of all Muslims to wage 'jihad'… The fact that there are also verses with a message of peace, or that most Muslims choose to reject, does not change the wording of those verses, which are heavily relied upon by both ISIS and by anti-Islamists to make their respective arguments."[43]

Power's comment, reductively depoliticises by placing the root cause of terrorism and cultural incompatibility in the faith of Islam. In doing so, all Muslims, 'good' or 'bad' are potential suspects upon which acts of hostility and discrimination can become legitimised. In this context certain areas in Europe were described in the media in Ireland as being 'breeding grounds' for terrorism. According to King "Belgium was a breeding ground for radical jihadism;"[44] Irish publications referred to Prof Peter Neumann from King's College London who, in the aftermath of the Bastille Day attack, spoke of Nice as a "jihadist breeding ground."[45]

Writing in the time after the Berlin Christmas Market attack, security analyst Declan Power notes that: "The terror attack in Berlin was no surprise to the security and intelligence community around Europe. For some time now an attack was expected, particularly in Germany."[46] These sentences are immediately followed with: "It [Germany] has a significant Islamic population, and has demonstrated fault lies in its society that have been taken note of by extremist ideologues." Later in the same piece, Declan Power notes: "There have been a number of other violent incidents in Germany involving members of both the Islamic and refugee communities" before going on to note an associated increase of "confidence in the hard right" and fear among "the general German citizenry and the German –Islamic population." Bringing the piece back to the Irish context, Power continues to use language problematically: "Monday's attack will inevitably give rise yet again to questions about whether we in Ireland are fully resourced to defend against such an attack. In many respects, we are fortunate in that we are an island, and we do not have a large population of Middle-Eastern or Islamic origin." Despite the author's call for partnership with Muslim communities in Ireland and the States to combat 'radicalisation', the language used in this article clearly serves to associate all members of Islamic communities and peoples from Muslim majority regions with the threat of terrorism in Ireland and the broader EU.

Carty's piece following the Brussels attacks also demonstrates a problematic use of language to co-locate Muslim communities in Ireland with the attackers on the basis of

43.Brenda Power, "Until our leaders are honest about the fear Islamists strike in our hearts, terror will always triumph," *Irish Daily Mail,* January 5, 2016.

44.Tim King, "Corrupt and fragmented Belgium a breeding ground for extremism Analysis," *Irish Independent,* March 23, 2016.

45.Irish Examiner, *"Nice 'jihadist breeding ground' for a number of years," Irish Examiner,* July 16, 2016.

46.Declan Power, *"Prevention and intervention the key to stopping similar atrocities," Irish Independent,* December 21, 2016.

religion and 'background': "In the context that a large proportion of Muslims domiciled here come from a background similar to the suspected attackers in Paris and Brussels, a significant amount of resources are deployed in monitoring these groups."[47]

A number of sources refer explicitly to Ireland as being a potential harbour for 'jihadis'. In a piece on the detention of Salah Abdelsalam in relation to the November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris that makes no mention of Ireland, the headline reads: "Brussels attacks: Extremists pose threat to Irish people."[48] Sheehan's article on the death of Khalid Kelly in a suicide attack in Mosul, which notes that Kelly was "generally regarded as a madman" by the Muslim community, ran with the headline: "Death of a Dublin jihadi confirms worst fears of the enemy within."[49] Flanagan asks the question: "Could Frances Fitzgerald [Minister for Justice and Equality] please tell us how many murdering, raping, torturing Islamic terrorists have returned to Ireland after being trained in Syria."[50] The language used in some of these reports has the potential to stigmatise all Muslim communities in Ireland, associate them through identity with international terrorism, thus legitimising suspicion and hostility.

Apart from reports surrounding the critical events analysed here, a very problematic report emerged in Limerick City. A locally distributed newspaper, the *Limerick Post*, ran with the headline "Limerick Asylum Centre Worker Claims Extremists have Infiltrated the System" referring to the highly problematic Irish asylum system.[51] The report stated that "A MAN working in a Limerick refugee centre claims that staff have been subjected to physical attacks and mental abuse by individuals and gangs of radical Muslim men living in the centre." [52] The 'man' claimed to "have found a worrying level of extremism, bordering on hatred, which could potentially manifest in some sort of devastating way."[53] Calling for the piece to be retracted, NGOs referred to the stereotyping and stigmatising portrayal of migrants and in particular, Muslim men; and requested that if any evidence of 'extremism' existed that it should be reported to the police.[54] The Irish Refugee Council criticised the report as being unbalanced, lacking in evidence and "inflammatory" and will result in "fear suspicion and hostility."[55]

47.Michael Carty, *"Special Garda units must be prepared to prevent a terrorist atrocity here," Irish Independent,* March 24, 2016.

48.Irish Examiner, "Brussels attacks: Extremists pose threat to Irish people," *Irish Examiner,* March 23, 2016.

49.Maeve Sheehan, *"Death of a Dublin jihadi confirms worst fears of the enemy within," Sunday Independent,* November 20, 2016.

50.Pat Flanagan, "The State knows who paid water charges but not how many Jihadis are in Ireland," *Irish Mirror*, March 25, 2016.

51.Darragh Frawley,"Limerick Asylum Centre Worker Claims Extremists have Infiltrated the System," *Limerick Post*, (April 1, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.limerickpost.ie/2016/04/01/limerick-asylum-centre-worker-claims-extremists-infiltrated-system-limerick/.

52.Ibid.

53.Ibid.

54.Anne Sheridan, *"Limerick migrant group 'outraged' by article on asylum seekers," Limerick Leader,* April 5, 2016; Anne Sheridan, *"Limerick Post's article 'resonates worryingly with far-right discourses'," Limerick Leader,* April 8, 2016.

55.Sheridan, *"Limerick Post's article 'resonates worryingly with far-right discourses'.*

### Justice System

Despite extant research and a previously drafted hate crime bill,[56] the new proposed legislation, namely the Criminal Justice (Aggravation by Prejudice) Bill 2016, by leading opposition party, received governmental support. The multifarious problems with the proposed legislation go beyond the scope of this report.[57] However, a key concern is the absence of the religious ground as a basis upon which one may be the target for hate crime. Thus, if a person of the Islamic or indeed any other religious background should experience hate on the grounds of their religious identity, it would not be possible to prosecute/have the hate motivation count in any court action.[58]

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The year started with Peter O'Loughlin, leader of Identity Ireland speaking at a PEGIDA event in Dresden, Germany.[59] Addressing those gathered, O'Loughlin invoked "millennia of European civilisation" which he argued was under threat from "masses of migrants… [that] should not be here"; he continued that the EU and its "puppet governments" are "importing radical Islam" through migration policies before concluding.[60] Tommy Robinson, founder of the English Defence League was in Ireland in January of 2016 as a guest of Peter O'Loughlin. Robinson was invited by O'Loughlin in his capacity as co-ordinator of PEGIDA in the UK to publicise the launch of PEGIDA Ireland.[61] Coinciding with similar events across Europe, PEGIDA Ireland was to formally launch in Dublin on the 6 February outside the symbolic General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin City Centre. A small number of PEGIDA supporters turned up at the GPO on the day, including Polish far right activists, to find themselves hugely outnumbered by at least 1,000 grass-roots anti-racism protestors and political groups. Some violence did break out at the scene and police intervened. O'Loughlin was targeted while on a tram en route to the

56.Amanda Haynes/Jennifer Schweppe, "Out of the Shadows: Legislating for hate crime in Ireland," *ulir.ul.ie*, (2015), retrieved December 2, 2016, https://ulir.ul.ie/bitstream/handle/10344/4751/Schweppe_2015_shadows.pdf?sequence=2.

57.Sinn Féin, "Fianna Fáil Hate Crime Bill "a frightening example of lazy legislating" – Jonathan O'Brien TD," (October 4, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.sinnfein.ie/contents/41834; Christina Finn, "Government says it won't oppose Fianna Fáil's hate crime bill," (October 4, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.thejournal.ie/hate-crime-bill-3010234-Oct2016/.

58.Jennifer Schweppe/Amanda Haynes, "Criminal Justice (Aggravation by Prejudice) Bill 2016: A review,"*ENAR Ireland*, (2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://enarireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/HHRG-Review-of-the-2016-Criminal-Justice-Aggravation-by-Prejudice-Bill.pdf.

59.*YouTube,*"Peter O'Loughlin von der Partei Identity Irland bei PEGIDA Dresden, 04.01.2016," retrieved December 2, 2016, fromhttps://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9gcxYT-P2o.

60.Ibid.

61.Barry Roche, "Anti-Islamic group Pegida Ireland to be launched at Dublin rally," *The Irish Times,* January 30, 2016.

event. However, the event itself was overwhelmingly peaceful and PEGIDA Ireland was prevented from formally launching.[62]

Identity Ireland is part of 'Fortress Europe' grouping of far right political parties. They have attended conferences organised by the group in Germany and the Czech Republic during 2016; and have invited members of Fortress Europe to speak in Ireland.[63] Identity Ireland invited Lutz Bachman, founder of PEGIDA in Germany and convicted racist, to speak in the Irish city of Limerick in June. According to reports, Bachman aimed to "highlight the mass sexual assaults on European women by Muslim men."[64] While the time and date of Bachman's appearance were closely guarded, the response of politicians in Limerick was to urge him to stay away.[65] At the time of writing, the proposed visit of Mr Bachman is yet to occur.

Mid-November witnessed another far right political group coming to the fore in Ireland in the form of the National Party.[66] News broke of the party when the hotel due to host their official launch cancelled the event. The National Party is led by Justin Barrett, an individual whose previous political campaigns have involved advocating a "No" vote to the Nice Referendum in 2001; campaigning as a member of Youth Defence, an anti-abortion lobby group; and, running in the 2004 Barrett European elections on an anti-abortion, anti-immigration platform.[67] In 1998, Barrett authored a book entitled *The National Way Forward!* in which he argued for the establishment of a "Catholic Republic".[68] Barrett has confirmed that he has in the past attended meetings by organisations such as the neo-Nazi group *Forza Nuova* in Italy. Anti-racism activist Shane O'Curry of the European Network Against Racism (Ireland) when referring to Barrett and the National Party has stated: "Without a doubt this is a fascist party."[69]

62.BreakingNews.ie, "Scuffles break out as anti-Islamisation group Pegida launches in Dublin," *breakingnews.ie*, (January 6, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/scuffles-break-out-as-anti-islamisation-group-pegida-launches-in-dublin-719359.html; Rachel Lavin, "Violent clashes at launch of Irish branch of Pegida," *Irish Independent,* February 7, 2016.

63.Barry Roche, "Irish anti-immigration group invites Fortress Europe to meeting," *The Irish Times,*(March 18, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/irish-anti-immigration-group-invites-fortress-europe-to-meeting-1.2651687.

64.Anne Sheridan, "Ex-Pegida member fears violent clashes over founder's Limerick address," *Limerick Leader*, June 11, 2016; Barry Roche, "German founder of anti-Islamist Pegida to speak in Limerick," *The Irish Times*, (May 27, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/german-founder-of-anti-islamist-pegida-to-speak-in-limerick-1.2663015.

65.Sheridan, "Ex-Pegida member fears violent clashes over founder's Limerick address"; Anne Sheridan, "Pegida founder told to 'stay away from Limerick'," *Limerick Leader*, June 2, 2016.

66.Gareth MacNamee, "Who is National Party leader Justin Barrett?," *TheJournal.ie*, (November 18, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.thejournal.ie/justin-barrett-national-party-3089289-Nov2016/.

67.Ibid;Pat Leahy, "National Party leader espouses creation of 'Catholic republic'," *Irish Times*,(November 17, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/national-party-leader-espouses-creation-of-catholic-republic-1.2870955.

68.Leahy, "National Party leader espouses creation of 'Catholic republic'".

69.MacNamee, "Who is National Party leader Justin Barrett?".

In a radio interview Barrett put forward some of his party's policies and principles.[70] These included a critical stance on the Ireland EU relationship; the restriction of "mass immigration" including those seeking asylum. When asked if he was in favour of placing a ban on Muslims from entering Ireland Barrett said he was.[71] He referred to an alleged "rise of Islamic fundamentalism" in Ireland, and stated that "all of them [Muslims] are potentially dangerous;" when challenged he argued that "if you hold to the faith of the Qur'an… properly… you will find support for drenching the world in bloodshed in the Qur'an;" he continued after being challenged again: "I'm saying there is such thing as a moderate Muslim but there is no such thing as moderate Islam."[72]

The central figures engaging in Islamophobic discourses and actions in Ireland are mentioned above and in last year's report; to these can be added the Celtic People's Party[73] and the 'Soilders of Odin.' In July of 2016, reports emanated in the media that the 'Soldiers of Odin' a group that originated in Finland in 2015 were 'patrolling' the streets of Irish towns. Although they claim to be non-violent, public statements demonstrate otherwise. The alleged purpose of these 'patrols' is to protect people from immigrant communities. According to a spokesperson for the group, their aim is to "highlight the evils of Islam and to start the debate on how followers of Islam demand that we respect and conform to their ways."[74]

In terms of mainstream politicians, a *Fianna Fáil* Member of Parliament Eamon Scanlon representing the Sligo-Leitrim constituency raised a question in Parliament in June as to the number of Muslims who had applied for citizenship in Ireland. He later stated that his question was in response to a query by a constituent and was "misinterpreted" and apologised for any offence caused.[75] In the following month, the independent Monaghan County Councillor Seamus Treanor claimed that most Muslims in Ireland, 98%, do not want to work: "why would they want to work when they're getting handouts? They are coming in droves;" making the exception

70.Sean Moncrieff, *"Justin Barrett President of The National Party,"*(November 18, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.newstalk.com/podcasts/Moncrieff/Highlights_from_Moncrieff/167093/Justin_Barrett_President_of_The_National_Party.

71.Ibid.

72.Ibid.

73.Carr, "Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2016". Also seehttp://www.cppireland.org/2016/11/01/the-irish-times-says-muslims-good-celts-bad/(retrieved December 2, 2016) and The Celtic People's Party, "Islam – the religion of barbarism,"*cppireland.org*, (November 30, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.cppireland.org/2016/11/30/islam-the-religion-of-barbarism/.

74.Alan Sherry, "Anti-Islam Group Patrolling Dublin," *The Sunday World*, (July 10, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.sundayworld.com/news/crimedesk/anti-islam-group-patrolling-dublin.

75.Elaine Edwards, "Fianna Fáil TD criticised for seeking Muslim citizenship data," *Irish Times*,(June 28, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, fromhttp://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/fianna-f%C3%A1il-td-criticised-for-seeking-muslim-citizenship-data-1.2703262.

for Muslim medical professionals who he classed as "fine."[76] Treanor also referred to the response of the German Government in 2015 as encouraging people to come to Europe and that many of the young Muslim men coming are radicalised.[77] As noted in last year's report for Ireland, the co-location between the three 'great threats' are explicit: welfare, migration and Muslims.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The evidence presented in this submission details the lived experiences of Islamophobia in Ireland for 2016; incorporating hostility, discrimination and exclusion at the structural, institutional, interpersonal and discursive levels. The following recommendations are, as per last year's submission, by no means exhaustive but do offer opportunities for change in a context of persistent Islamophobia.

- The Irish government must take action and implement effective hate crime legislation that recognises all grounds upon which a person may be targeted for identity based hostility. As noted in last year's submission, an evidence-based solution is already available for the government to draw from.
- Exclusion in the education sphere must be addressed in a meaningful manner. Criticisms of the suggested bills in the area of accessing education discussed above must be addressed.
- Efforts must continue to be made with media actors in Ireland to encourage greater reflexivity when reporting Muslim/Islam related issues. This is not to suggest stifling press freedom but to argue against the propagation of stereotypical representations of Muslim communities.
- It was encouraging to see NGOs and other civil society actors coming together at various points across 2016 to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland; the anti-PEGIDA rally being but one such incident. It is vital that all civil society groups continue to work together to challenge Islamophobia in Ireland.

76.Northern Sound, "Muslim academic says local Councillor's claims about people of the Islamic religion are wrong,"*northernsound.ie*, (not dated), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.northernsound.ie/news/muslim-academic-says-local-councillors-claims-about-people-of-the-islamic-religion-are-wrong/; see also Irish Mirror, "Independent councillor: Most Muslims do not want to work and liberal brigade needs a kick up the backside," *irishmirror.ie*, (July 29, 2016), retrieved December 2, 2016, from http://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/independent-councillor-most-muslims-not-8519204.

77.Northern Sound, "Muslim academic says local Councillor's claims about people of the Islamic religion are wrong".

# Chronology

## January

- Problematic media reports in the aftermath of the Cologne New Year's Eve.
- Peter O'Loughlin from Identity Ireland attends and speaks at PEGIDA rally in Dresden, Germany.
- End of January, Tommy Robinson from PEGIDA UK is invited as a guest of Identity Ireland to announce the forthcoming launch of PEGIDA Ireland.
- European Network Against Racism Ireland host an event on the topic of Islamophobia in Ireland.

## February

- PEGIDA Ireland attempt to formally launch at the General Post Office in Dublin City centre.
- A large counter-demonstration against PEGIDA Ireland prevents their launch.
- Immigrant Council of Ireland launches the report "Islamophobia in Dublin: Experiences and how to respond".

## March

- Problematic media reports in the aftermath of the Brussels terrorist attacks.
- A highly publicised incident is reported in the media regarding the spraying of graffiti near Croke Park stadium in Dublin; it is notable by manner in which the racist language is later subverted to welcome Muslims.
- On 31 March, an article is published in the Limerick Post, a free of charge newspaper, warning of 'radical' Muslims in the asylum system.

## April

- Irish NGOs publicly denounce the report in the Limerick Post regarding Muslim men in the asylum system.

## May

- Event held in Limerick by ENAR Ireland and Dr James Carr to launch the Irish submission to the European Islamophobia Report for 2015.
- Reports emerge of the extension of an invitation by Identity Ireland to Lutz Bachman, founder of PEGIDA in Germany to visit Ireland. Limerick is suggested as the possible venue.

## June

- Reports continue to emerge on the visit of Lutz Bachman to Ireland.
- Mainstream political and society activists tell Bachman to 'stay away'.
- An Irish member of parliament asks a question on the numbers of Muslim people granted citizenship in Ireland; later, he apologises.

- Problematic media reporting in the aftermath of the Pulse Nightclub attack in Orlando, Florida, USA.

### July

- Reports emerge of the 'Soldiers of Odin' undertaking street patrols in Irish towns and cities.
- Monaghan County Councillor makes claim that the vast majority of Muslims coming to/in Ireland are on welfare.
- Education (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016 published; Equal Status (Admissions to Schools) Bill 2016 progresses.
- Problematic media reporting in the aftermath of the Bastille Day attacks in Nice, France.

### September

- Reports in media of employment discrimination against a woman in Dublin with the name of Samia Jalal; the woman in question does not mention any possible link between Islam and her experience.
- Criticisms directed toward the Irish government for rejecting recommendations made by UN UPR members in relation to discrimination in the workplace.

### October

- Irish political party Fianna Fáil present draft legislation on hate crime. The proposed legislation is heavily criticised, in part because it omits religious identity as a grounds upon which one may experience hate crime.
- The Immigrant Council of Ireland hosts an event on media and Islamophobia in Ireland.

### November

- The National Party attempt to officially launch at a Dublin venue but the hotel in question removes permission for the event to go ahead.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN ITALY NATIONAL REPORT 2016

CLAUDIA GIACALONE

## The Author

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# Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Italy in 2016, taking under consideration all the European and global developments that might have influenced the appearance or the rise of Islamophobia, including the refugee and migrant flows, and the terrorist attacks in France, Belgium and Germany. The report is based, among others, on data collected from electronic media, the press, the Internet, and communication with NGOs.

Islamophobia in Italy is present in specific fields, for example, in the far right and particularly the *Lega Nord* party and *Fratelli d'Italia*. Italian authorities cannot be characterised as Islamophobic but due to their inability to implement the existing legislation, e.g. on the construction of new mosques, they are perceived as such. According to existing data and information, Islamophobia is present also in education and in the workplace and most of all in the media, Internet and social media, which are privileged places for such views to flourish.

On the counter-Islamophobia level specific laws on freedom of religion and against online racism are lacking and there have been only secondary and fragmented initiatives. These issues could be addressed through principal measures taken towards confronting Islamophobia. First of all, institutional decision makers should pay greater attention and get proactively involved in the fight against racism, foreseeing the aggravating factors when they make use of hate speech; and information and awareness-raising activities with youth and in schools should be promoted. Moreover, EU member states should intensify their efforts to improve the employment opportunities, particularly for young Muslims. In addition, Italian authorities should set up a method of data collection on incidents related to hate speech and, lastly, the media should examine news reporting to ensure the correctness and completeness of the services that address issues relating to Muslims.

## Sintesi

Questo rapporto esamina l'islamofobia in Italia nel 2016, prendendo in considerazione tutti gli sviluppi europei e globali che potrebbero aver causato la creazione o l'aumento dell'islamofobia, inclusi i flussi di rifugiati e migranti e gli attacchi terroristici in Francia, Belgio e Germania. Il rapporto si basa su dati raccolti da mezzi di informazione elettronici, dalla stampa, da Internet, dalla comunicazione con ONG, etc.

L' islamofobia in Italia è presente in settori specifici, ad esempio nell'estrema destra ed in particolare Lega Nord e Fratelli d'Italia. Le autorità italiane non possono essere considerate islamofobiche, ma a causa della loro incapacità ad attuare la legislazione esistente, per esempio sulla costruzione di nuove moschee, sono percepite come tali. Secondo i dati e le informazioni esistenti, l'islamofobia è presente anche nel campo dell'istruzione e nei luoghi lavoro e soprattutto nei media, su Internet enei social media, che sono luoghi privilegiati per far fiorire tali punti di vista.

A livello di contrasto dell'islamofobia mancano alcune leggi specifiche in materia di libertà di religione o contro il razzismo in linea e vi sono state solo iniziative secondarie e frammentarie. Queste mancanze potrebbero essere colmate attraverso alcune misure necessarie ad affrontare l'islamofobia. Prima di tutto, i decisori istituzionali dovrebbero prestare maggiore attenzione e essere positivamente coinvolti nella lotta al razzismo, prevedendo fattori aggravanti ad hoc quando essi stessi usano espressioni di odio; in secondo luogo, dovrebbero essere promosse attività di informazione e di sensibilizzazione con i giovani e nelle scuole. Inoltre, gli Stati membri dovrebbero intensificare i loro sforzi per migliorare le opportunità di lavoro, in particolare per i giovani musulmani. In aggiunta, le autorità italiane dovrebbero impostare un metodo di raccolta dati sugli incidenti relativi ai discorsi d'odio; infine i media dovrebbero esaminare le notizie al fine di garantire la correttezza e la completezza dei servizi che affrontano questioni relative ai musulmani.

# Introduction

A recent report by the Pew Research Center highlights Italy as the least Islam-friendly country in Europe. In most European countries, older people and those with less education are more negative toward Muslims. The biggest divide in each country, however, tends to be political. Results show that in 2016, 69% of Italians have a very unfavorable view of Muslims and 79% of those who have a negative opinion of Muslims place themselves on the right of the ideological scale.[1] In Italy, there is an evident lack of awareness of the extraordinary diversity of Muslim communities which means that the majority of the Italian population does not distinguish the various Muslim groups.

Islam in Italy has been at the centre of the political and cultural debate for several years. Since 11 September, 2001, incidents of violence and international terrorism, where Islamist movements have been protagonists, have contributed to the focus, in a problematic way, on the relationship between Islam and Western countries. The veil, fundamentalism, "holy war" and religious freedom are issues widely debated by the public and often create widespread Islamophobia.

The Islamic presence in Italy is due to a large extent to the migration that began in the seventies, especially from North Africa. Most Muslim immigrants have permanently settled in Italy.[2] Today, Italy's large Islamic community faces a double challenge: on the one hand, the cultural hostility that stems from the growing Islamophobia, and, on the other hand, the interpretation of its own religious tradition in terms of its compatibility with the new social, cultural and political context.[3]

Nowadays in Europe, and therefore also in Italy, the psychosis of a possible terrorist attack is widespread among the population: many are afraid of taking an airplane, a train, the underground, etc. A common feeling among Italians considers Islam the main cause of terrorism which today threatens the quiet life and security of Western countries.

The fear of Islam, which culminates in rampant Islamophobia, is not felt only by Italians. This fear and hate of Muslims is strengthened by the political and social instability in certain Muslim-majority countries, because of wars and terrorism. Terrorism has struck Europe on several occasions as well: in France, Belgium and Germany.[4]

1.Conrad Hackett, "5 facts about the Muslim population in Europe," *Pew Research Center,* (July 19, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/19/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/.

2.Mostafa El Ayoubi, "Religioni migranti. Islamofobia, ostacolo all'integrazione," *Adista Documenti*, (June 18, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.adista.it/articolo/56357.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Overall in Italy, there is a manifest lack of data on Islamophobic incidents which is mostly determined by the unwillingness of a part of the Muslim community to report these incidents. Moreover, according to the Observatory for security against acts of discrimination (OSCAD), the legislative framework and the configuration of the police database (SDI) do not allow the extraction of official data specifically related to the phenomenon of Islamophobia.

In 2016, and particularly after the attacks in Nice, Rouen, Reutlingen, Ansbach, Munich and Wurzburg (July) and Berlin (December), Italian media, politicians and the public have talked up "Islamic terrorism", transforming Islam and Muslims into something dangerous, even monstrous.

For example an article in *Il Giornale*, published on the front page on 3 July, 2016, and concerning the attack that took place in Dhaka on 1 July, 2016, which caused the death of 20 people, called the terrorists "Islamic Beasts". For this reason the Carta di Roma, which seeks to be a stable reference point for those who work on daily basis with media and minorities and the Association for Juridical Studies on Immigration (ASGI) which focuses on all legal aspects of immigration presented a complaint to Lombardia Journalists' association requesting a retraction of the article.[5]

Last October, almost all the national newspapers reported on the front page that a teacher of a Venetian school posted on Facebook insults to people of the Islamic faith. The invectives, short and not articulated, were addressed to refugees and Muslims; their arrival in Italy was called an "invasion" and the teacher wished them terrible things and death.[6]

Other than verbal attacks, in 2016, intolerance towards the Muslim community was also expressed through threats and violence. For instance, on 18 March, 2016, during the night, vandals set fire to a butcher shop run by a Muslim in Mirandola (Modena) and left an inscription on the floor with the words "Go away!" and a swastika (Figure 1). According to Mayor Benatti, in Italy there are "Forces that incite violence and sow fear and hatred and the town of Mirandola does not tolerate them."[7]

In June, unknown persons launched a 12-calibre cartridge charge inside a building located on Via Matteotti 3 (Sassari), a place of worship for citizens of Moroccan nationality.[8]

5. Associazione Carta di Roma, "Un esposto per Bestie Islamiche," *Editoriale Carta di Roma*, (July 6, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/un-esposto-bestie-islamiche/.

6. Associazione Carta di Roma, "Estremismo, moderazione e la prof razzista," *Notizie Carta di Roma*, (October 27, 2016), from http://www.cartadiroma.org/news/estremismo-moderazione-professoressa/.

7.Gazzetta di Modena, "Mirandola. Incendio e una svastica nella macelleria islamica," *gazzettadimodena.ie*, (March 18, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://gazzettadimodena.gelocal.it/modena/cronaca/2016/03/18/news/mirandola-incendio-e-una-svastica-nella-macelleria-islamica-1.13148853.

8. OSCAD, OSCAD, data sent to author in regard to the period January-December 2016.

In January, in Miane (Treviso), a flyer showing discriminatory epithets of a religious nature addressed to Muslims and signed with a swastika was posted on the walls of an auditorium.[9]

In May, a banner bearing discriminatory epithets of a religious nature addressed to Muslims and signed by *Forza Nuova* was found at the entrance of the mosque in Albenga (Savona).[10]

In January in Salerno, the phrase "We are not a land of Islam" reappeared on the external wall of a primary school. The phrase had appeared on the same wall where racist sentences with Celtic crosses had been found a few months before. They were cleaned after the intervention of the police and the administration.[12]

Figure 1: Act of vandalism in a butcher shop run by a Muslim in Mirandola (Modena). [11]

In October, in the church of the small village of Goro (Ferrara), a sign appeared inviting Muslims to leave Italy and "go to the Middle Eastern lands controlled by ISIS". The parish priest, Don Paolo Paccagnella, was contacted several times to ask him the reason for the presence of the sign but he was unavailable for comment.[13]

Also in 2016, Muslims reported continued difficulties in acquiring permission from local governments to construct mosques. As a result, over the years, they have created the so-called "independent Islamic centres", usually in private residences or buildings rented from local authorities, where they meet to pray. In some cases, people's houses and garages have become unofficial places of faith where hundreds gather every week. The phenomenon, increasingly common in the peninsula, has been dubbed "garage Islam".[14]

9. Francesco Dal Mas, "Soller, 30 dal sindaco svastiche a Miane contro gli immigrati", *La tribuna di Treviso*, retrieved January 15, from http://tribunatreviso.gelocal.it/treviso/cronaca/2016/01/15/news/soller-30-dal-sindaco-svastiche-a-miane-contro-gli-immigrati-1.12784830?refresh_ce.

10. OSCAD, data sent to author in regard to the period January-December 2016.

11. Image available from http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/03/18/news/mirandola_incendiato_un_negozio_islamico_sull_asfalto_una_svastica-135773059/ (retrieved February 14, 2017).

12. Davide Speranza, "Tornano le frasi contro l'Islam," *La Città di Salerno*, (January 2, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://lacittadisalerno.gelocal.it/salerno/cronaca/2016/01/02/news/tornano-le-frasi-contro-l-islam-1.12712135?refresh_ce.

13. Gabriele Bertocchi, "Gorino, il cartello contro i migranti: Islamici, tornate nel vostro califfato," *Il Giornale,* (October 27, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/gorino-cartello-contro-i-migranti-islamici-tornate-nel-1324155.html.

14.Vladimiro Polchi, "L'Islam in Italia e le moschee in garage. Il Viminale le ha censite: sono trenta soltanto a Roma," *La Repubblica*, (November 27, 2015), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://lacittadisalerno.gelocal.it/salerno/cronaca/2016/01/02/news/tornano-le-frasi-contro-l-islam-1.12712135?refresh_ce.

Italian local councils can oppose new buildings for reasons ranging from the proposed parking facilities to how well they think they would fit in with the architectural aesthetic of a neighborhood. Last August, for example, some campaigners in Tuscany fought against a plan to build a mosque a few hundred yards from the Leaning Tower of Pisa. They were concerned that it is too close to the landmark, one of Italy's best known tourist attractions, and feared that it could become a centre for the radicalisation of local Muslims, who number around 600. The building of the mosque in Via del Brennero has been provisionally approved by Pisa's centre-left council but campaigners are gathering signatures for a petition calling for a local referendum on the issue.[15]

Right-wing parties have also called for a blanket ban on any mosques built with foreign money. Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfano said in August that "mini mosques in garages" should be banned as they are hard to monitor and increase the risk of "radicalisation".

In most countries, Italy included, Muslim women are more likely to be victims of hate crime and hate speech than Muslim men, especially if they wear a headscarf. Muslim women are targeted by threats and hate speech, violence and assault and online hate. Verbal and physical violence often mix, as well as racist and sexist insults or gestures, and incidents mainly occur in public spaces. For instance, last January in Milan, a woman was insulted and denigrated. People shouted at her "Bedouin, go home!" because she was wearing the niqab. Her daughter wore only a scarf covering her hair. She dared to answer and was slapped, while nobody around stopped to help.[16]

Last July, a 51-year-old Tunisian woman was attacked without reason in Riolo Terme (Ravenna) by a 48-year-old Italian worker, perhaps influenced by the terrorist event in Germany and France of that period. The man followed the woman with his car, got closer and insulting her said "People die because of you, you have to go back to your country!". He then spat in her face. The man left abruptly, risking knocking her down with his car.[17]

Moreover, despite several circulars clarifying that women can wear the veil in photos for identification documents - most recently the circular of 20 October, 2016 by the Ministry of Transport - the ASGI (Association for Juridical Studies on Immi-

15. Marco Gasperetti, "Referendum contro la moschea troppo vicina alla torrei di Pisa," *Il Corriere,* (August 17, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.corriere.it/esteri/16_agosto_18/referendum-contro-moschea-troppo-vicina-torre-pisa-a6904b58-64b0-11e6-8281-0851fdf23454.shtml.

16. Francesca Sironi, "Io, italiana, aggredita per il velo," *L'Espresso*, (January 27, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2016/01/27/news/l-aggrediscono-per-il-velo-le-gridano-tornate-a-casa-vostra-ma-e-italiana-e-racconta-1.247906.

17. Il Resto del Carlino, "Insulti razzisti a una donna col velo: torna al tuo paese", *ilrestodelcarlino.it*,(July 15, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/ravenna/cronaca/insulti-razzisti-velo-torna-al-tuo-paese-1.2350497.

gration) received a number of reports about cases of opposition to the request and the release of documents such as ID cards, passports, driving licences and residence permits, because of photos of women wearing the Islamic veil. In a letter sent to the Ministries of Transport and Interior on 6 December, 2016, the ASGI emphasised that the right to wear headscarves in passport photos constitutes a right guaranteed by Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution of Italy, which respectively protect the freedom of religion and the freedom of thought. Therefore the association requested, in accordance with the application of these principles and o the ministerial circulars mentioned above, to put in place actions and appropriate measures to prevent further oppositions to the issuing of identity documents by the competent authorities.[18]

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

Due to the lack of an agreement between the Italian state and the Muslim community and of a general law on religious freedom, for the last couple of years, collective and enterprise bargaining have assumed and continue to assume importance. As part of the regulation of labour relations, practical solutions of bilateral legislation have been identified.

Concerning access to public employment, existing legislation often states that recruitment in the public sector requires the possession of Italian or EU citizenship and the Immigration Law 286/1998 authorises this type of discrimination. In the private sector, the lack of adequate education relegates Muslims to less-skilled and poorly paid jobs. Moreover, there is a high presence of irregular immigrants working without any social protection.[19]

To better analyse the reasons that push employers to hire natives rather than foreigners, some Italian scholars carried out a field survey which was published in 2016. Between July 2013 and October 2014, they sent 22,000 fictitious résumés to all companies that offered work through the major online search engines. They analysed the response rate that companies called each candidate to invite him/her for an interview. The CVs that were sent were equivalent in all their characteristics: the participants had the same age, they all resided in the same city (Rome), and had the same educational background. The experiment clearly showed that there is a significant difference between the treatment of Italian candidates (52% of whom were contacted) and that of foreign applicants (28%), who were heavily

18. ASGI, "Foto con il velo: non va negato il documento d'identità," *asgi.it,* (December 14, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.asgi.it/notizia/indossare-velo-foto-documento-identita/.

19. Redattore Sociale, "Rapporto sulla situazione dei Musulmani in Italia rispetto alla fruizione di bene e servizi," *edscuola.it*, (October 7, 2013), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/handicap/mussulmani_in_italia.htm.

penalised. It also emerged that most of the foreign applicants were from Muslim countries.[20]

During this research, it was difficult to find cases of employment discrimination that had occurred in 2016 due to the lack of complaints and reports to the Italian authorities. However, inferences can be drawn from the existing surveys and the information received from the MAI + (Monitoraggio Anti Islamofobia) initiative which reports and records incidents of Islamophobia.in Italy.

The information highlights that in Italy, the veil is one of the main – but not only - grounds of employment discrimination towards Muslim women. It is not only a case of racist employers, but also a wider structural inequality that affects mainly those who are socially and economically marginalised.

ISTAT data show that in Italy, in 2016, lower employment rates are reported among foreign women coming from Muslim-majority countries.[21] Yet, especially when employers do not provide any feedback, it is difficult to determine if the job applications are not successful as a result of discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, gender, age or social class. In many cases the intersection of one or more prejudices causes discrimination.

In Italy, the legal protection from religious discrimination in employment exists, but employees rarely report it. Sara Mahmoud, a young Italian of Egyptian origin, is a unique case: in early May, she won the lawsuit against an agency that, for a leafleting job at a shoe fair in Milan, had excluded her from the recruitment selections because she refused to remove her hijab. The Milan Court of Appeal ruled that the agency's behavior was discriminatory. If there is a religious component in a job's requirements it can be added by the company as a recruitment condition only when it is essential to the service and the sacrifice demanded by the worker is proportionate to the interest pursued by the company.[22]

## Education

The number of Muslim students in Italian schools is increasing every year although the level of immigrant students is rather low compared to the average of their Italian peers. In high schools for instance, as many of 22% of foreign children are rejected.[23] The biggest problem is obviously represented by their insufficient knowledge of the

20. Giovanni Busetta/Maria Gabriella Campolo/Demetrio Panarello, "Stranieri e donne discriminati nell'accesso al mercato del lavoro in Italia," *Migranti Torino*, (August 30, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.migrantitorino.it/?p=41481.

21. Giulia Dessì, "L'islamophobia colpisce soprattutto le donne," *In Genere*, (October 6, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.ingenere.it/articoli/lislamofobia-colpisce-soprattutto-le-donne.

22.Zita Dazzi, "Islam: discriminata sul lavoro per il velo. Il giudice: Sara può fare la hostess," *La Repubblica*, (May 5, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/05/05/news/milano_hostess_velo-139152587/.

23.Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "2015 Report on International Religious Freedom," *state.gov*, (August 10, 2016), https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2015/eur/256203.htm.

Italian language; however, poor intercultural context is also an obstacle to the integration of young people in schools.

Curricula do not offer courses on the native language or the culture of students' countries of origin. Moreover, according to various members of the Muslim community, the representation of Islam in the textbooks is not accurate, if not distorted. The evidence suggests that the Italian educational system increases the de facto discrimination based on religion in Italian society and especially at school.

After the Brussels attacks, in the Northern Italy and especially in Western Friuli and Lombardia, kids at school have been mocked, marginalised and often insulted. For example, in Milan, a teacher discovered that a WhatsApp group was created by some students. The messages of the group were full of insults to a Muslim girl who arrived in this class at the beginning of 2016. In addition, some students were organising hurtful practical jokes targeting the girl.[24]

Last year, some Muslim associations reported other instances of discrimination in schools as parents prohibited their children from interacting with Muslim classmates in Venice, Messina, and Civitavecchia. In September, in Cagliari, some parents revolted against two young migrant orphans asking the teachers to drive them out of school and to oblige them to use separate toilets. The parents were afraid that their children would get infected.[25]

## Politics

In this climate of hate and populism, Italy has been in the crossfire of Islamophobic sentiments as the Italian government passes new laws to protect Italian citizens against migrants, to ban mosques from being built and to close active ones. Several cases of Islamophobia in politics were registered in 2016. These are mainly linked to the climate of intolerance that has increased in the aftermath of the attacks in France, Belgium and Germany.

Hate speech in politics has been observed mostly in the words of right-wing exponents (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Election manifesto of Forza Nuova Toscana party).[26]

24. Marisa Marraffino and Ivano Zoppi, "Insulti razzisti via chat a una ragazzina musulmana da parte dei compagni: cosa rischiano gli spettatori?", *Osservatorio cyberbullismo*, (October 17, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017 from http://osservatorio-cyberbullismo.blogautore.repubblica.it/2016/10/17/73/

25. Alex Coriazzoli, "Cagliari, i genitori protestano contro l'iscrizione di due bimbi nordafricani: separati i bagni tra italiani e stranieri," *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, (October 1, 2016), retrieved January 26, 2017, from http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/10/01/cagliari-i-genitori-protestano-contro-liscrizione-di-due-bimbi-nordafricani-separati-i-bagni-tra-italiani-e-stranieri/3069030/.

26. Image available from http://kelebeklerblog.com/2009/01/19/forza-nuova-tra-antisionismo-e-islamofobia/ (retrieved February 14, 2017).

For example, last September the leader of *Lega Nord* Matteo Salvini attacked the Pope who, together with the Italian state, invited the Muslim community in Italy to a prayer after the brutal murder of Father Jacques Hamel, beheaded by Islamic terrorists in Normandy. Salvini declared that "Islam is not compatible with our freedoms and our rights. Those who do not understand this are ignorant or complicit!"[27]

The deputy of *Forza Italia*, Daniela Santanchè, after the attack in Berlin said "Today some imams pretend to respect our religion, but tomorrow they will share the sermons and exhortations for the destruction of Western countries."[28] Furthermore, last January, after the attack in Colonia, Santanchè relaunched the proposal to ban the burqa in Italy in order to do justice to young Muslim women.[29]

The leader of the national right-wing party *Fratelli d'Italia*, Giorgia Meloni, last July, presented to the Chamber of Deputies a bill "for the introduction of the crime of Islamic fundamentalism". "It is a crime of opinion, it is not a rule intended to undermine religious freedom, but a standard that is exclusively used for guaranteeing the safety of those who live in Italy," she said.[30] Moreover, after the terrorist attack in Berlin, Giorgia Meloni strongly attacked Europe and "the parasites that govern it", and called for the immediate suspension of Muslim immigrants' reception. On a message posted on Facebook she asked to stop the Islamization of Europe. "The uncontrolled reception policy brings insecurity, crime, degradation and helps Islamic terrorists," she declared.[31]

Regarding mainstream parties and left-wing politicians there were no obvious and significant examples of Islamophobia in 2016.

Another episode of Islamophobia in politics is that of the Mayor of Brugnera (Pordenone) Ivo Moras who last December sent home a Senegalese immigrant who lacked only the oath, the last step to become an Italian citizen. On the same day, Moras sent a complaint to the prefect and the prosecutor of Pordenone "against those who promoted and endorsed such citizenship"; he sent the same

27. Sergio Rame, "Salvini attacca Bergoglio: Non mi piace chi fa entrare gli imam in chiesa," *Il Giornale*, (September 18, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/salvini-attacca-bergoglio-non-mi-piace-chi-fa-entrare-imam-1308019.html.

28. Gloria Origgi, "Islam: la signora Santanché o della propaganda in democrazia," *Il Fatto quotidiano,* (January 17, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/01/17/islam-la-signora-santanche-o-della-propaganda-in-democrazia/2381791/.

29. Giulia Bonaudi, "Santanché si scaglia contro il burqa: Presto una proposta di legge," *Il Giornale*, (January 18, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/santanch-contro-burqa-presenter-presto-proposta-legge-1214660.html.

30. Luca Cirimbilla, "Islam: Giorgia Meloni, introdurre il reato di fondamentalismo," *L'ultima Ribattuta*, (July 5, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.lultimaribattuta.it/49573_islam-bandire-integralismo-meloni.

31.Riscatto Nazionale, "Meloni attacca l'Europa buonista: Basta accogliere immigrati. Basta con l'islamizzazione," *riscattonazionale.it*, (December 20, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.riscattonazionale.it/2016/12/20/meloni-attacca-leuropa-buonista-basta-accogliere-immigrati-basta-lislamizzazione/.

complaint to the Ministry of Interior. According to Moras an illiterate person cannot become Italian.[32]

Nonetheless, there is a specific judgment worth mentioning. Since the beginning of July 2015, an order of the mayor of Alassio, Enzo Canepa, prohibits entry into the town to people from Africa, Asia and South America "devoid of a medical certificate stating the absence of infectious diseases". For this and other reasons, last December, the magistrate of the Tribunal of Savona, issued a decree of condemnation to the mayor of Alassio and a 3,750 euros fine for racial discrimination. The mayor intends to appeal the court decision, claiming that his order is not fundamentally racist[33] In terms of criminal legislation in this field the United Nations, the European Union and the Council of Europe have already validated, on the political level, Islamophobia as a crime, supporting the strategy of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation. Last May, in Italy, the president of the Chamber of Deputies, Laura Boldrini, took another step forward aimed at codifing the crime of Islamophobia, which will result in criminal and civil penalties for anyone who criticises and condemns Islam as a religion. Boldrini will create a commission to study intolerance, xenophobia, racism and hate phenomena, in the various forms they can take such as anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, sexism, and homophobia.[34]

## Media

Xenophobic, Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and racist speech are growing and, due to the serious humanitarian crisis affecting European and Balkan countries and to the terrorist attacks in Brussels, Nice, Berlin etc, they have become particularly significant in the course of 2016. "If these are not bastards!" and "Kick Islam out of our houses!"[35] - these are two headlines on the newsstands after the Brussels attacks, emblems of the dangerous generalisations based on inaccurate and unverified information (Figure 3).

Throughout 2016, in Italy, some newspapers, such as *Il Giornale* and *Libero* (right-wing newspapers) have been critical of Muslims. In particular, *Il Giornale* has been one of the most damning, often associating terrorism with the practice

32. Francesco Scarabellotto, "Non legge l'italiano: il sindaco blocca il giuramento, niente cittadinanza," *Il Gazzettino*, (December 20, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.ilgazzettino.it/nordest/pordenone/niente_cittadinanza_brugnera_sindaco_moras_senegalese-2152454.html.

33.Pietro Barabino, "Migranti, il sindaco di Alassio condannato per l'ordinanza razzista: Devo tutelare i cittadini. Riproporrò l'ordinanza," *Il Fatto quotidiano,* (December 27, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2016/12/27/migranti-il-sindaco-di-alassio-condannato-per-lordinanza-razzista-devo-tutelare-i-cittadini-riproporro-lordinanza/3282671/.

34.35 Roberto Giovannini, "Nasce alla Camera la Commissione sull' intolleranza," *La Stampa,* (April 4, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.lastampa.it/2016/04/04/societa/nasce-alla-camera-la-commissione-sullintolleranza-ENyIQyFF2EFSkOgeZv87mM/pagina.html.

35. Associazione Carta di Roma, "Attentati Bruxelles. Evitare generalizzazioni e discorsi d'odio," *Editoriale Carta di Roma*, (March 23, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/bruxelles-giorno-evitare-generalizzazioni-discorsi-dodio/.

ristora
Libero
West End
L'attacco dell'Isis
Se questi non sono bastardi
A Bruxelles 34 morti e almeno 230 feriti, anche italiani
Ma l'Europa risponde con lacrime e papazzi

Figure 3: Libero newspaper's headline after Brussels attacks [37]

of Islam and/or migration. The topics that have been mostly discussed are the integration (and non-integration) of Muslims in Western countries, the prohibition on the beaches of burkinis imposed by some French municipalities and the murder of a young Nigerian in Fermo by an Italian hooligan with the aggravating circumstance of racism.[36]

Newspapers *Corriere della Sera* (centre-left), *Avvenire* (Catholic Church), *Unità* (left-wing), *La Repubblica* (centre-left), and *La Stampa* (centre-left) – with the exception of *Il Giornale* - tell stories of Muslims. Social inclusion is the common denominator of their titles/articles. These newspapers serve as models and promote ideals to be achieved in the management of a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon. *Il Giornale*, however, chooses to refuse such an approach by loading a dimension of alarmist meanings and, in particular, by establishing a connection between immigration and the risk of Western countries being "colonised" by Muslim ones with titles such as "What an illusion to think of integrating Islam!" and "We are fighting a battle against barbarism".[38]

Regarding the issue of banning burkinis in some beaches of France, in Italy also there was a reflection on the tolerance of religious customs and practices pertaining to Islam. With the exception of some headlines in *Il Giornale* that presented a culture clash between civilisations, the Muslim on the one hand, violent and ready to prevaricate, and the Christian on the other, tolerant and peaceful, the titles of the five other newspapers broadened the debate about the burkinis and extend it to the use of the burka. Those newspapers wrote about the choices in Europe to ban the full burka in public spaces, as it was considered incompatible with the affirmation of women's rights in the Western world: "Islam hates all freedom!", "Violence and Islam. Under the burkinis is women's blood".[39]

The third issue relates to the murder of the young Nigerian Emmanuel Chidi Nnamdi by an Italian hooligan. After the first few days of coverage of the event with updates of the investigations, all daily newspapers expanded the content of the story, stigmatised

36. Osservatorio Europeo sulla Sicurezza, "La ricerca della gioventù perduta. Un futuro oltre la paura," *IX Rapporto sulla sicurezza e l'insicurezza sociale in Italia e in Europa*, (March 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.demos.it/2016/pdf/3814rapporto_sicurezza2016.pdf.

37. Image available from http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/la-copertura-mediatica-degli-attentati-di-bruxelles-e-dei-successivi-sviluppi-tra-pericolose-generalizzazioni-e-hate-speech/.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

what happened and took the opportunity to reflect on the presence of racist instances in Italian society. The lead headline of *Il Giornale* did not address this issue and, in the only title on the first page, it wrote about anti-racists, without giving legitimacy to the murder: "The lies of Fermo and the racism of the anti-racists against the truth."[40]

Titles relating to anxiety caused by the so-called DAESH followers in Italy and in Europe increased by 2% compared to the previous year (9% compared with 7% in 2015). All titles/articles related to this category established a connection between immigration and terrorism. There are two categories of stories where the above link could be said to have legitimate grounds: the stories of immigrant arrests where an affiliation with Jihadi extremism was discovered, and the risks associated with the flow of asylum seekers who may include potential terrorists. *Il Giornale*, in addition to these aspects, gave space to the accusations against the judiciary for releasing dangerous DAESH supporters: "They were a Jihadist cell. But the judges will release two of them"; "Distracted Judges, 15 Jihadists on the run."[41]

In addition, following the attacks in Cologne, there was a reaction consisting of xenophobic movements and racist interpretations of the events, even outside the German border, as well as very superficial and stigmatising discussions on the identity of migrants, and in particular of "Arabs". Expressions such as "animals", "humiliation ritual", "herd of Cologne", "sexual jihad", "atavistic Arab tribalism" appeared in the centre-right Italian newspapers.[42]

Also following the truck attack on a busy Christmas market in Berlin, Italian media contributed to the raise of Islamophobia. For instance, some newspapers headlines included "German press uses self-censorship in order to respect the privacy of the terrorists" (*Libero*);"The exterminator of Berlin is a Muslim not a trucker" (*Libero*); "The 'butcher' of Berlin between hymns to Jihadism and threats to Christians" (*Il Giornale*); "Anis, the Berlin butcher landed in Italy and ended up in jail" (*Il Giornale*).[43]

The approach of the aforementioned newspapers has been severely criticised by the Carta di Roma Association, which in January 2016 published the Consolidation Act of journalists' duties inviting Italian journalists to take extreme care in handling information concerning asylum seekers, refugees, victims of trafficking and migrants in Italy and elsewhere.[44]

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Cinzia Costa, "La dottrina dell'islamofobia e il discorso su Colonia," *Istituto Euro-Arabo*, (March 18, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.istitutoeuroarabo.it/DM/la-dottrina-dellislamofobia-e-il-discorso-su-colonia/.

43. Domenico Bonvegna, "Riflessioni politicamente scorrette dopo l'ennesima strage islamista di Berlino*", Il Corriere delle Regioni,* (December 26, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.ilcorrieredelleregioni.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10494:riflessioni-su-berlino&catid=112:cavernadiplatone&Itemid=143.

44. Carta di Roma, "Protocollo deontologico concernente richiedenti asilo, rifugiati, vittime della tratta e migranti," *cartadiroma.org*, (February 3, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2016, from http://www.cartadiroma.org/cosa-e-la-carta-di-roma/codice-deontologico/.

## Justice System

In 2016, one of the most controversial legislative issues was the adoption by Lombardia Region of a regional law (L.R. 2/2015 passed on 3 February, 2015) regulating the construction of new places of worship. The law clearly breaks the principle of religious freedom enshrined in the Italian Constitution. The state has rejected the law, once dubbed "Anti-Mosque law", which imposes more stringent rules for creating new places of worship in Lombardia.[45]

Last June, the 'Anti-Mosque' regional law of Veneto was challenged by the government. The text (L.R. 12/2016) would violate several principles enshrined in the Italian Constitution. In particular, under this law new places of worship are relegated to the periphery and may be subject to a referendum among the residents; those who build them must pay a fee and stipulate an agreement with the City Council. Moreover during activities not strictly related to religion, the law stipulates that it is mandatory to use the Italian language.[46]

In addition, in December 2015, the regional governments of Lombardia and Veneto passed a law, which entered into force on 1 January, 2016, prohibiting the use of head coverings that could conceal the wearer's identity in public buildings, including government offices and hospitals.[47]

Furthermore, last September, *Lega Nord* presented to the Chamber of Deputies another bill. The idea behind it is that organisations and associations that want to build new mosques will have to prove the origin of their funds and to present their financial statements, to ensure that the funds do not come from organisations with unclear ideologies. Also they can receive money only from organisations based in Italy.[48] (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Muslims pray in the streets of Milan [49]

45. Stefano Pasta, "Bocciata la regione Lombardia: Legge anti-moschee incostituzionale," *Famiglia Cristiana,* (February 26 , 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.famigliacristiana.it/articolo/bocciata-la-regione-lombardia-legge-anti-moschee-incostituzionale.aspx.

46.Elvio Pasca, "Islam. Governo impugna la legge antimoschee: incostituzionale," *Stranieri in Italia*, (June 1, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.stranieriinitalia.it/attualita/attualita/attualita-sp-754/islam-governo-impugna-la-legge-anti-moschee-incostituzionale.html.

47. Leo Lancari, "Burqa, il divieto fa sempre discutere," Il *Manifesto*, (August 11, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://ilmanifesto.info/burqa-il-divieto-fa-sempre-discutere/.

48.Giovanni Vasso, "Fondi privati per le moschee? Solo se arrivano dall'Italia," *Il Giornale*, (September 23, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/fondi-moschee-solo-dallitalia-1310216.html.

49. Image available from http://www.famigliacristiana.it/articolo/bocciata-la-regione-lombardia-legge-anti-moschee-incostituzionale.aspx (retrieved February 14, 2017).

## Internet

Social networks and the Internet offer everyone the opportunity to express their thoughts via comments and shared posts, Yet, it cannot be denied that they are currently the main propagators of racist and xenophobic hate messages and provide a powerful and quick megaphone for the hate speech phenomenon. In 2014, UNAR (National Office Against Racial Discrimination) recorded 347 cases of racist expressions on social networks, of which 185 on Facebook and the others on Twitter and Youtube.[50]

Hate speech also involves Muslim people. In the last three years, Italy has distinguished itself for the largest number of discriminatory statements (towards migrants, asylum seekers and Muslims), mainly on the Facebook pages of political candidates or in TV interviews.

For instance, some Facebook pages, such as "*No all' Islam in Italia*"(No Islam in Italy), "*Di sinistra e antirazzista, ma contro l'invasione straniera*" (Left wing and anti- racist but against the foreign invasion) continue to spread false news and use inflammatory language when reporting about Muslim people.

Intolerance towards Muslims is widespread between the north and the centre of Italy, and less so in the south. After tweets about women, Muslims represent the group with the largest number of detected tweets. Between 2015 and 2016, there are in fact 1,014,693 tweets about Muslims with 22,435 negative tweets and 7,465 discriminatory messages.[51] Negative messages skyrocketed after the Paris attacks on 13 November, 2016, an episode that increased the proportion of people who identify terrorism and extremism as a challenge. Lazio and Lombardia are on the top of the most Islamophobic regions.

To highlight gaps and responsibilities about this situation, but also the best practices, last March the first Italian research on hate speech, journalism and migrations was presented. The research was titled "Hatred is not an opinion". The work was carried out by Cospe within the European project against racism and discrimination on the Internet entitled "Bricks - Building Respect on the Internet by Combating Hate Speech". The research was carried out through the qualitative analysis of case studies, monitoring of articles and interviews with journalists of the main Italian newspapers and industry experts.[52]

At the legislative level, in July 2015, at the initiative of the President of the Chamber of Deputies Laura Boldrini, the Italian Declaration on Internet Rights was creat-

50. Letizia Materassi/Marta Tiezzi/Camilla Bencini, "L'odio non è un opinione. Ricerca su hate speech, giornalismo e migrazioni," *BRICKS Building Respect on the Internet by Combating hate Speech*, (March 16, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.cospe.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ricerca_odionon%C3%A8opinione.pdf.

51.Manuela Malchiodi, "L'Islam nei Social Media. Analisi di Twitter," *Osservatorio di Pavia*, (May 22, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.osservatorio.it/download/Articolo_Islam_Twitter.pdf.

52. Letizia Materassi/Marta Tiezzi/Camilla Bencini, "L'odio non è un opinione. Ricerca su hate speech, giornalismo e migrazioni," *BRICKS Building Respect on the Internet by Combating hate Speech*, (March 16, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.cospe.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/ricerca_odionon%C3%A8opinione.pdf.

ed, whose purpose is to indicate high-level principles and values regarding the rights and duties in the access and use of the Internet. In this regard, Article 13 states that if, on the one hand "restriction of freedom of expression" is not permitted, on the other hand "the protection of the dignity of people from abuses related to behaviours such as incitement to hatred, discrimination and violence must be guaranteed."[53]

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

During the period under review Italian politicians, institutions and journalists have criminalised Muslims with speeches, slogans, discriminatory and xenophobic statements.

In particular, last May, Matteo Salvini inserted the section "Sex and Trash" in his new website "The populist". This section is full of articles on matters that have been revived by the *Lega Nord*: the anti-Islam and anti-migrant battle. "The Populist" devotes ample space to news that cast the Left, migrants and social centres in a bad light: irreverent cartoons of the Pope, foreigners occupying houses and beating up their employers, even foreigners who massacre an Italian after urinating in the street.[54] (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Matteo Salvini, leader of the Lega Nord political party[55]

Mayor of Cascina Susanna Ceccardi, the first elected mayor of the *Lega Nord* in Tuscany, after the attack of Rouen, published a cartoon on Facebook, where a young blonde woman holding a shield with the words "Europe" kicks a Muslim depicted with a pig's head, a beard and the Quran. A vignette bears the title "Wake up Europe!" Her choice to publish the cartoon was severely criticised. In response to her critics, she said "As I am the mayor I think I have to fight with even more force to oppose Islamic terrorism."[56]

Moreover, at the end of May, the town of Cantù issued a decision by which it gave permission to Muslims to use a former tribunal as a prayer site during the period of Ramadan. Immediately Riccardo Volonterio, secretary of Cantù's *Lega Nord*,

53. Arturo Di Corinto, "Laura Boldrini presenta la Carta dei diritti di internet: E' unica al mondo," *La Repubblica*, (July 28, 2015), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.repubblica.it/tecnologia/sicurezza/2015/07/28/news/carta_dei_diritti_boldrini_un_cantiere_in_evoluzione_-119968621/.

54. Laura Eduati, "Il Populista di Matteo Salvini: sesso, Islam, razzismo e notizie trash nel nuovo sito del leader della Lega Nord," *Huffington Post*, (May 9, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2016/05/09/populista-matteo-salvini-trash_n_9867690.html.

55. Image available from http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/16_dicembre_24/italia-ventre-molle-europa-salvini-attacca-chiudere-schengen-ab3c6bfa-c9d2-11e6-bc56-f60257ccfa3f.shtml.

56. Libero quotidiano, "Calci nel sedere all' islamico. La big della Lega demolisce l'Islam. E' caos," *liberoquotidiano.it*, (July 28, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/sfoglio/11934730/susanna-ceccardi-lega-nord-polemica-vignetta-islam-valchiria-islam-maiale-corano.html.

was against the decision, and expressed the fear that the place could become a real mosque. With a petition Cantù residents lined up against the use of the former tribunal as a place of worship for the Islamic community.[57]

Furthermore, Francesco Minutillo, the provincial coordinator of *Fratelli d'Italia* in Forlì, in the wake of the attack in Nice, posted on Facebook: "While Islamic dogs kill and exterminate us ... we think about making laws for gays weddings"; "Only a new manifesto of Verona against Muslims and blacks can save us. New racial laws in protection of Christianity!" and finally the "Fault of the Constitution written by partisan pigs". Following his statements, Minutillo was suspended from his party.[58]

## Phsyical and Verbal Assaults

In Italy, in the last two years, hate crimes have encountered increasing attention from civil society, national and international institutions, and also from the world of information and mass media.

**Some relevant cases of hate crimes reported in 2016 are the following:**

- On 4 April, 2016 in Palermo, in Southern Italy, a Gambian student, 21 years old, was shot. Yusoufa Susso was in a medically induced coma for several days; luckily his condition improved.[59]
- On 10 May, 2016, in Basilicagoiano, a small community a few kilometres from Parma, Mohamed Habassi, a 34-year-old Tunisian citizen, was brutally murdered. The aggressors, Alessio Alberici and Luca Del Vasto, are Parma citizens.[60]
- On 13 June, 2016, in Conegliano, a municipality in Veneto, the 30-year-old Cameroon citizen Donald Fombu Mboy, who had been living in Italy for ten years, died. Before dying, he had been stopped by the police for a check and had been beaten. Police headquarters said the cause of death was a heart attack.[61]
- On 5 July, 2016, in Fermo, a little city in central Italy, Emmanuel Chidi Namdi, a young Nigerian asylum seeker, was attacked by a man while walking in the town centre with his partner.[62]
- During the night of 22 July, 2016, in a casino on Torrenova Street, in the eastern

57.Canturino, "Lega Nord: Cantù non vuole la moschea. In un giorno oltre 250 firme," *canturino.com,* (August 5, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.canturino.com/politica/lega-nord-cantu-non-vuole-la-moschea-un-giorno-oltre-250-firme.

58.La Repubblica, "Nuove leggi razziali contro Islamici e negri. Fdi sospende Minutillo, segretario Forlì," *La Repubblica*, (July 17, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://bologna.repubblica.it/cronaca/2016/07/17/news/_nuove_leggi_razziali_contro_islamici_e_negri_romagna_bufera_su_fdi-144309810/.

59. Lunaria, "Report nazionale sui delitti di odio, Italia", *Lunaria*, ( April 25, 2015), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.togetherproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/italy.pdf.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

suburbs of Rome, a 42-year-old Senegalese citizen was violently assaulted by 5 Roman youngsters.

- In Imperia, also in July, a 19-year-old from Senegal was insulted and attacked by six Italian youngsters.
- Lunaria through its daily monitoring between 1 January, 2007 and 30 June, 2016 registered 5,369 cases of discrimination, hate speech, propaganda, injuries, property damage, physical violence and racist murders. The discriminatory motives were physical characteristics, nationality, national or "ethnic origin", religious practices, ideas and cultural practices.[63]
- For the year 2016, the data on reported cases has not been worked out in detail. To date, for the period January to 5 July, 2016 the documented cases of racism were 212, among which are three cases of murder whose reconstruction is very complex and controversial, and a case of attempted murder of which the evident racist motive hasn't been verified by the authorities responsible for the investigation.[64]

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Throughout 2016, initiatives were undertaken by the government, justice, institutions and the Muslim community itself. However much more needs to be done in order to counter Islamophobia in several fields.

For instance, last July, the leaders of the largest Italian Muslim communities along with representatives of the government, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs Alfano, discussed and shared suggestions about a report prepared by 12 scholars to propose good practices and measures about Islam in Italy. Sermons in Italian and the status of imams were two of the main points of agreement. The imams who agree to undertake training, which will not focus on religious doctrine but will offer a civic point of view and emphasize Italian rules, will be recognised by the state and will have access to protected locations such as hospitals, cemeteries, migrants reception centres and, of course, prisons. Moreover, representatives of Muslim women's organisations have suggested that the training of the imams should include information on the protection of women.[65]

From a judicial point of view, Stefano Dambruoso, a magistrate in the front row of the fight against terrorism and Deputy of Civic Choice in 2013, together with Andrea Manciulli (Pd), last January presented to the Chamber of Deputies a bill aimed at creating an "Information System on Jihadist Radicalism". This is a system where

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65.Paolo Naso, "La strada in salita del Consiglio per l'Islam," *Confronti,* (February 25, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.confronti.net/confronti/2016/02/la-strada-in-salita-del-consiglio-per-lislam/.

all information on subjects and situations related to Jihadist radicalism will merge in order to be monitored alongside terrorist phenomena. The proposed law includes a number of measures to prevent episodes of radicalisation. Among these, since the Jihadist propaganda and the terrorist recruitment mainly occurs on the Internet, Dambruoso and Manciulli included the construction of an information portal on the issues of radicalisation and Jihadist extremism.[66]

Furthermore, in the field of media and cyberspace, due to the increasing complaints relating to cases of hate speech, especially online, the UNAR's Media and Social Network Observatory on hate speech has been recently set up. This observatory, to be financed with ordinary funds from UNAR, officially started its activities last January with a two-fold aim: the first is to find online hate speech and report it for removal; the second is to analyse, learn and understand. The observatory is supplied with software that works on the basis of a set of search keywords, selected by UNAR and based on data from scientific literature and from the practical experience of UNAR's work against discriminations.

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, in March 2016, Arci and Cittalia associations, presented to the Chamber of Deputies the communication campaign of the PRISM project - Preventing, Redressing and Inhibiting Hate Speech in New Media. The project involves partners from five countries (Italy, France, Romania, Spain, and England) and is funded by the European Commission.[67]

Figure 6: *Osservatorio sulle discriminazioni*'s manifesto after Brussels attacks[68]

66. Stefano Dambruoso/Andrea Manciulli, "Misure per la prevenzione della radicalizzazione e dell'estremismo jihadista," *andreamanciulli.it*, (January 27, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.andreamanciulli.it/i-miei-impegni/2016/01/misure-per-la-prevenzione-della-radicalizzazione-e-dellestremismo-jihadista/.

67.Carta di Roma, "Hate speech. Come contrastare l'odio con nuovi linguaggi e social network," *Editoriale Carta di Roma,* (March 22, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://www.cartadiroma.org/editoriale/contrareodiolinguaggisocial/.

68. Image available from: http://articolo3-osservatorio.blogspot.co.at/2016/03/con-il-cuore-bruxelles-e-con-la-mente.html (retrieved February 14 2017).

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report studies the major incidents and events that occurred in Italy during 2016 that have as their subject acts of discrimination and racist violence against Muslims. During the research, it became obvious that overall in Italy there is a manifest lack of data on Islamophobic incidents which is mostly determined by the unwillingness on a part of the Muslim community to report these incidents. However, especially after the attacks in France, Belgium and Germany mainstream Italian media started talking up "Islamic terrorism", transforming Islam and Muslims into something dangerous, even monstrous. In this context, hate speech used in the sphere of political debate, the bitter controversy concerning the construction of suitable places of worship, the link between the so-called migration crisis and the presence of Muslims as well as the discrimination suffered by Muslim women have been analysed. Hate speech in politics has been observed mostly in the words of right-wing exponents such as Matteo Salvini of *Lega Nord* and Giorgia Meloni of *Fratelli d'Italia*. In addition, in 2016, Muslims reported continued difficulties in acquiring permission from local governments to construct mosques. Throughout the year, Islamophobia has manifested itself above all through shameful minor gestures perpetrated by ordinary citizens, such as constant insults towards the members of the Muslim community. In particular, Muslim women are targeted by threats and hate speech, violence, assault, employment discriminations and online hate mostly because they wear the hijab. Also, following terrorist attacks abroad, children have been discriminated in several schools of the country because of their Muslim faith. Moreover, an analysis of the main limitations of the legislative framework, such as the absence of a general law on religious freedom and the lack of a specific agreement between the Muslim community and the Italian state put Muslims' rights in jeopardy and perpetuates discrimination and Islamophobia. To conclude several cases of "hate speech" were recorded in the media and in cyberspace. Not only journalists and blog authors but also websites' moderators and ordinary people have used media and Internet websites as a tool to sow fear and hatred towards Muslims.

On the basis of this report, the following set of key measures should be considered when discussing ways to counter the Islamophobia phenomenon in Italy.

## Legislative Framework

- Italy should complete the legislative process for the ratification of Protocol No. 12 of the European Convention on Human Rights as soon as possible.
- Italian authorities should ensure the full independence de jure and de facto of UNAR.
- Italian authorities should adopt the laws necessary to provide specialised support to victims of hate crimes.
- Italian authorities should introduce regulations in the Penal Code to criminalise

the insult and the defamation in public against a person or group of persons on grounds based on race, color, language, religion, nationality or ethnic origin.
- Italian authorities should set up a method of data collection on incidents related to hate speech.

## Employment and Education

- Information and awareness-raising activities with youth and in schools should be promoted.
- taly should intensify their efforts to improve the employment opportunities, particularly for young Muslims.
- Italy should review textbooks to ensure that the history of Muslim groups is presented in a correct manner. Moreover, discussion of racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia should be part of official school curricula.
- Teachers should be trained as cultural mediators.
- Schools should create stable and productive relationships with the Muslim associations in the territory and plan regular meetings with them.

## Politics

- All political parties in Italy should ratify and implement the "Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society".
- The existing criminal legislation in this field should be enforced and the penalties have to be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.
- Institutional decision makers should pay greater attention and get proactively involved in the fight against racism, foreseeing the aggravating factors when they make use of hate speech.
- Decision makers should allocate adequate public funding to carry out a multi-year strategy preventing, contrasting and safeguarding against racist and hate speech crimes.

## Media and Internet

- Media should examine the news reporting to ensure the correctness and completeness of the services that address issues relating to Muslims.
- Training sessions with media workers and their organisations to promote unbiased reporting should be launched.
- The self-regulatory measures taken by the Internet industry to combat racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia online, such as anti-racist hotlines, codes of conduct and filtering software should be supported, and further research in this area should be encouraged.
- Existing anti-racist initiatives on the Internet as well as the development of new sites devoted to the fight against racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and intolerance should be supported.

# CHRONOLOGY

- **2 January, 2016:** Salerno - The phrase "We are not a land of Islam" appears on the external wall of a primary school.
- **13 January 13, 2016:** Miane (Treviso) - A flyer showing discriminatory epithets of a religious nature addressed to Muslims, signed with a swastika was posted on the walls of an auditorium.
- **18 January, 2016:** Mirandola (Modena) - Vandals set fire to a butcher shop run by a Muslim and leave an inscription on the floor with the words "Go away!".
- **27 January, 2016:** Milan - A woman is insulted and denigrated. People shout at her "Bedouin, go home!" because she is wearing a niqab.
- **28 March, 2016:** Pordenone - In several of the town's schools children are discriminated against because of their Muslim faith.
- **9 May, 2016:** Matteo Salvini, the leader of *Lega Nord* political party, inserts "Sex and Trash", an anti-Islam and anti-migrant section in his new website "The populist".
- **17 May, 2016:** Albenga (Savona) - A banner bearing discriminatory epithets of a religious nature addressed to Muslims signed by *Forza Nuova* was found at the entrance of the local mosque.
- **27 June, 2016:** Sassari - Unknown persons launched a 12-calibre cartridge charge inside a building located in Via Matteotti 3, a place of worship for citizens of Moroccan nationality.
- **3 July, 2016:** The newspaper *Il Giornale* publishes a front-page headline reading "Islamic Beasts".
- **14 July, 2016**: Rome - The leader of the national right-wing party *Fratelli d'Italia*, Giorgia Meloni, presents the draft law "for the introduction of the crime of Islamic fundamentalism".
- **15 July, 2016:** Riolo Terme (Ravenna) - A Tunisian woman is attacked both verbally and physically by an Italian worker.
- **17 August, 2016:** Pisa - Campaigners fight against the plan to build a mosque a few hundred yards from the Leaning Tower of Pisa.
- **20 August, 2016:** Venice - A teacher of a local school posts a message on Facebook insulting people of the Islamic faith.
- **27 October, 2016:** Goro (Ferrara) - A sign inviting Muslims to leave Italy and go to the Middle Eastern lands "controlled by ISIS" appears in a church.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN LATVIA NATIONAL REPORT 2016

ANITA STASULANE

## The Author

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# Executive Summary

The dynamics of Islamophobia in Latvia were driven by several factors: (1) the so-called 'refugee crisis' triggered by war in the Middle East; (2) terrorist attacks in other European countries; and (3) the position of the Muslim community in Latvia's society. When addressing the problems caused by the so-called 'refugee crisis', Latvian politicians chose a tough policy: a draft law on the restriction on wearing face coverings in public places was drawn up, and it was supported by 77% of Latvia's population aged between 18 and 55. The opinion of the Muslim community, however, was divided: most Muslim groups expressed the view that the draft law would not interfere with their rights. The tough policy could also be observed at municipal level: the Riga Construction Office withdrew the construction permit for a building which was planned to be used by the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre. Although the views expressed by the Latvian media were not manifestly Islamophobic on the whole, their efforts to increase revenues by attracting maximum audience prevailed: the press tended to attract readers by means of flashy and scandalous headlines that were abusive towards Muslims. The Latvian media continued to report on Muslims living abroad and rarely focused on the Latvian Muslim community. Islamophobic sentiment was most intensive in cyberspace. Social networks provide an opportunity to react to what is going on in a fast manner and this reaction usually is emotionally charged and abusive. The fact that hatred and intolerance against Muslims voiced on the Internet have become a problem in Latvia was evidenced by a criminal case referred to court in 2016: genuine punishment was imposed for a comment containing a message full of hatred and intolerance published on the Internet. If the year 2015 was marked by the first open Islamophobic manifestations in Latvia, 2016 was characterised by the strengthening of Islamophobic sentiment in society which was facilitated by the activities of radical right-wing groups, the unclear position of politicians, as well as the actions and provocative messages of individual members of the Muslim community. However, there were also positive trends: (1) when addressing the so-called 'refugee crisis', the activity of non-governmental organisations and responsiveness of individuals increased; (2) the determination to tackle the problem of Islamophobia from a legal perspective; (3) specific education activities have been implemented to prevent marginalization and discrimination.

## Kopsavilkums

2016. gadāislāmafobijas dinamiku Latvijā noteica vairāki faktori: (1) Tuvajos Austrumos notiekošās karadarbības izraisītā bēgļu krīze; (2) citās pasaules valstīs un it īpaši Eiropāveiktie terorakti; (3) musulmaņu kopienas pozicionēšanās Latvijas sabiedrībā. Risinot bēgļu krīzes izraisītās problēmas, Latvijas politiķi izvēlējās stingrās rokas politiku: tika sagatavots likumprojekst par sejas aizsedzoša apģērba nēsāšanas ierobežošanu publiskās vietās, ko atbalstīja 77 procenti aptaujāto Latvijas iedzīvotāju vecumā no 18 līdz 55 gadiem, betmusulmaņu kopienas viedoklis dalījās: vairums musulmaņu grupu pauda uzskatu, ka šis likumprojekts neskar viņu tiesības. Stingrās rokas politika bija vērojama arī pašvaldību līmenī: Rīgā buvvalde atcēla būvatļauju ēkai, kur plānoja pārcelties Islāma Kultūras centrs. Lai gan kopumā Latvijas plašsaziņas līdzekļi nepauda klaji islāmafobiskus uzskatus, centieni nopelnīt, piesaistot iespējami lielāku auditoriju, ņēma virsroku:the press tended to attract readers by means of loud and scandalous headings, kas bija aizskaroši musulmaņiem. Latvijas plašsaziņas līdzekļi joprojām ziņojagalvenokārt par musulmaņiem ārvalstīs un reti pievērsās Latvijas musulmaņu kopienai. Visintesīvāk islāmafobiskais noskaņojums izpaudās kibertelpā. Sociālie tīkli sniedz iespēju ātri paust attieksmi pret notiekošu, un parasti šī attieksme ir emocionāli sakāpināta un aizskaroša. Par to, ka interneta vidē paustais naids un neiecietība pret musulmaņiem ir kļuvusi par problēmu, liecina 2016. gadā tiesai nodotā krimināllieta: par internetā publicētu naidu un neiecietību saturošu komentāru tika piemērots reāls sods. Ja 2015. gads bija zīmīgs ar pirmajām atklātajām islāmafobijas izpausmēm Latvijā, tad 2016. gaduraksturoja islāmafobiska noskaņojuma nostiprināšanās sabiedrībā, ko sekmēja radikāli labējo grupu aktivitātes, politiķu neskaidrā pozīcija un arī musulmaņu kopienas atsevišķu locekļu rīcība un izaicinošivēstījumi. Tomēr iezīmējās arī pozitīvas tendencies: (1) risinot bēgļu krīzi, pieauga nevalstisko organizāciju aktivitāte un individuālu cilvēku atsaucība; (2) apņemšanās risināt islāmafobijas problēmu juridiskā aspektā; (3) veikti konkrēti izglītībaspasākumi, lai novērstu marginalizāciju un diskrimināciju, kā arī iezīmējās refleksiju klātbūtne.

# Introduction

Several incidents signaling the presence of Islamophobia in Latvia stand out against the background of the dynamics of events in 2016; these incidents have been addressed in this report. At the end of 2015, the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre hoped to move to a small two-storey building with a large prayer room. The house was not put into service due to disagreements with the Construction Office of the Riga City Council which insisted on additional construction expertise. The respective law stipulates that buildings in which at least 100 people can be present at the same time need a special expert report, but the figure provided by the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre was that of a maximum of 99 people. The Construction Office did not believe this figure and required an additional expert opinion. As a result of the argument, the Construction Office withdrew the construction permit on 22 February, 2016 since the documents necessary for the reconstruction were not submitted. The head of the Construction Office announced that the Muslims of Riga were trying to cheat construction supervisors in order to avoid an additional expert opinion.[1] Zufars Zainullins, who represents the Muslims who arrived in Latvia during the Soviet period (Tatars, Azerbaijanis and Uzbeks), provided the following comments on the situation: "Currently the Islamic Development Bank has suspended financing as repairs of the new premises in Avotuiela 19, Riga, have been discontinued."

The year 2016 explicitly revealed that the Muslim community in Latvia was not homogeneous, and that the radicalization of two of its members supported the strengthening of Islamophobic sentiment across society. One of Latvia's first converts was a student of sociology who travelled to the Middle East during the conflict in Iraq, turned towards Islam and later in time, left Latvia. According to the media, he was likely killed among other militants.[2] In 2016, other people were reported to have joined combatants in Syria. This, possibly, contributed to the decline in Islamophobic activity of radical right groups, although it was also probably affected by the fact that the refugees who had received in Latvia left the country. We can assume that the radical right considered the emergence of radicals among Latvia's Muslims the best proof of their threat, and, as a result, did not try to influence society anymore. However, it appears more likely that the radical right groups in Latvia have not received financing for their activities since the spring of 2016.

1. Nra.lv, "IslāmacentrsvēlnevarpārvāktiesuzlielākāmtelpāmAvotuielā;apturētabūvatļauja," *nra.lv*, (February 22, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://nra.lv/latvija/riga/164211-islama-centrs-vel-nevar-parvakties-uz-lielakam-telpam-avotu-iela-aptureta-buvatlauja.htm.

2.VikmanisĢirts, "Jaunsbīstamsfenomens – islāmakonvertīti," *LatvijasAvīze*, (March 3, 2016), retrievedJanuary 1, 2017, fromhttp://www.la.lv/jauns-bistams-fenomens-islama-konvertiti/.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Although Latvia is geographically distant from the armed conflict zones in Syria and Iraq, the discourse on the war in the Middle East has adversely affected the life of Latvia's Muslim community. The most significant incident which determined the increase in Islamophobia in Latvia in 2016 was a 12-minute-long video message by the leader of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre Oļegs Petrovs posted on YouTube in which he expressed deep regret regarding the fact that previously he had no choice but to conceal his real thoughts and to act during interviews. Following the massacre in Charlie Hebdo's office in France in 2015, Oļegs Petrovs had publicly voiced the opinion that the cartoonists had to be punished but not so severely, and that broken fingers would have sufficed. Conversely, in 2016, Oļegs Petrovs used YouTube to announce the following: "The only punishment for those who mock any Islamic values, according to all scientists, according to the unanimous views of Islamic scientists, is capital punishment. No Muslim opposes this."[3]

On 28 February, the TV3 programme "Nothing Personal" broadcast a story about Oļegs Petrovs' video message posted on YouTube in which he lauds Jihad. Journalists had found out that the leader of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre had left Latvia together with his wife nine months earlier. It was clear from the video that he was in Syria or Iran. Although members of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre maintained that Oļegs Petrovs had informed them about his intentions to study abroad, the Security Police opened criminal proceedings against him pursuant to Section 77[1] of the Criminal Law in relation to unlawful participation in an armed conflict. Overall, three criminal proceedings[4] have been opened in Latvia regarding cases when Latvian nationals have joined the so-called Islamic State. Following this incident, the head of the Security Police announced on the LNT programme "900 Seconds" that the Latvian Muslim community has been affected by tendencies of radicalism, an accusation that the leaders of the local Muslim communities have tried to actively deny. However, information about the death of one of the Latvian Muslim community's activists in the conflict zone in Syria, where he had arrived together with his family, was made public on March 7 - this person was not Oļegs Petrovs, however.[5] Although there have been no quantitive studies of the extent to which these developments have facilitated an increase in Islamophobic sentiment

3. Labdien.tv, "Bijušais Latvijas Islāma kultūras centra vadītājs atbalsta teroristu uzbrukumus Francijai un slavina "džihadu"," *labdien.lv*, (February 29, 2016), retrievedDecember 19, 2016, fromhttp://www.labdien.lv/bijusais-latvijas-islama-kulturas-centra-vaditajs-atbalsta-teroristu-uzbrukumus-francijai-un-slavina-dzihadu/.

4. Tvnet.lv, "Drošības policija pārbaudīs jaunieša LTV pausto par došanos uz Sīriju apgūt «citu mācīšanās stilu," *tvnet.lv*, (April 9, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, fromhttp://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/603727-drosibas_policija_parbaudis_jauniesa_ltv_pausto_par_dosanos_uz_siriju_apgut_citu_macisanas_stilu.

5.Skaties.lv, "Sīrijā mirušais Latvijas valstspiederīgais pie Islāma valsts devies kopā ar savu ģimeni,"*skaties.lv*, (March 7, 2016)retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://skaties.lv/zinas/degpunkta/sirija-mirusais-latvijas-valstspiederigais-pie-islama-valsts-devies-kopa-ar-savu-gimeni/.

in Latvian society, we can dare to assume that they have played the key role in the strengthening of Islamophobia in the country.

In 2016, Islamophobic attitudes were expressed openly in public places. The incidents that took place outside Latvia during New Year's Eve celebrations in Cologne contributed to such attitudes. One of the most active members of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre stated during a TV interview that his wife faces "moral terror" and, as a result, carries an electric shock device with her.[6]

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

When granting refugee status to a person, the regulatory framework provides the issuance of a permanent residence permit valid for five years. Meanwhile, when granting alternative status, a person receives a temporary residence permit for a year. The above residence permits give their holders unrestricted right to employment in Latvia. This means that a person has the right to be employed by any employer in Latvia, and this is confirmed by an entry in the residence permits: "Has the right to work with no restrictions". Both refugees and people who have been granted alternative status have to submit documents to the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs one month before the expiry of their residence permits to renew them for five years or a year respectively. Latvian legislation does not provide for the granting of humanitarian protection status within the asylum procedure.[7]

Several state institutions developed an integration policy in relation to access to the labour market for refugees and people who have been granted alternative status. Free Latvian courses are available in Latvia to support integration into the labour market. These courses have several functions, such as providing a chance for the active practice of the language, and educational and entertaining functions. Thus, the complex objective of acquiring Latvian, familiarizing oneself with Latvia and its people can be achieved.[8]

Although Latvia is not considered a country which uses proficiency of specific languages to restrict access of citizens from other countries to its labour market, threats of linguistic discrimination are present in Latvia's labour market as the Labour Law prohibits employing a person who has not passed the state language exam.

6.Apollo.tvnet.lv, "Klimoviča sieva nēsā līdzi elektrošoku, jo islāmticīgie Latvijā saskaras ar morālo teroru," *apollo.tvnet.lv*, (January 29, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://apollo.tvnet.lv/zinas/klimovica-sieva-nesa-lidzi-elektrosoku-jo-islamticigie-latvija-saskaras-ar-moralo-teroru/719525.

7.European Migration Network, "Starptautiskās/ humānās aizsardzības saņēmēju integrācija darba tirgū Latvijā: politika un labās prakses piemēri," *emn.lv*, (December 2015), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.emn.lv/wp-content/uploads/LATVIA_FINAL_version_emn_integration_of_beneficiaries_for_international_protection_LV.pdf.

8.Trešo valstu pilsoņu portrets Latvijā (Rīga: Sabiedrības integrācijas fonds, 2015), p. 59.

One example is the Iraqi Kurd Tariks who wanted to work as a cleaner at McDonalds but was refused this opportunity since he did not know Latvian. He left Latvia for Germany together with his wife and seven children, where he was refused a work permit and a possibility to apply for benefits. After returning to Latvia, he found a job thanks to the responsiveness of individuals.[9] There is insufficient political will for the integration of refugees into Latvian society and their stay in Latvia currently mostly depends on the support provided by fellow human beings, especially by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Shelter 'Safe House' that offers complex assistance to refugees. Tariks' case is not the only one of its kind. More than 150 people were resettled to Latvia in 2016 and more than 60 of those who were granted refugee or alternative status have already left for Germany where they work in the black market.

## Politics

A number of politicians poise between political correctness and hidden Islamophobia, while hardly anybody takes an open position. Manifestations of latent Islamophobia, e.g. doubts about integration possibilities of refugees from Muslim countries in Latvia, were present in statements by several politicians. Indulis Emsis (Latvian Green Party) expressed the view that "one should not expect that we will be able to accept and integrate refugees and succeed in creating a new life environment for them in Europe. It can be done politically and economically, but this is not the right path. This is the road to ruin as evidenced by great empires and cultures that perished in the past".[10] A member of the liberal-conservative party Unity, Ainars Latkovskis, provided the following comments on the people who after obtaining refugee status left Latvia for Western European countries: "Their departure does not represent security risks. If somebody was forced to stay here, this could lead to frustration which could erupt into, e.g. a terrorist attack later on, but this is not the case. It does not bother us that people have an opportunity to go to other EU countries".[11] Left-wing politicians take a similar view; for example Ivars Zariņš (Social Democratic Party Concord) pointed out: "A person who has hardly crossed the Mediterranean will not work at a canning factory for 200 euro. This can lead to conflicts as people will look for illegal opportunities to earn money. [..] We are saved by cold and the unfavourable social situation."[12] Some politicians took a more

9.Kristīne Žilde-Krēvica, "Pozitīvi! Pateicoties cilvēku atsaucībai, bēglis Tariks no pirmdienas sāks strādāt," *skaties.lv*, (December 17, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://skaties.lv/zinas/latvija/sabiedriba/pozitivi-pateicoties-cilveku-atsaucibai-beglis-tariks-no-pirmdienas-saks-stradat/.

10.Nra.lv, "Ekspremjers: Pieņemt un integrēt bēgļus Eiropā ir nepareizs ceļš," *nra.lv*, (July 26, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://nra.lv/latvija/179730-ekspremjers-pienemt-un-integret-beglus-eiropa-ir-nepareizs-cels.htm.

11.Vikmanis Ģirts, "Bēgļu "tūrisms": Latvijā iegriežas uz mēnesi, lai atjaunotu status," *Latvijas Avīze*, (September 21, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.la.lv/beglu-savdabigais-turisms/.

12.Sputnik News, "Latvija: aukstums un nabadzība pret bēgļiem," *sputniknewslv.com*, (February 16, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://sputniknewslv.com/opinion/20160216/656420.html.

open view, such as Aleksandrs Kiršteins (National Alliance All for Latvia! – For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK) who warned that extreme political correctness and self-censorship can threaten national security. He mentioned the instance when the public was not informed in time about the sexual assaults by immigrants in Cologne.[13] Jānis Dombrava (National Alliance All for Latvia! – For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK) took the firmest position. In March 2016, he suggested rejecting the decision regarding the reception of 776 asylum seekers in Latvia.[14] Politicians of the ruling coalition did not support this proposal: Augusts Brigmanis (Union of Greens and Farmers) explained that the problem would not be solved by refusing to implement the previously adopted decision since asylum seekers can also enter the country through other means, while Solvita Āboltiņa (Unity) emphasized that a call to refuse the reception of refugees means giving in to panic, and she invited everyone to focus on the fight against terrorism, not on banning refugees' entry into the country. Aleksandrs Giļmans, a former politician (For Human Rights in a United Latvia), opponent of the Russian school reform and board member of the unregistered organisation Congress of Non-citizens, was a participant of the European March for the Refugees Rights organised on 27 February, 2016. He was positive regarding the reception of refugees in Latvia. In his opinion, refugees will integrate into the Russian community. Aleksandrs Giļmans regretted that people in Latvia were negative towards refugees and made their racist opinions known. This was unacceptable to him and therefore, he participated in the event to demonstrate that representatives of the Russian Community support the reception of refugees.[15] However, a survey conducted by the research centre SKDS suggests that Latvians and Russians do not have differing points of view on the admission of migrants, i.e. 78,3% of the population do not support the reception of refugees in Latvia.[16]

## Media

The media provided matter-of-fact information about the terrorist attacks in Belgium on 22 March, 2016. It was supplemented by stories of Latvian eyewitnesses living in Brussels and by expressing solidarity with the Belgian people. None of the media used the events in Belgium to pronounce Islamophobic attitudes, and later articles limited themselves to an explanation that "the group DAESH claimed respon-

13.Zvirbulis Ģirts, "Spiegiem un teroristiem pievienojušies bēgļi," *Latvijas Avīze*, January 22, 2016.

14.Tvnet.lv, "Koalīcija neatbalsta Dombravas ierosinājumu atteikties no lēmuma uzņemt Latvijā 776 patvēruma meklētājus," *tvnet.lv*, (March 24, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/viedokli/601616-koalicija_neatbalsta_dombravas_ierosinajumu_atteikties_no_lemuma_uznemt_latvija_776_patveruma_mekletajus.

15.La.lv, "Vairāk nekā 60 cilvēku gājienā Rīgā pauž atbalstu bēgļu uzņemšanai," *Latvijas Avīze*, (February 27, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.la.lv/vairak-neka-60-cilveku-gajiena-riga-pauz-atbalstu-beglu-uznemsanai/.

16. BNA Latvia, "Pētījums: Sabiedrība migrantus negrib. Pret bēgļiem – 78,3%," *bna.lv*, (January 8, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.bna.lv/site/?id=63344.

sibility for these attacks which killed 32 people and three terrorists".[17] The events in Belgium were mainly perceived as "a subsequent terrorist attack", and this phrase was the one used most commonly.

In contrast, the emotional headlines of Latvia's media heralded the mass sexual assaults of women in Cologne on New Year's Eve. Such headlines included "Just-admitted Refugees Organise a Night of Barbaric Violence and Mockery in Germany"[18], "Fear of One's Own Fear. New Reality of Cologne"[19], "Refugees Sneered at People during the Cologne Assaults by Saying: 'We Were Invited by Merkel'."[20] Comments regarding the Cologne events were full of a pronounced phobia and aggression: "The same will also happen in Latvia, and I hope that Latvia's men will find a possibility to resist gangs of degenerates. In my opinion, they do not deserve any mercy. God makes us love people, but those who currently commit crimes in Europe and soon will do the same in Latvia must be called enemies and enemies must be physically destroyed to protect our children, daughters and mothers".[21]

In 2016, the mass media of Latvia published information about the armed conflict in Syria and other Muslim-inhabited countries on a regular basis. Since local TV channels and news agencies rarely send their reporters to the "hot spots", the information consisted of republished news provided by Western information agencies. This is why the publicist and member of the Muslim community Roberts Klimovičs reiterated several times that this was one-sided and tendentious information and questioned its reliability. He also asked a rhetorical question: "Have you noticed a piece of news about the bombardment of Gaza in any of the Latvian media?"[22]

Alongside news about hostilities in the Middle East, refugee reception problems in Europe were still topical in 2016. The Latvian press reflected on these from a more pragmatic viewpoint, e.g. the daily *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze Latvijai* wrote: "The idea of mass integration of refugees has not run up against terrorist inclinations and crimes of individuals but against practical issues, i.e. where to house people and how to educate

17.La.lv, "Atklātībā nāk Briseles spridzināšanā aizdomās turētā vēstule mātei," *Latvijas Avīze*, (November 12, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.la.lv/atklatiba-nak-briseles-spridzinasana-aizdomas-tureta-vestule-matei/.

18.Puaro.lv, "Tikko uzņemtie bēgļi sarīko barbariskas vardarbības un ņirgāšanās nakti Vācijā," *puaro.lv*, (January 6, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://puaro.lv/kars/tikko-uznemtie-begli-sariko-barbariskas-vardarbibas-un-nirgasanas-nakti-vacija/.

19.Toms Ancītis, "Reportāža no Vācijas: Bailes no pašubailēm. JaunāĶelnesrealitāte," *lsm.lv*, (January 18, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.lsm.lv/lv/raksts/zinju-analiize/zinas/reportaza-no-vacijas-bailes-no-pasu-bailem.-jauna-kelnes-realitate.a164668/.

20.Nra.lv, "Bēgļi Ķelnes uzbrukumu laikā ņirgājušies: "Mūs uzaicināja Merkele"," *nra.lv*, (January 8, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://nra.lv/pasaule/159895-begli-kelnes-uzbrukumu-laika-nirgajusies-mus-uzaicinaja-merkele.htm.

21.Jautajums.lv, "Ko domājat par skandālu Vācijā(Jaungada naktī Ķelnē)," *politika.jautājums.lv*, (January 5, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://politika.jautajums.lv/1366105.

22.Roberts Klimovičs,"Vai esat kādā LV mēdijā manījuši kādu ziņu par Gazas bombardēšanu?" *twitter.com*, retrieved December 19, 2016, from https://twitter.com/klimovics/status/784662278381641728?lang=en.

children."[23] The journalists writing about issues relating to integration of refugees and migrants balanced between political correctness and Islamophobic undertone. When outlining problems related to Islamophobia, the author of the above article mentioned a Latvian saying "fear is a bad adviser", but at the end of her article she added: "Sadly, but it has to be acknowledged that humanity based on European Christian values will not win a victory over the Islamic world vision. Currently it is even difficult to imagine what models of peaceful coexistence would be possible in Europe, given that the idea of creating enclaves has already been found to be incorrect."[24] Thus, the article entitled "Fear Is Already an Adviser" fuels further fear. Overall, awareness of the problem of Islamophobia was outlined in the press in 2016 but without any analysis of the local situation, i.e. the analytical articles addressing Islamophobia as a societal challenge did not point to its manifestations in Latvia.[25]

Announcements about events organised by anti-globalists were published by all leading Internet portals. Although these announcements were informative, they performed an advertising function and contributed to the participation of people inclined towards Islamophobia in these events. During rallies organised by the association Anti-globalists, Latvia's media showed a strong interest in these developments. On the one hand, journalists were doing their job to reflect socio-political activities in Latvia where civic activity is very low (rallies and pickets are rare in Latvia, and strikes are organised only in exceptional cases). On the other hand, the reflection of these protest rallies in the media encouraged anti-globalists to organise future events since they felt noticed and appreciated.

The press tended to attract readers by means of sensationalist and scandalous headlines in 2016, such as an article published in the right-wing newspaper *Latvijas Avīze* analysing problems of converts entitled "A New Dangerous Phenomenon – Converts to Islam". The article itself was an analytical overview of expert opinions regarding reasons and causes of converting to Islam reflected in the foreign press.[26]

In relation to the development of a Latvian law on the restriction on wearing face coverings, the media paid attention to similar situations in other countries, namely in France[27] and Germany, not forgetting to investigate the views of Latvia's Muslims. The media showed particular interest in two women who wear the niqab

23.Daukšte Anita, "Bailes jau ir padomdevējs," *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze Latvijai*, (July 22, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://news.lv/Neatkariga_Rita_Avize_Latvijai/2016/07/22/bailes-jau-ir-padomdevejs.

24.Daukšte Anita, "Bailes jau ir padomdevējs," *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze Latvijai*, (July 22, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://news.lv/Neatkariga_Rita_Avize_Latvijai/2016/07/22/bailes-jau-ir-padomdevejs.

25.Ķezberis Uldis, "Pieaudzis naids pret musulmaņiem," *Diena*, August 19, 2016. Zanders, Māris. "Mums visiem jāizkāpj no "savas smilšu kastes"," *Diena*, July 11, 2016.

26.Vikmanis Ģirts "Jauns bīstams fenomens – islāma konvertīti," *LatvijasAvīze*, March 3, 2016.

27.Krūmiņš Māris, "Francijā strīdi par burkini draud ievilkties līdz nākamajai sezonai," *news.lv*, (August 29, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://news.lv/Neatkariga_Rita_Avize_Latvijai/2016/08/29/francija-stridi-par-burkini-draud-ievilkties-lidz-nakamajai-sezonai.ĶezbersUldis, "Musulmaņugalvassegasizraisakonfliktus Vācijā," *news.lv*, (September 19, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://news.lv/Diena/2016/09/19/musulmanu-galvassegas-izraisa-konfliktus-vacija.

in Latvia. Almost all the largest newspapers published interviews with Līga Legzdiņa, who was also interviewed on several TV programmes. Journalists' position was not Islamophobic during the interviews.

## Justice System

On 26 February, 2016, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) under the leadership of Dzintars Rasnačs (National Alliance All for Latvia! – For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK) continued to develop a draft law[28] on the restriction on wearing face coverings in public places (the first draft law was rejected by the majority of the *Saeima* in 2015) and invited the population to express its views on it. The public consultation lasted for a month, and the Ministry of Justice received 21 contributions. Eight individuals supported the draft law, pointing out that face covering is not consistent with Latvian traditions and culture; they also said they wanted to see the people they communicate with. Thirteen individuals did not support the draft law on the grounds of the following arguments: (1) the restriction on the wearing of face coverings is an unjustified encroachment on human rights, (2) the principle of proportionality has not been observed in the development of the draft law, (3) such a restriction contributes to the division in society and the isolation of Muslim women from the public, (4) it is discriminatory, does not comply with democratic principles and will create many implementation problems. The opinions of Muslim congregations varied: five Muslim congregations pointed out that the draft law did not affect their rights, whereas two Muslim congregations did not support it.

When assessing the draft law, the Ombudsman of Latvia drew attention to the fact that tolerance of those who think differently, including followers of other religions and nonconformist traditions, is one of the most significant values of Western democratic society which have also been strengthened in the preamble to the *Satversme* (Constitution) of Latvia. The Ombudsman concluded that the draft law substantially limits the right of an individual to private life and religious freedom laid down in the *Satversme* and international treaties which are binding for Latvia. Sociologists and anthropologists should also provide their assessment since the ECHR, when deciding on the existence and relevance of a legitimate objective in each member state, takes into account the values of and situation in each of the member states concerned. Meanwhile, in the event that the draft law is adopted, a decision on liability of the individuals who force other people to wear such face coverings should be made, otherwise this may result in a situation where victims of coercion are punished while the individuals who knowingly violate the provisions of the law in question are not.[29]

28. "LatvijasRepublikasMinistruKabinetatiesībuaktuprojekti," *tap.mk.gov.lv*, (not dated), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://tap.mk.gov.lv/lv/mk/tap/?pid=40399697.

29. "Latvijasrepublikastiesībsargs. TieslietuministramDzintaramRasnačam," *tiesibsargs.lv*, (February 26, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, fromhttp://www.tiesibsargs.lv/files/content/atzinumi/Atzinums_Par_seju_aizsedzosa_apgerba_nesasanu_TSB_vestule_TM_26022016.pdf.

A survey conducted by *TNS Latvia* in March 2016 suggested that the majority (77%) of Latvia's population aged between 18 and 55 supported the draft law (42% – definitely yes; 35% – more likely yes), but 16% did not support it (11% – more likely no; 5% – definitely no).[30]

The draft law bans wearing face coverings in public places, except in certain cases. Face covering in public places is allowed when it is necessary, i.e. to fulfill requirements set out in laws and regulations, perform professional duties, for participants of sports activities and events, artistic events, events dedicated to national holidays and participants of national cultural events, due to weather and health conditions.

Within the meaning of the law, any place which, irrespective of its actual use or the form of ownership, serves to satisfy the common public needs and interests and is available against payment or free of charge to any natural person who is not an owner, holder, keeper, employee or other person related to the place concerned and whose presence in the respective place does not involve performance of job responsibilities will be considered a public place. Within the meaning of the law, places of worship, prayer rooms and premises where religious activity takes place will not be considered a public place.

The Ministry of Justice explained that the parallel work on amendments to the Latvian Administrative Violations Code will continue to impose penalties to be applied in the event of a breach of the restriction. Initially a warning to the person concerned will be issued but then a fine will be imposed.

When taking the drafted "Law on the Restriction on Wearing Face Coverings" forward for its consideration at a meeting of state secretaries, Minister of Justice Dzintars Rasnačs pointed out that the law is primarily aimed at the protection of Latvian cultural space and integration. Meanwhile, Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Justice Jānis Iesalnieks explained that the objective of the draft law is to build a harmonious society without closed communities which are not able and do not want to integrate into Latvian cultural space. State secretaries at their meeting of 22 September proclaimed the draft law, and it was reviewed by the Cabinet of Ministers. The law is expected to come into effect in 2017.

Muslims in Latvia do not have a unified position regarding the law on the restriction on wearing face coverings. Five Muslim communities acknowledged that they would not have any problems in relation to the introduction of the restriction on wearing the niqab since nobody in their communities wears it. The Riga City Muslim community, the Riga District Muslim community, the Riga Zemgale District Muslim community and the Jēkabpils City Muslim community explained that they continue the traditions of the Orenburg Muslim community established in 1789, and the Sunnah contains no indications with regard to the obligation to wear face coverings. No community member

30. TNS, "77% Latvijasiedzīvotājuatbalstalikumprojektu par sejuaizsedzošaapģērbanēsāšanasierobežošanupubliskāsvietās," *tns.lv*, (March 7, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.tnslv/?lang=lv&fullarticle=true&category=showuid&id=4925.

wears such garments. Meanwhile, information provided by the Riga Muslim community Ideļ suggests that most of its members are families of Tatars and Bashkirs. These peoples have never had a tradition of wearing veils covering the face completely. Therefore, females wear a garment (neckerchief) that covers only their hair. In contrast, the Muslim communities Halal and Makka, as well as the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre explicitly favor the niqab. Representatives of these organisations stated that the niqab is an integral part of Muslim traditions. A representative of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre provided the following explanation: "If such a ban is adopted, Muslim women will be prevented from both respecting their religious requirement and from feeling comfortable in public. This may lead to a situation where they will refuse to go out of their homes or they will look for opportunities to move to another country where there is no such ban."[31] Taking into account the topical issue of the reception of refugees, the discussion on whether to ban wearing face coverings in public places can become increasingly intense in the future. One out of four or five Muslim women who wear the niqab in Latvia is Līga Legzdiņa who converted to Islam nine years ago. During a Latvian TV interview she announced: "If the law is adopted, I, most probably, will consider litigation since private life and the right to religious practice will be seriously restricted. It can create a split between Muslims and the rest of society, engender hostility towards Muslims. I have a feeling that stereotypes are strengthened and maintained."[32] Currently the draft law is being coordinated in the ministries, and will be submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers at the beginning of 2017.

## Internet

Websites, social networks, forums and blogs have become the key means for manifesting intolerance and racism, including Islamophobia. Islamophobic materials are most often posted on the websites of radical movements as, for example, the home page of the association Anti-globalists (http://antiglobalisti.org/and that of the Latvian National Front (LNF) http://fronte.lv/). Although many other portals should not be considered part of the Islamophobic cyberspace, it is notable that before the anti-globalists' rally took place on 6 February, 2016, a large number of portals had made information about the forthcoming event public, thus actually advertising it.[33]

31.Kasjauns.lv, "Latvijasmusulmaņipretējāsfrontespusēs: vieninikābunoliedz, otri to uzskata par obligātu," *kasjauns.lv*, (September 24, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.kasjauns.lv/lv/zinas/231477/latvijas-musulmani-pretejas-frontes-puses-vieni-nikabu-noliedz-otri-to-uzskata-par-obligatu.

32.Tvnet.lv, "Fatima gatavasūdzētLatviju ECT par aizliegumunēsātsejuaizsedzošuapģērbu," *tvnet.lv*, (September 22, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/626755-fatima_gatava_sudzet_latviju_ect_par_aizliegumu_nesat_seju_aizsedzosu_apgerbu.

33.IgorsLukjanovs, "6.2.2016 plkst. 12.00-13.00 Rīgā pie Brīvībaspieminekļamītiņš „Protests pretmasuimigrāciju, kurupieļauj ES un Latvijasvaldība," *protesti.lv*, (February 5, 2016) retrieved December 19, 2016, fromhttp://www.protesti.lv/2698-2/.; Mix News, "Pie Brīvībaspieminekļaprotestēs "pretmasuimigrāciju," *lat.mixnews.lv*, (January 27, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://lat.mixnews.lv/lv/sabiedriba/news/44082_pie-brivibas-pieminekla-protestes-pret-masu-imigraciju/.; Tvnet.lv, "Pie Brīvībaspieminekļanotiks protests «pretmasuimigrāciju," *tvnet.lv*, (February 6, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.tvnet.lv/zinas/latvija/594971-pie_brivibas_pieminekla_notiks_protests_pret_masu_imigraciju.; Nra.lv, "Šodiennotiks protests "pretmasuimigrāciju," *nra.lv*, (February 6, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://nra.lv/latvija/riga/162523-sodien-notiks-protests-pret-masu-imigraciju.htm.

Hate crimes are mostly committed on various Internet portals, especially in the form of comments. Provocation of ethnic and racial hatred, as well as incitement to religious hatred are considered hate crimes in Latvia. Such activities could result in criminal liability. The fact that hatred and intolerance against Muslims voiced on the Internet have become a problem was evidenced by a criminal case referred to court in 2016. A person was accused of making a hostile comment against Muslims on the Internet. This comment was added to an article "A Latvian Muslim Woman Openly Talks about the Attitude Towards Muslims in Latvia"[34] published in 2015 by using an assumed name. In October 2016, the court sentenced the accused person to 140 hours of community service.[35] This was one of the rare cases when a punishment was imposed for a comment containing a message full of hatred and intolerance published on the Internet. Comments published on various websites suggest that people most frequently do not assess the consequences of their published opinions. Anonymity provides a feeling of permissiveness. Moreover, sometimes people think that their individual responsibility decreases on a shared Internet site where a large number of users express their opinions.

In 2016, comments following the publication of an article "In Bed with a Muslim Man: A Story about a Catastrophic Marriage", describing an unsuccessful marriage of a Latvian woman with a Turkish Muslim man, were one of the most visible manifestations of Islamophobia on the Internet. The comments added to the article were extremely harsh: "It's called zoophilia if you marry a monkey man"; "There is no more serious crime than the intermingling of races. Injection of Semite blood into the Aryan Latvian DNA is a crime against one's family, ancestors and the entire nation"; "Everyone knows that Muslims are liars and double-dealers, that their wives rank 12th after their cats and camels".[36]

It is notable that a surprisingly high number of Internet users hold a view that this particular topic deserved comments. Conversely, articles about the law on the restriction on face coverings did not prompt significant activity of commentators, and their content was also more moderate: "Well, Muslims don't have to come with their hymn book to our church. If they want to live here, they must behave like all other people in the street, they can do whatever they want at home, respect

34.Apollo.tvnet.lv, "Latviete - musulmane atklāti pastāsta par attieksmi pret islamticīgajiem Latvijā," *apollo.lv*, (September 24, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://apollo.tvnet.lv/zinas/latviete-musulmane-atklati-pastasta-par-attieksmi-pret-islamticigajiem-latvija/706054.

35.La.lv, "Par naidīgu komentāru pret musulmaņiem – 140 stundu piespiedu darbs," *Latvijas Avīze*, (October 18, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.la.lv/pec-naidiga-komentara-par-musulmaniem-140-stundu-piespiedu-darbs/hidehead/.

36.Māris Kalniņš,"Vakara ziņas: gultā ar musulmani. Stāts par laulības dzīves katastrofu," *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, (August 27, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://nra.lv/skandalozi/182937-vakara-zinas-gulta-ar-musulmani-stasts-par-laulibas-dzives-katastrofu.htm/komentari?cnr=5.

of their human rights or not, the rights of anyone else end where mine begin and this should not be forgotten!"[37]

Websites such as Facebook, Draugiem, Instagram, Twitter, etc., which have increased the social dimension of cyberspace and have facilitated information exchange, threaten to create a culture which accepts Islamophobia socially as Islamophobic attitudes are not uncommon in certain discussion forums.

Islamophobic ideas were disseminated also by individuals. On 9 January, 2016, a 24-year-old man from the town of Tukums posted an appeal on Facebook: "Hey, people of Tukums, does anyone wanna go and brutally give a thrashing to immigrants at the dairy? They live in Slocene Street just next to the dairy!!!.. I don't give a f…, I'm gonna smash windows today", etc. A news portal of the capital informed the police about this post. Since it contained concrete threats to be implemented in a specified place, the police went to the location, checked all the apartments and made sure that they were inhabited not by refugees but by Latvian citizens. The young man "explained that he had read about the doings of refugees on New Year's Eve in Germany and they had made him angry. Therefore, he had written the threats, but actually he did not want to do anything".[38] Criminal proceedings were instigated against the young man in relation to his call on social networking sites for dealing with refugees.[39] Strangely enough, another inhabitant of Tukums had acted in a similar vein before this event: a policeman had published comments on a social networking site inciting violence and as a result he had received disciplinary punishment. [40] The head of Tukums Police Station was asked why criminal proceedings were not opened in this case as well. He explained that the policeman's post was general and ambiguous, but the young man had called for concrete criminal acts in a specified place.[41]

37.Pietiek.com, "Sejas aizsegšanas ierobežojuma likumprojekts – kas, ko, kā, kāpēc," *pietiek.com*, (September 22, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.pietiek.com/raksti/sejas_aizsegsanas_ierobezojuma_likumprojekts__kas,_ko,_ka,_kapec/komentari.

38. Drēziņš Artis, "Jaunietis Tukumā aicina "salauzt imigrantus", policists "gatavot stroķus". Kāpēc sods atšķiras?" *LatvijasAvīze*, (January 19, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.la.lv/mutes-bruketajus-soda-atskirigi-tukums/.

39. Pursuant to Section 78(1) of the Criminal Law: For a person who commits acts directed towards triggering national, ethnic, racial or religious hatred or enmity, the applicable punishment is deprivation of liberty for a term up to three years or temporary deprivation of liberty, or community service, or a fine.

40.Vimbule Zane, "Policija soda tukumniekus – naida kurinātājus internet," *Neatkarīgās Tukuma ziņas*, (January 13, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.ntz.lv/kriminalzinas/policija-soda-tukumniekus-naida-kurinatajus-interneta/.

41.Vimbule Zane, "Policija soda tukumniekus – naida kurinātājus internet," *Neatkarīgās Tukuma ziņas*, (January 13, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.ntz.lv/kriminalzinas/policija-soda-tukumniekus-naida-kurinatajus-interneta/.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The association Anti-globalists was the most active Islamophobic group in 2016. After issuing a statement that "Riga might turn into a concentration place of at least 80% of the immigrants received in Latvia"[42], the Anti-globalists invited inhabitants of Riga to take part in a meeting and vote on the reception of refugees. Voters received ballot papers and were asked to choose between being for or against the settlement of refugees. The secret ballot revealed 516 out of 519 inhabitants of Riga voted against the resettlement of refugees in the city and three people voted in its favor. Minutes were drawn up and the results of the vote were submitted to the Riga City Council. It should be clarified that in autumn of 2015 a collective application signed by 500 inhabitants of Riga in which they asked the City Council to conduct a survey of Riga's inhabitants in relation to the resettlement of refugees was submitted to the Riga City Council which refused to do so. Therefore, the inhabitants of Riga themselves organised the meeting and conducted the survey without the participation of the municipality.[43]

In response to the call of organisations in other countries to organise anti-immigration and anti-Islamization campaigns simultaneously, a protest rally "against mass immigration supported by the EU and the Latvian government"[44] took place on 6 February, 2016. Although the application for a permit to organise the event was submitted by individuals, the rally was organised by the leader of the Anti-globalists Andris Orols, and it took place within the more extensive project "STOP Mass Immigration!"[45] When applying for the permit, the organisers noted that the number of participants would be 50, but the responsiveness was higher than expected, i.e. approximately 200 people participated in the protest rally at the Freedom Monument, most of whom were elderly. Participants of the rally explained the small number of young participants by the fact that it was not good for youngsters to come as their presence could affect their careers and by the fact that history was not taught to young people.

There were calls at the rally for the dismissal of *Saeima* and in favor leaving the European Union. Shouts against the immigration policy and reception of

42.Nra.lv, "Antiglobālisti organizē sapulci rīdziniekiem, lai izlemtu bēgļu jautājumu," *Neatkarīgā Rīta Avīze*, (January 8, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://nra.lv/latvija/riga/159883-antiglobalisti-organize-sapulci-ridziniekiem-lai-izlemtu-beglu-jautajumu.htm.

43.Stopimigracija.lv,"Rīdzinieki lemj imigrantu jautājumu," *stopmigracija.lv*, (January 20, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://stopimigracija.lv/ridzinieki-lemj-imigrantu-jautajumu-16-01-2016-video/.

44.Stopimigracija.lv, "Pretimigrācijas mītiņš 6.februārī, Rīgā," *stopimigracija.lv*, (January 26, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://stopimigracija.lv/pretimigracijas-mitins-6-februari-riga/. Igors Lukjanovs, "6.2.2016 plkst. 12:00-13:00 Rīgā pie Brīvības pieminekļa mītiņš „Protests pret masu imigrāciju, kuru pieļauj ES un Latvijas valdība," *protesti.lv*, (January 26, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.protesti.lv/2177-2/. Host: Igors Lukjanovs,"Rīdzinieku sapulce un balsojums pret imigrantu uzņemšanu," *facebook.com*, retrieved December 19, 2016, from https://www.facebook.com/events/1486547341654051/.

45.Stopimigracija.lv, "Nāc palīgā dibināt jaunu politisku spēku!," *stopimigracija.lv*, (not dated), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://stopimigracija.lv/.

refugees could be heard in several languages, but posters heralded the following: "Europe for Europeans, the Baltic for the Baltic nations"; "Send [Latvian female politicians] Solvita, Viņķele, Straujuma to Cologne to the blacks"; "*Saeima* parties treacherously open the gate for the invaders". Participants of the rally expressed various opinions. Some of them voiced their frustration over the fact that at the time when Latvia's inhabitants, especially pensioners, are experiencing bad living conditions, they will have to feed others. Someone said that everything had been planned a long time ago to make Latvians leave their country on a wide scale so that Arabs, Muslims and blacks had a place to come, i.e. all wars in the Middle East and Africa take place according to a special plan. The organiser of the rally Andris Ozols understood that he would not achieve anything by means of pickets and rallies; however, he was determined to continue organising such activities in all municipalities. Following the event, the Latvian Radio pointed out on the social network Twitter that its correspondent, Vita Anstrate, was pushed and punched in the stomach during the rally.[46]

The Anti-globalists wanted to become a serious political force by forming a party which they hoped to establish on the basis of civic activities such as "STOP Mass Immigration!" In April 2016, the programme of the new party[47] was made public for discussion. Since participation of at least 200 Latvian citizens is required to establish a party, the Anti-globalists organised several so-called pre-establishment meetings,[48] but they did not succeed in bringing together the necessary number of people.

Endeavours of individual radical groups to cooperate started to emerge in 2016, and this was illustrated by two noteworthy events. Igors Šiškins, chair of the Gustavs Celmins Centre,[49] was an active speaker both during the meeting of Riga's inhabitants held on 16 January and the rally organised on 6 February. Meanwhile, the Anti-globalists, aspiring to establish a party, included the issue of the *DDD* (De-occupation. De-colonization. De-Bolshevization), which was initially the goal of the LNF, in their programme. In autumn, the LNF newspaper

46.Focus.lv, "Vairāki simti cilvēku pie Brīvības pieminekļa piedalās pretimigrācijas mītiņā," *focus.lv*, (February 6, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, fromhttp://www.focus.lv/latvija/riga/vairaki-simti-cilveku-pie-brivibas-pieminekla-piedalas-pretimigracijas-mitina.;Diena.lv, "Antiglobālistu piketā Latvijas Radio žurnālistei iesists pa vēderu," *diena.lv*, (February 8, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, fromhttp://www.diena.lv/raksts/latvija/zinas/antiglobalistu-piketa-latvijas-radio-zurnalistei-iesists-pa-vederu-papildinats-1518-14128934.; Kasjauns.lv, ""Valdība, nenodod Latviju!" 200 cilvēki Rīgas centrā šodien protestē pret "masu imigrāciju," *kasjauns.lv*, (February 6, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.kasjauns.lv/lv/zinas/214556/valdiba-nenodod-latviju---200-cilveki-rigas-centra-sodien-proteste-pret-masu-imigraciju.

47.Stopimigracija.lv, "Nāc palīgā dibināt jaunu politisku spēku!," *stopimigracija.lv*, (not dated), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://stopimigracija.lv/

48.Antiglobalisti.org, "Aicinājums ņemt dalību jauna politiska spēka "STOP imigrācijai" veidošanā (pirmsdibināšanas sapulces)," *antiglobalisti.org*, (October 2, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://antiglobalisti.org/politika-latvija/aicinajums-nemt-dalibu-jauna-politiska-speka-stop-imigracijai-veidosana-pirmsdibinasanas-sapulces/#more-7626.

49.The offshoot of the radical right group „Pērkonkrusts" (1933) which exhibited ideological affinities to German National Socialists.

*DDD* several times published a call to join the Anti-globalists in the creation of a new political force to gain real power and execute their policy tasks. Despite this, responsiveness was negligible.[50]

Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

To counter Islamophobia in Latvia, the Memorial of Žanis Lipke in cooperation with the Norwegian Embassy and the online magazine *Punctum* prepared the material for a series of lectures to be published under the title "Dangerous Relations: The Present Time of Old Phobias in Latvia"[51] with the support of the U.S. Embassy and Konrad Adenauer Foundation. It is a collection for teaching staff of educational establishments consisting of ten lectures, supporting material and a list of recommended literature. The material contains reflections on marginalization, fears and discrimination, and addresses the issues of the promotion of tolerance in society, acceptance of the Other, and the provision of opportunities for exercising everyone's rights.

The emotionally negative Islamophobic response triggered by the terrorist attacks and the so-called 'refugee crisis' last year was replaced by reflections in 2016 illustrated by a series of public debates, such as a public discussion "Diversity on the Border: Islam and the West"[52] organised in the Anglican Church on 2 March, 2016 with the participation of philosopher Maija Kūle, representatives of the Muslim community Roberts Klimovičs and Līga Legzdiņa, the head of the Arabic Culture Centre Hosams Abu Meri and researcher of religions Valdis Tēraudkalns. It is notable that icons were removed before the discussion which was led by Nils Sakss who was mentioned in last year's report as a person whose statements contained Islamophobic sentiment. Meanwhile, the topic of the annual Andrievs Eiche discussion organised at the Latvian National Library on 20 October, 2016 was "How Foreign or Close is Islamic Culture for a Latvian?"

The year 2016 was marked by a willingness to address the issue of Islamophobia from a legal point of view. During the annual conference on human rights and good governance organised by the Ombudsman's Office on 13 December, 2016, a discussion on identifying hate crimes and hate speech in Latvia took place under the theme "Promotion of Tolerance in Society". Both those who face such crimes in their professional lives and researchers participated in the discussion.[53]

50.Antiglobalisti.org, "5.000 "DDD" lasītāji – kur jūs esat?", *antiglobalisti.org*, (December 5, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://antiglobalisti.org/politika-latvija/5-000-ddd-lasitaji-kur-jus-esat/#more-7712.

51.Gubenko Igors, Deniss Hanovs (Eds.), *Bīstamie sakari: seno fobiju šodiena Latvijā: lekciju cikla materiāli* (Riga: Memorial of Žanis Lipke, 2016).

52.Videos uploaded by user 'St. Saviours Anlglican Church Riga','Publiska diskusija "Dažādība uz robežas: Islāms un Rietumi"," *youtube.com*, (March16, 2016) retrieved December 19, 2016, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7AtwORMJuD4, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qg6dqxLn3eQ, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NuGboVxyRj0, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=msvU62fygz4.

53.TiesibsargaBirojs, "Jurista vārds," *juristavards.lv*, (December 13, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.juristavards.lv/zinas/269824-naida-runa-bernu-sociala-un-mediciniska-rehabilitacija-un-sabiedribas-tiesibas-uz-labveligu-dzives-vidi-temas-tiesibsarga-konference/.

To find practical solutions, the Latvian Christian Academy launched the project *SURPRISE, as a* meeting of cultures,[54] within the programme *NORDPLUS*. The aim of the project is to develop teaching materials for specialists and volunteers in their work with immigrants and refugees.

The mass media tried to carry out their function of public education and reduce Islamophobic sentiment in Latvian society. For instance, the supplement to the right-wing newspaper *Latvijas Avīze Mājas Viesis* published an article "Married to a Muslim Man" written after interviews with Latvian women living in Ireland. Their experience suggests that each marriage is individual and that its foundations are important. The article helped break down stereotypes about Muslim men and at the same time touched upon the problem of marriages of convenience between Latvian female citizens and Muslims living in Western countries. One of the interviewed women explained: "They, of course, don't do it because they are Muslims or according to their faith. Everybody is looking out for his own benefit, they don't think they hurt women or that abusing fallen women is a wrongdoing. They just use her, it is not an issue of faith. They want to stay in Europe and, therefore, they will do anything, and these women are completely worthless for these people."[55]

Getting closer to the local Muslim community might help dispel the Islamophobic sentiment in Latvian society. In 2016, the State Culture Capital (SCCF) Foundation financially supported the creation of a documentary about the everyday life of the Latvian Muslim community. Its director Kārlis Lesiņus entitled the film "Under the Overturned Moon".[56]

To demonstrate support for the human rights of refugees and to encourage the governments of European countries to ensure a safe and legal way of reaching countries of asylum, the European March for the Refugees Rights was organised in Riga on 27 February, 2016. It brought together around 60 people. Their slogans read: "Jesus was also a migrant", "I would also flee", "We are for humanity", "Be just a human being, that's it", "Refugees are also people", "Human rights refer to everyone", etc. The event was organised by a group named "I Want to Help Refugees". The event was strongly supported by the LGBT community, who were the number one advocate against Islamophobia. A very limited number of those against refugee reception were interested in the march and, therefore, it ended without violent clashes.

54.Nordplus, "International NORDPLUS ADULT project" SURPRISE meeting other culture" (NPAD-2016/10046)," *projects.kra.lv*, (not dated), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.projects.kra.lv/NORDPLUS/index.htm.

55.KalveIlze, "Laulībāarmusulmani," *MājasViesis*, (January 6, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://news.lv/Majas_Viesis/2016/01/06/lauliba-ar-musulmani.

56.La.lv, "VKKF izsludinājisšīgadatrešākonkursarezultātus," *la.lv*, (October 26, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.la.lv/vkkf-izsludinajis-si-gada-tresa-konkursa-rezultatus/.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The dynamics of events in 2016 has led to the conclusion that research is required in the field of criminal law in relation to hate crimes. Section 150 of the Criminal Law provides that a person can be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of up to two years or community service or fined up to 40 minimum monthly salaries for wounding religious feelings of people or the incitement of hatred in relation to the attitude of these people towards religion or atheism.[57] No knowledge on the application of this section is available in the case law and theory of criminal law of Latvia. On the one hand, attention should also be drawn to the cases when Section 150 of the Criminal Law is confronted with the right to the freedom of expression. On the other hand, state institutions, when investigating incidents, should take all possible steps to denounce Islamophobic motivation and find out whether Islamophobia has affected the respective events.

It is necessary to increase visibility of discussions on hate speech on the Internet. Only registered users or individuals who are authorized via their social network profiles should be entitled to provide comments. However, offensive comments are also often published on social networks where users' data is not mentioned. This confirms that part of society does not sufficiently assess the strength and impact of its words. It is necessary to educate the public about the consequences of abusive opinions expressed publicly, about what is and is not acceptable in public space, and what kind of communication facilitates public discussions and aggression.

Discussions, forums, and workshops on Islamophobia and its relation to racism and other forms of discrimination organised in collaboration with religious communities, NGOs and student clubs would contribute to the eradication of its diverse forms.

## Chronology

- **04.01.2016**: The Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs announces that there are two men registered in Latvia whose given name after birth is Jihad, a name of Arab origin. One of these men was born in Latvia.
- **09.01.2016**: Police receive information that a young man has posted a call on Facebook inciting violence against refugees.
- **16.01.2016**: 519 inhabitants of Riga participate in a voting on the reception of refugees organised by the Anti-globalists. From those who voted, 516 were against the resettlement of refugees in Riga. Minutes were drawn up and the results of the vote were submitted to the Riga City Council.
- **05.02.2016**: Within the EU Resettlement Programme, the first six people arrive in Latvia: two families from Syria and Eritrea.

57.Likumi.lv, "GrozījumiKrimināllikumā," *likumi.lv*, (not dated), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://likumi.lv/ta/id/1599966-grozijumi-kriminallikuma.

- **06.02.2016**: A protest rally against mass immigration is organised at the Monument of Freedom.
- **22.02.2016**: The Riga Construction Office withdraws a construction permit for the conversion of a building into a mosque started by the Islamic Culture Centre since the documents necessary for the reconstruction have not been submitted.
- **27.02.2016**: A march in support of refugees takes place in Esplanāde, a park in Riga.
- **28.02.2016**: The TV3 programme "Nothing Personal" broadcasts a story about the former head of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre Oļegs Petrovs who supported terrorist attacks in France and lauded Jihad.
- **02.03.2016**: The Security Police publish information about opening criminal proceedings against two people for unlawful participation in an armed conflict in Syria; one of them is the former head of the Latvian Islamic Culture Centre Oļegs Petrovs.
- **02.03.2016**: A public expert discussion entitled "Diversity on the Border: Islam and the West" takes place.
- **17.03.2016**: The presentation of a book *Dangerous Relations: The Present Time of Old Phobias in Latvia* at the Memorial of Žanis Lipke.
- **20.10.2016**: A discussion "How Foreign or Close is Islamic Culture for a Latvian?" takes place at the Latvian National Library.
- **25.10.2016**: The Riga District Court sentences the accused person to 140 hours of community service in criminal proceedings for publishing hostile comments about Muslims on the Internet.
- **26.10.2016**: The results of the project competition organised by the SCCF are made public: financial support for the creation of a documentary about everyday life of the Latvian Muslim community has been awarded.
- **13.12.2016**: The annual conference on human rights and good governance discussed the identification of hate speech and hatred in Latvia.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN LITHUANIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

BIRUTĖ SABATAUSKAITĖ, EGLĖ URBONAITĖ TILINDIENĖ, KAROLIS ŽIBAS

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# Executive Summary

There are almost 3,000 Muslims living in Lithuania according to the 2011 population census.[1] The Institute for Ethnic Studies, Lithuanian Social Research Centre reports that Muslims are one of the most negatively viewed religious groups in Lithuania in 2016. Compared to the previous annual public opinion polls, in 2016, negative attitude towards Muslims (64.2%) and refugees (63.8%) significantly increased. According to the Lithuanian Social Research Centre, refugees (especially war refugees from Syria) and their migration to European countries is a topic that receives significant attention in public discourse (including media). Lithuanian society's opinions towards refugees were largely affected by the intensive questioning and hardening of the European Union's politics towards refugees, the views of European politicians, and the radical or negative opinions towards refugees shared by Lithuanian politicians during the parliamentary election campaign in 2016.[2]

The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson did not receive any complaints regarding discrimination on the ground of religion (Islam) in 2016. There is no data available on hate crimes towards Muslims. Nevertheless, the media widely reported on an attack against two refugee women in Rukla, the town where the Refugee Reception Centre is located.

There were no significant developments in the field of justice. Hate crimes and incitement of hatred cases remain underreported. And even very clear cases of hate crime are not necessarily registered as hate crimes, but rather as other criminal or administrative offences.

During 2016 there were no registered employment-related incidents regarding Muslims. Public opinion polls, however, show there might be potential underreporting. Interviewees mentioned headscarves and beards as elements that might scare potential employers and prevent them from hiring an individual.

The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson has reported that there are no cases recorded in 2016 related to education and Muslimness. Nonetheless, the OEOO investigated one case that was related to Islam and possible discrimination on the ground of ethnicity – the complainant was possibly of Arab origin.

Lithuanian parliament elections took place on 9 October, 2016. Anti-migrant, anti-refugee and to a certain degree Islamophobic discourse was used, in particular, by some populist parties.

Media coverage of different Islamophobic statements has been related to the same (continuing) public discussion on global refugee flows, on the one hand, and local refugee integration challenges, on the other. However, one significant difference

1. This amounts to 0.09 % of the total population. The latest population census is from 2011; for more data, see http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/table_049.htm?lang=lt / https://osp.stat.gov.lt/2011-m.-surasymas

2. Lietuvos socialinių tyrimų centro Etninių tyrimų instituto užsakymu 2016 m. atliktos visuomenės nuostatų apklausos rezultatai, 2016.

has been identified: the amount of information on the aforementioned issues in 2016 was significantly less than in 2015. Eventually, anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes in media discourse became less visible, while xenophobic manifestations by politicians and public commentators became less frequent.

Lithuania could be characterised by the diversity of its xenophobic manifestations. There are different xenophobic manifestations related to global refugee flows, to Muslim integration in the EU member states and to other related processes in social media. Unfortunately, almost all Facebook profiles with xenophobic content, which were observed in 2015, are still active in 2016.

## Santrauka

Remiantis paskutiniais Lietuvos gyventojų surašymo duomenimis, Lietuvos gyvena 2727 musulmonai[3]. Lietuvos socialinių tyrimų instituto ataskaitoje teigiama, kad pabėgėliai (ypatingai karo pabėgėliai iš Sirijos) ir jų migracija į Europos šalis – tai tema pastaraisiais metais sulaukianti ypač daug dėmesio ir diskusijų viešajame (taip pat žiniasklaidos) diskurse. Intensyvus Europos Sąjungos šalių migracijos politikos pabėgėlių atžvilgiu kvestionavimas ir jos griežtinimas, kai kurių Europos politikų, taip pat ir Lietuvos politikų rinkimų į Seimą 2016 m. agitacinės kampanijos metu, radikalūs arba neigiami pasisakymai pabėgėlių atžvilgiu, turėjo įtakos ir Lietuvos visuomenės požiūriui į šią grupę žmonių.

Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyboje nebuvo gauta skundų dėl diskriminacijos prieš musulmonus, tačiau respondentai išskiria diskriminacijos problemą, siekiant musulmonams išsinuomoti būstą, ypatingai jei būstą nori išsinuomoti galvos apdangalą dėvinti moteris. Atskiros informacijos apie neapykantos nusikaltimus musulmonų atžvilgiu nėra, tačiau žiniasklaida plačiai pranešė apie dviejų pabėgėlių moterų užpuolimą Rukloje, miestelyje, kuriame įkurtas Pabėgėlių priėmimo centras.

Didelių pokyčių teisingumo srityje per 2016 metus neįvyko. Pranešimų skaičius apie neapykantos nusikaltimus ir neapykantos kalbą vis dar yra labai mažas. Ir netgi tais atvejais, kai pradedamas ikiteisminis tyrimas dėl aiškiai identifikuojamo neapykantos nusikaltimo, teisėsaugos institucijų tyrimas pradedamas dėl kito nusikaltimo ar nusižengimo arba administracinio pažeidimo.

2016 metais nebuvo užregistruotas nei vienas įvykis, nukreiptas prieš musulmonus darbo rinkoje. Nuomonių tyrimai rodo galimą nepakankamą pranešimų skaičių apie atvejus. Apklausti asmenys minėjo, kad galvų dangalai ir barzdos yra tie elementai, kodėl darbdaviai bijo įdarbinti asmenis.

Lygių galimybių kontrolieriaus tarnyba (LGKT) praneša, kad 2016 metais nebuvo atvejų užfiksuotų švietimo srityje dėl diskriminacijos religijos pagrindu (kon-

3. Tai sudaro 0.09% visos populiacijos. 2011 m. gyventojų ir būstų surašymo duomenys. Daugiau informacijos žr. http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/table_049.htm?lang=lt / https://osp.stat.gov.lt/2011-m.-surasymas

krečiai, islamo). Kita vertus, LGKT tyrė du atvejus dėl galimos diskriminacijos tautybės pagrindu (dėl pareiškėjos galimos arabų kilmės) ir pažiūrų.

2016 m. spalio 9 d. vyko Lietuvos Respublikos Seimo rinkimai. Prieš Seimo rinkimus kai kurios politinės partijos, ypatingai populistinės, savo kampanijų metu skleidė neigiamą informaciją apie migrantus, pabėgėlius ir musulmonus.

Žiniasklaidoje pasirodžiusios islamofobiškos publikacijos 2016 m. buvo vis dar susijusios su tuo pačiu (tęstiniu) viešu diskursu apie pasaulinius prieglobsčio ir migracijos srautus iš vienos pusės, ir pabėgėlių integracijos iššūkius iš kitos pusės. Vis dėlto, pastebėtinas skirtumas: informacijos apie minėtus klausimus kiekis 2016 m. buvo pastebimai mažesnis, lyginant su 2015 m. Tuo pačiu, prieš imigrantus ir pabėgėlius nukreiptos informacijos žiniasklaidoje 2016 m. taip pat buvo mažiau, o politikų ir viešųjų komentatorių ksenofobiniai pasisakymai 2016 m. buvo labiau fragmentiški, negu 2015 m.

Internetinė erdvė Lietuvoje pasižymi ksenofobinių ir islamofobinių apraiškų įvairove. Kaip ir 2015 m., 2016 m. šios apraiškos buvo susijusios su taip vadinamąja „pabėgėlių krize“, musulmonų integracijos procesais kitose ES valstybėse narėse. Deja, beveik visi „Facebook“ profiliai su ksenofobiniu turiniu, kurie buvo pastebėti 2015, vis dar yra aktyvus ir 2016 m.

## Introduction

Lithuanian society remains quite homogenous in 2016. However, intense international migration and the so-called "refugee crisis" brought various political and societal challenges to Europe and the whole world. Lithuania is no exception, but is influenced more by views and public opinions than by the direct challenges of an increasing migrant population. The latest population census was carried out in 2011. According to it, 2,727 residents in Lithuania considered themselves to be Sunni Muslims or 0.09% of the total population.[4]

According to the latest data by the Migration Department there are 42,057 foreigners in total living in Lithuania,[5] which is only 1.47% of the total population. There were 113 requests for refugee status submitted as of 1 July, 2016; 22 persons received refugee status; 6 received subsidiary protection; and 49 did not receive refugee status. There were 185 refugees (out of 1,105 that have to be relocated by the end of 2017) relocated from Greece and Turkey to Lithuania as of November 2016.[6] There is no breakdown of data according to religion.

Even though the number of Muslims in Lithuania is very small, it is one of the religious groups evaluated most negatively by Lithuanian society. According to the latest data by the Ethnic Research Institute, more the 60% of respondents answered that their opinion of Muslims and refugees, among other groups, has worsened in the last five years.[7] Around 47.9% of people would not want to live next to Muslims in their neighborhood, 44.8% would not want to live next to refugees. The Social Research Centre pointed out that the opinion towards refugees has insignificantly improved compared to 2015 based on measuring social distance, but also by measuring change in the last 5 years.[8] According to the centre, Lithuanian society's opinion towards refugees was largely affected by the intensive questioning and hardening of the European Union politics towards refugees, the views of European politicians, and the radical or negative opinions towards refugees shared by Lithuanian politicians during the parliamentary election campaign in 2016.

4. For more data of the population census, see http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/table_049.htm?lang=lt/, https://osp.stat.gov.lt/2011-m.-surasymas

5. Data up to 1 July, 2016, Pagrindiniai migracijos rodikliai Lietuvos Respublikoje, Lietuvos Respublikos Migracijos Departamentas prie Vidaus reikalų ministerijos, 2016. Available at: http://www.migracija.lt/index.php?1357390560

6. Prieglobsčio prašančių asmenų perkėlimas į Lietuvą: migrantų patirtys, ekspertų vertinimai, Lietuvos gyventojų nuostatos, EMT studija, Tarptautinė migracijos organizacija (TMO), Europos migracijos tinklas (EMT), 2016/2, Vilnius, 2016, p. 9.

7. Lietuvos socialinių tyrimų centro Etninių tyrimų instituto užsakymu 2016 m. atliktos visuomen4s nuostatų apklausos rezultatai, 2016.

8. Ibid.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

There were no major legal changes affecting the rights of Muslims in 2016. The most significant developments are related to the acceptance of refugees and the EU, and the national agreements regarding relocation and resettlement of refugees within the EU.

The Lithuanian government has agreed to share the responsibility with other EU countries and adopted the decision to relocate 1,105 refugees over a period of two years (by 31 December, 2017).[9] Discussions in the EU regarding the duty to accept larger numbers of refugees have continued in 2016. "The Lithuanian ruling coalition parties signed a political agreement voicing their disapproval of additional mandatory refugee resettlement quotas"[10] on 10 June, 2016. The Labour Party that tried to revoke the agreement to accept the refugee quota back in 2015 initiated the agreement. The same party has used openly anti-refugee rhetoric during the parliamentary election campaign (see Politics).

The Information Technology Department under the Ministry of the Interior, which collects information on crimes, does not break down the information in terms of the numbers of hate crimes committed against Muslims. In general, a very low number of hate crimes are officially recorded; in total 45 hate crimes were registered in 2016.[11]

The number of other attacks is unknown. Refugees, in in-depth interviews, stated that they feel disrespected, vulnerable and rejected because of the local population's views towards other nationalities.[12]

An attack in Rukla, the town where the Refugee Reception Centre is located, received significant media attention. Two locals attacked a Syrian and an Iraqi woman that were going from a local shop to the Refugee Reception Centre. One of the women's glasses were broken, the women were pushed and they were grabbed by their clothes. According to the information received from the Ministry of Interior, the investigation was initiated as a mere violation of public order (Article 284 of the Criminal Code).[13] It has not been registered as a hate crime so far, but the representatives of the police department stated that the investigation is still ongoing.[14]

9. Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2015 m. birželio 22 d. nutarimas Nr. 628 „Dėl užsieniečių perkėlimo į Lietuvos Respublikos teritoriją".

10. 'Lithuania's ruling parties sign political agreement on refugees', BNS, June 10, 2016, available at: http://www.baltictimes.com/lithuania_s_ruling_parties_sign_political_agreement_on_refugees/

11. Statistical data of the Information and Technology Department under the Ministry of Interior Affairs, available at: http://www.ird.lt/statistines-ataskaitos/wp-content/themes/ird/reports/txt_file.php?fv=data/1_201612_lt/f-1g-201612.data.txt&ff=%3C%21--%7C1G%7C6%7C--%3E&tt=Duomenys%20apie%20nusikalstamas%20veikas%2C%20padarytas%20Lietuvos%20Respublikoje%20%28Forma_1G%29

12. Prieglobsčio prašančių asmenų perkėlimas į Lietuvą: migrantų patirtys, ekspertų vertinimai, Lietuvos gyventojų nuostatos, EMT studija, Tarptautinė migracijos organizacija (TMO), Europos migracijos tinklas (EMT), 2016/2, Vilnius, 2016, p. 20, 27

13. Meeting of the working group on the investigation of hate crimes in the Ministry of Interior, December 15, 2016.

14. Representative of the Police Department Aušra Sadauskienė during the working group in the Ministry of Interior, December 15, 2016.

Two skinheads were fined for an administrative offence – an incident of minor hooliganism - [15] for violently grabbing a poster from one of the demonstrators during the public demonstration "Safe passage for refugees". The demonstration took place on 27 February, 2016.[16] This 'attack' was not investigated as a hate crime, which is a criminal offence according to the Penal Code of the Republic of Lithuania.

A person was found guilty by a court for incitement of hatred towards Muslim refugees. On 18-19 July, 2016, the person wrote online comments inciting hatred in the comment section of an article about a Muslim refugee and his family, saying they should be burned and sent away from Lithuania.[17]

According to the information received from the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, in 2016, there were no complaints received regarding discrimination of Muslim persons in particular (information received by 20 December, 2016). There were three cases related to the ethnic origin and/or beliefs of persons. An investigation was carried out because of alleged discrimination in the field of employment; in this case, no grounds for the misconduct were established (see Employment).[18] A case was recorded in the field of education when a university lecturer mocked a student due to her possible Arabic origin; the case ended in a friendly settlement (see Education).

The representatives of the association Islam Culture and Education Centre[19] stressed that there were many cases of discrimination against Muslims when, especially those who do not speak Lithuanian, tried to rent flats. Both organisations stressed that, if women who wore headscarves and were easily recognisable as Muslims tried to rent flats they would surely not be able to do so. No official complaints were filed.

The discriminatory attitudes of real estate owners towards refugees were also raised by the representatives of the Lithuanian Social Research Centre and the Refugee Reception Centre during the discussion entitled "Political Strategic Document on Integration of Foreigners who Received Refugee Status"[20] at the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

15. Article 174, Lietuvos Respublikos administracinių teisės pažeidimų kodeksas, Vyriausybės žinios, 1985-01-01, Nr. 1-1, available at: https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.FC2B71C84492

16. A. Jančys, 'Pabėgėlius remiančioje akcijoje Vilniuje – chuliganų išpuolis', Lrytas.lt, February 27, 2016, available at: http://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/pabegelius-remiancioje-akcijoje-vilniuje-chuliganu-ispuolis.htm

17. Comments inciting hated were written on 18-19 July, 2016. D. Sinkevičius, 'Bausmė už komentarus internete: ragino iš Lietuvos išsiųsti pabėgėlį', delfi.lt, December 26, 2016, available at: http://m.delfi.lt/article.php?id=73262898

18. 'Grožio studijos vadovas paneigė informaciją apie galimai diskriminuojančią įdarbinimo politiką', October 6, 2016: available at: http://lygybe.lt/lt/grozio-studijos-vadovas-paneige-straipsnio-informacija-apie-galimai-diskriminuojancia-idarbinimo-politika

19. Interview with the Director of the Islam Culture and Education Centre Mr. Aleksandras Beganskas and the Imam Mr. Romualdas Kaminskis, January 4, 2017.

20. Dr. Vilana Pilinkaitė-Sotirovič, research fellow at the Ethnic Research Institute, Lithuanian Social Research Centre; Neringa Gaučienė, head of the Social Integration Department of the Refugees Reception Centre, Discussion in the Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania, September 30, 2016.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

The Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson reports that during the period of January to December 2016, there were no employment-related incidents that discriminated against Muslims in particular. However, the Ombudsperson initiated an investigation when she received information about an article in the leading news portal *DELFI.lt*.[21] The article was covering the opening of a beauty salon for men, "Men's spot", and it cited the director of the salon Mr. Povilas Malinauskas. The director, among other discriminatory statements, informed the media "We had an offer to employ Syrians, Turks, however we decided that only Lithuanians will work to make the money remain in Lithuania"[22]. Further, in the article the director claimed "They have selected the staff of the salon very responsibly"[23], which led to the perception that the director willingly avoided hiring Syrians and Turks. After the Ombudsperson started the investigation and contacted the director, he informed her that, in fact, he had not received any offers to employ Syrians and Turks or persons of other ethnicity and he expressed his regret that the article published false information. He assured the office that competence was the only criterion, not the candidates' gender, race, origin, religion, etc. The OEOO failed to contact the journalist, and the communication with local and national migrant organisations and NGOs working in the field showed no evidence that Syrians and Turks were in fact candidates for the job. Hence, the OEOO terminated the investigation due to the lack of objective data on the committed violation.

Even though officially there are very few Islamophobic cases, public opinion surveys and interviews with representatives of the community show that there is potential underreporting. Work migrants and inhabitants of smaller towns are less likely to complain for various reasons including fear of putting their job in jeopardy[24] and not being able to identify discrimination.

While analysing possible discrimination cases, few aspects have to be mentioned. It should be noted that there are less than 3,000 Muslim residents in Lithuania[25] and Islam has not been evaluated to any great extent. Society primarily learns about Islam via mass media, which usually reports negative aspects (see

21. Virginija Spurytė, „Tokioje darbovietėje ištvertų ne kiekvienas: klaipėdietis iškėlė itin griežtas sąlygas darbuotojams", delfi.lt (08/23/2016), http://www.delfi.lt/projektai/kiekvienas-gali-buti-didelis/tokioje-darbovieteje-istvertu-ne-kiekvienas-klaipedietis-iskele-itin-grieztas-salygas-darbuotojams.d?id=72083320

22. Unofficial translation, *Ibid*.

23. Unofficial translation, *Ibid*.

24. Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, Annual Activity Report 2012 (Vilnius, 2013), p. 3.

25. In the population census of 2011, 2,727 Muslims were recorded. Statistics Lithuania, Population Composition, http://osp.stat.gov.lt/services-portlet/pub-edition-file?id=22

Media). Hence, the lack of knowledge about the religion brings challenges to Muslim employees. While looking for a job, clothing and physical attributes, such as headscarves for women and beards for men, become a barrier due to negative stereotypes about the Muslim community. During an interview, the community representative noted that Muslim women usually do not work, as they are studying and afterwards return to Turkey, or they are afraid of society's and employers' reactions to their headscarves. For example, a female volunteer in a kindergarten could not continue her practice as the representative of the kindergarten said she could not explain to the parents why the volunteer was wearing a headscarf; this lack of knowledge was a trigger to discontinue volunteering. Another Turkish student, who was studying in Lithuania, enrolled in an European voluntary service programme and was a volunteer in the same kindergarten. He had no issues with his ethnicity or appearance. However, after the summer break, he came back with a beard, which was unacceptable to the kindergarten. The student was Turkish, but not Muslim. However, he was perceived as such.

There is no official statistical data collected nationwide on employment rates, disaggregated by ethnicity, nationality or religion. The Lithuanian Labour Exchange is responsible for granting work permits to foreigners who live in Lithuania with temporary work permits.[26] According to the Labour Exchange data,[27] for the period up to 31 December, 2016, 12,600 work permits were issued to foreigners, 7,064 could work on additional grounds, while 1,035 foreigners were unemployed.[28] Most of them were citizens of the Russian Federation, Belarus and Ukraine. Most work migrants are men.[29]

The framework of Lithuanian society's perceptions can help identify potential areas of discrimination. As observed by the Institute for Ethnic Studies,[30] the social distance between co-workers of different ethnicity or religion is relatively smaller and less pronounced than the negative social attitudes regarding living in a neighbourhood with persons of different ethnicity or religion. Compared to 2015, in 2016, a public survey showed slightly better results. However, in general, results are worse than before the so-called "refugee crisis" started. A bigger number of respondents of the public opinion survey would agree to work with

26. People who live in the country with permanent residence permits do not require a work permit.

27. Lithuanian Labour Exchange official note of 3 January 2017, No. Sd-13 „Concerning the request for information".

28. Information as of 1 November 2016, *ibid.*

29. Diversity Development Group, Institute for Ethnic Studies at Lithuanian Social Research Centre, "Trečiųjų šalių piliečių integracijos trajektorijos ir vertinimo mechanizmai. Imigracijos, migrantų integracijos ir pilietybės politikos teorinės ir empirinės sąsajos. Tyrimo ataskaita", http://www.ces.lt/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Imigracijos-migrant%C5%B3-integracijos-ir-pilietyb%C4%97s-politikos-teorin%C4%97s-ir-empirin%C4%97s-s%C4%85sajos2.pdf (2014), p. 98-108

30. Institute for Ethnic Studies at Lithuanian Social Research Centre, "Public opinion survey 2016", http://www.ces.lt/veikla-2/ziniasklaidos-stebesena/visuomenes-nuomones-apklausos/

Muslims, refugees, Chechens, Syrians, Iraqis and Turks – the groups of people who practice Islam in Lithuania in 2016 than in 2015. Tatars were the only ethnic community of Muslim background who were perceived slightly worse than in the previous year. However, it has to be noted that the Muslim community overall is the least favoured group in the workplace compared to other religions and confessions.[31] Muslim people are among the most negatively perceived and 37.6% of respondents would not work with a Muslim, only a little less than in 2015 – 38%. Therefore, it is important to understand that negative perception about Muslims did not really change. As last year, respondents tend to assess ethnicity more favourably than religion.

In the long term, it can be observed that the reporting of multiple terrorist attacks in the media, especially starting in 2015, had the most negative impact on the Muslim community in Lithuania. This tendency continued in 2016 when negativity towards the Muslim community appears to be slightly declining, but the group remains among the most socially distanced.

## Education

The Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson has not reported any cases of possible discrimination on the ground of religion in education. Nonetheless, the OEOO investigated a case in relation to Islam. The office received a claim from a student at Vilnius College, which is a higher professional education institution, who complained about a lecturer's remark during a lecture. The lecturer asked "Are you an Arab? Like some kind of refugee?" This remark insulted the complainant. During the investigation, it appeared that the student had talked to the lecturer and as they came to terms, the investigation was dropped.

Discrimination in educational institutions is rarely observed due to the small number of Muslims. However, incidents when certain university lecturers inappropriately commented on Islam-related matters were recorded. Students report that their lecturers oppose Islam and compare terrorism and religion. Therefore, there is a need to educate society about Islam and the teachings of the Quran. On the other hand, good practices have also been observed. A student at Mykolo Romerio University mentioned that her professor gave her a separate key to a room at the Institute of Psychology so she could pray in peace and silence. In addition, a separate room for prayers was established at this university in 2015.

31. Ibid. Please indicate a group with which you would rather not work:
Muslims – 24.9% (2012); 26% (2013); 22.4% (2014); 38% (2015); 37.6% (2016).
Refugees – 16.3% (2012); 21% (2013); 15.1% (2014); 31% (2015); 27.8% (2016).
Chechens – 22.5% (2012); 23% (2013); 17.4% (2014); 26% (2015); 21.7% (2016).
Syrians – 28% (2015); 17.8% (2016).
Iraqis – 22% (2015); 17.8% (2016).
Turks – 8.8% (2012); 10% (2013); 7.8% (2014); 12% (2015); 10.7% (2016).
Tatars – 7% (2012); 8% (2013); 4.9% (2014); 5% (2015); 7.3% (2016).

The Law on Religious Communities and Associations of the Republic of Lithuania[32] has been praised by the Muslim community: children can learn about Islam at state schools if there are six or more pupils[33] who express such a desire.

## Politics

As in most other fields, negative attitudes towards Muslims were related to the public discussions about refugee flow, integration, resettlement and relocation procedures. The views of various politicians working on the national and municipal level could be analysed, however as there is no research on the attitudes of politicians, examples will be provided mostly relating to the attitudes of various political parties during the parliamentary election of 2016.

The Lithuanian government agreed to share the responsibility with other EU countries and adopted the decision to relocate 1,105 refugees in a period of two years (by 31 December, 2017).[34]

The discussions on the greater responsibility and involvement of EU member states continued throughout 2016.

"The Lithuanian ruling coalition parties (Lithuanian Social Democrats, Party 'Order and Justice' and Labour Party) signed a political agreement voicing their disapproval of additional mandatory refugee resettlement quotas"[35] on 10 June, 2016. Eight parties were encouraged to sign this agreement, stating that, even if requested Lithuania, would not accept more than 1,105 refugees. The agreement among the three ruling coalition parties stressed that consistent and clear refugee selection and revision procedures did not exist, and this posed a danger to national and internal security in Lithuania. It stated that there were no possibilities to check a person's past, their relationships to criminal groups or propensity to commit crimes. It claimed that most asylum seekers were not refugees running from war, but economic migrants.[36] The Labour Party, which had tried to revoke the agreement to accept the refugee quota back in 2015, initiated the agreement. A political scientist called it their electoral campaigning strategy.[37]

32. Lietuvos Respublikos religinių bendruomenių ir bendrijų įstatymas, 4 October 1995, No. I-1057, https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.B4DBBD7C388A/TAIS_363706

33. Interview with Director of the Islam Culture and Education Centre Mr. Aleksandras Beganskas and the Imam Mr. Romualdas Kaminskis, January 4, 2017.

34. Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės 2015 m. birželio 22 d. nutarimas Nr. 628 „Dėl užsieniečių perkėlimo į Lietuvos Respublikos teritoriją".

35. Lithuania's ruling parties sign political agreement on refugees, BNS, June 10, 2016, available at: http://www.baltictimes.com/lithuania_s_ruling_parties_sign_political_agreement_on_refugees/

36. Tracevičiūtė Roberta, 'Valdantieji sutarė: daugiau pabėgėlių įsileisti nenori', lzinios.lt, June 11, 2016, available at: http://m.lzinios.lt/mob/loadStrN.php?rlinkas=Lietuva&linkas=valdantieji-sutare-daugiau-pabegeliu-isileisti-nenori&idas=224500

37. 'Susitarimas dėl pabėgėlių: Lietuva daugiau nei 1105 pabėgėlių neįsileis', lrt.lt, June 10, 2016, available at: http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/139494

A member of the Lithuanian Liberal Movement expressed the same ideas.[38]

The Lithuanian parliament elections took place on 9 October, 2016. Discussions on refugees, asylum seekers and Muslims occurred throughout the entire year. The discourse on Muslims is usually connected to negative opinions by politicians, who relate to the so-called "refugee crisis". According to the Lithuanian Social Research Centre, Lithuanian society's opinions towards refugees were largely affected by the intensive questioning and hardening of the European Union politics towards refugees, the views of European politicians, and radical or negative opinions towards refugees shared by Lithuanian politicians during the parliamentary election campaign in 2016.[39]

Islamophobic attitudes were clearly expressed by the Labour Party in their election campaign. One of their election slogans was "We will stop the influx of refugees" and their campaign videos claimed they would not allow the refugees "to drain our social welfare system". People in videos talked about refugees as a danger to national security, women, girls, and children, called them extremists, and associated refugees with the terror attacks in France, Belgium and Denmark.[40]

It has to be noted that the campaign of the Labour Party received criticism and was ridiculed, as the number of refugees that were resettled to Lithuania is still very small (35 as of 1 July, 2016, and 185 as of November 2016). Famous journalists released a social commercial making fun of the Labour Party's campaign.[41] It is also important to note that the party did not pass the required 5% threshold, receiving 4.68% of votes.

Other parties, considered to be far right did not receive more than 1.01% of votes: the Lithuanian People's Party received 1.01% of votes and the S. Buškevičius and the Coalition of Nationalists "Against Corruption and Poverty" ("Young Lithuanian, Union of Nationalists" party) received 0.54% of votes.[42]

Far right parties do not (yet) occupy an important place in the political arena. Nevertheless, mainstream parties sometimes use anti-migrant and xenophobic statements.

38. MP Eugenijus Gentvilas, one of the leaders of the Lithuanian Liberal Movement said "Causing fear is very effective among a certain part of voters. It shifts from causing fear talking about Russians, ticks, and refugees. Instead of causing fear, we should talk with people. Let's remember the times, when Lithuanians were running away and were accepted by others. Have we forgotten?" – article by Tracevičiūtė Roberta, 'Valdantieji sutarė: daugiau pabėgėlių įsileisti nenori', lzinios.lt, June 11, 2016.

39. Lietuvos socialinių tyrimų centro Etninių tyrimų instituto užsakymu 2016 m. atliktos visuomen4s nuostatų apklausos rezultatai, 2016.

40. Political videos of the Labour Party, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qHWpAHQhCes, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSZ-Q98aJBk, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JR8sFev8gaw

41. Videos by journalists and comics ridiculing the Labour Party's anti-refugee campaign: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qY7BIak5bQg, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hoY5AvNjE-E, https://www.facebook.com/laikykitesten/videos/1647893332188724/

42. Election results available at: http://www.vrk.lt/2016-seimo/rezultatai?srcUrl=/rinkimai/102/1/1304/rezultatai/lt/rezultataiDaugmVrt.html

According to the media reports, the Muslim Community and Vilnius Municipality failed to find a compromise regarding the land plot for building a mosque.[43]

## Media

While analysing media content related to Islamophobia in 2016, the same trends as in 2015 were revealed as media coverage of different Islamophobic statements was related to the same (continuing) public discussion on global refugee flows, on the one hand, and local refugee integration challenges, on the other. Eventually, as in 2015, Islamophobia-related challenges and processes in 2016 have to be analysed and discussed in a broader context of xenophobia and immigration issues, particularly the ongoing international debate on flows of asylum seekers, resettlement and relocation schemes, and the general perception of solidarity among different EU member states.

One significant difference was identified: the amount of information on the aforementioned issues in 2016 was significantly less than in 2015. This trend might be explained by different factors: on the one hand, the media response has shifted towards more local challenges and processes (for example, national elections and corruption controversies) and, on the other, due to the very intense information flow in 2015, a natural decrease in the interest of different media channels in 2016 has emerged. Eventually, anti-immigrant and anti-refugee attitudes in media discourse became less visible. At the same time, xenophobic manifestations by politicians and public commentators became fragmented and less frequent.

According to the FRA report (FRA 2016),[44] courts, national equality bodies, independent press councils and independent regulatory or supervisory bodies for broadcasting organisations found incitement against immigrants and refugees in Lithuanian media content and political discourse. At the same time, courts, independent press councils and independent regulatory or supervisory bodies for broadcasting organisations ruled on cases or complaints relating to incitement to hatred against (members of) Muslim, Jewish and Christian communities in Lithuania (as in a number of other EU member states).

In addition, the Media 4 Change Report (2016)[45] revealed unethical reporting on migrants and refugees in Europe, including Lithuania. According to the research, refugees and immigrants have sometimes been seen as a treat to Christian values. Some Lithuanian newspapers reported on the topic. Journalists failed to question the official rhetoric of politicians and religious leaders publishing claims that refugees coming from the Middle East and being transferred to Lithuania might not have an

43. Tracevičiūtė Roberta, 'Musulmonai nesulaukia vietos mečetei sostinėje', lzinios.lt, August 2, 2016, available at: http://lzinios.lt/lzinios/Lietuva/musulmonai-nesulaukia-vietos-mecetei/227092

44. Incitement in media content and political discourse in EU Member States. Contribution to the second Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights - November 2016. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016.

45. Unethical Reporting on Migrants and Refugees in Europe: Media 4 Change, 2016. Available at http://www.media4change.co/news/unethical-reporting-migrants-refugees-europe

impulse to learn the language and to accept the local culture, and might pose a threat to Christian values.

As far as publications on immigration issues in Lithuania appear after certain events and the media response is usually triggered by different "external" factors (EIR 2015), the year 2016 was not an exception. Recent incidents in Rukla, where the Refugee Reception Centre was established and the initial refugee integration phase is organised, could be considered as an example. Due to a more intense refugee relocation process, Rukla has witnessed a bigger influx of foreigners granted asylum. Eventually, some minor conflicts within the local community emerged. These minor conflicts and the follow-ups with comments by the director of the Refugee Reception Centre, the mayor of Jonava and the elder of Rukla were reported in the media.[46]

Contrary to the media coverage in 2015, no visible anti-immigrant and anti-refugee statements were identified. At the same time, no particular Islamophobic, anti-immigrant or anti-refugee campaigns in Lithuanian media were observed with the exception of activities in cyberspace such as social media and blogs, and fragmented and marginal websites (see below).

## Justice System

There have not been any laws adopted in 2016 that could be labelled as Islamophobic.

The Information Technology Department under the Ministry of the Interior, which collects information on crimes, does not break down the information in terms of hate crimes committed against Muslims. In general, a very low number of hate crimes were officially recorded. Only 38 cases of incitement of hatred were recorded by the end of November 2016 according to the Information Technology Department under the Ministry of Interior;[47] there were 138 recorded cases of incitement of hatred in 2015. There is no publicly available data breakdown for the year 2016 regarding the number of hate crimes on the grounds of religion or belief.

The number of other attacks is unknown. In in-depth interviews, refugees stated that they feel disrespected, vulnerable and rejected because of the local population's views towards other nationalities. One of them mentioned an attack against his

46. For example, 'Described why violence in Rukla has emerged', 2016, available at http://tv.lrytas.lt/?id=14769019481474826020; 'After the conflict in Rukla refugees: we will defend not only our, but also Litbuanian women', 2016, available at http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/crime/po-konflikto-rukloje-prabile-pabegeliai-ginsime-ne-tik-savo-moteris-bet-ir-lietuves.d?id=72618072; 'Rukla is already calming down, but the Elder of the town: fled like cowards while have not defended their country – now sit with folded ears', 2016, available at http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/rukla-jau-rimsta-bet-jos-seniunas-ne-pabegai-kaip-bailys-negynes-savo-salies-tad-sedek-dabar-suglaudes-ausis-56-700243, etc.

47. Data on recorded crimes in January-November, 2016, Information Technology Department under the Ministry of Interior, available at: http://www.ird.lt/statistines-ataskaitos/wp-content/themes/ird/reports/txt_file.php?fv=data/1_201611_lt/f-1g-201611.data.txt&ff=%3C%21--%7C1G%7C6%7C--%3E&tt=Duomenys%20apie%20nusikalstamas%20veikas%2C%20padarytas%20Lietuvos%20Respublikoje%20%28Forma_1G%29

daughter when her veil and trousers were torn at school but explained that because of the fear of being called terrorists they did not want to talk about the incident.[48]

An attack in Rukla, the town where the Refugee Reception Centre is based, received significant media attention. Two locals attacked a Syrian and a Iraqi woman who were going from a local shop to the Refugee Reception Centre. One of women's glasses were broken, the women were pushed and they were grabbed by their clothes. The first reports stated that around 20 men sought to take revenge for the women who reported this attack to them, and that with the involvement of the police there were no fights. According to the information received from the Ministry of Interior, the investigation was initiated as a mere violation of public order (Article 284 of the Criminal Code).[49] So far, the incident has not been registered as a hate crime, but the representatives of the police department stated that the investigation is still ongoing.[50]

Lithuania was reviewed by the Universal Periodic Review on 2 November, 2016. According to the draft report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Lithuania has received a particularly large number of recommendations in relation to hate crimes and incitement of hatred. Around twenty recommendations pay particular attention to strengthening efforts in combating hate crime - some of them addressing hate speech/incitement of hatred in particular - and stress the importance of fighting xenophobic, racist hate crimes.[51] Others pay particular attention to hate crimes committed because of a person's religion or anti-Muslim, Islamophobic crimes.

The Chairman of the Parliamentary National Security and Defence Committee continued to express his opinion on the need to prohibit women from Muslim countries from wearing clothes that cover their faces, but no draft laws have been registered. The Minister of Interior Tomas Žilinskas did not see a reason for discussing the matter as in his opinion there were no people who would wear such clothes in Lithuania.[52]

## Internet

As in 2015, in 2016, cyberspace in Lithuania could be characterised by the same diversity of xenophobic manifestations, especially following global refugee flows and the terror attacks in Paris and Brussels. Regarding Islamophobic manifestations in

48. Prieglobsčio prašančių asmenų perkėlimas į Lietuvą: migrantų patirtys, ekspertų vertinimai, Lietuvos gyventojų nuostatos, EMT studija, Tarptautinė migracijos organizacija (TMO), Europos migracijos tinklas (EMT), 2016/2, Vilnius, 2016, p. 27.

49. Meeting of the working group on the investigation of hate crimes in the Ministry of Interior, December 15, 2016.

50. Representative of the Police Department, Aušra Sadauskienė during the working group in the Ministry of Interior, December 15, 2016.

51. Recommendations No. 100.50, 100.52, 100.53, 100.54, 100.56, 100.59, 100.61, 100.62, 100.64, 100.65-100.70, 100.72, 100.73, 100.74, 100.82, 100.85.
Draft Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Lithuania, Human Rights Council, Twenty Sixth Session, 15 November 2016.

52. 'Socialinis eksperimentas: ką reiškia būti musulmone Lietuvoje', August 5, 2016, alfa.lt, available at: http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/50062005/socialinis-eksperimentas-ka-reiskia-buti-musulmone-lietuvoje

Lithuanian cyberspace in 2016, social media stands out as a fertile ground for different xenophobic manifestations including, among others, comments relating to global refugee flows, and Muslim integration on the EU member states. Unfortunately, almost all Facebook profiles with xenophobic content, which were observed in 2015, are still active in 2016. However, contrary to 2015, when some of these initiatives went far beyond the digital world, in 2016, these initiatives remained without any activism outside the Internet. The content, which is published on the profiles of these initiatives, should be considered as an open incitement of hatred against immigrants (refugees) in general and Muslims in particular. Such incitements are not republished in traditional media channels.

New forms of hatred in cyberspace against Islam, in general, and Muslims, in particular, emerged in 2016. For example, the Centre for the Study of Political Islam in Lithuania,[53] provides single-sided information relating to Islam and Muslims in Lithuania and beyond. Moving from social media to the so-called 'regular' websites, the same trend is identified as with still existant Facebook pages: almost all websites with xenophobic and Islamophobic content, which have been observed in 2015, are still active in 2016.[54]

Summarising xenophobic and Islamophobic manifestation on the Internet, emphasis should be given to the fact that the biggest proportion of information in cyberspace is not related to immigration to Lithuania or to the integration of Muslim immigrants in Lithuania. Rather, it is related to a very specific collection of propaganda-related information on so-called challenges posed by international migration and the integration of Muslim immigrants in different EU member states and beyond.

However, the biggest concern lies in the fact that governmental institutions and law enforcement agencies do not properly monitor initiatives and xenophobic manifestations on the Internet. As a result, no significant number of pretrial investigations, related to the aforementioned initiatives, were identified in 2016.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There are no Islamophobic organisations or activists that are fostering Islamophobic campaigns, stirring up debates and lobbying for laws. However, after the incidents in the Rukla Refugee Reception Centre in 2016, some discussions, related to refugee integration challenges, emerged. At the same time, local politicians expressed their attitudes towards the cultural issues of the integration of refugees from Islamic countries.

After the brutal attack against refugee women from Syria and Iraq, the Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevicius visited the Rukla Refugee Reception Centre.

53. For more see: https://www.facebook.com/pg/cspi.lt/about/?ref=page_internal

54. For example, http://kulgrinda.lt, http://www.baltalietuva.eu, http://www.respublika.lt/, http://sioe.blogas.lt/apie, http://alkas.lt/?s=pabegeliai.

During the meeting, refugees in Rukla opened their hearts emphasising that Lithuanian society, especially in Rukla, does not want to welcome refugees.[55] However, after the meeting with refugees, the minister expressed his opinion that refugees in Rukla are not afraid and are not intimidated.[56] At the same time, refugees emphasised that they will defend both refugee and local women from any kind of violence, emerging in Rukla and beyond.[57] Eventually, different opinions were expressed, while some local politicians expressed discriminatory attitudes. For example, the elder of the town of Rukla stated that if refugees "fled as cowards and did not defend their country, they should sit with folded ears".[58] In addition, he stated that refugees should not show their traditions openly.[59] However, this discussion had no significant follow-up and was fragmented in terms of the time and people involved.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

As the majority of Lithuanian society has rarely personally met a Muslim person,[60] the majority of information comes from the media. Few initiatives can be mentioned as countering Islamophobia and raising awareness on the topic.

'*Mišri šeima*', '*Priimsiu pabėgėlį*' ('Mixed family', 'Welcome Refugees') is an initiative that started two years ago as a volunteer hub for sharing experiences on living in 'mixed' families. These initiatives later evolved into a "Welcome Refugees" campaign, which is very active in raising awareness on Islam and refugees' lives. Members of the initiative constantly write articles for the mainstream media to raise awareness on Muslimness and integration.[61]

The Islam Culture and Education Centre provides information to members of society on interpretations of Islam and Muslims in Lithuania, and engages in dialogues with the media, politicians and state institutions. They organise Open Day events, meetings with students, excursions to mosques and summer camps for children. The Turkish government officially supports this centre.

55. For more, see: http://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/pabegeliai-rukloje-atvere-sirdi-l-linkeviciui-jie-nenori-musu-priimti.htm

56. For more, see: http://www.ve.lt/naujienos/lietuva/lietuvos-naujienos/linas-linkevicius-rukloje-pabegeliai-nera-ibauginti-1502711/

57. For more, see: http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/crime/po-konflikto-rukloje-prabile-pabegeliai-ginsime-ne-tik-savo-moteris-bet-ir-lietuves.d?id=72618072

58. For more, see: http://www.15min.lt/naujiena/aktualu/lietuva/rukla-jau-rimsta-bet-jos-seniunas-ne-pabegai-kaip-bailys-negynes-savo-salies-tad-sedek-dabar-suglaudes-ausis-56-700243

59. For more, see: http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/ruklos-seniunas-apie-pabegelius-tegul-savo-tradiciju-laikosi-uzdarai-ir-nebruka-ju-mums.d?id=72698318

60. Institute for Ethnic Studies at Lithuanian Social Research Centre, Public Opinion Surveys 2009–2015, http://www.ces.lt/veikla-2/ziniasklaidos-stebesena/visuomenes-nuomones-apklausos/

61. See more: www.priimsiupabegeli.lt, www.misriseima.lt

It is important to note that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has met with the Mufti Romas Jakubauskas of the Lithuanian Muslim Sunni Spiritual Centre and Imam Romualdas Krinickis to discuss cooperation opportunities, the integration of relocated refugees and public initiatives that could educate society about Islamic culture.[62]

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

## Employment

- Measures must be taken to protect victims of discrimination and to assist them in filing complaints against their employers and other perpetrators, e.g. public consultations, visits to Rulka Refugee Reception Centre, migrant centres, training for employees on diversity, etc.
- In the light of the so-called "refugee crisis" and the influx of refugees, sensitive measures for integration have to be developed such as guidelines for job hunting and work with potential employees to consider language requirements and cultural differences.
- Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990).

## Education

- Establish state-funded infrastructure and ensure that measures are taken to integrate children of migrant backgrounds, as well as children who learn in a language other than their mother tongue, into the education system.
- Involve journalists into proactive discussions about the promotion of diversity and the responsibility of the media in the formation of negative attitudes towards the Muslim community.
- Collaborate with universities and other higher education institutions for a better understanding of Islam.
- Ratify the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960).

## Politics

- As public opinion towards Muslims is significantly influenced by politicians, it would be meaningful to carry out continuous monitoring of politicians using hate speech, especially during election campaigns, to prevent Islamophobic hate speech from spreading.
- Political parties and politicians should strengthen their initiatives in cooperating with the Muslim community in Lithuania and raise awareness about the integration of refugees resettled in Lithuania.

62. 'Užsienio reikalų ministras ir Lietuvos musulmonų muftijus aptarė bendradarbiavimo galimybes', December 2, 2016, available at: https://www.urm.lt/default/lt/naujienos/uzsienio-reikalu-ministras-ir-lietuvos-musulmonu-muftijus-aptare-bendradarbiavimo-galimybes

- Adopt political programmes and strategies fighting hate speech and hate crime and encourage the dissemination of correct information about Islam and Muslims living in Lithuania.

### Justice

- Improve the effectiveness of the mechanisms that record hate crimes and educate those responsible for recognising hate crime.
- Establish an alternative hate crime recording mechanism.
- Provide assistance to victims of hate crime, including hate speech.
- Regarding the police department: establish cooperation with the Muslim Community in Lithuania.
- Initiate legal changes ensuring the proactive role of the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, whereby it can bring cases of discrimination to court on behalf of victims of discrimination.

### Media and Internet

- Implement a long-term monitoring mechanism to prevent ethnic and Islamophobic hatred in mass media and cyberspace.
- Explore ways of enhancing the knowledge and understanding of the media about global asylum and migration issues and the situation of refugees in Lithuania to ensure accurate and objective reporting, and the avoidance of stereotyping. Different measures have to be taken into consideration: alternative media campaigns, training for journalists, specific external communication strategies for different social groups, etc.
- Outline the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in this area and the initiatives taken to promote a welcoming environment and combat racism, xenophobia and related intolerance; elaborate on a clear way forward beyond the current practices and initiatives. Different governmental institutions and NGOs have to be involved in this process.

# Chronology

- **6 February**: The organisations National Interest and Public Committee Against Forced Immigration organised a demonstration as part of the international demonstration organised by Pegida against "European Islamization and forced immigration".[63]
- **27 February**: Two skinheads violently grabbed a poster from one of the demonstrators during the public demonstration "Safe passage for refugees".[64] They were fined for an administrative offence ("small hooliganism").[65] Counter-demonstrators were also present, holding posters, such as "The invasion of Communist Muslims to Europe – is the real hybrid war" and "Lithuania is not a multi-cultural jungle", etc.
- **18-19 July**: A person wrote comments inciting hatred towards Muslim refugees. He was found guilty by the court for incitement of hatred in December 2016.[66]
- **2 August**: Muslims were not given permission to build a mosque in Vilnius.[67]
- **5 August**: The social experiment 'What is means to be a Muslim in Lithuania' is presented by TV Alfa.[68]
- **10 June**: Lithuania's ruling parties sign a political agreement on refugees. [69]
- **19 October**: A report by lrytas TV tries to explain why violence broke out in Rukla.[70]

63. More information about the event: https://www.facebook.com/events/655933371214670/permalink/657864901021517/ http://interesas.lt/akcija-vilniuje-30-metru-parasu-pries-priverstine-imigracija-video/Organised by: https://www.facebook.com/NacionalinisInteresas/

64. A. Jančys, 'Pabėgėlius remiančioje akcijoje Vilniuje – chuliganų išpuolis', Lrytas.lt, February 27, 2016, (retrieved February 14, 2017), from http://lietuvosdiena.lrytas.lt/aktualijos/pabegelius-remiancioje-akcijoje-vilniuje-chuliganu-ispuolis.htm.

65. Article 174, 'Lietuvos Respublikos administracinių teisės pažeidimų kodeksas, Vyriausybės žinios, 1985-01-01, Nr. 1-1,from https://www.e-tar.lt/portal/lt/legalAct/TAR.FC2B71C84492 (retrieved February 14, 2017).

66. D. Sinkevičius, 'Bausmė už komentarus internete: ragino iš Lietuvos išsiųsti pabėgėlį,' delfi.lt, (December 26, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017, from http://m.delfi.lt/article.php?id=73262898.

67. Roberta Traceviciute, 'Muslims do not get the permission for the mosque in the capital,' *lzinios.lt*, (August 2, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2016, from http://lzinios.lt/lzinios/Lietuva/musulmonai-nesulaukia-vietos-mecetei/227092.

68. TV Alpha, 'Social experiment: what it means to be a Muslim Lithuania,' *alfa.lt*, (August 5, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017, from http://www.alfa.lt/straipsnis/50062005/socialinis-eksperimentas-ka-reiskia-buti-musulmone-lietuvoje.

69. ELTA/BNS, 'The agreement on the refugee resettlement: Lithuania will not allow more than 1,105 refugees to be resettled,' *lrt.lt*, (June 10, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017, from http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/139494; BNS/TBT, 'Lithuania's ruling parties sign political agreement on refugees,' *baltictimes.com*, (June 10, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017, from http://www.baltictimes.com/lithuania_s_ruling_parties_sign_political_agreement_on_refugees/; and: Roberta Traceviciute, 'Politicians agreed: do not want to admit more refugees,' *lzinios.lt*, (June 11, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017, from http://m.lzinios.lt/mob/loadStrN.php?rlinkas=Lietuva&linkas=valdantieji-sutare-daugiau-pabegeliu-isileisti-nenori&idas=224500.

70. Lyras.Tv, 'Papasakojo, dėl ko prasiveržė smurtas Rukloje,' *lrytas.lt*, (October 19, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017, from http://tv.lrytas.lt/?id=14769019481474826020.

- **20 October:** The Lithunian newsportal Delfi publishes an article with a title "After the conflict in Rukla refugees claim 'We will not only defend our women, but also Lithuanian women'".[71]
- **2 December**: The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Lithuanian Muslims' mufti discuss the possibilities of cooperation.[72]

71. Paulius Garkauskas, 'Po konflikto Rukloje prabilę pabėgėliai: ginsime ne tik savo moteris, bet ir lietuves Skaitykite daugiau: http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/crime/po-konflikto-rukloje-prabile-pabegeliai-ginsime-ne-tik-savo-moteris-bet-ir-lietuves.d?id=72618072,' *delfi*.lt, (October 20, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017, from http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/crime/po-konflikto-rukloje-prabile-pabegeliai-ginsime-ne-tik-savo-moteris-bet-ir-lietuves.d?id=72618072.

72. urm.lt, 'Užsienio reikalų ministras ir Lietuvos musulmonų muftijus aptarė bendradarbiavimo galimybes', *urm.lt*, (December 2, 2016), retrieved February 14, 2017. from https://www.urm.lt/default/lt/naujienos/uzsienio-reikalu-ministras-ir-lietuvos-musulmonu-muftijus-aptare-bendradarbiavimo-galimybes.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN MACEDONIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

The political crisis in Macedonia culminated in the elections of December 2016, which however did not end this crisis; the election campaigns were the main source of Islamophobic discourse that was used to discredit political opponents. The other strand of Islamophobic discourse and discursive events arose from issues related to securitization such as terrorism, migration, asylum, and foreign fighters. Islamophobic speech in Macedonia is present in media and social media. The professional standards and the independence of media in Macedonia remain issues that are relevant to Islamophobia in 2016 as the state of media freedom and independence continues to deteriorate.

Underreporting of Islamophobia is still a problem, mostly because of the intersectionality with ethnic and political discrimination. It can also be presumed that there is lack of trust in the institutions which should, therefore, react, protect and build a protective environment. Civil society initiatives do not directly tackle Islamophobia, apart from the general antidiscrimination discourse and interreligious dialogue. However, NGOs have an important task in monitoring and reporting Islamophobia; education and an increase in awareness of the issue are also important.

Islamophobic initiatives are ad hoc and often seem to be "imported" following the discourse from far right "hate groups" existing in the EU and U.S. The improvement of the framework of the general rule of law, and avoiding and condemning the existing ethno-nationalistic discourse is strongly recommended. Critical coverage of issues relating to Islam in public discourse is also important in order to prevent Islamophobia.

# Извршно резиме

Политичката криза и изборите во декември 2016 со кои кризата достигна до кулминација, но не и до решение, беа извор на исламофобен дискурс користен за дискредитација на политичките противници. Другиот извор на исламофобен дискурс и дискурзивни настана кои можат да доведат до исламофобија потекнува од прашањата поврзани со секуритизација како што се тероризмот, миграции, азил, странски борци. Исламофобен говор е присутен во медиумите и на друштвените мрежи. Професионалните стандарди и независноста на медиумите во Македонија сеуште се тема која е релевантна за исламофобијата во Македонија имајќи во предвид дека слободата и независноста на медиумте продолжува да се влошува.

Непријавувањето на исламофобија е сеуште проблем, најмногу заради меѓусебната поврзаност со етничката и политичка дискриминација, но исто може да се претпостави деке недостига доверба во институциите кои би требало да реагираат, заштитат и изградат сигурна средина. Иницијативите на граѓанското општество не ја препознаваат исламофобијата надвор од општата рамка на заштита од дискриминација и меѓурелигискиот дијалог. Сепак, организациите на граѓанското општество имаат важна задача во мониторингот, известувањето како и во поглед на едукација и освестувањето на јавноста за важноста на ова прашање.

Исламофобните иницијативи се ад хок, и, се чини, често „увезени“ бидејќи го следат дискурсот на радикално десните „групи на омраза“ кои веќе постојат во ЕУ и САД. Се препорачува подобрување на општата рамка за владеење на правото, осуда и избегнување на постоечкиот етнонационалистички дискурс како и критички пристап кон темите кои се поврзани со Исламот како би се спречила и превенирала исламофобијата.

# Introduction

The report draws on two pillars of data. The first one is data on discriminatory actions on the ground of religion – specifically against those belonging to the Islamic religion - which took place in 2016.The second is what in most cases preceded these discriminatory actions - discursive events or enticement of hatred, and attempts to counter it with critical speech.

Muslims are an important religious minority in Macedonia, significant for both their number and their historical presence. According to the last census of the population and households which took place in 2002, 33.3% are Muslim, 64.7% are Orthodox Christian, and the rest follow other religions including Catholicism and Protestantism.[1] Beyond religion, in the context of Macedonia, the ethnic structure is also important in understanding Islamophobia. Again, the only relevant data is from the 2002 census, in which 64% of the population identified themselves as Macedonians, 25% as Albanians, 3.8% as Turks, 2.6% as Roma, 1.8% as Serbian, 0.8% as Bosniaks, and 0.1 as Muslims. Religious division correlates with ethnic division. Most of the ethnic Macedonians are Orthodox Christians, while most of the Albanians are Muslims; Islam is also the religion for the majority of Turks, Roma, Bosnians and Macedonian Muslims.

This report is based on the analysis of media reports and readily available documents, legislation, official reports by the government or governmental bodies, national human rights institutions, and national and international non-governmental and governmental organisations.[2] Sources of data considered and used were those available in English and Macedonian. This was so because the researcher lacked language proficiency in the Albanian language; this is hereby acknowledged as a limitation for both the methodology and the inclusiveness of the results presented herein. The reader is kindly directed to the 2015 *Report on Islamophobia in Macedonia* for an extensive description of the general context of Islam, ethnic structure and political background in Macedonia. All information in this report pertains to the period between 1 January, 2016 and 31 December, 2016.

1. A new census should have taken place in 2011, but it was cancelled in controversial circumstances with ethnic and political overtones. Thus, the 2002 census data are the latest available data. According to this data, the total population of the country is 2,022,547. The State Statistical Office estimates that the total population in the Republic of Macedonia on 31 December, 2015 is 2,071,278. See: State Statistical Office Website, data available fromhttp://makstat.stat.gov.mk/PXWeb/pxweb/mk/MakStat/MakStat__Naselenie__ProcenkiNaselenie/225_Popis_reg_31_12_PolVoz_mk.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?rxid=1b95834b-9218-48dc-9620-5f3004de518b (retrieved February 5, 2017).

2.The author would like to aknowledge and express gratitude for the contribution and support in writing this report to Biljana Kotevska, particularly for the sections dealing with education and employment.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

In Macedonia, the year 2016 was marked by a deep political and societal crisis. In the words of the European Commission of the European Union, this was the "most severe [crisis] since 2001".[3] Two very important events took place: the first was the protests and the societal confrontations related to the political crisis, and the second was the elections which were scheduled for April, then postponed until June, and were finally held on 11 December. Due to the seriousness of the 2015 wire tapping scandal allegations which, among others, revealed possible election fraud, corruption and other criminal acts by the ruling party VMRO-DPMNE (*Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija – Demokratska partija za makedonsko nacionalno edinstvo,* Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) the election campaign was marked by the "ethnocentric messages conveyed by the ruling party and their warnings of a supposedly planned federalisation of the country".[4]

In the election campaign for the 2016 pre-term parliamentary elections, both in the official and the un-official campaigns that began long before, there were several noticeable attempts at discrediting politicians and political parties on account of the Muslimness of their members. Interestingly, the Islamophobic discourse which stemmed from the main ruling party VMRO-DPMNE was not directed towards ethnic minority political parties, but at the main opposition party, SDSM (*Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija* – Social Democratic Union of Macedonia). Islamophobic discourse was noted in the attempts at discrediting other Albanian parties by claiming that they have "Islamic backgrounds" and by doing so protecting the ruling Albanian party DUI (*Bashkimi Demokratik për Integrim/Demokratska unija za integracija* – Democratic Union for Integration).[5]

The attempt to present a civic option that would overcome the ethnic divisions was received by more discrediting along ethnic lines. The representation of Islam in Macedonia and its interrelation with ethnic identity is very important for understanding Islamophobia in Macedonia. Ethnic relations continue to be tense and often politicised.

On the global level, the issues of refugees, the terrorist attacks in Paris, Nice, Berlin, and the U.S. presidential elections gained publicity in local media and cre-

3.European Commission, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2016 Report," *ec.europa.eu*, (November 9, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf.

4.Elizabeta Milosevska, "Fateful elections in Macedonia,"*dw.com,*(December 12, 2016), retrieved December 27, 2016, from http://dw.com/p/2U2Dv.

5.FerikanIljazi, "Аналитичар, социолог, психолог, експертпобезбедност, политичар… штостанасоновинарот?," *Сервис за проверка на факти од медиумите(Serviszaproverkanafakti od mediumite),* (April 6, 2016), retrieved January 10, 2017, from http://proverkanafakti.mk/analitichar-sociolog-psiholog-ekspert-po-bezbednost-politichar-shto-stana-so-novinarot/.

ated discursive events that gave rise to Islamophobia. Uncritical reporting, as well as a sensationalistic approach to these issues contributed to Islamophobic discourse that can be seen in comments sections relating to such news. As the refugees were mainly passing through Macedonia in order to get to Western European countries, in the Macedonian context the so-called "refugee crisis" resonates both on the global and local level. Despite the closure of what was known as the Balkan route, refugees kept arriving and mainly passing through Macedonia; they were in a particularly vulnerable position and numerous attacks were reported on the webpage for reporting hate crime *zlostorstvaodomraza.mk*.[6] The process of securitization of migration that culminated with the closure of the borders put an end to the Balkan Route, which influenced Macedonian society and, in turn, this largely influenced the discourse regarding Islamophobia. The World Macedonian Congress, an organisation claiming to be "an informal World Parliament of Macedonians from all parts of Macedonia in the world"[7] demanded from the president and the government of the Republic of Macedonia to "warn the migrants and the international community that the illegal and violent entrance of migrants on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia will be considered an act of war" as the acceptance of migrants from Asia will change the "ethnic and religious map of the Republic of Macedonia"; they also demanded from the government to eliminate all NGOs supporting the acceptance of migrants.[8]

According to an article by Piro Rexhepi, who examines the emergence of Balkan Islam as more secular and reluctant to engage in terrorism in light of Islam's securatization, the EU enlargement policies in the Western Balkans through the debates on the "crime-terror" nexus suggest the "acceptable Islamic practices", thus marking "suspect communities" and "relegating Islam only to the private sphere".[9] Thereby, in the Macedonian context the categories of the "good" and "bad" Muslim are used as well and implicitly or explicitly attributed to certain ethnic groups or designated together with other criteria in a way which induces Islamophobia.

Discrimination both towards ethnic Albanians and towards refugees is fuelled by discursive events that contain among others Islamophobic rhetoric on the platform built by strong ethno-nationalism, securitization and populism.

6.Reports on attacks against refugees were taken from the following links http://www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com/reports/view/304; http://www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com/reports/view/326; http://www.zlostorstvaodomraza.com/reports/view/333(retrieved January 10, 2017).

7.See webpage of the World Macedonian Congress, available from: https://svetskimakedonskikongres.wordpress.com/about/ (retrieved January 10, 2017).

8.Informax.mk, "ДА БИДЕМЕ ПОДГОТВЕНИ: Македонија мора да се подготви за војна со мигрантите на јужната граница!," *Informax*, (July 1, 2016), retrieved December 22, 2016 from http://infomax.mk/wp/да-бидеме-подготвени-македонија-мора/.

9.Piro Rexhepi, "Mainstreaming Islamophobia: The Politics of European Enlargement and the Balkan Crime-Terror Nexus," *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 2-3 (June-September 2015), pp. 189-214.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

Under the Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination (ADL), religion is a protected discrimination ground (Article 3) and employment is a protected field (Article 4).[10] However, assumed discrimination does not fall within the scope of the ADL. An analysis of the harmonization of the equality and non-discrimination legislation published in 2016 by the OSCE and the Commission for Protection Against Discrimination (CPAD) underlines this as an issue and recommends legislative change – introducing a second paragraph to Article 3 which will include assumed discrimination as well as discrimination by association.[11]

At the time of writing this report, the two national human rights institutions with competences to oversee discrimination in the job market including on grounds of religion, namely the Ombudsperson of the Republic of Macedonia (Ombudsperson)[12] and the CPAD[13], had not yet published their annual reports for 2016. There is no case on grounds of religion or other belief filed to the CPAD in 2016.[14] In addition, none of the cases on ethnic affiliation in the area of employment seem to suggest an indirect discriminatory action on grounds of religion, or any connectedness to it.

A study of the implementation of the just and equitable representation principle in the public sector, published in 2016 by the European Policy Institute focused, among others, on equality and non-discrimination on ethnic grounds. It explicitly notes the fluidity in Macedonian context between religion, ethnicity and language, in line with what is at the international level understood by ECRI[15] and others as "race". This study found lack of knowledge on the legal protection against discrimination, internal mechanisms for addressing discrimination issues and protecting

10. Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination [Закон за спречување и заштита од дискриминација]: Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia, No.50/10, 44/2014, 150/2015, 31/2016, Constitutional Court Decision: U.no.82/2010. Arts. 3, 4.

11.BiljanaKotevska, "Анализа на хармонизираноста на домашното законодавство за еднаквоста и недискриминацијата (Analysis of the harmonisation of the national equality and non-discrimination legislation)," *OSCE/CPAD*, (2016), retrieved January 22, 2017 from http://www.kzd.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/publikacii/2015_analiza_za_harmonizacija_dom_zakon.pdf.

12. Annual Reports [Годишни извештаи], Official website of the Ombudsperson of the Republic of Macedonia, from http://ombudsman.mk/MK/predmetno_rabotenje/godishni_izveshtai.aspx (retrieved January 22, 2017).

13. Annual Reports [Годишни извештаи], Official website of the Commission for Protection Against Discrimination, from http://www.kzd.mk/?q=node/51 (retrieved January 22, 2017).

14. Opinions adopted in 2016 [Мислења усвоени во 2016 година], Official website of the Commission for Protection Against Discrimination, from http://www.kzd.mk/?q=node/116 (retrieved January 22, 2017).

15.European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "ECRI Report on 'The Fromer Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'," *coe.int*, (June 7, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Former_Yugoslav_Republic_Macedonia/MKD-CbC-V-2016-021-ENG.pdf.

against discrimination internally. This conclusion is drawn on the grounds of results from a survey conducted within the frame of this study with public servants, which shows that 44.3% of respondents consider that they do not know what to do in case of discrimination, as opposed to 39.8% who say that they do. They also think that the Ombudsperson and the CPAD have never dealt with a discrimination case from/in relation to the institution where they work. In addition, it also shows that 23.8% of the survey respondents "identified members of the Albanian community as the most subjected to prejudice. Half of the respondents do not express distrust towards any of the communities, while 14.5% of them express distrust towards Macedonians. Meanwhile, 11.2 % of the total number of female respondents does not trust Albanians. When asked how colleagues from different ethnic communities treat each other, 64.8% answered that there is equal treatment and 25.3% reported partially equal treatment. A small number (2%) of respondents believe they are treated unequally."[16] Also according to the respondents, women and persons with disabilities seem to be subject to multiple types of discrimination.[17]

## Education

An unpublished OSCE and CPAD 2016 analysis of stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination in primary school textbooks reached worrying results. The 24 analysed textbooks suggest that beyond doubt it can be concluded that the textbooks impose Christianity as the norm and consider some religions to be "right", "normal" and omnipresent. Islam and other religions are presented through a discourse of Othering.[18] Below are some of the findings noted in this analysis.

The authors of textbooks presuppose that the children are Orthodox Christians and have, thus, phrased the exercises or the homework tasks in relation to this. For example, they ask the children who colours eggs in their home, which songs they sing for *Kolede*,[19] what they do on Christmas which is dubbed "the happiest night", and so on. Authors then ask students whether they know the meaning of a term which is related, for example, to "Muslim", but, conversely, do not ask whether they know a term related to Christianity, for example "Christian".[20]

16.Malinka Ristevska-Jordanova et al, "LIFE AND NUMBERS: Equitable Ethnic Representation and Integration at the Workplace," *European Policy Institute*, (March 2016), retrieved January 22, 2017, from http://epi.org.mk/docs/Life%20and%20numbers_ENG_Final%20version.pdf.

17.Ibid.

18.Biljana Kotevska, "Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination in Education: Focus on Primary Education Textbooks [Стереотипи, предрасуди и дискриминација во образованието: Фокус на учебниците за основно образование]," *OSCE/CPAD*, (unpublished), retrieved January 22, 2017 from https://www.academia.edu/29271744/Stereotypes_Prejudice_and_Discrimination_in_Education_Focus_on_Primary_Education_Textbooks_Стереотипи_предрасуди_и_дискриминација_во_образованието_Фокус_на_учебниците_за_основно_образование_.

19.The evening before Christmas Eve.

20.Biljana Kotevska, "Stereotypes, Prejudice and Discrimination in Education: Focus on Primary Education Textbooks," p.32.

This analysis notes that in a lesson called "Religion and religious institutions in the Republic of Macedonia" from the textbook *Society for V grade*, Christianity and Islam are noted as "dominant religions" in Macedonia. However, the lesson does not ascribe Christianity as faith to ethnic communities in the country, but it does for Islam by explicitly numbering ethnic communities which are predominantly Muslim.[21]

The focus group that Analytica think tank held for the research "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism, View from Civil Society" noted cases of veiled Muslim women who have been "ridiculed and bullied by professors at state universities".[22] However, there was no information of such cases in the media or any such cases reported to institutions or NGOs.

## Politics

The elections which were supposed to take place in April, then in June and finally happened in December left their mark on 2016 though they have not solved the political crisis as no political party gained majority, while the VMRO DMPNE gained the most seats in parliament. The election campaign as mentioned before was marked by tense political debates and Islamophobia was instrumentalised in order to discredit political opponents or for populist purposes.

The opposition party SDSM included several ethnic Albanians on its voting lists in so-called "winning places". They attracted the votes of ethnic Albanians who are not satisfied with the corrupt and clientelistic practices of the existing Albanian ethnic parties. Muhamed Zekiri, a former journalist and member of the executive board of the SDSM, was labelled as an "Islamistic radical" in a news article that reported that the SDSM opened their headquarters in a "mosque" or improvised religious premises in Kriva Palanka, posing the question "whether the executive board [of the SDSM] is secretly advocating for total Islamization of Macedonia, even in places such as Kriva Palanka where over 99% of the population is Christian Orthodox".[23] Another news portal, *Infomax.mk*, labelled another SDSM candidate, namely Ferid Muhic, as a "radical Islamist" and stated that the genocide in Srebrenica was organised by Izetbegovic and Clinton in order to justify the military intervention.[24]

21.Ibid., p.31.

22.Kaltrina Selimi/Filip Stojkovski, "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism, View From Civil Society,"*Analytica*, (2016), retrieved January 11, 2017, from http://www.analyticamk.org/images/Files/extremism-en-updated-FINAL-web_ceb98.pdf.

23.Вечер, "СДСМ отвориле штаб во џамија,"vecer.mk, (October 31, 2016) retrieved January 22, 2017, from http://vecer.mk/makedonija/sdsm-otvorile-shtab-vo-dzhamija.

24.Инфомакс, "РАДИКАЛЕН ИСЛАМИСТ И ПРОПАГАТОР НА ГЕНОЦИД: Ферид Мухиќ најавува исламизација на Европа, и пролевање крв за Република Српска!,"*infomax.mk*, (November 9, 2016), retrieved January 22, 2017, from http://infomax.mk/wp/радикален-исламист-и-пропагатор-на-ге/.

In order to discredit its political opponents, it was speculated that the Albanians who voted for the opposition party were paid by the Albanian diaspora and that these funds were distributed through religious facilities.[25]

Zahir Beqiri (aka Chaush) was accused of forging documents in a highly politicised court case. In the case it was stressed that the accused is a member of the opposition political party SDSM and asked the judge and the public prosecutor to be acquitted as he considered that he was discriminated on religious grounds.[26]

## Media

The Law on Media[27] and the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Services[28] set the professional standards for media and forbid hate speech. However, professional standards and the independence of media in Macedonia remain issues that are relevant for Islamophobia in 2016 as the state of both continue to deteriorate.[29] In such an environment, a critical approach is often lacking and discriminative and Islamophobic speech is seldom sanctioned.

Islamophobic content or discourse that may lead to Islamophobia was found in media in the context of reporting on the election campaigns for the purpose of political discrediting.

Apart from domestic issues, Islamophobia in the media was built mainly through the securitization discourse with reference to global issues such as terrorism and migration, but also regarding the so-called "foreign fighters" and religious conversion. The issue of foreign fighters continued to be present in public discourse in 2016, mostly because of the arrest of four persons accused of participation in a terrorist organisation as part of a case named 'Cell 2', and the statements of the President of Republic of Macedonia Gjorge Ivanov.[30] Regarding the debate on foreign fighters it is important to note that the think tank Analytica has published the policy brief entitled "Assessment of Macedonia's Ef-

25.Република, "Со црни пари платени повеќе од 70.000 албански гласови?,"*republika.mk*, (December 18, 2016),retrieved January 22, 2017, fromhttp://republika.mk/702210.

26.Деспина Тодоровска, "Захир Бекири Чауш: Македонија е ФИРОМ, за мене суд е само шеријатското право," Сител, (May 20, 2016),retrieved January 22, 2017, fromhttp://sitel.com.mk/zahir-bekiri-chaush-makedonija-e-firom-za-mene-sud-e-samo-sherijatskoto-pravo.

27.Закон за медиуми, Службен Весник, N. 184/2013, 13/2014

28.Закон за аудио и аудиовизуелни услуги, Службен Весник, N. 184/2013, 101/2014, 132/2014, 142/2016

29.Бесим Небиу/Насер Селмани/Драган Секуловски, "Показатели за степенот на слобода на медиумите и за безбедноста на новинарите [МАКЕДОНИЈА]," Здружение на новинарите на Македонија *(Association of Journalists of Macedonia)*, (2016), retrieved January 22, 2017, from http://znm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Извештај-Показатели-за-степенот-на-слобода-на-медиумите-и-безбедноста-на-новинарите-МК-декември-2016.pdf.

30.telegraf.mk, "ИВАНОВ: Македонија е под ризик од странски терористички борци,"*telegraf.mk*, (August 2, 2016), retrieved January 11, 2017, from http://www.telegraf.mk/aktuelno/makedonija/ns-newsarticle-ivanov-makedonija-e-pod-rizik-od-stranski-teroristicki-borci.nspx.

forts in Countering Violent Extremism, View from Civil Society"[31] which is an important contribution towards a critical and informed debate on countering violent extremism and foreign fighters by framing the discourse in facts and analysis. However, in another text on the same issue on the portal *Religija.mk*, while trying to follow the same approach it is claimed that "the number of people who are converting to another religion is concerning, who are accepting the Islamic faith and who are the most radical". [32]

The reporting of conversions makes the news in media outlets. The most notable case is that of a young Christian woman who converted to Islam according primarily to her posts on Facebook.[33] The media continued to report on the events that followed such as her marriage and giving birth.[34] Although there were no direct Islamophobic references in the news coverage of this case, the lack of a critical approach and the emphasis given to the issue resulted in Islamophobic messages in the comment sections of the relevant articles.

Reporting on terrorist attacks around the world continues to bring issues of Islamophobia to the forefront and frequently results in Islamophobic comments on Internet portals.[35] The most prominent is the case from 9 December, 2016, when in a very short period the media reported on three terrorist attacks: the assassination of the Russian ambassador in Turkey, the shooting in Zurich and the incident at the Christmas Market in Berlin.[36] However, the first news of the attack on the Islamic Centre in Zurich did not characterise the attack as terrorist and was very careful in drawing any conclusions, sticking instead to the known facts.[37] The attack in Berlin was described as a terrorist attack and the issue of whether the perpetrator was a migrant, a refugee, or an asylum seeker - categories which are often not understood and are used incorrectly - was continuously raised.[38]

In the media, Islam is presented as a threat. The news portal of the daily newspaper *Dnevnik* published an article entitled "Brussels by year 2030 will be a Mus-

31.Selimi/ Stojkovski, "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism, View From Civil Society".

32.Marjan Gurovski, "Верските лидери се клучни за справување со екстремизмот,"*religija.mk*, (November 4, 2016),retrieved January 22, 2017, from http://religija.mk/verskite-lideri-se-kluchni-za-spravuvanje-so-ekstremizmot/.

33.See:http://denesen.mk/web/?p=392028 (retrieved January 22, 2017).

34.Sitel, "Се омажи прилепчанката Катерина што премина во ислам," *sitel.com*,(March 14, 2016), retrieved January 22, 2017, from http://sitel.com.mk/se-omazhi-prilepchankata-katerina-shto-premina-vo-islam.

35.Report on hate speech available from http://govornaomraza.mk/reports/view/529 (retrieved January 22, 2017).

36.Press24, "Црн ден во Европа: За само три часа три терористички напади во три европски метрополи (ВИДЕО),"*press24.mk*, (December 19, 2017),retrieved January 22, 2017, from http://www.press24.mk/crn-den-vo-evropa-za-samo-tri-chasa-tri-teroristichki-napadi-vo-tri-evropski-metropoli-video.

37.See: http://standard.mk/3-lica-se-povredeni-pri-pukanje-islamski-centar-vo-cirih/ (retrieved January 22, 2017).

38.Vest, "ТЕРОРИСТИ ЈА ТРЕСАТ ЕВРОПА," *vest.mk*, (December 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://vest.mk/?ItemID=F0824809F98A674E81DFC8B6FE1DE0A6&arc=1; Nova Makedonija, "Последиците за Европа од нападот во Берлин," novamakedonija.com.mk, (December 22, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetail?title=Последиците-за-Европа--од-нападот-во-Берлин&id=9899a31b-81c8-4171-8f4b-5516b86ebc18.

lim-majority city" with the subheading "Islam is slowly conquering Europe" bringing together the attitudes towards Muslims and terrorism, sharia law and Islamization.[39]

## Internet

Hate speech is on the rise in social networks as well as on Internet news outlets and other web pages.[40] On the web page *govornaomraza.mk,* which is a service for reporting hate speech, there are numerous reports on hate speech and Islamophobic speech in the comment section of social networks and Internet portals.[41]

The Facebook page of Pegida Macedonia as reported by Global Voices and other media and organisations combating hate speech became the first webpage that on 26 January, 2016 was suspended by Facebook; this was also reported in the *Macedonia Islamophobia Report* on 2015.[42] The Facebook page was suspended for hate speech, or violation of Facebook's Community Standards after being reported several times for its Islamophobic content.

However the Facebook page of Pegida Macedonia continued to regularly post messages online; their posts, however, did not received significant support, with an average of 1 to 7 likes for each post. The first post was uploaded on 1 February 2016, so it is yet unclear whether the new Facebook page is still undercover and does not attract public attention in order to be protected from reporting and another suspension.

Pegida Macedonia or the person(s) behind the webpage seem to have connections with other international counterparts and the diaspora. They may have roots in the diaspora (countries with strong(er) anti-Islam movements such as Germany, U.S.) and be trying to promote the same model in the Macedonian context. Pegida Macedonia regularly shares posts from other Pegida organisations/pages, such as Pegida Canada, Pegida USA, Pegida Scotland, Pegida Norway as well as articles that support Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, and Geert Wilders. Besides being Islamophobic, the Facebook page of Pegida Macedonia is also highly nationalistic, Orthodox and openly expresses anti-migrant tendencies.

Another Facebook page that uses Islamophobic discourse is 'Macedonia Supports Donald Trump' created to show support for the candidate of the U.S. presidential elections; the page continued to be active after he was elected president. Islamophobic content was noted in the aftermath of the Berlin attack and on the occasion of reporting the news that allegedly the daughter of an EU official was murdered

39.Дневник, "Брисел до 2030 година ќе биде мнозински муслимански град," dnevnik.mk, (October 28, 2016), retrieved January 9, 2017, from http://dnevnik.mk/default.asp?ItemID=B0B2F2CCFA721D4F9AC71AD46646A0C1.

40.Neda Čalovska/Voislav Stojanovski/Aleksandar Jovanoski, "Shadow Report on Chapter 23," *Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia*, (2016), retrieved January 9, 2017, from http://www.merc.org.mk/Files/Write/Documents/04670/en/Shadow-report-web.pdf.

41.Report on hate speech available from http://govornaomraza.mk/reports/view/637(retrieved January 22, 2017).

42.Adrijana Selmani,"Facebook Finally Suspends 'Pegida Macedonia' Anti-Muslim Page,"*Global Voices*, (January 29, 2016), retrieved December 27, 2016, from https://globalvoices.org/2016/01/29/facebook-finally-suspends-pegida-macedonia-anti-muslim-page/.

and raped by an Afghan migrant. Another post shows what appears to be a Muslim praying on a bus alluding to the fact that this is allegedly happening in the centre of Belgrade and calling out for it not to be allowed in Macedonia.[43]

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Initiatives undertaken to counter discriminatory practices in general, as well as initiatives undertaken to combat discrimination on grounds other than religion (discrimination on the ground of ethnicity or language), or in particular targeting Islam and its followers, can contribute to the reduction of the general level of Islamophobia in Macedonia. For example, activities directed towards combating discrimination or the reduction of the social distance of people belonging to the Albanian or Roma ethnic community are greatly needed.

In the situation where there is a lack of political will for independence of institutions, including judiciary, supervisory and regulatory bodies who should sanction discrimination and hate speech, the role of fact-checking services is particularly important. The fact-checking project *Servis za proverka na fakti* does immensely important work in this regard and in several occasions critically analysed media pieces which were contributing to Islamophobic discourse, as well as other forms of religious intolerance.[44] Support of such initiatives is very important in order to build a critical debate and prevent the further radicalisation of the discourse.

The reporting of Islamophobia remains an issue as there is a relatively small number of reports of discrimination and hate speech on religious ground by Muslims.

On the webpage *religija.mk* there are often articles which introduce basic concepts of Islam and discuss issues related to religion, including interreligious dialogue. The website also presents a series of videos where imams and Orthodox priests dis-

43.Facebook post of *Macedonia supports Donald Trump*, uploaded on November 30, 2016, available from https://www.facebook.com/macedoniatrump/photos/a.1541805599453504.1073741828.1541608059473258/1649206685380061/?type=3&theater(retrieved December 27, 2016).

44.Silvana Žežova, "Двојни аршини: Тарчуловски претставен како херој, Зекири како вахабист!," Сервис за проверка на факти од медиумите *(Servis za proverka na fakti od mediumite)*, (November 17, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://proverkanafakti.mk/dvojni-arshini-tarchulovski-pretstaven-kako-heroj-zekiri-kako-vahabist/; Fatlume Dervishi, "Кога новинарството ја злоупотребува верата во политички контекст," Сервис за проверка на факти од медиумите, (October 27, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://proverkanafakti.mk/koga-novinarstvoto-ja-zloupotrebuva-verata-vo-politichki-kontekst/; Xhenis Sulimani, "Професионализмот се „суши", а воајеризмот „не пие" вода," Сервис за проверка на факти од медиумите, (September 30, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://proverkanafakti.mk/profesionalizmot-se-sushi-a-voajerizmot-ne-pie-voda/; Adrian Kerimi, "Верата е лична работа, а не јавен интерес!," Сервис за проверка на факти од медиумите, (September 28, 2016), retrieved January 27, 2017, from http://proverkanafakti.mk/verata-e-lichna-rabota-a-ne-javen-interes/

http://proverkanafakti.mk/vest-bez-vest/ and Vladimir Mirčeski, "Ретроградно, оцрнувачкоиопасночетиво," Сервис за проверка на факти од медиумите, (December 7, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://proverkanafakti.mk/retrogradno-ocrnuvachko-i-opasno-chetivo/.

cuss radicalization and its relation to religion.[45] They also present the results of research on the perception of religion by Macedonian citizens.[46]

The ZIP Institute is also implementing a project entitled "Imam or priest? Whoever, just in the role of peace!" with the aim of improving interreligious relations and the prevention of escalation of ethnic conflicts. The project includes representatives of the Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community who participate in discussions and training sessions in communities with a mixed religious structure.[47]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The ethnic tensions in Macedonia have the potential to transform into religious tensions and ethno-nationalistic discourse, while discriminative actions against certain ethnic minorities overlap with religious intolerance, including Islamophobia.

The key recommendation for politics is to re-establish rule of law and ensure the functioning and independence of institutions in order to secure that the state does not violate human rights, including the right to equality and freedom of religion; to provide an environment in which there is trust that institutions will act on reported discrimination; and as a positive measure to create an environment in which there is no place for Islamophobia by encouraging public discussions on the relevant issues.

The pacification of the discourse and the rejection of populist politics, through calls for the responsibility of politicians is needed in order to prevent Islamophobia. The securitization discourse should be avoided and not connected with Islam and Muslims. The state authorities should cooperate with the Islamic community/communities and the attempts of deradicalization should be carefully framed in order not to violate religious pluralism and religious freedoms. Informed public debates are needed as well as professional, critical and fact-based journalism.

Particular attention in suppressing Islamophobia should be addressed with Muslim women in mind. In the focus group that Analytica think tank held for the research "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism, View from Civil Society" particular attention was given to the issue of Muslim women, especially veiled women who are more vulnerable to discrimination both in the field of education and employment.[48]

45.See:http://religija.mk/category/na_ista_strana/ (retrieved January 11, 2017).

46.Religija, "ИСТРАЖУВАЊЕ – РЕЛИГИЈА.МК, ИПИС, КАС: Верските лидери малку работат на верска толеранција," *religija.mk*, (December 29, 2016), retrieved January 11, 2017, from http://religija.mk/istrazuvanje-religija-mk-ipis-kas-verskite-lideri-malku-rabotat-na-verska-tolerancija/.

47.ZIP Institute, "Kick-off Press conference of the project 'Imam or priest? Whoever, just in the role of peace!'," (June 27, 2016), retrieved January 11, 2017, from http://zipinstitute.mk/27-06-2016-kick-off-press-conference-of-the-project-imam-or-priest-whoever-just-in-the-role-of-peace-2/.

48.Selimi/Stojkovski, "Assessment of Macedonia's Efforts in Countering Violent Extremism, View from Civil Society".

## Chronology

- **14 January:** Nikola Gruevski resigned as prime minister in accordance with the Prži-no Agreement while he remained president of the ruling party VMRO DPMNE.
- **16 March:** The Constitutional Court quashed the provisions of the Abolition Act that restricted abolition to criminal acts related, among others, to elections.
- **12 April**: President George Ivanov published the decision for the abolition of politicians; this caused mass protests, which lasted until June, and that would later become known as the "Colourful Revolution".
- **6 June:** President Ivanov withdraws the abolition decision.
- **1 July:** An Islamophobic press statement regarding the refugees issued by the World Macedonian Congress.
- **11 December:** Parliamentary elections in Macedonia result in fewer parliamentary places for the ruling party of the last 10 years, which still, however, wins the elections. The overall number of MPs from the Albanian parties decreased, while Albanian MPs were selected from the main opposition party, SDSM.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NETHERLANDS NATIONAL REPORT 2016

INEKE VAN DER VALK

# The Author

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# Executive Summary

This report discusses Islamophobia in the Netherlands in 2016. Discriminatory aggression against Muslims has continued to be a hot topic. Islamophobic incidents occurred in particular at 49 mosques and at reception centres for asylum seekers. Periodical reports that were issued in 2016 by the anti-discrimination provisions show an increase in reports of anti-Muslim discrimination by 45 tot 100%.

The PVV, the parliamentary party that politically organises Islamophobia, has become even more isolated at the level of mainstream Dutch politics after Geert Wilders was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for 'fewer, fewer' Moroccans. For the first time an arson attempt against a mosque was considered a terrorist act. The perpetrators have been condemned to several years of imprisonment. Another important development is the growth of right-wing extremist groups and their campaigns against 'Islamization'.

The police services have continued to move towards a better system of registration of discrimination cases. For the first time the national police together with anti-discrimination institutes published a common report with data on reported experiences of different forms of discrimination.

The government gradually develops more elaborate policies and measures to increase tolerance and counter discrimination based on skin colour, origin and religion. The European ECRI however estimates that more specific policies for different groups and different fields are still lacking and that too much emphasis is placed on local policies instead of a national approach.

More and more stakeholders have joined force to counter Islamophobia. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) counter Islamophobia by creating hotlines and notification sites, campaigning against Islamophobia, carrying out research, and presenting data. Islamophobia is also increasingly becoming a focus of attention in politics and social research.

## Samenvatting

Dit rapport bespreekt de ontwikkelingen in 2016 rond het verschijnsel islamofobie, als vorm van racisme in Nederland. Incidenten vonden met name plaats bij 49 moskeeën en rond de opvang van asielzoekers. Een groot aantal moskeeën ontvingen (vaak dezelfde) dreigbrieven. In Enschede vond in het voorjaar een aanslag met molotovcocktails plaats op een moskee. Voor het eerst werd een dergelijke aanslag aangemerkt als een daad verricht met terroristisch oogmerk en de daders zijn zwaar bestraft. Publicaties die in 2016 verschenen over discriminatie ervaringen in 2015 laten het volgende beeld zien. Het aantal gerapporteerde ervaringen van moslimdiscriminatie steeg. Antidiscriminatiebureaus rapporteerden een stijging van 45%. Bij de politie was sprake van een verdubbeling vergeleken met het aantal meldingen van een jaar daarvoor. Ook bij de meldpunten voor internetdiscriminatie was sprake van een verdubbeling tot 472 meldingen. Extreemrechtse en anti-islam groepen maakten in de afgelopen periode een opmerkelijke groei door. Wilders werd op 9 december veroordeeld wegens groepsbelediging en het aanzetten tot discriminatie vanwege zijn 'minder, minder' uitspraak in de campagne voor de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen. Daarmee heeft de rechtbank een duidelijke grens getrokken tussen de vrijheid van meningsuiting en het recht om te worden gevrijwaard van discriminatie. Steeds meer belanghebbenden zetten zich in om islamofobie als een vorm van racisme in het kader van een bredere antiracismestrijd tegen te gaan. Maatschappelijke organisaties hebben meldpunten in het leven geroepen, voeren campagnes tegen islamofobie, doen onderzoek naar en verschaffen informatie over het verschijnsel. De Nederlandse overheid treedt geleidelijk steeds actiever op tegen van moslimdiscriminatie en discriminatie in het algemeen, hoewel ECRI van mening is dat verdere intensivering en een meer op deelgroepen en deelproblemen gericht landelijk beleid nog teveel ontbreekt.Moslimdiscriminatie is in toenemende mate onderwerp van onderzoek.

# Introduction[1]

The Netherlands has a population of around 17 million, of which 900,000 are Muslims or of Muslim origin. The main groups are immigrants from Morocco and Turkey and their descendants, as well as refugees from the Middle East; 88% of Dutch people with a Turkish background and 93% of Dutch people with a Moroccan background consider themselves Muslims. Concerning the number of Muslims, the Netherlands occupies the sixth place in Western Europe after France, Germany, the UK, Italy and Spain. Dutch Muslims experience a relatively high degree of discrimination. Since the second half of the last century, Muslims have established around 450 mosques and centres of prayer in the Netherlands.

In 2016, many Dutch citizens experienced an increase in social differences such as differences between Muslims and non-Muslims (73%), indigenous Dutch people and immigrants (70%), rich and poor (71%); these citizens [2] these developments are a strong cause of concern in the country. Social differences are not unchangeable, but are historically and socially determined. Sometimes they fade away or alternatively increase in relevance, depending on societal conditions and political developments. An example is the difference between Muslims and non-Muslims that has become increasingly relevant since the beginning of the present century. This is expressed in prejudices but also in less social and political confidence in (the policies of) the government and the EU, especially with regard to diversity issues. A recent survey has shown that one in ten citizens is in favour of the unequal treatment of Muslims;[3] while 73% is of the opinion that Muslims and ethnic minorities in general should adapt to the Dutch way of living (an increase of 6% compared to 2010). It is remarkable that voters of left-wing parties also agree with this statement. Only 55% of Dutch citizens disagree with the statement that all mosques should be closed down, 21% were neutral, and 21% of citizens want them to be closed down. Meanwhile, 48% were in favour of an interdiction on wearing a headscarf in public functions and 85% want a prohibition of face-covering attire in public functions. Social differences may result in wider gaps between groups and people. The Dutch Minister Edith Schippers of the liberal party VVD discussed this in a lecture in the fall of 2016. She argued that polarisation as such is not harmful if people continue to meet and engage in discussion with each other. It may be harmful and lead to parallel, segregated worlds if encounters and discussions are lacking. The paradox of her lecture was that in discussing the present-day problems of diverse societies she spoke about 'cultures'

1.Research for this report was carried out in the context of the project "Monitor Islamophobia".

2.I&O Research, "Politieke peiling I&O Research," *ioresearch.nl*, (September 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from http://www.ioresearch.nl/Portals/0/I%26O%20Research%20politieke%20peiling%20september%202016%20v3.pdf. In reality, social differences in the Netherlands are less prominent compared to those in many other European countries.

3. IPSOS, "NOS Prinsjesdagonderzoek2016," *ipsos-nederland.nl*, (2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from http://www.ipsos-nederland.nl/uploads/documenten/16065690_Ipsos_rap_v.1.0.pdf.

even 'clashing cultures' and 'our culture' that is much better 'than all others I know of.' Without explicitly mentioning it, she obviously juxtaposed Western culture and Islamic culture as if these are homogenous, fixed entities that lack internal variation and dynamic development, and do not mutually influence each other. She thus contributed to the creation of wider gaps herself.

The following report is about Islamophobia and its manifestations in the Netherlands in 2016. Discriminatory aggression and violence against Muslims continued to be a hot topic. Other issues that were at the heart of the public debate on discrimination in 2016 were ethnic profiling by the police, labour market discrimination, the arrival of large numbers of refugees and the racist character of the folkloric figure of Black Pete.[4]

It should be pointed out, however, that data on 2016 from anti-discrimination agencies and official institutions such as the police, the public prosecutor and the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights will not be published until mid-2017 and will thus be reported in the *European Islamophobia Report* of next year.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

The following important developments have stood out in 2016. First, on 9 December, Geert Wilders, founder and only member of populist party PVV, was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for 'fewer Moroccans' in the Netherlands. He was found not guilty of the charge of inciting racial hatred in mid-March 2014 at a meeting concerning the municipal elections in The Hague. A punishment was not imposed because the court considered the conviction of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination as sufficient punishment for a politician and democratically elected lawmaker. Wilders asked his followers if they wanted more or fewer Moroccans in the city. The crowd shouted "fewer, fewer, fewer" and Wilders answered "we shall arrange that". After almost 6,500 official complaints were made to the police, amongst others by local authorities, Wilders was prosecuted. Although Geert Wilders was not specifically accused or convicted of Muslim discrimination, this conviction by the Court of Amsterdam is among the most important developments related to Islamophobia. As a matter of fact Wilders is the main political actor organising and promoting Islamophobia and racial discrimination in the Netherlands and abroad. He has sought to advance a conspirational anti-Muslim agenda for many years. The condemnation is also of major importance because the judges have now set clear limits to the freedom of speech, which he has abused for many times. The court carefully investigated the event that occurred at the election meeting and its

4. Black Pete is imagined to be a Moorish servant of the white bishop Saint Nicolas who gives presents in particular to children in annual festivities in December the 5th. Black Pete is criticized of having a racist appearance.

context and discovered that Wilders had orchestrated it on purpose. Reacting to the verdict, Wilders showed his disrespect for the judges and the constitutional system with its separation of powers. He made it clear that the verdict will not stop him from repeating his words. His lawyer will appeal. The judges in return called Wilders' behaviour unworthy of a politician.

A second major development has been the fact that for the first time an arson attempt against a mosque in Enschede in February was considered a terrorist act. Following the claim of the public prosecutor, the five perpetrators of an arson attack against a mosque were condemned to several years of imprisonment for committing a terrorist act.

Another important development is the growth of right-wing extremist groups and their campaigns against 'Islamization'. Mainstream media programmes have occasionally given the leaders of these movements the opportunity to spread their Islamophobic discourse.

Since 2009, every municipality in the Netherlands has been under obligation to offer its citizens a provision against discrimination. The reports about complaints of discrimination received in 2015 by anti-discrimination providers such as regional offices and the national police services were published in 2016.(see table 1) The anti-discrimination offices received in total 240 reports of discrimination against Muslims. This is 5% of all complaints received and an increase of 45% compared to the number of reports received in the previous year. The offices in Amsterdam and The Hague in particular show a high number of reports compared to other cities and regions.

The National Police Services adopted a new policy formulated in the document titled 'The Strength of Diversity' that contains a programme for diversity policies in the police services and improvement of existing anti-discrimination policies. The four main focuses are a better connection with civil society; an inclusive working culture; better antidiscrimination policies; and a diverse workforce. In addition, by taking a variety of measures and providing for training facilities, police services at the work floor level are subject to awareness-raising projects and urged to improve their approach in cases of discrimination that are reported to their services. The police services have continued to improve the registration system. Moreover, from 2016 onwards, police data are reported in collaboration with antidiscrimination provisions by the organisation Art1.[5] The latest data from this common report show an increase in Muslim discrimination in 2015. Both the reports on Muslim discrimination made by victims to the police and the reports that were received by notification bureaus regarding Internet discrimination doubled compared to the previous year. The police received 206 reports on Muslim discrimination in 2014 and 439 in 2015. This was 9% of all discrimination reports received by the national police services.

5. Saskia van Bon/Ilse Mink, "Discriminatiecijfers in 2015," *politie.nl*, (2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from https://www.politie.nl/binaries/content/assets/politie/nieuws/2016/00-km/np-rapport-discriminatiecijfers-2015.pdf.

There continues to be a huge gap between the discrimination experienced, as it is reported in representative surveys, on the one hand, and on the other, the number of complaints and reports to the police and anti-discrimination agencies.[6] While surveys show high numbers, the number of reports to official institutions is generally low. It is estimated that only one of eight experiences of discrimination (on all grounds) is reported to the police or a notification bureau. Therefore, the National Police Services investigated the reasons Muslims are reluctant to report the discriminatory behaviour that they experience to the police.[7] There appeared to be a close correlation with the reluctance to report felt by other groups whose members are victims of discrimination. The most important reasons for not reporting to the police are that the victims do not expect any results from reporting because discrimination is difficult to prove, police officers discourage them to report, and victims themselves take other initiatives to counter discrimination such as engaging in dialogue. Moreover reporting is time-consuming. In addition, it is often hurtful for victims to be confronted again with these experiences or victims are reluctant because they want to avoid escalation. Sometimes victims do not trust the police. They find the police services lack neutrality or are even discriminatory themselves. Moreover, they do not want to appear vulnerable when confronted by this powerful institution. They fear negative consequences such as losing their job or registration of their private data.

**TABLE 1: MUSLIM DISCRIMINATION IN 2015, REPORTED IN 2016 AND COMPARED WITH THE PREVIOUS YEAR (2014).[942]**

| | 2014 | 2015 |
|---|---|---|
| Police services | 206 | 439 |
| Anti-discrimination bureaus | 165 | 240 |
| Total | 371 | 679 |

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Aggression against mosques

Thirty-five mosques witnessed cases of discriminatory aggression in 2016.[9] Certain acts of aggression that stand out are discussed below.

In February 2016, a large number of Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands received a leaflet with the picture of an eagle on a swastika and the text: 'To all Islamic

6.See e.g. Iris Andriessen/ Henk Fernee/ Karin Wittebrood, *Ervaren discriminatie in Nederland* (Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2014). Available from: https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2014/Ervaren_discriminatie_in_Nederland(retrieved December 18, 2016).

7.Arnoud Ens, *Discriminatie melden bij de politie?* (Den Haag: Nationale Politie, 2016). Available from: http://www.nikthemadag.nl/doc/69/NIK_69-7.pdf (retrieved December 18, 2016).

8. *Van Bon & Mink 2016*

9. Sources on attacks against mosques are from reports to the author by Muslim organisations and press articles. Links to original press reports may be found on the website of Republiek Allochtonie http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/update-van-lijst-met-geweldsincidenten-gericht-tegen-moskeeen See also I. van der Valk, Monitor Moslim Discriminatie, University of Amsterdam, 2017.

houses of prayer, expect an important visitor!! Pigs'. In addition, it is stated that Islam is a false, devilish religion (see picture below).

Figure 1: Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands received a leaflet with the picture of an eagle on a swastika and Islamophobic insults.

28 February, Enschede. An arson attempt takes place in a mosque during the time of prayer. Around thirty people, including women and children were in the mosque at the time of the attack. Worshippers succeeded in extinguishing the fire. Five men were arrested and accused of an attack with a terrorist aim. In November 2016, four of them were convicted in a court of law to four years' detention, one of which conditional. Only one person who spoke in court and showed remorse was sentenced to four years' imprisonment with two conditional years. The press coverage was substantial. It was the first time that this kind of aggression was considered a terrorist act. The actors were in their mid-thirties and one in his mid-twenties. Before committing their crime they exchanged WhatsApp messages with extremist content such as 'All refugees to Auschwitz'. They also campaigned against the reception of asylum seekers and were organised in the Dutch Self Defense Army.

In February, two mosques in Almelo and Drunen received mail with partially burnt pages from the Quran. The increasing number of incidents in big cities, in particular in Rotterdam, has attracted attention, since previous research has shown that fewer incidents occurred in cities than in small municipalities.

**TABLE 2: NATURE OF THE AGGRESSION AGAINST MOSQUES AND RELEVANT MUNICIPALITIES (2016).** [944]

| | Number | Municipalities |
|---|---|---|
| Arson | 3 | Enschede, Alkmaar, Culemborg |
| Graffiti | 7 | Rotterdam (6) Dongen |
| Vandalism | 4 | Gorinchem, Medemblik, Maassluis, Zaandam, Zwijndrecht, Rotterdam |
| Personal threat | - | - |
| Threatening letter or e-message | 23 | Nijmegen, Leiden, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Almelo, Drunen, Zaandam (among others) |
| Various incidents | 8 | Rotterdam, Alblasserdam, Almelo, Arnhem, Doesburg, Maassluis, Groningen, IJmuiden |
| Depositing pigs' heads | 3 | Mijdrecht, Nijkerk, Berkel & Rodenrijs |
| Telephone threat | 1 | Amsterdam |
| **Total** | **49** | |

10.See note 8.

A particular action against a mosque took place in Roosendaal. On 19 September, the mosque received a letter from a lawyer on behalf of 15 members of a special army unit from a nearby barracks urging that the weekly Azaan, the call for prayer from the minaret, should stop. They also complained that their institution might be spied upon from the minaret. The Ministry of Defence had not been informed about the case and a TV programme clearly showed that the claim lacked validity. Four months have passed since the last Azaan was heard, the window from which the barracks can be seen is covered and the minaret itself is not accessible.

On 28 December, the buildings of a former swimming pool in Culemborg were burned down. The local Islamic association had bought the buildings several months earlier with the intention of transforming them into a mosque. The police are still investigating the case and do not exclude arson. During the same night, several cars in the municipality were also set on fire.

## Employment

In spite of a gradual improvement over the years, the position of citizens with a non-Western immigrant background in the labour market is clearly worse than that of their indigenous counterparts. Research has repeatedly shown that members of minority groups permanently lag behind when it comes to entering the employment market and in terms of their employment participation. Unemployment in this group is relatively high, in comparison with indigenous Dutch citizens, especially during the low points of the economic cycle.

Students with a migrant background also have more difficulties in finding internships for vocational training.[11] In particular female students wearing a headscarf are confronted with prejudices and discrimination and often do not succeed in getting an internship, notably in commercial firms with functions that demand frequent contacts with clients.

In 2016, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) issued a research report investigating how women in eight European countries experienced Islamophobia, in particular in the domain of labour, racist discourse and racist violence.[12] In 2016, the city of Utrecht and The Hague started pilot projects with anonymous job applications.

## Politics

In March 2017, general elections will take place. Wilders' programme for these elections is only a page long. Measures against Muslims and immigration continue to be number one in PVV politics. 'De-Islamization' is the objective. The PVV wants to

11.Eva Klooster/ Suzan Kocak/ Mehmet Day, *Mbo en de stagemarkt, wat is de rol van discriminatie*? (Utrecht, VJI&KIS, 2016). Available from https://www.kis.nl/sites/default/files/bestanden/Publicaties/mbo-stagemarkt-rol-van-discriminatie.pdf (retrieved December 18, 2016).

12.For the full European report see: http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/20095_forgottenwomenpublication_v5_1_.pdf (retrieved December 27, 2016).

close the borders to immigrants from Islamic countries. The party wants to withdraw the temporary residence permit of asylum seekers and close reception centres. In addition, the party wants to close down all the mosques and Islamic schools, prohibit the Quran, prohibit women from wearing headscarves in public functions, such as in education, the courts etc and forbid all other Islamic symbols 'that are against the public order'. What these are is not explained in detail.

Various opinion polls since 2013, have pointed to the PVV as the most popular party in the Netherlands, if elections had taken place at that point in time. This did not change after Wilders was sentenced for insulting Muslims and inciting discrimination. The PVV, which got only 10% of the votes in the last general election and has 15 seats in Parliament, is actually in the lead for the general elections in some recent opinion polls.

After the terrorist attack on a Christmas market in December 2016 in Berlin, Geert Wilders retweeted a message with a photo of Angela Merkel with blood on her hands, implying her responsibility for this cruel act because of her policies in favour of the generous reception of refugees.

Not only the PVV but also new political parties of the extreme right such as *Forumvoor Democratie* try to instrumentalise different issues in their Islamophobic and anti-immigrant agenda which subsequently go viral in the online and offline public domain. When supermarkets for various reasons change names of certain products related to traditional Dutch or Christian festivities such as Christmas or Easter these parties and their followers frame them as signs of submission to Islam. This, for example, was the case with Easter eggs that are traditionally hidden in gardens for children to find. A supermarket used the name 'hiding eggs' instead of 'Easter eggs' which was taken as an example of the denial of Dutch Christian traditions. When the public broadcast and Dutch embassies abroad wished 'Happy Holidays' instead of 'Happy Christmas' in December 2016, *Forumvoor Democratie* attacked 'the self-hating elites who collaborate enthusiastically to destroy our culture ... in the name of diversity and inclusivity.'[13] Surprisingly the prime minister joined the complainers - obviously for electoral reasons.

The right-wing Christian party SGP wants to prohibit the Azaan. By allowing the Azaan, so the argument goes, the state contributes to the Islamization of the public space. The public call for prayer will give rise to unease and protests, in particular because of the association with terrorism. The SGP wants the authorities to be reluctant to grant permission for the construction of new mosques and minarets. In its election programme, the SGP emphasises that the authorities should remain vigilant to the differences between religions.

In the parliamentary discussions on the annual budget on 16 September, 2015, Geert Wilders called for resistance against the reception of refugees. From that point

13.Forum Voor Democratie, "Stop de zelfhaat! Behoud het Kerstfeest," *forumvoordemocratie.nl*, (December 16, 2016), retrieved December 29, 2016, from https://forumvoordemocratie.nl/actueel/kerstmis.

onwards, a large number of discriminatory actions against asylum seekers took place, almost on a daily basis. Buildings, in particular reception centres, were painted with racist graffiti or vandalised, reception centres and cars set on fire, local authorities, mayors, councillors and politicians intimidated or threatened and local meetings disturbed by people yelling and shouting. Sometimes violence was used to disturb information meetings.[14] This situation continued in the first months of 2016. For example, on 13 January, two dead pigs were found in Heesch on the site where the building of a reception centre was in preparation and riots took place on 18 January. The local council was attacked, among others with eggs and the like (?). Fireworks were thrown at the police. Several people were arrested in the months after the riots. The municipality received a letter with a bullet on 21 January. Again rioters attacked the local council and threw fireworks, eggs and wooden sticks at the police.

On 21 February, after a Pegida rally against the reception of asylum seekers dead pigs were found in Ede on a site where the building of a reception centre was planned.

On 14 March, the graffiti 'go home' and 'not welcome' was found on a house of Syrian refugees.

On 20 March, a building that was meant to become a reception centre for refugees was set ablaze with an arson attack.

However, in the course of 2016, the situation gradually changed. This was not only due to the fact that fewer refugees came in and plans for various reception centres were cancelled but also that politicians and policymakers seemed to have learned to better manage emotions and protests. Sometimes quite simple changes were made such as setting limits to public meetings that were no longer open to anyone but only to neighbours who were directly involved and local people - not to people from outside the municipality. Policymakers chose a more realistic approach by emphasising that meetings were about informing people and that it was not up to local citizens to decide whether a reception centre should be opened; the meetings were instead promoted as an opportunity to brainstorm together about how the reception should be organised. Sometimes police officers visited rioters and people inciting hatred on the Internet at home to press them to respect democratic limits by their actions. Also in practice the situation and conditions of the reception of refugees turned out to be less threatening than people had initially expected. Local people got to know the refugees and they sometimes became allies. Now and then, there were encouraging initiatives that brought people together and increased social cohesion.[15] Because of the opportunities of direct contact, people are able to evaluate their prejudices in real life situations and they often discover the error of their ways. In the fall of 2016, the central institution for the

14. Information was obtained from the numerous press reports in Dutch media and reports of court cases.

15.See for example, Jenny Velthuys, "Met mij haat het hoed', Asielzoekers in Zaandam," D*e Groene Amsterdammer*, September 19, 2016.

reception of refugees COA had enrolled 60,000 volunteers contributing to the reception of refugees in municipalities all over the country.

Right-wing extremist groups in particular have been very active in protest actions against the reception of refugees. They disturbed many information meetings at different municipalities. Established right-wing extremist groups that participated in the protest movement against the reception of asylum seekers include the NVU (active since the seventies) and Voorpost, alongside recently formed groups such as the Identitarian Movement (2012); Pegida (2015); and *Demonstranten tegen Gemeenten* (DTG) (Picketers Against Municipalities) (fall 2015). They were also joined by new groups that were formed in 2016 such as Dutch Self Defence Army (DSDA) (January 2016) and Soldiers of Odin (winter 2016). Sometimes these groups lead a short existence such as the DTG (Picketers Against Municipalities) which was dissolved in March 2016.[16]

The Dutch Self Defence Army (2016) opposes the 'Islamization of the Netherlands and Europe' and supports Geert Wilders. It wants 'the Netherlands to be given back to the Dutch' and to maintain 'our culture, norms and values'. The struggle against Islam is the first priority for this young extremist group which openly encourages using violence. Of the 22 action targets in the group's programme, 13 pertain to migrants, refugees and Muslims. The group has almost ceased its activities after the condemnation of several members for a terrorist attack against a mosque in Enschede.

*Soldiers of Odin* (2016) was first created in Finland in reaction to the refugee crisis and now has different sections in parts of the Netherlands. Several of its adherents were previously organised in other right-wing extremist groups. The group obtained national coverage in the press when members in the north of the country 'arrested' a refugee and handed him over to the police because of 'misbehaviour against a woman.'

In 2016, Pegida was the most active among these groups. Pegida was formed in Germany in October 2014 and campaigns in weekly rallies against what they call 'the Islamization of the Occident.' A Dutch counterpart was formed a year later. Being against Islamization for Pegida means the closing of Islamic schools, no new mosques, closing of mosques that allow 'hate preachers' to spread their messages, no more immigrants from Islamic countries and a prohibition of ritual slaughtering and religious expressions and symbols in public buildings. In 2016, Pegida organised a number of rallies against the reception of refugees in various municipalities and towns ,such as The Hague and Amsterdam, where people were incited to deposit pigs' hats in front of the mayor's house. On 8 March, on International Women's Day, Pegida distributed flyers with women in high heels trampling on verses of the Quran.

16. The sources for the information on right extremist groups that are discussed in this section include their websites, media reports and the reports by research group Kafka:www.kafka.nl (retrieved January 2, 2017).See also I. van der Valk, Monitor Moslim Discriminatie, University of Amsterdam, 2017; B. Tierolf, M. van Kapel & N. Hermens, *Vijfde rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland,* Utrecht: Verwey Jonker Instituut 2016, p.42-54..

## Justice system

On 29 November, 2016, a majority in the Dutch House of Representatives voted for a law regarding the partial interdiction of face-covering attire. Although the law aims at non-religious face covering as well, it is self-evident that the primary targets are the burqa and niqab. Earlier governmental and parliamentary proposals to ban these Islamic veils were raised in various ways in 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2011/12. The present proposal aims to ban face covering in a limited number of public domains i.e. the care sector, state institutions and public transport. Transgression of the law will be punished with a fine of 400 euros. Only the political parties *Groen Links*, D66 and DENK voted against the law.

On 15 December, 2016, the Dutch House of Representatives discussed a law proposal by the political party VNL (*Voor Nederland*) to eliminate two antidiscrimination articles from the Penal Law in favour of the enlargement of freedom of expression. A large majority was against such changes to the antidiscrimination laws.[17]

## Court cases [18]

### 31 March

The police court condemned a 59-year-old man to 80 hours community service (conditional) because of incitement. After the terrorist attacks in Paris he posted on his Facebook page '20 Muslims in jail for every innocent victim and confront them with MG 42 and 10,000 bullets.'

### 26 May

The National Human Rights Institute judges that the court of Rotterdam has made an unlawful distinction by refusing an applicant because of her headscarf.[19] The court of Rotterdam did not employ the woman because she refused to uncover her head in court. Since the judicial system has convened that no sign of religion whatsoever is allowed in court, which have to remain neutral in this regard the court of Rotterdam was convinced that its refusal was lawful. However, this was not the case in the eyes of the Human Rights Institute which was subsequently overruled by the Council of Jurisdiction that maintained that jurisdiction has to observe absolute neutrality

### 11 February

Eight people who participated in an attack against a reception centre for asylum seekers in Woerden in October 2015 were found guilty of using violence and threats

17.https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/12/15/debat-vrijheid-meningsuiting-5810507-a1536852

18.This overview of cases that were brought to court in 2016 is based on data from the media and the official website www.rechtsspraak.nl. It does not exclude the possibility of more cases having been brought to court which might not have attracted the attention of the media or may not have been interesting enough to be mentioned on the aforementioned website.

19.College voor De Rechten Van De Mens, "Rechtbank Rotterdam discrimineerde een moslima door haar af te wijzen als buitengriffier omdat zij tijdens de zitting haar hoofddoek niet wilde afdoen," *mensenrechten.nl*, (May 26, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, fromhttps://www.mensenrechten.nl/publicaties/oordelen/2016-45.

and sentenced to 120 hours of community work. They also had to pay 2000 euros to the security personnel. Seven people were sentenced to 40 hours of community work. Others were acquitted. The reception centre was attacked with fire bombs and eggs by a group of young men (18-35 years old). Beforehand they had exchanged sent Whatsapp messages such as 'Death to Muslims', and 'We will show our faces so that those typhoid apes know that it is us who destroy them.'

**13 June**

Five men were sentenced for using violence in order to disturb a meeting of the local council in Geldermalsen in December 2015. Three persons (22, 29 and 53 years old) were sentenced to 6 months in jail (two months conditional). One 20-year-old was sentenced to two months in jail (one conditional). In addition, two of them were ordered to pay a police officer 450 euros in compensation for damage. One person (35 years old) was sentenced to 100 hours of community service.

**22 June**

A 62-year-old man from Horst was fined by the police judge for inciting hatred on Facebook. He commented upon an article about arson in a mosque by saying "They should do that here too". Previously the judge had fined him 450 euros but he had refused to pay. Again he repeated before the court that he would be pleased if a mosque was attacked.

**22 July**

The court of North Holland ordered a man to pay a (conditional) fine because of insulting discourse about Muslims on Facebook. "The words of the suspect contribute to creating a climate in which discriminatory and violent behaviour against Muslims may thrive," the judge said.

**12 October**

A spokesperson from Pegida Holland was sentenced by the court of Utrecht to pay a fine of 800 euros (400 conditional). The court sentenced the person for insulting a group and inciting hatred and discrimination against Muslims. The fact that this was done during a public meeting and that she repeated her words afterwards on Facebook contributed to the sentence. The conditionality of 50% of the fine was motivated by the fact that the person continues to speak on this issue in public meetings.

**27 October**

The perpetrators of an arson attack with terrorist motives in Enschede were sentenced to 4 years imprisonment.

**9 December**

Geert Wilders was sentenced for insulting a group and inciting discrimination against Muslims by the court of Amsterdam because of his call for 'fewer, fewer, fewer Moroccans' at a public meeting in The Hague during the local election campaign in 2014.

**9 December**

A 72-year-old woman who tried to pull off the headscarf of a Muslim girl in March 2016 in Zutphen was sentenced by the police court to pay a fine of 500 euros (of which 200 conditional). The woman associated the headscarf with terrorist attacks and DAESH. The judge argued that this act, which was committed only a few days after the terrorist attacks in Brussels, was insulting because most Muslims also condemn terrorism or are indeed among the victims. The perpetrator was ordered to pay the victim 350 euros as compensation for damage done.

## Internet

In the past, politicians used to make a major contribution to the formation of public opinion. In recent years however, this role has been more and more taken over by actors on the Internet via more or less organised expressions and discourses on websites, blogs, forums and, in particular, increasingly via social media. The use of the Internet changes constantly. From an instrument to find information it has evolved to a site for joining like-minded people with all the related echo-chamber effects and consequences. Websites, forums and posters on social media exploit these effects. Nowadays the world is increasingly confronted with the phenomenon of fake news with far-reaching political effects. All these media feature hostile utterances against Muslims on an almost daily basis.

Data about online discrimination is registered by the Internet hotlines MDI and MIND. Their annual reports give an overview of discrimination data on grounds that are subject to criminal law i.e. race, religion, philosophy of life, gender, sexual orientation and disability.[20] In order to better contextualise the new data that was provided in 2016 and that concerned reports made to the agencies in 2015, they are compared to data of the previous year in Tables 3 and 4. Most reports on discrimination in recent years concern social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, more than weblogs, websites and discussion forums. In 2015, discrimination of Muslims became the most important category of complaints, followed by anti-black racism, discrimination of other nationalities ( such as refugees) and anti-Semitism (Table 3). Discrimination of Muslims reported to the MDI and MIND doubled compared to the previous year. The MDI received 330 (33%) reports about anti-Muslim discrimination, whereas 145 reports received by the MIND were about anti-Muslim discrimination. Most of the reports were made in the context of the debates on the reception of refugees and in the context of terrorist attacks carried out in Europe.

20.Stichting Magenta. Afdeling Meldpunt Discriminatie Internet, *Jaarverslag 2014*, (Amsterdam: MDI, 2015).; Stichting Magenta. Afdeling Meldpunt Discriminatie Internet, *Jaarverslag 2015*, (Amsterdam: MDI, 2016).

| TABLE 3: COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY THE MDI.[955] | | |
|---|---|---|
| Category | 2014 | 2015 |
| Anti-Semitism | 328 | 142 |
| Anti-black racism | 255 | 220 |
| Discrimination of Muslims | 219 | 330 |
| Discrimination of Moroccans | 103 | 90 |
| Other descent or nationality | 93 | 198 |

The MDI considers the legality of the expressions and accordingly requests the owner of the website to remove the statement if it is illegal. In most cases the owner is willing to do so and the statement is removed. If not, it is reported to the police. In 2015, 176 of 330 anti-Muslim expressions were punishable by law; likewise 36 of 90 that targeted Moroccans, and 7 of 22 that targeted Turks.

| TABLE 4: DISCRIMINATORY ONLINE EXPRESSIONS.[956] | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2014 Reports | 2014 Punishable | 2015 Reports | 2015 Punishable |
| Against Muslims | 219 | 118 | 330 | 176 |
| Against Moroccans | 103 | 41 | 90 | 36 |
| Against Turks | 41 | 23 | 22 | 7 |

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

CSOs counter Islamophobia by managing hotlines and notification sites where victims can report outside of the official system of antidiscrimination bureaus and the police. Organisations that collect complaints are the Facebook initiative *Meld Islamofobie!*; the Collective against Islamophobia (CTID) based in Amsterdam; SPIOR, a platform organisation of Islamic organisations and mosques in Rotterdam; the Muslim Women organisation Al Nisa; and the Turkish Forum. Other organisations that campaign against Islamophobia are the *Contact Orgaan Moslims en Overheid* (Contact Body Muslims and Government) and EMCEMO.

The Dutch government has increasingly developed policies to counter Islamophobia, in particular, and ethnic discrimination, in general, although more needs to be done. This is also emphasised by the ECRI, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe.[23] The recommendations of the

21. *Source: MDI, Yearly report 2015, issued 2016*

22. *Source: MDI, Yearly report 2015, Amsterdam 2016*

23. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "ECRI Conclusions on the Implementation of the Recommendations in Respect of the Netherlands Subject to interim Follow-Up," *coe.int*, (June 7, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Netherlands/NLD-IFU-IV-2016-024-ENG.pdf.

ECRI have not been adequately taken into account. The commission argues that an effective structural approach to combat racism is still lacking. Indeed policies against discrimination in the labour market have been developed but the same is not true for other social domains. The action programme that is being implemented against discrimination is too general in the eyes of the ECRI and does not make any distinction between different groups and different fields. The government relies too much on local policies while expertise at the local level is lacking. In other words, structural national policies that not only target discrimination in general but also more specific forms as experienced by different groups are lacking.

In 2016, in its annual policy paper on discrimination the government expressed concern about the increase of intolerance and announced concrete policies to counter discrimination in the labour market, in education and in other fields. The 2016 National Action Programme against all forms of discrimination pointed to the following areas of attention: prevention aiming at promoting an inclusive society – with special focus on inclusive public institutions and private businesses - and awareness raising; reinforcement of the infrastructure of the antidiscrimination provisions of effective local policies; and support by research and development.[24] Muslim discrimination is one of the fields of action in the context of the Action Programme. Specific areas of attention pointed out by national authorities in relation to Muslim discrimination are the increase of knowledge and insight, the increase of willingness to report among victims and the reinforcement of local policies and forms of cooperation with CSOs in countering Muslim discrimination. The ministry also initiated research on trigger factors for Muslim discrimination among young people. This research project examines the contextual conditions of prejudices and the influence of important political and media actors in the formation of public opinion. Another research project examines effective interventions and good practices in the field of awareness raising and countering prejudice and discrimination by training, dialogue and debate. In May 2016, the Ministry of Social Affairs launched a campaign against discrimination in the labour market.

Islamophobia in politics is not about the PVV alone. Wilders would not have reached the notoriety, reputation and support he currently enjoys in the Netherlands if the media and mainstream politics had not supported him and paid him so much attention. The PVV/Wilders have obtained more media coverage than any other party. At the same time, democratic political parties gradually but increasingly take a stance against (the racism of) the PVV, against racism in general and Islamophobia in particular trying to isolate Wilders in the political domain. After the murder of Jo

24.Rijksoverheid, " Kamerbrief Nationaal Actieprogramma tegen discriminatie," *rijksoverheid.nl*, (January 22, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2016/01/22/kamerbrief-nationaal-actieprogramma-tegen-discriminatie& "Nationaal Actieprogramma tegen discriminatie",*rijksoverheid.nl*, (January 22, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2016/01/22/nationaal-actieprogramma-tegen-discriminatie.

Cox in June 2016 in the UK, several Dutch political parties appealed to the PVV to moderate anti-refugee speech. Several MPs have raised questions on Muslim discrimination in Parliament. Various political parties have raised the issue of discrimination and how to improve and reinforce the fight against it in their programmes for the upcoming parliamentary elections in spring 2017.[25] The following proposals pertain to forms of discrimination on different grounds including Muslim discrimination. The political parties PvdA (social democrat), D66 (liberal left), *Christen Unie* (Christian) and DENK (a new party formed by MPs with a migrant background) pay explicit attention to anti-Muslim discrimination/Islamophobia. PvdA and DENK want more police forces to combat discrimination. DENK also pleads for special provisions in the field of (forced) education for persons convicted of discrimination. Persons convicted of discrimination should be registered to prevent them from assuming public office jobs and the government must develop an action plan against extreme right violence. PvdA wants to facilitate reporting to the police, by various measures such as by allowing online reporting. Pubs and the like should be punished for discrimination by withdrawal of their licence. PvdA, SP, D66, Groen Links and DENK have raised proposals to combat discrimination in the labour market. Proposals vary from better equipment of the labour inspection services to the introduction of more neutral hiring procedures, 'naming and shaming' and exclusion from public tenders in case of discrimination. The same parties together with the *Christen Unie* want to counter ethnic profiling by the police forces by taking various measures such as diversity policies, training and education and the introduction of special forms to be used by the police forces. DENK wants a special notification provision for ethnic profiling. Finally, the liberal party VVD wants to improve the fight against discrimination by improving law enforcement and initiatives in the field of information and education. A new political party aiming primarily at combating racism was formed in December 2016 under the name "Art1" - Article 1 of the constitution stipulates that all citizens are equal.

A positive trend is observed in relation to information and research about the phenomenon of Islamophobia. First of all, this form of discrimination has become more visible in the reports of various services which have been engaged for many years in reporting on discrimination, such as the police services and antidiscrimination bureaus. In addition, CSOs have installed their own notification provisions which issue periodic reports. The weblog *Republiek Allochtonie*[26] and the website *polderislam.nl* periodically provide various reports, articles and background information. Finally, more focused, in-depth research projects have recently been carried out. In 2016, the following projects provided information on the phenomenon of Islamophobia and Muslim discrimination.

25.For a full overview of the programme's items on discrimination and related domains see: Ewoud Butter, *Verkiezingsprogramma's over immigratie, integratie, discriminatie en tegengaan van radicalisering* (Utrecht, KIS, 2016).

26. Republiek Allochtonie,www.republiekallochtonie.nl,retrieved January 16, 2017.

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) investigated how women experienced Islamophobia, in particular in the domain of labour, racist discourse and racist violence.

At the local level in the city of Rotterdam, SPIOR tries to combat underreporting with the special project '*Islamofobie in Zicht*' (Looking at Islamophobia). A first report on Muslim discrimination in Rotterdam was issued in spring 2016.[27] The *Bureau Discriminatiezaken Zaanstreek Waterland* did the same for this the region Zaanstreek Waterland in North Holland.[28]

As a follow-up to previous research on attacks against mosques, a special edition of the *Monitoring Islamophobia Report* discusses factors of risk and protection against violent aggression against mosques.[29]

Arnoud Ens of the National Police Services investigated factors that make Muslims reluctant to report experiences of discrimination to the police services.[30] Ewoud Butter wrote the fact-checking report *Neemt moslimhaat toe in Nederland?* (Is Muslim hatred increasing in the Netherlands?).[31] Eva Klooster, Suzan Kocak and Mehmet Day researched the problems that students encounter in finding an internship.[32]

Two ongoing research projects that are carried out in the context of the programme Religion and Society of the Dutch Scientific Research Council are of particular relevance in the context of Islamophobia. Yolanda Jansen (University of Amsterdam - UvA) and Thijl Sunier (Free University Amsterdam - VU) manage the project Islam and Jewishness in Public Debates and Modern Political Theories. This project investigates the representation of Muslims and Jews and the role played by arguments from the Enlightenment about the relationship between religion and politics. Annelies Moors, Martijn de Koning and Fouzia Outmany (University of Amsterdam) investigate the role of Muslim activists in the debate about Islam since 1989, paying special attention to gender and social media. The research institute of the Ministry of Security and Justice (WODC) published the results of an investigation pertaining to perceived discrimination, victimhood and discrimination data registered by the police and the public prosecutor and their route through the criminal justice system.[33]

27. Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond, "*Islamofobie in Zicht*," *spior.nl*, (May 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from http://www.spior.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Rapport-Islamofobie-in-Zicht.pdf.

28. Bureau Discriminatiezaken, "Islamofobie in de Zaanstreek en Waterland," bureaudiscriminatiezaken.nl, (February 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from http://bureaudiscriminatiezaken.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/rapportislamofobie2016.pdf.

29.Ineke Van Der Valk, *Incidenten bij moskeeën: risico en bescherming* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2016)

30.Arnoud Ens, *Discriminatie melden bij de politie*?

31.Ewoud Butter, "Factcheck: neemt moslimhaat toe in Nederland?," *republiekallochtonie.nl*, (August 30, 2016), retrieved January 16, 2017, from http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/factcheck-neemt-moslimhaat-toe-in-nederland.

32.Eva Klooster/ Suzan Kocak/ Mehmet Day, *Mbo en de stagemarkt, wat is de rol van discriminatie*?

33.Peter Kruize/ Paul Gruter, '*Discriminatie van aangifte tot vervolging', de gang van discriminatie door de strafrechtketen* (Den Haag: WODC, 2015).

Despite these projects the scholarly attention on Islamophobia in particular is very limited. A general look at the research projects that were initiated by the WODC in relation to radicalisation is enlightening. These projects focused predominantly on Islamist radicalisation while hardly any attention was given to right extremist radicalisation – in which anti-Muslim hatred plays an important role. In 2016, a special issue of the WODC journal *Justitiële Verkenningen* entitled 'Radicalisation and terrorism' almost exclusively discussed jihadist radicalisation, its background and context.[34]Another project investigated potential confrontations and the mutual influence of jihadism and the extreme right in different European countries.[35] Unfortunately the Dutch situation was not discussed. A common project of the VU, UvA and Insitute for Diversity Issues, Forum investigated the resilience of the Dutch population against extremist messages. Once again it was about jihadi extremism only. For research on right-wing extremism we have to go back as far as 2012 when a more general approach was offered by the research report 'System hate among young people'.[36]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report discusses Islamophobia in the Netherlands in 2016. Discriminatory aggression and violence against Muslims has continued to be a hot topic. Other issues that were at the heart of public debate in relation to discrimination in 2016 were ethnic profiling by police forces, labour market discrimination, the arrival of large numbers of refugees and the debate on the racist character of Black Pete. Islamophobic incidents occurred in particular at mosques and at reception centres for asylum seekers. Muslim individuals, in particular women, were targeted.

Alongside the continuity of Islamophobic discourse and practices, some important changes have been taking place in relation to Wilders' PVV, the parliamentary party that politically organises Islamophobia. The PVV has continued its mobilisation outside Parliament for social action against mosques and against reception centres for refugees. The PVV has become even more isolated at the level of mainstream Dutch politics after Wilders was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for 'fewer, fewer' Moroccans. However, various opinion polls continue, as in previous years, to point to the PVV as the most popular party in the Netherlands, if elections were to take place at that point in time.

34.Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC), "JV nr. 6 2016: Empirisch-juridisch onderzoek," *wodc.nl*, (December 12, 2016), from https://www.wodc.nl/publicaties/justitiele-verkenningen/index.aspx.

35.Bert Klandermans/Jacquelienvan Stekelenburg, *Bedreigde identiteiten: de wisselwerking tussen anti-islambewegingen en de radicale islam*(Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2016).

36.Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum (WODC), "Systeemhaat onder jongeren," *wodc.nl*, (2012), retrieved January 16, 2017, from https://www.wodc.nl/onderzoeksdatabase/systeemhaat-onder-jongeren.aspx.

Islamophobia occurs in various fields in the social and political domains. More qualitative research is necessary to shed light on the manifestation of Islamophobia in different social domains, and in the media, in particular.

The police services have continued to move towards a better system of registration of discrimination cases. For the first time antidiscrimination provisions and the police published a common report with data on discrimination.

In spring 2016, the government launched its National Action Programme Against Discrimination with more elaborate policies and measures to increase tolerance and counter discrimination based on skin colour, origin and religion.

More and more stakeholders have joined force to counter Islamophobia. CSOs have taken initiatives to counter Islamophobia by creating hotlines and notification sites, campaigning against Islamophobia, carrying out research, and presenting data. This newly created infrastructure needs to be reinforced to become more sustainable. Islamophobia is also increasingly becoming a focus of attention in politics and in social research.

National and local authorities and civil society need to perceive discriminatory aggression and violence against Muslims for what they are: cases of abuse of the right to freedom of religion and the principles of equality and anti-discrimination.

Authorities need to reinforce adequate responses in the case of discriminatory aggression against the Muslim community by

- supporting initiatives by Muslim communities to create reporting systems in coordination with the existing general notification agencies;
- serious and respectful treatment of people who complain and report discrimination to the police;
- improvement of prosecution procedures and practices;
- improvement of communication with the Muslim community to support them in preventing discriminatory and aggressive acts against them and in developing long- term and preventative policies aimed at education and dialogue.

Political parties should reinforce their initiatives against populist and discriminatory slogans by racist parties such as the PVV and not copy them for fear of losing votes. Relevant authorities should take a stance when hate crime and discrimination are fuelled by propaganda in the media and politics. Politicians need to function as role models and emphasise norms and values related to democratic principles and the rules of the constitutional state.

Islamophobia and right extremist radicalisation should be the focus of attention in radicalisation research.

The Muslim community as a targeted group has an important role to play. Muslim organisations should reinforce their cooperation to better cope with the problems of discrimination and to convince their members that reporting acts of discrimination is necessary to get access to political agendas and to influence anti-discrimination policies. Alliances with other discriminated communities may reinforce the struggle against discrimination and human rights violations.

## Chronology

- **11 February:** Eight people who participated in an attack against a reception centre for asylum seekers in Woerden in October 2015 were sentenced for using violence and threats and sentenced to 120 hours of community work. They were also told to pay 2000 euros to the security personnel. Seven people were sentenced to 40 hours of community work.
- **28 February:** An arson attempt with Molotov cocktails took place in a mosque in Enschede during the time of prayer.
- **February:** A great number of Moroccan mosques in the Netherlands received a similar leaflet with the picture of an eagle on a swastika and Islamophobic messages.
- **February:** Two mosques, in Almelo and Drunen, received mail with pages of the Quran that were partially burned.
- **May:** The Ministry of Social Affairs launched a campaign against discrimination in the labour market.
- **June:** After the murder of MP Jo Cox in the UK, several Dutch political parties called on the PVV to moderate anti-refugee speech.
- **12 October:** A spokesperson from Pegida Holland was sentenced by the court of Utrecht to a fine of 800 euros (of which 400 conditional). The court sentenced the person for insulting a group and inciting to hatred and discrimination of Muslims.
- **27 October:** Four of the perpetrators of an arson attempt with Molotov cocktails in a mosque in Enschede were convicted in court to four years' detention, one of which is conditional. One person was sentenced to four years with two years conditional.
- **29 November:** A majority in the Dutch House of Representatives voted for a law regarding the partial interdiction of face-covering attire.
- **9 December:** Geert Wilders, founder and only member of the Dutch right-wing populist party PVV, was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for 'fewer, fewer' Moroccans in the Netherlands.
- **15 December:** The House of Representatives rejected a proposal of the political party VNL (*Voor Nederland*) to change two anti-discrimination articles in the Penal Law.
- **December:** A new political party aiming primarily at combating racism was formed under the name "Art1" - Article 1 of the constitution stipulates that all citizens are equal.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN POLAND
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

Although the Muslim community in Poland does not exceed 0.1% of the total population, Polish society believes that 7% of the country's population is Muslim - that is well over 2 million citizens. The exaggeration of the size of the Muslim community in Poland in the eyes of its inhabitants is clearly linked to the perception of Islam as a threat. As several comparative studies have shown, Poles, who have very limited contact with Muslims, are one of the European nations that is most afraid of Islam and its followers. If 2015, as the year of parliamentary elections in the midst of the so-called "refugee crisis" marked a significant rise in the public expression of anti-Muslim sentiments, 2016 saw Islamophobic views become even more mainstream not only in politics, but also in media, education and other spheres of life. The report analyses the processes of banalisation of Islamophobia in Poland in 2016 and bringing it into mainstream public discourse, and shows how these processes have also contributed to the rising level of hate crimes and in particular those of anti-Islamic character. The report also highlights the fact that the most significant change in comparison to the situation in 2015 is the attitude of the key ministries responsible for dealing with these kinds of crimes: the ministries now refuse to properly address the issues lurking behind Islamophobia. In spite of numerous calls to the ministries to follow through with their responsibilities by the Ombudsman and various civil society actors the relevant ministers either seemed not to see the problem of the rising number of racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic attacks or downplayed the actual cases of hate crimes by considering them as simple instances of hooliganism. The report begins with the assessment of key developments and Islamophobic incidents in 2016 and then analyses Islamophobia in various spheres of social life. It points out key institutions that used Islamophobic speech last year as well as some counter-Islamophobia initiatives. It ends with concluding remarks and with recommendations for ways that Poland could be less prejudiced and become a more tolerant and inclusive country towards all types of "Others" including "Muslim Others".

## Streszczenie

Choć społeczność muzułmańska w Polsce stanowi nie więcej niż 0,1 procent populacji, to społeczeństwo polskie uważa, że 7 procent, czyli znacznie ponad 2 miliony muzułmanów mieszka w kraju. Przeszacowywanie wielkości społeczności muzułmańskiej przez mieszkańców Polski jest bezpośrednio związane z postrzeganiem islamu jako zagrożenia. Jak pokazało wiele studiów porównawczych, Polacy, którzy mają bardzo ograniczony kontakt z muzułmanami, są jednym z narodów europejskich, który najbardziej obawia się islamu i jego wiernych. Jeśli rok 2015, w którym odbywały się wybory parlamentarne w cieniu kryzysu migracyjnego, cechował się znaczącym nasileniem się publicznej ekspresji poglądów anty-muzułmańskich, to w 2016 można zaobserwować dalszą popularyzację postaw islamofobicznych w polityce, mediach, edukacji i innych sferach życia. Niniejszy raport analizuje procesy popularyzacji i banalizacji islamofobii w Polsce w 2016 i pokazuje jak przyczyniły się one do wzrostu nasilenia przestępstw nienawiści, a w szczególności tych o charakterze anty-muzułmańskim. Zauważa również, że jedną z rzeczy która uległa znaczącej zmianie w porównaniu do sytuacji z 2015, to postawa kluczowych Ministerstw odpowiedzialnych za zwalczanie tego typu przestępstw. Pomimo licznych apeli Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich i rozmaitych aktorów społeczeństwa obywatelskiego Ministrowie odpowiedzialni za takie działania albo wydawali się nie dostrzegać wzrastającej liczby ataków rasistowskich, ksenofobicznych i islamofobicznych albo traktowali je jako przypadki chuliganizmu. Raport rozpoczyna się od omówienia głównych przemian i incydentów islamofobicznych w minionym roku, a następnie analizuje islamofobię w różnych sferach życia społecznego. Wskazuje również na główne instytucje, które używają anty-muzułmańskiej narracji oraz wybrane inicjatywy mające na celu walkę z islamofobią. Kończy się podsumowaniem oraz rekomendacjami wskazującymi w jaki sposób Polska może stać się nie tylko krajem mniej uprzedzonym do „obcych", ale również bardziej tolerancyjnym i inkluzywnym dla różnych grup „innych", w tym „muzułmańskich innych".

# Introduction[1]

While the latest Ipsos Mori poll has shown that all the EU societies analysed in the study overestimate the number of Muslims in their countries[2], it is the Poles who are in Europe the unquestionable champion of such overestimations. If the peoples' perceptions are taken into account there should be in Poland 2,6 million Muslims which would make Polish Muslim population one of the largest in the European Union after French, German and the British one. If the expert's suggestions of the size of the Muslim population are taken into account then the estimation based on perception is 70 times higher than in the reality, and over 500 times higher than in the reality when it is based on the GUS official size[3]. The Ipsos "Perils of Perception" study shows also that Poles believe that their country will experience in the next years a massive conversion to Islam or huge wave of immigration of 600,000 Muslims per year (both equally unlikely) as the size of Muslim population in the country in their eyes is supposed to grow up to 13% of the total population (5 million people) in 2020. If this was to happen the Muslim population in Poland would have overpassed not only that of Italy, Spain and the Netherlands but even the British one which has grown dynamically from 1,6 million in 2001 to 2,8 million in 2011[4]. In terms of the speed of expected growth of the country's Muslim community Poland has been overtaken in the Ipsos study only by Hungary.[5] In contrast to Hungary though, that experienced a particularly large inflow of migrants in 2015 as it stood on the Balkan migration path, Poland has not served even as a transit country in the last years' increased migratory mobility across Europe[6]. Interestingly the Ipsos research shows also that Poles who are so mistaken about the size of the country's Muslim population in many other issues and phenomena researched were quite accurate. The 'Perils of the Perception' study showed actually that that their overall level of accuracy among the 40 analyzed

1. Some data included in this report were collected within a project "Islamophobia in Germany, Poland and Russia, with Particular Attention to Its Christian Dimension" carried out in collaboration with the School of Historical and Contemporary Studies at the Södertörn University (Sweden).

2. For example in Italy 6 times more than the actual size, in France almost 5 times more and Belgium 4 times more. Ipsos Mori, *Perceptions are not reality: what the world gets wrong*, 15.12.2016, https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3817/Perceptions-are-not-reality-what-the-world-gets-wrong.aspx, 17.12.2016.

3. According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) the Muslim population in the country is made up of 5,108 persons, whereas the expert estimations suggest that there are around 35,000 Muslims among circa 38 million inhabitants of the country.

4. MCB, *British Muslims in Numbers*, Muslim Council of Britain, London 2015.

5. Hungarians think that their Muslim population will grow within the next four years to 14% of the population from the current size similar to Polish one that is less than 0,1% of the society. Significantly politicized in the country migration crisis and then the referendum on reception of refugees that Victor Orban lost only because the turnout was lower than the expected 50% of eligible voters, had clearly played a key role in such perceptions.

6. At the same time it is worth recalling that Poland has significantly contributed in the last 2 decades to EU mobility pushing out of the country over 2 million of its own citizens searching for work and better living conditions. GUS, *Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004–2015*, GUS, Warszawa 2016.

countries was quite high and even higher than the one recorded for example in France, Spain, Hungary, Japan and Belgium.[7] The aforementioned exaggeration of the size of Muslim community in Poland is clearly linked with perception of Islam as threat. This report aims at shedding light on how this perception has been produced and re-produced over 2016 and how it influenced various spheres of life.

## Production and Re-Production of the Muslim Other

As several comparative studies have shown Poles are one of the European nations that is most afraid of Islam and its believers[8]. This fear in a way obstructs the inhabitants of the country to see the reality behind their simplified perceptions of the followers of Islam. Muslims are quite widely viewed as the 'other' and a serious threat to 'our way of life' and 'our social and cultural norms and values' as well as if not yet, then 'prospective terrorists'. Thus, apart from socio – cultural fears the figure of a Muslim arouses economic fears (about the distribution of public resources), political fears (resulting from a sense that supranational bodies are eroding national sovereignty) and last but not least security fears (due to concerns about crime and terrorism).[9] The research on the perception of foreigners by Poles carried out in 2016 by Ipsos for the International Organisation for Migration found that there has been a growth of social fears and anxieties related with the prospective inflow of migrants in comparison with the similar poll in 2015. The most afraid were those over 60 years old and those who have never had contact with foreigners. 6 out of 10 said that "foreigners are a threat to the country" whereas 80% believed that "foreigners are a threat to our security" and every third person claimed they "take our jobs". The study has also shown that Arabs, who are most commonly associated in Poland with Muslims, are seen as the most culturally distant group from Poles and the group that is viewed with the least trust. Three fourth of the respondents would not accept an Arab as a member of their family – an attitude very rare when matched with any other analysed national or ethnic group.[10]

7. Ipsos Mori, „Perceptions are not reality: what the world gets wrong", op. cit.

8. A. Zick, *Intolerence, Prejudice and Descrimination: A European Report*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin 2011, http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/do/07908-20110311.pdf; Amnesty International, *Refugees Welcome Index shows government refugee policies out of touch with public opinion*, 19.05.2015, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/refugees-welcome-index-shows-government-refugee-policies-out-of-touch/, 24.05.2016; CBOS, *Postawy wobec islamu i muzułmanów (Attitudes towards Islam and Muslims)*, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warszawa 2015.

9. B. Bachman, *Diminishing Solidarity: Polish Attitudes toward the European Migration and Refugee Crisis*, 15.06.2016, http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/diminishing-solidarity-polish-attitudes-toward-european-migration-and-refugee-crisis, 22.12.2016; M. Buchowski, *Making Anthropology Matter in the Heyday of Islamophobia and the "Refugee Crisis": The Case of Poland.*, „Český lid", 2016, no 103, pp. 67–51.

10. IOM, *Badanie na temat postaw wobec cudzoziemców w Polsce*, International Organisation of Migration, Warszawa 2016.

Other research shows also that such negative attitudes towards Muslims have developed in Poland by and large in the absence of any contact with followers of Islam. Only one or two out of ten Poles has ever had any contact with a Muslim and if they did it was only temporary one (e.g. during holidays to Egypt or Turkey – particularly in the past favourite tourist destinations among Poles).[11] Similar results were also revealed in research carried out last year by the Centre for Research on Prejudice at University of Warsaw and Foundation Common Space. According to it 80% of Poles did not know any Muslim and 73% had negative attitude towards them.[12] However, if Polish citizens remain to have limited contact with Muslim persons in their daily life they have been flooded with a wave of orientalistic and Islamophobic views and images in the larger public sphere. The "Muslim alien" is thus not completely unknown or alien to Poles since the society clearly recognizes Muslim persons as alien without knowing them. Muslims are in a way well known to the wider society since it views them as "aliens"[13].

The exaggeration of the size of the current Muslim community in Poland in the eyes of the Polish citizens and unrealistic predictions of its future growth are clearly linked also with the believe people put in the information disseminated by the mass media and public figures. In 2015 several mass media outlets and key politicians using the images from countries experiencing increasing inflow of migrants and refugees argued that the same faith will be shared by Poland and soon the country will be "flooded" or "invaded" by migrants. The right wing weekly *W Sieci*, for example, put on its cover (first from the left below) the well known scene from the beginning of the Second World War when Nazi Germans were entering Poland but this time with Muslim supposedly "migrants and refugees" in place of Wehrmacht soldiers. The title on the cover stated "They are coming". Another right wing weekly *Do Rzeczy* showed crowds of migrants on the Balkan path (second from the left) and stated "They are invaders not refugees". The cover of the bimonthly Catholic magazine *Polonia Christiana* from November-December 2015 featured a masked person with a bomb and a clock in the hands and the title "Immigrants - Caliphate's Fifth Column" (see the aforementioned covers below).

11. CBOS, *Postawy wobec islamu i muzułmanów (Attitudes towards Islam and Muslims)*..., op. cit.

12. J. Klimowicz, *19-letni uczeń nawoływał do podpalenia meczetu w Kruszynianach*, n.d., http://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/1,35241,18317737,19-letni-uczen-nawolywal-do-podpalenia-meczetu-w-kruszynianach.html, 23.02.2016.

13. The critical view on the contact theory with regards to Islamophobia in Poland is explored in more depth in Narkowicz, K. and Pędziwiatr K. (2017) Aliens in the Urban Space: Residents of Warsaw Towards the Mosque-building Projects. In: Górny, A. et al. Po sąsiedzku z różnorodnością. Warszawa: WUW.

Figure 1: Covers of weeklies *W Sieci* ("They are coming") and *Do Rzeczy* ("They are invaders not refugees") and the bimonthly *Polonia Christiana* ("Immigrants - Caliphate's Fifth Column").

All these covers and many other similar images and statements made by the key politicians in the country resulted in the serious exaggeration of the threat and had also significant impact on the perception of the size of the Muslim community in the country. In line with the Thomas's theorem ("If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences") – Poles defined the supposed inflow of Muslim as real although in reality it was not taking place, and thus produced significant increase of the size of Muslim population that was totally imaginary. The theorem suggests also that it is not only our thoughts that are affected by our perception of the social reality but also our deeds. The interpretation of a situation in the country as the "Muslim invasion" and attack on "our culture or our way of life" quickly caused also certain supposedly "defensive actions" (see below subchapter Verbal and Physical Attacks).

What has significantly changed in comparison to the situation in 2015 is the attitude of the persons in the key position of state authority responsible for dealing with these kinds of crimes to properly address the issues behind them. In spite of numerous calls to do that by various civil society' actors (e.g. Coalition of Equal Chances - *Koalicja Równych Szans*) the relevant Ministers either pretended not to see the problem of rising number of racist, xenophobic and Islamophobic attacks or downplayed the actual cases of hate crimes considering them as only instances of hooliganism. The Minister of Interior Affairs and Administration Mariusz Błaszczak on several occasion said for instance that recurrent xenophobic attacks on foreigners in Poland in 2016 were "not common" but "marginal".[14] At the same time similar kind of attacks on Polish nationals in the United Kingdom resulted in high rank visit to London of the Polish Ministers (including Minister of International Affairs and Minister of Interior Affairs and Administration) and calls on the British government to address the issue of growth of anti-immigrant sentiments of increased xenophobic attacks in the country in the post-Brexit context which the government of Theresa May did acknowledge

14. S. Bujalski, „Polska walczy z obcymi. Rośnie liczba ataków rasistowskich i ksenofobicznych", op. cit.

and address.[15] In one of the interviews after the "emergency visit" to London Minister Błaszczak said that the reason why Britons are attacking Poles is because "due to political correctness they cannot show their frustration with Muslims."[16]

In spite of the calls of the Rectors of Polish Universities[17] to the government to address the issue of increased number of attacks on foreign student and especially those visibility different and visibly/possibly Muslim, the Minister of Science and Higher Education Jarosław Gowin on several occasions refused to take any action. In one of the latest communications on this subject during the Ministry's conference in Wrocław he said that "There is no racism at the Polish universities and no attack has taken place on their premises but in other localities. This kind of attacks are disgraceful but only incidents. Generally, we do not have a problem of racist attacks on foreign students".[18] Earlier in April 2016 the Prime Minister Beata Szydło, clearly sharing the views of Minister Gowin with regards to the level of tolerance of the Polish society towards largely understood others, resolved the Council for Fight with Racism and Xenophobia that was launched in 2011 by then Prime Minister Donald Tusk. At the same time the government cut out from the educational materials about the hate crimes for Police forces the chapter dealing with symbolics and ideas of the Far Right. These actions have been aptly summed up the Polish Ombudsman Adam Bodnar who pointed out that "The politicians who refuse to take actions against racist or xenophobic attacks and pretend that these are only incidents of hooliganism and that the problem does not exist only create a consenting atmosphere for such attacks".[19]

## Significant Incidents and Developments

If 2015, as the year of presidential and parliamentary elections, marked the significant rise in the public expression of anti-Muslim sentiments that in the context of the so-called "refugee crisis" moved from the margins of society and became elements of the political battle, in 2016 Islamophobic views were brought further mainstream not only in politics, but also in media, education and other spheres of life. Islamophobic views did not only pass the "dinner table tests", to use the famous

15. J. Watts, *Theresa May called the Polish PM to express "deep regret" over attacks on EU citizens*, 9.09.2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-has-called-the-polish-prime-minister-to-express-deep-regret-over-post-brexit-attacks-a7235046.html, 26.12.2016.

16. M. Albin, *Mariusz Błaszczak już wie, dlaczego Brytyjczycy biją Polaków. „To wina muzułmańskich imigrantów"*, 2016, http://natemat.pl/190783,blaszczak-wie-dlaczego-brytyjczycy-bija-polakow-to-wina-muzulmanskich-imigrantow, 26.12.2016.

17. Politechnika Warszawska, *Uczelnie przeciw rasizmowi – rektorzy reagują na ksenofobię*, 11.05.2016, https://www.pw.edu.pl/Uczelnia/Aktualnosci/Uczelnie-przeciw-rasizmowi-rektorzy-reaguja-na-ksenofobie, 25.12.2016.

18. Wyborcza.pl, *Jarosław Gowin: Nie ma problemu rasizmu wobec zagranicznych studentów*, 8.12.2016, http://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/1,35771,21089956,jaroslaw-gowin-nie-ma-problemu-rasizmu-wobec-zagranicznych.html, 26.12.2016.

19. S. Bujalski, „Polska walczy z obcymi. Rośnie liczba ataków rasistowskich i ksenofobicznych", op. cit.

expression by Warsi,[20] by becoming self-explanatory in the context of the private sphere, but also became increasingly present and accepted in public debates. The terrorist attacks carried out by the operatives of DAESH in Europe (in particular the attacks in Brussels in March, in Nice in July, and in Berlin in December) strongly reaffirmed the perspective of those who held essentialist views of Muslims and Islam, and served as a powerful weapon to fight against those who think differently. Thus, Islamophobic views became increasingly banalised in the course of 2016 similarly to the ideas and symbols of nationhood in the conception of banal nationalism.[21] If contemporary nationalism is banalised through the everyday representations of the nation which builds a shared sense of national belonging amongst a given group of people, Islamophobia in the same way is banalised in today's Poland: throughout the omnipresent unquestioned representations of Muslims as bloodthirsty, violent, aggressive, undemocratic, etc. which are taken for granted by the majority of society. As a consequence, the unquestioned, essentialist views of Muslims and Islam are being increasingly and widely held across the political spectrum, not only by right-wing elites, intellectuals and voters, but also increasingly by those who traditionally vote for central and left parties.

It is important to understand the anti-Muslim sentiments in Poland in 2016 as a continuation of the processes that started in 2015 when the figure of a Muslim traditionally viewed as the external enemy and usually mentioned in relation to external events such as the killings of Polish soldiers participating in the military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Polish victims of major terrorist attacks (9/11/2002 Bali bombing, 3/11 and 7/7), the controversies surrounding the Danish cartoons of the Prophet, or the Pope's speech in Regensburg, became increasingly viewed as an internal enemy and symbolised by the figure of the immigrant/refugee. As shown above it did not matter that this was mainly an imaginary enemy as there was no substantial inflow of immigrants and refugees to Poland; a significant part of society believed that it actually took place and increasingly started to view Muslim and Islam as an internal problem. This transformation was part of the larger political change in Poland brought by the October 2015 parliamentary elections. These elections, for the first time since 1989, brought a single party to power - the right-wing Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość PIS) - giving it the majority of seats in parliament. The elections also paved the way to parliament for the members of the far-right National Movement

20. David Batty, "Lady Warsi claims Islamophobia is now socially acceptable in Britain," *The Guardian*, (January 20, 2011), retrieved January 18, 2017, from https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/jan/20/lady-warsi-islamophobia-muslims-prejudice.

21. Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

(Ruch Narodowy) as part of the Kukiz'15[22]. Both parties (as well as KORWIN that narrowly missed the 5% threshold) used very strong anti-refugee slogans in their campaigns portraying the so-called "refugee crisis" as a "Muslim invasion" in disguise. This has clearly played a significant role in the change of Polish society's attitudes towards refugees: from cautious openness in May 2015 to a situation, in July 2016, when the majority of Poles believe that Poland should not accept asylum seekers from the MENA region.[23]

Although the government led by Beata Szydło initially claimed that it would honour the promises made by the former government about the acceptance of circa 7,000 refugees in Poland within the European relocation scheme,[24] very quickly it became apparent, first through the statements of the Ministers of European Affairs and of Foreign Affairs and then by Szydło's statements that the new Polish authorities would do everything in order not to fulfil the agreement's obligations. From the first day in office the members of government of Beata Szydło and the Prime Minister herself claimed that the so-called "refugee crisis" has nothing to do with refugees and is only about economic migration. At the same time, paradoxically, the Prime Minister while giving a speech in the European Parliament portrayed the inflow of Ukrainians to Poland not as economic migration (as it is) but as refugee migration.[25] After the terrorist attacks in Brussels in March 2016, Beata Szydło famously announced that Poland would not accept any refugees under the European plan and said that "I see no possibility at this time of immigrants coming to Poland."[26] The migration data from the end of 2016 show that the Prime Minister has managed to keep her promise as not a single refugee arrived to Poland within the relocation scheme and very few of those who applied for international protection were granted it: in the first half of 2016, out of almost 7,000 people who applied for asylum only 121 were granted such status and from this limited group 37 persons were Russians (usually Chechens), 25 Syrians, 18 Iraqis and 10 Ukrainians.[27] In contrast to Victor Orban who tried to oppose the relocation scheme by organising a nationwide refer-

22. The electoral block and parliamentary club led by punk musician Paweł Kukiz that achieved very good results (21% of votes) in the first round of the presidential elections in May 2015. The block,which is not formally registered as a political party as one of its key postulates is to "destroy particracy", is made up of right-wing and far-right elements.

23. CBOS, *Stosunek Polaków do przyjmowania uchodźców*, (Warsaw: CBOS, 2016).

24.Konrad Pędziwiatr/Agnieszka Legut, "Polish Governments on the European Strategy of Dealing with Migration Crisis (Polskie rządy wobec unijnej strategii na rzecz przeciwdziałania kryzysowi migracyjnemu)," Konstanty A. Wojtaszczyk/Jolanta Szymańska (eds.), *Refugees in Europe (Uchodźcy w Europie - uwarunkowania, istota, następstwa)* (Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 2016).

25. Gazeta Prawna, "Szydło w PE o milionie ukraińskich uchodźców w Polsce. "W 2015 r. było ich dwóch"," *gazetaprawna.pl*, (January 20, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.gazetaprawna.pl/artykuly/918747,szydlo-milion-ukrainskich-uchodzcow-w-polsce.html, 27.12.2016.

26. Jan Cienski, "Poland slams door on refugees," *politico.eu*, (March 23, 2016), retrieved December 27, 2016, from http://www.politico.eu/article/poland-slams-door-on-refugees-beata-szydlo.

27. Daniel Flis, "Komisja Europejska: tylko Polska i Węgry nie przyjmują uchodźców," *oko.press*, (December 11, 2016), retrieved December 27, 2016, from https://oko.press/komisja-europejska-polska-wegry-przyjmuja-uchodzcow.

endum on the issue, the Polish government used a strategy of ignoring the scheme provisions. This is one of the reasons the Law and Justice Party did not endorse the campaign initiated by Kukiz15 and led by its far-right elements to organise a referendum on the acceptance of refugees. After 10 months of collecting signatures for the petition to organise such a referendum, its organisers were still missing circa 200,000 signatures.[28] The initiative, which to this day has been unsuccessful, provided the far right and many other right-wing actors the opportunity to constantly mobilise people against refugees who were portrayed as "Muslim terrorists" or soon-to-become "Muslim terrorists". As Bachman aptly notices the Poles' willingness to utilize EU free movement provisions to their advantage through labour migration, and their unwillingness to share the burden of refugees arriving in Europe has led other EU countries to accuse Poland of hypocrisy.[29]

The Polish authorities seemed not to pay much attention to the voices of criticism from the European capitals focusing more on the social mood in the country. Several studies carried out in the last years showed that Poles are very sceptical about accepting refugees. The study by Amnesty International, for example, showed that only 56% of respondents in Poland said that they would accept people fleeing war or persecutions in their country. Out of 27 countries in which the study was conducted more negative attitudes towards refugees than in Poland were present only in Russia. Thus, according to Amnesty International, Poland has one of the lowest scores on the refugee welcome index.[30] Furthermore, the research carried out by the University of Warsaw showed that the majority of Poles (between 55 and 76%), both men and women, supported the use of physical and psychological violence while dealing with refugees, including forced deportation of persons illegally crossing the state borders, control and monitoring of refugees, and use of force.[31] The findings of the quantitative projects are confirmed by the qualitative research. In an interview with the author, Grzegorz Lindenberg, one of the leaders of the association Europe of the Future that plays a key role in the country's network of promoting the stereotypical vision of Muslims and Islam, proudly pointed out that "What we have been saying about Muslims and Islam

28. Rafał Zychal, "W Polsce nie będzie referendum w sprawie uchodźców," *wiadomosci.onet.pl*, (October 20, 2016) retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://wiadomosci.onet.pl/tylko-w-onecie/w-polsce-nie-bedzie-referendum-w-sprawie-uchodzcow/8n85j4.

29. Bart Bachman, " Diminishing Solidarity: Polish Attitudes toward the European Migration and Refugee Crisis," *migrationpolicy.org*, (June 16, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/diminishing-solidarity-polish-attitudes-toward-european-migration-and-refugee-crisis.

30. Amnesty International, "Refugees Welcome Index shows government refugee policies out of touch with public opinion," *amnesty.org*, (May 19, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2016, from https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/05/refugees-welcome-index-shows-government-refugee-policies-out-of-touch.

31. Aleksandra Świderska/Mikołaj Winiewski/Karolina Hansen, "Przemoc jako rozwiązanie? Napływ uchodźców w opiniach Polaków," *Centrum Badań na Uprzedzeniami*, (2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://cbu.psychologia.pl/uploads/images/foto/Raport_WinSwiHan2016_clean.pdf.

for a long time became part of the mainstream. Our views are the views of the majority of people in Poland and the majority of politicians".[32]

The banalisation and mainstream position of Islamophobic views has been significantly enhanced in 2016 by the post-election transformations in the state-owned Polish Television (Telewizja Polska - TVP) and Polish Radio (Polish Radio - PR). With the new leadership of TVP and PR, placed there by the victorious right-wing Law and Justice Party and its parliamentary supporters, particularly the information programmes of TVP (and to a smaller degree of PR) started to undergo a deep transformation opening the television and radio studios not only to a whole range of new right-wing journalists and commentators but also to far-right and openly Islamophobic individuals. Thus, Miriam Shaded and other so-called "critics of Islam" started to be presented as "experts" on Islam and Muslim populations in Europe and elsewhere, and became increasingly frequent guests on various information programmes and debates.

Figure 2: Graffiti by the football fans of Wisła Kraków in one of the districts of Kraków stating "Every arab[33] (sic) should remember that for us Poland is sacred". (Photo by Konrad Pędziwiatr)

One of the important developments that have had a significant influence on the country's key narratives on Islam and Muslims in 2016 was the intensification of the process of sacralisation of the nation.[34] As Michał Buchowski rightly notes in Poland, where one may observe crosses present in almost every school and in many other public spaces, where there are religious classes in public schools, numerous religious monuments, national heroes presented as martyrs, religiously motivated restrictive abortion laws, etc., there is a strong intertwining of Catholicism and nationalism; in other words, Poland is constructed as a hybrid of the sacred and the profane.[35] In a new political context (locally and globally) a profane nation is converted into a holy body of a nation that is endangered not only by cultural Others, but - above all - by religious Others. In this scheme, Islam is presented as the most important enemy and

32. Interview with Grzegorz Lindenberg, member of the Board of Management of the Europe of the Future Association and the portal *Euroislam.pl i*n Warsaw (September 20, 2016).

33. In the Polish language, similarly to English, the word "Arab" designating the people originating from the Middle East and North Africa should be written with a capital letter. The mistake seems deliberate to linguistically diminish this specific group of people.

34. It is important to stress that this process has a very long history; see for example: Maria Janion, *Niesamowita Słowiańszczyzna*, (Krakow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006). And: Michał Łuczewski, *Odwieczny naród. Polak i katolik w Żmiącej*, (Toruń: Fundacja na rzecz Nauki Polskiej, 2012).

35. Michał Buchowski, "Making Anthropology Matter in the Heyday of Islamophobia and the 'Refugee Crisis': The Case of Poland," Český lid, 103 (2016), p. 51-67.

key threat to the nation. In the most extreme version, this threat (as imminent) was presented in 2016 by a young charismatic Catholic priest, Jacek Międlar, who was suspended by his religious order (Zgromadzenie Księży Misjonarzy) for spreading openly anti-Semitic and Islamophobic views and later announced his intentions of leaving it. He became a symbol of the marriage of certain segments of Polish Catholicism with the far-right movements (Wszechpolacy and ONR), especially after leading a Holy Mass and delivering a sermon in support of the far-right organisation ONR in Białystok Cathedral. This process of intensified sacralisation of the nation that is seen as threatened by cultural and religious aliens is well captured in football fans' graffiti on a street in Kraków with a crossed-out sign of a mosque and of DAESH and the statement "Every arab (sic) should remember that for us (KP – fans of Wisła Kraków) Poland is sacred". (Figure 1)

The increase in anti-Muslim prejudice in the public sphere in 2016 began straight after New Year's Eve as the information about the attacks by groups of men (many of North African descent) on women in German cities, in particular Cologne, started to emerge in the media. The complaints of theft, sexual harassment and other abuse fed into an already growing backlash against European policies welcoming migrants and refugees, particularly an influx from war-torn Syria. In spite of the fact that according to police reports there were almost no refugees amongst the attackers,[36] many newspapers, especially right-wing ones, in Poland depicted the incidents as directly linked with the influx of refugees to Germany in 2015. The newspapers that earlier described the so-called "refugee crisis" in terms of a "Muslim invasion" now found proof that the only reason the migrants came to Europe was to "rape our women" and "steal our money". The most provocative in the Islamophobic framing of the New Year's Eve attacks was the conservative weekly magazine *W Sieci* (The Network) whose February cover with the title "The Islamic Rape of Europe" and a blonde woman draped in a European Union flag being groped by three men (six dark-skinned arms and hands) sparked international outrage. (Figure 2) As the *Washington Post* aptly pointed out "The message of the cover is so clear that it barely needs the brutal cover line" and that the cover fits into a long history of racism.[37] The magazine blurb promised "a report about what the media and Brussels elite are hiding from the citizens of the European Union". In its editorial Aleksandra Rybińska wrote that "The people of Old Europe after the events of New Year's Eve in Cologne painfully realised the problems arising from the massive influx of immigrants." She

36. Kirsty Major, "Polish magazine causes outrage with cover showing white woman being sexually attacked by 'migrants'," *The Independent*, (February 17, 2016), retrieved December 31, 2016, from /www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/polish-magazine-causes-outrage-with-cover-showing-white-woman-being-sexually-attacked-by-migrants-a6879551.html.

37. Ishaan Tharoor, "The so-called "Islamic rape of Europe" is part of a long and racist history," *Washington Post*, (February 16, 2016), retrieved December 31, 2016, from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/02/18/the-so-called-islamic-rape-of-europe-is-part-of-a-long-and-racist-history.

went on to say, "The first signs that things were going wrong, however, were there a lot earlier. They were still ignored or were minimised in significance in the name of tolerance and political correctness." The February edition of the magazine also carried articles headlined "Does Europe Want to Commit Suicide?" and "The Hell of Europe" dealing with the issues of the so-called "refugee crisis" and its consequences.[38]

This type of narrative was strengthened by more nuanced articles by central and left-wing mass media outlets, which however maintained the same "clash of civilization" and anti-Muslim logic. Importantly they were also strengthened by the statements of the country's key politicians. The Minister of Foreign Affairs Witold Waszczykowski wrote a letter to his German counterpart demanding information whether there were Polish women among the victims of the attacks. Earlier in a TV interview commenting on the New Year's Eve attacks he argued that the so-called "refugee crisis" has been used by the DAESH and other terrorist organisations "to fight with our civilisation on our land".[39]

Figure 3: February 2016 cover of the magazine *W Sieci* - "The Islamic Rape of Europe".

# Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

Due to the small size of the Muslim community in Poland, its high dispersion across the country and the lack of well-developed channels of registering Islamophobic incidents in the labour market it is difficult to assess the level of discriminatory practices towards Muslims in this sphere of social life. Numerous research into the discrimination against foreigners in Poland shows, however, that exclusionary practices towards people considered as 'Others' do occur in the labour market as well and might be quite frequent depending on the social status/class of the persons concerned and the sector of the economy.[40]

38. W Sieci, no. 7, 15-21 Feb, 2016.

39. Wyborcza.pl, "*Waszczykowski pisze do szefa MSZ Niemiec w sprawie ataków na kobiety w Kolonii: Szanowny panie ministrze, drogi kolego...*," *wyborcza.pl*, (January 7, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,19440631,waszczykowski-pisze-do-szefa-msz-niemiec-w-sprawie-atakow-na.html.

40. Witold Klaus (ed.), *Sąsiedzi czy intruzi? O dyskryminacja cudzoziemców w Polsce*, (Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej i Instytut Spraw Publicznych, n.d.); Jan Brzozowski/K. Pędziwiatr, "Analiza procesu integracji imigrantów w Małopolsce," *Imigranci w Małopolsce: między integracją, asymilacją, separacją i marglinalizacją* (Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum w Krakowie, 2014), p. 117-290.

## Education

According to Article 53, Section 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997, the religion of every officially recognised religious community may be taught in schools on the condition that the freedom of conscience and religion of other persons is not violated. Thus, Muslim religious instruction may be taught in Polish schools both by the Muslim Religious Union and by other Muslim religious organisations listed in the registry of churches and religious communities. Article 12 of the 1991 Act contains a regulation that public kindergartens, primary and junior high schools provide religious instruction upon the parents' or students' request. According to Article 13 of the Education System Act, schools and public institutions are obliged to enable students to cultivate their religious identity through studying their own history and culture. A public educational institution is obliged to provide religious education if it is requested by at least seven pupils or students in a class or unit. In the case of a smaller number of students, religious instruction is provided in joint-class or joint-unit groups. According to the study carried out by Nalborczyk and Pędziwiatr there are currently 350 children attending religious education classes organised usually outside of the school premises.[41] Some Muslim teachers complained about the difficulties they have experienced in communicating with the Local Educational Authorities. For example, the Muslim Centre in Poznań used to have problems with some schools from outside of Poznań that did not want to recognise the grades given by the Muslim League teachers.[42] In another publicised case, the authorities in Częstochowa not only did not want to organise Islam classes for Muslim teachers from the town but some local councillors, acting against the law, tried to prevent the transfer of funds from the city to Katowice for the provision of religious education for inhabitants of Czestochowa.[43] Many teachers of Islam have complained about the growing hostile atmosphere, and the xenophobia and Islamophobia fuelled inter alia by the so-called "refugee crisis" and the terrorist attacks carried out in the name of Allah.[44] In these new circumstances, they have had to devote extra time during their classes to explain current affairs.

The larger educational sphere is to a certain degree a reflection of wider society and as a result, the rise of xenophobic and racist sentiments in wider society is also clearly detectable in the educational sphere. The latest report by the Anti-discrimination Education Association points out to numerous cases of xenophobic and

41. Agata Nalborczyk/Konrad Pędziwiatr, "Between Old Traditions and New Diversities: Islamic Religious Education in Poland," Jenny Berglund (ed.) *European Perspectives on Islamic Education and Public Schooling* (London: Equinox Publication, 2017).

42. Interview with Youssef Chadid in Poznań (March 9, 2016).

43. Interview with Abdelwahab Bouali in Katowice (March 10, 2016).

44. Interviews with Ali Abi Issa in Wrocław (February 29, 2016), Youssef Chadid (March 9, 2016), and Paweł Dudek in Lublin (March 10, 2016)

Islamophobic incidents in primary and secondary education. In one case a teacher in a Warsaw school asked pupils who want to get the best mark (6) to write eight reasons why "Islam is bad".[45] Press articles[46] and radio programmes[47] point to the growing need expressed by teachers to deal with the issue of hate speech in the school environment, an issue that has been generated inter alia by the discourse about the so-called "refugee crisis".

It is also worth noting how in 2016 self-styled "experts on Islam and Muslim population in Europe" have been invited to higher educational institutions to promote Islamophobic views to wider audiences. In one case, the Department of Political and Legal Doctrines of the University of Wrocław invited Dr. Piotr Ślusarczyk, who holds a PhD in Polish language studies, from the anti-Muslim web portal *Euroislam.pl* and the Europe of the Future Association, to lecture on "the socio-cultural consequences of political Islam in Europe".[48] In another case, Miriam Shaded was invited by the Department of Civil and Economic Law of the Cracow University of Economics to a conference on "Islam in the International and National Legal Space" to speak about "Ritual Female Circumcision in Islam". The two-day conference on Islam and Islamic law did not have a single Muslim or Arabic-peaking Shariah expert among the panellists who could challenge some of the Orientalistic and Islamophobic views expressed during the proceedings.[49]

## Politics

As mentioned above the sphere of politics provided an important arena for promoting anti-Muslim prejudice and fear in 2016. With five members of the far right in Parliament (entered as part of Kukiz15) and the ruling Law and Justice flirting with the far right and trying to seek their support locally[50] the xenophobic and Islamophobic narratives became very popular. The terrorist attack in Brussels in March, in Nice in July and in Berlin in December provided politicians with additional arguments in political battles in which they happily used if not openly anti-Muslim,

45. Magdalena Chustecka/Elżbiety Kielak/Marty Rawłuszko, *Edukacja antydyskryminacyjna - ostatni dzwonek!* (Warsaw: Towarzystwo Edukacji Antydyskryminacyjnej, 2016).

46. For example: Wojciech Karpieszuk, "Temat uchodźców w warszawskich szkołach. Narasta mowa nienawiści," *wyborcza.pl*, (April 27, 2016), retrieved January 3, 2017, from http://wyborcza.pl/1,75248,19982594,szkoly-w-warszawie-temat-lekcji-uchodzcy-czyli-ksenofobia.html.

47. Anna Ryczkowska, "Ksenofobia w polskich szkołach. Uchodźca oczami dzieci: brudas, wróg, terrorysta [POSŁUCHAJ]," *rdc.pl*, (December 27, 2016), retrieved January 4, 2017, from http://www.rdc.pl/informacje/ksenofobia-w-polskich-szkolach-uchodzca-oczami-dzieci-brudas-wrog-terrorysta-posluchaj/.

48. More details about the programme within which the lecture of Dr. Ślusarczyk was organised are available here: http://uni.wroc.pl/wiadomo%C5%9Bci/administracji-i-ekonomii-uwr/wyk%C5%82ady-w-pracowni-bada%C5%84-praw-orientalnych (retrieved January 3, 2017).

49. The programme of the conference is available here: http://janek.uek.krakow.pl/~mailing/Program_konferencji_17_11_2016.pdf, (retrieved December 28, 2016).

50. Kampania Zero Tolerancji, "Zero Tolerancji - dla współpracy państwa ze skrajną prawicą," *zero-tolerancji.pl*, (2016), retrieved January 3, 2017, from http://zero-tolerancji.pl/; Łukasz Woźnicki, "ONR - tajny współpracownik PiS," *wyborcza.pl*, (November 7, 2016), retrieved January 3, 2017, from http://wyborcza.pl/7,75248,20940251,onr-tajny-wspolpracownik-pis.html.

then Orientalistic figures to further their point that Islam and Muslims are totally alien to "our way of life". One of the major ways of hiding openly anti-Muslim sentiments was to talk critically about the so-called "refugee crisis" and refugees and link either of the two with terrorism. When, for example, over the summer an increasing number of Chechens emerged at the Polish-Byelorussian border and were trying to file applications for refugee status, they were denied entry. Polish Minister of Interior Affairs Mariusz Błaszczak commenting on this said that "We will not succumb to the pressure of those who want to start a migration crisis. Our politics is totally different (…) This is an attempt to create a new migration route, and an inflow of Muslims into Europe".[51] As these examples show Polish politicians including ministers used all the opportunities to show their true desires and opinions, and all their powers "to protect' Poland from Muslims and "Islamization" even in the form of Chechens who for decades have been able to file applications for asylum.

## Media

In 2016, as in the year before, the mass media and the Internet played a crucial role in promoting essentialist images and narratives of Islam and Muslims. As discussed in the Introduction, Polish Islamophobia has a very strong media and cyberspace dimension, and hence the social fear of Islam and Muslims can be viewed as largely a media-made and cyberspace-amplified fear. This is linked to the fact that it is the media and the Internet where Poles mainly draw information about Islam and its followers. As mentioned earlier the state-owned media has undergone significant transformations after the election as a result of the fact that individuals who have expressed "politically incorrect" opinions on refugees, Muslims and Islam were given additional airtime to convey their message, which frequently bordered on hate speech. Thus, openly Islamophobic Miriam Shaded started to be invited to comment on ongoing events on TVP programmes and to take part in TV debates.[52] She has also been invited to other mainstream TV channels such as Polsat.[53] TV Republica, which has been functioning since 2012, is one of the TV channels where one may find the most essentialist description of Islam and Muslims. Miriam Shaded is frequentily present on its programmes,[54] as well as far-right activists such as Justyna Helcyk from ONR.[55]

51. Mariusz Błaszczak quoted in: Elena Kachanovich-Shlyk, "Slightly open borders of Poland," *politicalcritique.org*, (November 2, 2016), retrieved January 19, 2017, from http://politicalcritique.org/cee/poland/2016/slightly-open-borders-of-poland/.

52. For example, the discussion on *TVP* Debate on 23.02.2016. Programme available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bi13rr4u9EE (retrieved December 28, 2016).

53. For instance *Polsat* magazine "Yes or No" aired on 08.02.2016. Programme available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RIWEoxF-cpA (retrieved December 28, 2016).

54. For example, the programme *Clash of civilisations* aired on 14.09.2016. Available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLICtAQE00g (retrieved December 28, 2016).

55. For instance, the programme *Republika* aired live on 02.08.2016. Available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odnGad2bqOg (retrieved December 29, 2016).

## Justice System

In the eyes of the law, Muslims in Poland have the same religious freedoms and rights as citizens of other faiths. The Polish Constitution of 1997 in Article 53 guarantees freedom of conscience and religion to every citizen. Although a substantial part of the law that regulates the relations between the state and the Muslim community comes from before the Second World War and is not very well suited to the new social realities of the country's Muslim community, it is not discriminatory towards Muslims as such but rather privileges some groups of Muslims (in particular Tatars) over other groups such as immigrants or converts. It seems that the legal status of Islam as a state-recognised faith in Poland is unquestioned, in spite of the repeated calls for delegitimisation of Islam in the country. In 2015, this idea was particularly strongly promoted by Miriam Shaded, the chairwoman of the Polish Estera Foundation promoting the reception only of Christian refugees, who wanted to ban Islam in Poland.[56] In 2016, this idea was picked up again after the Berlin attack by a volleyball player and a former member of the national team, Marcin Prus who wants Poland to follow the Slovak example in the legal treatment of Islam and raise the threshold of recognition of a religious organisation to 50,000 followers so as Muslims would not able to attain it.[57]

In 2016, the Prosecutor's Office decided to discontinue its investigation into the case of Miriam Shaded accused by the Mufti of Poland Tomasz Miśkiewicz and the Muslim Religious Union in 2015 of insulting the religious community and promoting hatred among faith communities. In 2015 and 2016, Miriam Shaded repeatedly talked about the "Quran as a source of evil", "Muhammad as a criminalist and paedophile" and "Tatars as a sect". She also called for making Islam illegal in the country and expelling all Muslims from Poland. The prosecutor found the opinions about Islam and Muslims expressed by Miriam Shaded as "fitting within the borders of acceptable critique" and expressions of freedom of speech. According to the Regional Prosecutor's Office in Białystok the social interest in this case did not require the continuation of the investigation ex officio.[58] Following the announcement of the legal authorities, not only the Tatars associated with the Muslim Religious Union but also many other Muslims in the country felt that they are not being treated equally by the judiciary.

## Internet

Polish Islamophobia has also an important cyberspace dimension. Individuals and groups promoting stereotypical visions of Islam and its followers have been greatly

56. Konrad Pędziwiatr, Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2015, Enes Bayrakli/Farid Hafez (eds.9 *European Islamophobia Report 2015* (Istanbu: SETA, 2016).

57. eOstrołęka, "Delegalizacja islamu w Polsce? "Do roboty parlamentarzyści"," *eostroleka.pl*, (December 22, 2016), last retrieved December 25, 2016, from http://www.eostroleka.pl/m/index.php?artykul=57397.

58. Dorota Mariańska, "Sprawa obrazy uczuć religijnych muzułmanów. Prokuratura umorzyła dochodzenie," *bialystokonline.pl*, (December 15, 2016), retrieved December 17, 2016, from http://www.bialystokonline.pl/sprawa-obrazy-uczuc-religijnych-muzulmanow-prokuratura-umorzyla-dochodzenie,artykul,95905,14,1.html.

empowered by the Internet which in a society where over 70% of people have online access constitutes a powerful tool for the amplification of their voices, mobilisation and recruitment. Thanks to the Internet, anti-Muslim individuals and groups are able to amplify the dominant frameworks through which Islam and Muslims are being reported as extremists, terrorists, violent, radicals, oppressed, threatening, jihadists, criminals, fanatics, sexists - to mention only the most frequent characterizations. Some of the websites that concentrate on spreading this type of information on Islam and Muslims include *Euroislam.pl*, *Fronda.pl*, *PCh24.pl*, *Ndie.pl*, *Wpolityce.pl*, *Wsieci.pl*, *Polskaligaobrony.org.pl*, *Ruchnarodowy.net* and *Onr.com.pl*.[59] As one of the initiators of the *Euroislam.pl* portal pointed out, the so-called "refugee crisis" and its politisation in Poland in the second half of 2015 gave a huge boost to its popularity. At present, the portal has almost 100,000 entries per month with users with unique IP addresses. Before September, they had half this amount.[60]

Most of the aforementioned groups and web portals also have social media accounts and use them to promote their ideas. One of the Polish Pegida-like groups "No to the Islamization of Europe" linked to the website *Ndie.pl* gathered a particularly significant following on Facebook. Its Polish Facebook page had almost 320,000 followers by the end of 2016.[61] Other Facebook groups that have large followings include ‚Stop the Islamization of Europe'[62] (60,000 followers) and ‚Euroislam'[63] (which is linked to the website *Euroislam.pl* and has almost 17,000 followers). In comparison, the Polish anti-racist group ‚YES for refugees – No to racism and xenophobia' has at present (February 2016) only 8,000 followers on Facebook. [64]

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

If in 2015 during the election year and the climax of the so-called "refugee crisis" some of the major institutions and groups that promoted anti-Muslim attitudes were mainstream political parties and organisations that could be qualified as secular, in 2016 it seems this role was played above all by the far-right organisations and those that have some religious references. Among the former, it is possible to find a wide variety of groups that oppose 'Muslimness' in all forms mainly with reference to ultra-nationalist terms. The Polish National Movement (*Ruchnarodowy.net*) and the National Radical Camp (*Onr.com.pl*) that managed to secure five seats in Parliament

59. More information on some of these groups is provided below.

60. Interview with Grzegorz Lindenberg, member of the Board of Management of Europe of the Future Association and the portal *Euroislam.pl* in Warsaw (September 20, 2016).

61. See https://www.facebook.com/pages/Nie-dla-Islamizacji-Europy/182944451832138?fref=ts (retrieved December 30, 2016).

62. https://www.facebook.com/Stop-islamizacji-Europy-191777667634248/ (retrieved December 30, 2016).

63. https://www.facebook.com/euroislampl (retrieved December 30, 2016).

64. https://www.facebook.com/groups/tak.dla.uchodzcow/?fref=ts (retrieved December 30, 2016).

played a key role among them with the largest capacities to mobilise people. The flirting with the victorious Law and Justice Party mentioned earlier has given the groups extra leverage and allowed them to move from street mobilisation to a certain degree of impact, so far minimal, on political decisions. If in the past the major element of their mobilisation was anti-Semitism and the figure of the Jew, in the last years it started to be the Muslim, the Arab, the refugee and Islam. One of the organisers of campaigns against refugees in Krakow from the local division of the Polish National Movement Szymon Kasinski, argued, for example, in a recent interview that „Where there is no ethnic homogeneity there is terrorism (…) Look at France and Belgium, in those countries the initial welcome has turned into terrorism. We will not allow this to happen in Poland."[65] Similar views are spread by other members of the movement in towns across Poland.[66] Some of their ideas and strategies are also shared with the Polish Defence League (*Polskaligaobrony.org.pl*), and the Facebook group "No to the Islamization of Europe".

In 2016, the ultra-nationalist ONR (National Radical Camp) received significant support from certain sections of the Polish Catholic Church within the aforementioned wider process of sacralisation of the nation and the intertwining of Catholicism and nationalism. They were not only allowed to celebrate the anniversary of the foundation of the ONR in a Polish cathedral but were also received by some of the most important bishops in the country.[67] However, the most damaging episode for the image of the Catholic Church in Poland - in general the Polish Church tried to balance between the Pope's calls to show more openness to the refugees and rejection of this idea by the file and rank of the Church, the ruling party and the majority of the society - was the activism of the young charismatic priest Jacek Międlar. The latter took active part in ultra-nationalist demonstrations and on numerous occasions expressed openly anti-Semitic and Islamophobic views.[68] More moderate anti-Muslim views were loosely or more directly linked with the conservative wing of the Church institutions like the web portal *Fronda.pl* (which was linked until the end of 2014 with the journal *Fronda Lux*) and the web portal *PCh24.pl* which is linked to the bimonthly glossy magazine *Polonia Christiana* (published since 2008 by Father Piotr Skarga of the Association of Christian Culture founded in 1999 under the guidance of the traditionalist Catholic international movement 'Tradition, Family and Property').

65. Joshua Evangelista, "Krakow: A portrait of Islamophobia in Poland," *cafebabel.co.uk*, (January 19, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/society/article/krakow-a-portrait-of-islamophobia-in-poland.html.

66. For example by Justyna Helcyk from ONR speaking at a large demonstration in Wrocłow, available on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fi1vIcvEuKg (retrieved December 30, 2016).

67. Woźnicki, 2016.

68. Many of these opinions are available on the private YouTube channel of priest *Międlar* at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxOqelhdkXRpxEA8_q2F5mg (retrieved December 30, 2016)

The last group is that of secularists that are made up of various individuals and associations that legitimise their essentialist visions of Islam and Muslims with particularly frequent references to notions of enlightenment, secularism, pluralism, human rights and democracy. In this category, among a wide range of organisations, the most important one seems to be the Europe of the Future Association, which aims "*to thwart the development of Islamism in* Poland and Europe" and associates all forms of Muslim public religiosity to a "totalitarian movement hostile to democracy".[69] As mentioned before, the organisation has been growing significantly over the last year and its members are nowadays invited not only to comment on ongoing events on mainstream TV channels but also to lecture at universities.

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

The year 2016 saw the continuation (with slightly lower intensity) of "anti-Islamization" marches and demonstrations that sprung up a year earlier across the country from East (e.g. Białystok) to West (e.g. Wrocław) and North (e.g. Gdańsk) to South (e.g. Kraków); the rise of indiscriminate, negative attitudes and feelings directed at Muslims; and an increase in the number of various types of attacks (usually categorised as "hate crimes") on Muslims or people believed to be followers of Islam. According to one of the coordinators of the Never Again Association (Stanisław Czerczak) "in the past the association was registering up to 20 homophobic, racist or xenophobic incidents per month, whereas now we register the same amount per week."[70] The Polish Ombudsman Adam Bodnar pointed out in June 2016 that "Almost every few days we have some brutal assaults with racist or xenophobic background.[71] Hate speech on the Internet is omnipresent".[72]

The aforementioned observations are confirmed by the statistics of the National Persecutor's Office. One of the latest reports states that in the first half of 2016 there has been 13% increase in the number of offenses motivated by racial or xenophobic hate in comparison with last year. This increase is particularly troubling taking into account that 2015 had been a record year in terms of the number of cases of racial crimes registered by the Prosecutor's Office. In 2015, the Office dealt with over 1,500 such cases and in the first half of the 2016 it was occupied with 863 such cases. Moreover, the report of the Persecutor's Office clearly points out that in 2016 there has been a significant change in the profile of the most frequent

69. More information about the association that started its anti-Muslim activities at an anti-Turkish demonstration in 2004 can be found on its website: http://www.euroislam.pl/index.php/stowarzyszenie/o-nas/ (retrieved December 15, 2015).

70. Stanisław Czerczak quoted in: Szymon Bujalski, "Polska walczy z obcymi. Rośnie liczba ataków rasistowskich i ksenofobicznych," *wyborcza.pl*, (September 16, 2016), retrieved December 20, 2016 from http://wyborcza.pl/1,75398,20699634,polska-walczy-z-obcymi-rosnie-liczba-atakow-rasistowskich-i.html.

71. Some of these assaults that can be qualified as Islamophobic will be elaborated in a subsequent part of the report.

72. Adam Bodnar quoted in: Magdalena Chrzczonowicz, "Gowin zachwycony polską tolerancją", *oko.press*, (June 19, 2016), retrieved December 20, 2016, from https://oko.press/gowin-zachwycony-polska-tolerancja-racje/.

victim of such hate crimes: the most common victims now are followers of Islam and only then persons of Jewish and Roma ancestry,[73] and blacks. Around one third of victims of hate crimes are Muslims (250 cases), whereas 12% (102 cases) are Jews, 7.5% (65 cases) are Roma, and 6% are black people. The report also points out that in comparison to 2015 here has been a significant decline in the number of offences against the Roma (three times fewer offenses) and Jewish persons. Some of the worrying developments are the increasing number of cases of hate crimes that end with acquittal and cases which are either not being processed or being dropped because the Persecutor's Office considers them of "low societal harmfulness". On the positive side, the data of the judicial authorities show that the detection rate has increased and, at present, only one fourth of the cases are abandoned because the perpetrators are not identified.[74]

The cases of verbal and physical attacks on Muslims or individuals perceived as followers of Islam, as well as, the instances of export of Polish anti-Muslim sentiments abroad started to emerge in the beginning of the 2016. In January, the media informed the public of a Palestinian student at the Łódź Film School who filmed himself being verbally attacked in the grocery shop in Łódź by an individual who later turned out to be a firefighter who called him "F… dirty Arab" and "f… Allah'.[75] In February, Chilean pianist Christian Rapos was severely beaten in the train from Sochaczew to Warsaw by an individual who had asked him earlier whether he was an Arab (Muslim).[76] In the same month the Persecutor's Office in the city of Krakow charged three persons for inciting racially motivated hatred for posting comments on Facebook under the film on migrants in Hungary calling, among others, for "igniting the Auschwitz furnaces" and placing immigrants there or "putting them in gas chambers".[77] In March, an Egyptian lecturer at the University of Łódź was attacked in the tram by three racist individuals who kicked him in the stomach and threw him out of the tram while saying that he should "go to Great Britain where they love Muslims and hate Christians".[78] The following month, the Pakistani citizen Umer Hayat was severely beaten in a park in Warsaw by racist attackers while his Polish colleague was left unharmed.[79] In May, two men

73. With regards to Jews and the Roma the reports actually point out that in the last period there has been a decrease in the number of cases against them.

74. Prokuratura Krajowa, "Wyciąg ze sprawozdania dotyczącego spraw o przestępstwa popełnione z pobudek rasistowskich, antysemickich lub ksenofobicznych prowadzonych w I półroczu 2016 r. w jednostkach organizacyjnych prokuratury," *pk.gov.pl*, (2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://pk.gov.pl/plik/2016_10/24acf46588c-7847967633b4cceaede99.pdf.

75. Marcin Kornak/Anna Tatar/Rafał Pankowski, "Katalog Wypadków – Brunatna Księga 2014-2016," *Nigdy Więcej*, nr. 22, (2016).

76. S. Bujalski, 2016.

77. Kornak/Tatar/Pankowski, 2016.

78. Ibid.

79. Bujalski, 2016.

attacked a Chechen woman in the centre of Łomża trying to pull off her headscarf and shouted at her "f… off terrorists" and "Muslim prostitute".[80] A similar type of attack took place the following month when a 25-year-old female student from Algeria wearing hijab was attacked by an Islamophobe shouting at her "Islam preacher go home", kicked her and tried to push her out of the tram.[81]

Almost every month in 2016 one could read about several verbal or physical attacks on Muslims or persons viewed as Muslims in different parts of Poland (for more details see Chronology). Some of the groups that were particularly vulnerable to such attacks were "visible Muslims", either women wearing headscarves or full veils,[82] or men working in kebab bistro/bars. The last group of Muslims is in a particularly difficult position since these types of fast food stands are most popular among football fans and members or supporters of far-right organisations. In 2016, these encounters increased and owners or workers of kebab shops were frequently verbally or physically attacked. In August, for example, newspapers described the case of Gani Shahriar, who runs a kebab shop in Ziolona Góra, who was attacked and brutally beaten by a group of racists – they also caused severe damages to his shop. The Bangladeshi businessman found himself in hospital and was not able to walk for two weeks after the attack. The perpetrators of the attack were not found. In November, the trial of four Polish men began who had brutally attacked an Egyptian worker of a bistro bar in Warsaw a year earlier.[83] At the end of the year - on New Year's Eve – this type of encounter ended with the tragic death of a 21-year-old Polish man who tried to steal some products from a kebab bistro/bar in Ełk (in North-East Poland) and was mortally stabbed during the argument with a Tunisian employee.[84] The incident resulted in small scale racial riots in the town during which several people were injured and immigrant-owned kebab shops were vandalized.

As argued elsewhere Islamophobia in Poland can be conceived as partially a homemade phenomenon and partially as an import of anti-Muslim sentiments from

80. Kornak/Tatar/Pankowski, 2016.

81. Radio Łódź, *Pobicie młodej muzułmanki. Kolejny rasistowski atak w Łodzi*, *radiolodz.pl*, (June 3, 2016), retrieved December 21, 2016, from https://www.radiolodz.pl/posts/25606-pobicie-mlodej-muzulmanki-kolejny-rasistowski-atak-w-lodzi.

82. Niqabs are almost completely absent in Poland.

83. See for example: Paulina Nodzyńska, "Pobili mnie, mówią wypieprzaj, a tu jest moje miejsce," *zielonagora.wyborcza.pl*, (August 28, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://zielonagora.wyborcza.pl/zielonagora/1,90220,20599624,pobili-mnie-mowia-wypieprzaj-a-tu-jest-moje-miejsce-rasizm.html; G.W. Polska, *Pobili Egipcjanina, bo nie chciał im sprzedać kanapki. Ruszył proces*, 2016, http://wawalove.pl/Pobili-Egipcjanina-bo-nie-chcial-im-sprzedac-kanapki-Ruszyl-proces-a24723, 21.12.2016.

84. Newsweek, "Nowa wersja wydarzeń w Ełku. 21-letni Daniel karany za groźby i rozbój," *newsweek.pl*, (January 2, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2017, from http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/nowa-wersja-wydarzen-w-elku-21-letni-daniel-karany-za-grozby-i-rozboj,artykuly,402937,1.html.

abroad.[85] The interconnectedness of the way anti-Muslim discourses circulate in European contexts has been explored by Gawlewicz and Narkowicz.[86] In part as a result of Polish migrations and the fact that in the last two decades more than two million Poles have left the country and now reside temporarily or permanently abroad,[87] one can observe not only cases of the import of foreign fears and anxieties (as part of social remittances) but also cases of export of Polish Islamophobia abroad. In January, the German Police in Adelsheim arrested four Polish citizens who were trying to enter the local refugee facility armed with knives.[88] In November, two Polish immigrants were convicted by a British court to 8 months inprisonment for entering a London mosque and throwing bacon at the praying worshipers.[89] The openly Islamophobic Swedish Defence League was founded and has been led by the Polish immigrant Kamil Ryba who wants to call not only on Swedish but also on Polish society to more actively oppose "the Islamization of their countries".[90] As one of the young leaders of the Polish Muslim community aptly pointed out the Islamophobia of Polish immigrants is not only dangerous for the host societies where Poles set up, join or support openly anti-Muslim organisations but also for the home society since the views of immigrants on Islam and Muslims are rarely questioned as "they are in the West and they know best".[91]

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

As far as the initiatives to counter Islamophobic narratives are concerned there are numerous efforts undertaken by different actors. On the state level, the only institution that seems truly concerned with the issues of growing levels of xenophobia in Polish society is the Polish Ombudsman Adam Bodnar. Either he personally or members of his office

85. Konrad Pędziwiatr, "Islamophobia as a New Manifestation of Polish Fears and Anxieties," R. Kusek/J. Purchla/J., Santera-Szeliga (eds.), *Nations and Stereotypes Twenty Five Years After: New Borders, New Horizons* (Kraków: International Cultural Centre, 2015), p. 132-150.

86. Anna Gawlewicz,/Kasia Narkowicz, "Islamophobia on the Move: Circulation of Anti-Muslim Prejudice between Poland and the UK," Yasir Suleiman (ed.), *Muslims in the UK and Europe I* (Cambridge: Centre of Islamic Studies, University of Cambridge, 2015), p. 90-100.

87. Glowny Urzad Statystyczny (GUS), "Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach czasowej emigracji z Polski w latach 2004–2015," *stat.gov.pl*, (September 5, 2016), retrieved January 18, 2017, from http://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/migracje-zagraniczne-ludnosci/informacja-o-rozmiarach-i-kierunkach-emigracji-z-polski-w-latach-20042015,2,9.html.

88. Kornak/Tatar/Pankowski, 2016.

89. Onet.pl, "Wielka Brytania: dwóch polskich imigrantów skazanych," *wbi.onet.pl*, (November 1, 2016), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://wbi.onet.pl/wielka-brytania-dwoch-polskich-imigrantow-skazanych/6mkr62.

90. Michał Gąsior, "Polak robi w Szwecji "karierę" na nienawiści do muzułmanów. W redakcji gazety rzucał jajkami i groził użyciem noża," *naTemat*, (December 31, 2013), retrieved December 19, 2016, from http://natemat.pl/86967,polak-robi-w-szwecji-kariere-na-nienawisci-do-muzulmanow-w-redakcji-gazety-rzucal-jajkami-i-grozil-uzyciem-noza.

91. Interview with Arkadiusz Miernik in Birmingham (April 16, 2016).

have numerous times spoken critically about the situation in the country and taken initiatives to help individuals and groups who were victims of hate crimes.[92]

Within civil society, the initiatives come from numerous institutions that took ad hoc or more systematic initiatives to counter, at least minimally, the anti-Muslim/anti-refugee/anti-Arab narratives in the public sphere. One of the institutions that has been monitoring and reacting to instances of hate crime for many years now is the Never Again Association (Stanisław Czerczak), which was first registered in 1996. Its latest edition of the *Brown Book* (2014-2016) enlists numerous cases of Islamophobic incidents.[93] Other important initiatives that, among others, have tried to challenge Islamophobic voices in 2016 were carried out by the Centre for Monitoring Racist and Xenophobic Behaviours (*Ośrodek Monitorowania Zachowań Rasistowskich i Ksenofobicznych*);[94] the Coalition Against Hate Speech *(Koalicja Bez Nienawiść)*;[95] and Hate Stop (*Hejtstop*).[96] The political party Party Together *(Partia Razem*) in September started the campaign "Zero Tolerance" that monitors the cases of cooperation between state institutions and the far right.[97] Many 2016 issues of the Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and monthly *Znak* have dealt critically with the phenomenon of hate speech and the demonization of refugees and Muslims.

Last but not least, in spite of limited human and financial resources, Polish Muslims have tried to counter Islamophobia and the wider xenophobia in Polish society. In the last year, they have moved from institutional initiatives (e.g. the website 'Observatory of Islamophobia' run from 2013 to March 2015 by the Muslim League in Poland)[98] to less formal efforts linked with social media to register cases of Islamophobia and to provide constructive counter-narratives to the dominant frames through which Islam and Muslims are being portrayed. An important example of institutional initiatives is the social media site Stop Islamophobia in Poland;[99] a successful example of the less formal efforts was short YouTube films on different aspects of Islam by the young Polish Muslim religious leader Arkadiusz Miernik.[100]

92. Adam Bodnar/Anna Goc, "Uchodźcza opozycja", *tygodnikpowszechny.pl*, (December 23, 2016), retrieved December 23, 2016, from https://www.tygodnikpowszechny.pl/uchodzcza-opozycja-146235.

93. Kornak/Tatar,/Pankowski, 2016.

94. More information about the centre is available at https://www.facebook.com/osrodek.monitorowania/ (retrieved December 30, 2016).

95. More information about the coalition is available at http://beznienawisci.pl/koalicja/ (retrieved December 30, 2016).

96. More information is vailable at http://hejtstop.pl/ (retrieved December 30, 2016).

97. More information about the campaign is available at http://zero-tolerancji.pl/o-kampanii/ (retrieved December 30, 2016).

98. More information on the initiative can be found at http://islamofobia.info.pl/ (retrieved December 30, 2016).

99. For more information see https://www.facebook.com/StopIslamofobia/ (retrieved December 30, 2016).

100. See *IslamTVpl* on https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGANBEhY-NC2FdLRtCg_AHQ (retrieved December 30, 2016).

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

As argued above the levels of Polish fear of Islam and Muslims often exceed those in other European countries with much more significant Muslim populations. The lack of contact of Polish people with Muslims evidenced in various research initiatives[101] is clearly not conducive to diminishing the levels of fear of the Muslim Others in society but rather contributes to their rise. As the Ipsos study on the perception of the actual and future size of the Muslim population in Poland showed the size - and hence the fear of the Muslim community - is hugely exaggerated.[102] In 2016, this situation was made worse not only by the mass media and the Internet, where sensational information about Muslims and Islam were provided without balance and then amplified, but also by key Polish politicians who too often spoke their mind and expressed views that linked whole groups of people and cultures with terrorism, violence and bloodshed. Clearly, the persistence of DAESH and the acts of terror perpetrated in different parts of Europe and elsewhere helped them to convey there Islamophobic messages. The most troubling part, though, was the refusal of the political establishment to institutionally tackle the growing number of hate crimes and to systematically fight xenophobia and all forms of racism. This political stand has only encouraged groups "defending" Poland from supposed Islamization to be bolder in their actions and to fight more openly with the "Muslim Other" and with many other forms of difference, such as ethnic, cultural and religious Otherness, in Polish society.

- In order to challenge Islamophobia and other forms of xenophobia in Poland, at least minimally, the recognition at the highest level of the state that such issues exist is first and foremost necessary.
- It is also necessary to significantly strengthen widely understood anti-discrimination policies in the whole country.
- The resolved governmental Council for Fight Against Racism and Xenophobia should be reinstated or a new body should be created to address the issues of racism and xenophobia at the highest level and to overlook the policies undertaken to tackle these phenomena.
- There cannot be any tolerance of hate speech and all forms of hate crimes should be punished with outmost severity.
- A new mechanism of collecting data on hate crimes should be put in place and the employees of relevant state institutions (in particular the police) should be trained in how to register cases of such crimes.
- State institutions in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders (in particular from academia and the non-governmental sector) should identify some of the key issues of xenophobia and racism in the country and in cooperation with these stakeholders fight to build a more tolerant and inclusive society.

101. CBOS, 2016.

102. Ipsos Mori, "Perceptions are not reality: what the world gets wrong," *ipsos-mori.com*, (December 14, 2016), retrived December 19, 2016), from https://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3817/Perceptions-are-not-reality-what-the-world-gets-wrong.aspx.

# Chronology

## January

- In the aftermath of the New Year's Eve attacks on women in German cities, there was an outpour of anti-refugee, anti-immigrant and often racist and Islamophobic narratives in the media and in public debates.
- On 9 January, the German Police in Adelsheim arrested four Polish citizens who were trying to enter the local refugee facility armed with knives. This case of the export of Polish Islamophobia was analysed in the report.
- In a University dormitory in Szczecin, two men (one was later identified as a student of the University of Szczecin) placed stickers on the doors of foreign students from Muslim countries with the slogan "No to the Islamization of Europe".
- A Palestinian student at the Łódź Film School filmed himself being verbally attacked in a grocery shop in Łódź by an individual who called him "F… dirty Arab" and "f… Allah'. The individual insulting the student was indentified by the police and accused of racial discrimination.

## February

- Chilean pianist Christian Rapos was severely beaten in the train from Sochaczew to Warsaw by the individual who had asked him earlier whether he was an Arab (Muslim).
- A few dozen Internet users wrote racist and Islamophobic comments on the Facebook profile of the Water Park in Koszalin regarding a Muslim woman who was using the facilities of the park dressed in a burkini. Among others, they called her "dirty", suggested that she was "spreading diseases" and that the pools should be disinfected.
- A Tunisian citizen was attacked and beaten in Poznan by an individual who called him an "Arab". The attacker was caught by the police and charged with racially motivated attack.
- The Persecutor's Office in Krakow charged three people for inciting racially motivated hatred. The accused published comments on Facebook under the film on migrants in Hungary calling, among others, for "setting on the Auschwitz furnaces" and placing migrants there or "putting them in gas chambers".

## March

- In the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Brussels (22 March), the portrayal of Islam and Muslims was increasingly linked with terrorism and the atrocities of DAESH.
- After the terrorist attack in Brussels, the Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło announced that Poland would not accept any refugees under the European plan of resettlement hence directly linking the so-called "refugee crisis" and issues of management of immigration to Europe with terrorism.

- An Egyptian lecturer at the University of Łódź was attacked in the tram by three racist individuals who kicked him in the stomach and threw him out of the tram while saying that he should "go to Great Britain where they love Muslims and hate Christians".

### April

- The Pakistani citizen Umer Hayat was severely beaten in a park in Warsaw by racist attackers. His Polish colleague was not touched.
- Catholic priest Jacek Międlar led a Holy Mass and delivered a sermon in support of the far-right organisation ONR in the Białystok Cathedral during which he called for "zero tolerance for Jewish cowardice". After the mass, the members of ONR marched through the city centre shouting "We do not want Islam, terrorists or Muslims here".
- A British citizen of Egyptian origin was brutally beaten in Gdańsk by a racist attacker who was stopped by police and charged for the attack.

### May

- A Palestinian man was insulted racially in the grocery store in Warsaw. He was defended by the Polish playwright Paweł Demirski who was severely beaten by the racists.
- Two men attacked a Chechen lady in the centre of Łomża trying to pull off the hijab covering her hair and neck. They shouted "F… off terrorists" and "Muslim prostitute". Other people who saw the attack did not react.
- International students – some from Turkey – were attacked in Bydgoszcz by young men who claimed to "defend Poland". The local police were unwilling to report the incidents claiming that they were not serious enough. Only after the intervention of the spokesperson of the University of Kazimierz Wielki, did the police change its attitude towards the attacked students.

### June

- A 25-year-old female student of one of the universities in Łódź, who is from Algeria and wears the hijab, was attacked by an Islamophobe. He called at her "Islam preacher go home", kicked her and tried to push her out of the tram. Colleagues of the Algerian student who also wear hijabs complained that verbal insults were a daily occurance for them but that physical attacks were a new phenomenon.

### July

- In the aftermath of the truck terrorist attack in Nice, there was an outpour of anti-immigrant and Islamophobic narratives in the public sphere and especially on social media.

### August

- The media informed the public of the case of Gani Shahriar in Ziolona Góra who was attacked and brutally beaten by a group of racists who also caused

damages to his Kebab shop. The Bangladeshi businessman found himself in the hospital and was not able to walk for two weeks after the attack. The perpetrators were not found.

- Over the summer, an increasing number of Chechens emerged at the Polish-Byelorussian border and tried to file applications for refugee status, but were denied entry. Polish Minister of Interior Affairs Mariusz Błaszczak suggested that this was an attempt to start another migration crisis and that Poland would not allow this inflow of Muslims to Europe.

### September

- During official celebrations in Kraków of the 333th anniversary of the Vienna victory of 1683 it was proclaimed that it supposedly prevented the "Islamization of Europe".
- The Minister of Interior Affairs and Administration in an interview for Nasz Dziennik claimed that the reason why Britons are attacking Poles in the post-Brexit referendum context is because "due to political correctness they cannot show their frustration towards Muslims".
- Newspapers wrote about a self-styled Polish "patriot" who has opened a kebab stand in Lublin for "real Poles" wanting to buy the famous Middle Eastern dish from somebody other than a foreigner.

### October

- A football fan of the club Pogonia Szczecin who was shouting during a match "F… the Arabs" and "Islamic pigs, we don't want you in Szczecin" was convicted by a court to 2 months inprisonment and given a 2-year stadium entry ban for inciting hatred.
- After 10 months of collecting signatures for a petition to organise a referendum on whether Poland should receive refugees, Kukiz15 collected only 300,000 – 500,000 were required.

### November

- Two Polish immigrants were convicted by a British court to 8 months inprisonment for entering a London mosque and throwing bacon at praying worshipers. (The export of Polish Islamophobia is analysed in the report).
- An Egyptian student at Cracow University of Economics and a cross-fit athlete was insulted and physically attacked by racists in the centre of Krakow. As a result of the attack, Amr Eljamil was badly injured and, at least temporarily, had to suspend his sports career.
- Newspapers informed the public of the beginning of the trial of four Polish men who had brutally attacked the Egyptian worker of a bistro bar in Warsaw a year earlier.

## December

- The mass media wrote about the racist verbal and physical attack of Turkish and Bulgarian students in public transportation in Bydgoszcz. All three perpetrators were arrested by the police and will stand trial.
- In the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Berlin perpetrated by Anis Amri in which a Polish driver was murdered and his truck was used in the attack, some national media (particularly right-wing ones) described the truck driver Łukasz Urban as a "martyr". There was also a significant outpour of anti-refugee, anti-immigrant and Islamophobic narratives in the media and in public debates.
- On New Year's Eve, a 21-year-old Polish man who tried to steal some products from the kebab shop in the northeastern city of Ełk was mortally stabbed during the argument with a Tunisian employee. The incident caused small-scale racial riots in the town during which several people were injured and immigrant-owned kebab shops were vandalized.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN PORTUGAL NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

In spite of the insistent claim that there is no Islamophobia in Portugal, discriminatory stereotyping of Muslims is widespread. Attitudes towards Islam, Muslims and Islamophobia are informed by the colonial past of the country, its history of recent dictatorship, as well as incidents in other countries. Portugal's very small and diverse Muslim community has proactive representatives who are well-versed in working with the media. A significant part of the community is economically secure and well connected with church dignitaries and the highest-ranking state officials. Interfaith activities count on the presence of these dignitaries. High-ranking governmental representatives and political parties do not exploit anti-Muslim stereotypes in their election campaigns. Nevertheless, Muslims are repeatedly exposed to stereotyping and processes of Othering.

Muslim institutions like mosques are more readily accepted in Portugal than in other European countries. Nevertheless, they become targets of hostile acts in the aftermath of terror attacks abroad. Their representatives are repeatedly confronted with anti-Muslim stereotypes and defamation in cyberspace. Schoolbooks and the media play a crucial role in the definition of a white and Roman Catholic "Portugueseness" or "Europeanness" and related mechanisms of exclusion.

While police violence and exclusion predominantly affect the black and Romani populations, intersectional discrimination of black Muslims as well as intersection with gender and poverty has not been analysed and recorded systematically. Muslims affected by multiple aspects of discrimination and exclusion are not visible in the media.

Anti-Muslim actions and incidents occur in Portugal, but there are no mechanisms in place to register and document them.

## Resumo

Apesar da afirmação insistente de que não existe islãmofobia em Portugal, os estereótipos discriminatórios sobre mulçumanos são generalizados. A postura em relação ao Islã, aos muçulmanos e à islãmofobia são baseadas no passado colonial do país, na sua história recente de ditadura e em incidentes em outros países. Portugal tem uma comunidade muçulmana muito pequena e diversa a qual conta com representantes proativos e versados no trabalho com a mídia. Uma parte significativa da comunidade está em boa situação financeira e bem conectada com dignitários da igreja e com altos funcionários do Estado. As atividades inter-religiosas contam com a presença desses dignitários. Os representantes governamentais de alto escalão e partidos políticos não usam estereótipos anti-muçulmanos para campanhas eleitorais. No entanto, os muçulmanos são repetidamente expostos a estereótipos e alteridade.

Instituições muçulmanas como as mesquitas são mais facilmente aceitas em Portugal do que em outros países europeus. No entanto, tornaram-se alvos de atos hostis após ataques terroristas no exterior. Seus representantes são repetidamente confrontados com estereótipos anti-muçulmanos e difamação no espaço cibernético. Livros escolares e meios de comunicação desempenham um papel crucial na definição de uma "portuguesidade" e "europeidade" branca e católica e os mecanismos de exclusão associados a esse processo.

Embora a violência e a exclusão da polícia afetem predominantemente a população negra e cigana, a discriminação interseccional de muçulmanos negros, bem como a interseção com gênero e pobreza não foram analisadas e registradas sistematicamente. Os muçulmanos afetados por múltiplos aspectos de discriminação e exclusão não são visíveis na mídia.

# Introduction

When requiring about Islamophobia in Portugal, the recurrent answer is that it does not exist. In fact, research on any form of racism in Portugal poses several challenges.

Portugal has traditionally been at the periphery of Europe and the European Union, the country has a longstanding tradition of distancing itself from Spain, and a strong orientation towards its former colonies.[1] Portugal's population suffers from high levels of internal inequality, e.g. its Gini coefficient has remained at a stable high 0.34 since 2011.[2]

Since the financial crisis of 2007/2008 and the subsequent economic crisis, emigration has remained high. Estimations range from 50,000 emigrants per year[3] to up to 150,000.[4] At the same time, immigration has decreased significantly.

Colonial politics and discourses continue to influence national perceptions about religion, racism, and European or Portuguese identity. During the first period of colonial politics of the Estado Novo, i.e. from the early 1930s to 1951, the Salazar regime aimed at anchoring the idea of a supposed superiority of the "white race" and European civilisation in all parts of the population, as well as the duty to "civilise" and Christianise the (remaining) colonised territories.[5] This ideology and policy of "colonial consciousness" was changed in 1951 when Portugal's regime decided to eliminate the word "colonies" from its terminology and to substitute it with "oversee provinces". As a way to counter criticism for maintaining its colonies in Africa, Portugal described itself as a "pluri-continental" and "pluri-racial" nation, stressed national unity,[6] and resorted to the ideology of lusotropicalism.[7] The turn towards an ideology of "no-racism" implied that racism was projected on other people, especially Europeans from the North.[8] Lusotropicalism influenced Portugal's policies until the end of the regime and the independence of its colonies in 1974; and it continues to influence Portuguese discourses on racism.[9]

1. Fernando Soares Loja, "Islam in Portugal," Shireen T. Hunter (Ed.), *Islam, Europe's second religion* (Westport, London: Praeger, 2002), p. 191f.

2. Pordata, (not dated), retrieved January 23, 2017, from http://www.pordata.pt/.

3. Eurostat, "Emigration by age and sex," *europa.eu*, (January 6, 2017), retrieved January 23, 2017, from http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_emi2&lang=en.

4. EurActive/AFP, "Portugal wants more refugees to help revive dwindling population," (February 22, 2016), retrieved December 28, 2016, from https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/portugal-wants-more-refugees-to-help-revive-dwindling-population/.

5. João Filipe Marques, "Les racistes, c'est les autres. Les origines du mythe du "non-racism" des Portugais," *Lusotopie*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2007), p. 77f.

6. Ibid., p. 79.

7. Ibid., p. 74.

8. Ibid., p. 72.

9. Ibid., p. 85.

Similarly, the perception of Islam in the colonies changed in the 1960s. Before the colonial wars, colonial functionaries perceived Islam and Muslims as unmanageable and menacing;[10] being a Muslim was repeatedly described as incompatible with being Portuguese. In Mozambique, Muslim Indians were considered a specific threat to Portuguese sovereignty.[11] By the end of the 1960s, official policies changed and Muslims were considered as possible allies to maintain rule and order in the colonies. Changes within the Catholic Church, notably the Second Vatican Council and its new openness towards other creeds, favoured the new Portuguese policy.[12] In the European mainland, however, the Estado Novo continued to scrutinise Muslim leaders.[13]

Portugal's Muslim community is very small. Its origin goes back to the 1950s when students of South Asian origin arrived from Mozambique. In 1968, the Communidade Islamica de Lisboa was founded by 25 to 30 members. After the independence wars and the end of the Salazar regime, half a million refugees from the ex-colonies came to Portugal, a fraction of them Muslims. Today, estimates of the Muslim population oscillate between 35,000[14] and 55,000.[15] Most of the Portuguese Muslims originate from Mozambique, and among them, the largest group is of South Asian origin. The second largest group is from Guinea and of both South Asian and African origin. In the 1980s and 1990s, smaller groups of Muslims arrived from North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Most of Portugal's Muslims are Sunnis, and the second largest group is Sevener Shi'a Ismailis.[16] The group's presence is mainly the result of collective migration by the predominantly Gujarati Ismaili community in Mozambique, and it is well connected with Ismaili communities in Canada and other European countries.[17]

Several studies show that prejudices and discrimination against Muslims are weaker in Portugal than in other European countries, but they are nevertheless widespread. Already before 9/11, prejudices against Muslims were significantly more widespread than against (other) migrants. Among 30 European countries, Portugal had the lowest percentage of people unwilling to have Muslims as neighbours (8.11%) and of people unwilling to have immigrants as neighbours

10. Mário Machaqueiro, "Ambivalent Islam: The identity construction of Muslims under Portuguese colonial rule," *Social Identities*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2012), p. 40.

11. Ibid. p. 43f.

12. Ibid. p. 51f.

13. Nina Clara Tiesler, "No bad news from the European margin. The new Islamic presence in Portugal," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 12, (2001), p. 81.

14. Soares Loja, "Islam in Portugal", p. 192.

15. José Mapril/Nina Clara Tiesle, "Portugal," Jøgen S. Nielsen/Samim Akgönül/Ahmet Alibašić/Egdūnas Račius (Eds.), *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 518.

16. About 5,000 to 7,000, according to Soares Loja (2002: 193) or 8,000 according to Mapril & Tiesler (2013: 517.

17. Nina Clara Tiesler, "No bad news from the European margin. The new Islamic presence in Portugal," p. 79.

(2.55%).[18] In a representative study conducted during summer 2010, more than a third of those interviewed in Portugal described their personal attitude towards Muslims as "negative" or "very negative";[19] 57.9% associated Islam with the discrimination of women; 54.3% with fanaticism; 39.4% with propensity to violence; and 42.9% with narrow-mindedness. Positive associations were much less common and included peacefulness (19.8%), tolerance (17.6%), respect of human rights (17.1%) and solidarity (27.4%).[20] The approval of the construction of mosques and minarets in Portugal is significantly higher than in other European countries (73.5% and 53.4% respectively). While 39.4% consider other cultures and religions as a threat to their country, 81.1% also consider increasing cultural diversity as a form of societal enrichment; 89.2% consider that all religious affiliations in the country should have the same rights; 41.6% agree that girls should be allowed to wear a headscarf at school; and 36.5% consider that Islam fits well into the Western world.[21] In 2011, nearly half of the population of Portugal considered that Muslim culture and European Culture were not compatible (49.9%), more than 25% considered that there were too many Muslims in Portugal, and 34.4% considered that Muslims demanded too much.[22] Finally, 45% of the population believed in a "natural hierarchy" between black and white people.[23]

## Significant Incidents and Developments

The Ismaili community has opted for transferring the global seat of their imamat to Portugal. The corresponding agreement between the Republic of Portugal and the Ismaili Imamat was signed in November 2015. At the ceremony, Portugal's Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho and other senior government officials were present.[24] Subsequently, the Aga Khan Foundation has chosen Lisbon as its world headquarters.[25]

18. Zan Strabac/Listhaug Ola, "Anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe. A multilevel analysis of survey data from 30 countries," *Social Science Research*, Vol. 37, No. 1, (2008), p. 278.

19. Detlef Pollack, "Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt. Bevölkerungsumfrage des Exzellenzclusters *Religion und Politik*", *uni-muenster.de*, (December 2010), retrieved December 28, 2016, from https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/religion_und_politik/aktuelles/2010/12_2010/studie_wahrnehmung_und_akzeptanz_religioeser_vielfalt.pdf.

20. Ibid., p. 6.

21. Ibid., p. 8-10.

22. Andreas Zick/Beate Küpper/Andreas Hövermann, *Die Abwertung des Anderen. Eine europäische Zustandsbeschreibung zu Intoleranz, Vorurteilen und Diskriminierung* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011). Available from: http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/do/07905-20110311.pdf (retrieved December 28, 2016).

23. Ibid., p. 201.

24. Aga Khan Development Network, "Historic agreement establishes Global Seat of Ismaili Imamat in Portugal," *akdn.org*, (June 3, 2015), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://www.akdn.org/press-release/historic-agreement-establishes-global-seat-ismaili-imamat-portugal.

25. Adrian Frey, "Ismailis, the Muslim elite of business and diplomacy will have their world headquarters in Lisbon," *clubofmozambique.com*, (May 24, 2016), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://clubofmozambique.com/news/ismailis-the-muslim-elite-of-business-and-diplomacy-are-about-to-have-their-world-headquarters-in-lisbon/.

After months of political instability, conservative Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa gained presidency with 52% of the votes on 24 January. In February 2016, Portugal offered to accept thousands of refugees from Greece. Tito Morais, head of the Portuguese Refugee Council, argued that the refugees might benefit regions in Portugal that have been deserted by emigration.[26]

The past year has seen increasing research and activism against racism in Portugal focusing on racism against people of African descendent and the Romani minority. Police violence against black youth is a recurrent topic[27] and was also condemned by the Islamic Human Rights Commission in London.[28] The UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent had stated earlier that "the rate at which people of African descent were killed by the police in Portugal was higher than any other country of the European Union".[29]

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

In spite of the relatively high acceptance of visible Muslim sights, threats of violence against mosques in Portugal are regularly reported in the aftermath of violent attacks committed by Muslims in other Western countries.[30] In 2016, this included a gathering in front of the Mesquita Central de Lisboa against Islam in the aftermath of the suicide attack at the airport Brussels-Zaventem. The police was present and neighbours of the mosque told the protesters to leave.[31] Since Muslims are not considered to be victims of anti-Muslim racism, there are no institutions which document relevant Islamophobic incidents.

### Employment

The economic situation of Muslims tends to reflect their position before immigration to Portugal. Muslims of South Asian origin who came from Mozambique to Portugal tend to have middle-class backgrounds; their descendants predominantly work in

26. EurActive/AFP, "Portugal wants more refugees to help revive dwindling population," *euractiv.com*, (February 22, 2016), retrieved December 28, 2016, from https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/portugal-wants-more-refugees-to-help-revive-dwindling-population/.

27. Amnistia Internacional, *Relatório Anual 2015/2016* (London: Amnesty International, 2016). Available from: http://www.amnistia-internacional.pt/files/relatorioanual/RA_2016/AI_AR20152016_Country_Portugal.pdf (retrieved December 28, 2016).

28. Islamic Human Rights Commission, *Press release: IHRC condemns Portuguese police brutality against black youth* (London: IHRC, 2015). Available from: http://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/press-releases/11359-press-release-ihrc-condemns-portugese-police-brutality-against-black-youth (retrieved December 28, 2016).

29. Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent on its eleventh session. Addendum. Mission to Portugal. A/HRC/21/60/Add.1*. (Geneva: UN, 2012), p. 17.

30. Bruno Peixe/Elisa Silva/Pedro Soares et al, *O racismo e xenofobia em Portugal (2001-2007)*, (Oeiras: Centro de Investigação em Ciências Sociais e Humanas, 2008). Available from: http://www.amnistia-internacional.pt/files/Estudo_Racismo_Portugal.pdf (retrieved December 28, 2016).

31. Interview with Imam Daniel Munir, December 29, 2016.

the commercial and banking fields and trade. Similarly, Muslims from Guinea-Bissau tended to come as students and succeeded in establishing themselves as professionals. Members of the Ismaili community tend to be the most affluent[32] and are successful businessmen and -women in the areas of interior design, restaurants, furniture, clothing, the hotel sector, banking, services, real estate, and caregiving. Younger generations are starting to enter law, engineering and medical professions.[33]

Already before the economic crisis, one third of the community – especially the black African minority and recent immigrants from the Middle East and South Asia - were living in poverty and working in the construction sector.[34]

An investigation in 2010 did not provide evidence on restrictions imposed on Muslim employees in relation to the practice of their religion.[35]

A recent report suggests that prejudice against Muslims families limits their possibilities to access social services. In a demonstrative example, a woman from Tapada das Mercês complained that her wish to combat poverty was rendered impossible because the responsible social worker focused on denouncing her husband as the culprit of – non-existing - domestic violence instead of supporting her in solving the dire socioeconomic situation of her family. The social worker argued that domestic violence "is a problem with Muslim families". In Portugal, Muslim men, as evidenced in this case, tend to be associated with "violent behaviour" while Muslim women are readily considered to be victims of domestic violence.[36]

## Education

In science, representatives of Muslim communities co-operate at the highest level with representatives of the state. On 12 May, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education of the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imamat signed an Agreement of Cooperation to strengthen research capacity and to improve the quality of life in Portugal and in Portuguese-speaking countries, particularly countries in Africa. The Ismaili Imamat will support these efforts with a grant of 10 million Euro over 10 years.[37]

32. Soares Loja, "Islam in Portugal," p. 193.

33. Adrian Frey, "Ismailis, the Muslim elite of business and diplomacy will have their world headquarters in Lisbon," *clubofmozambique*.com, (May 24, 2016), retrieved on December 28, 2016, from http://clubofmozambique.com/news/ismailis-the-muslim-elite-of-business-and-diplomacy-are-about-to-have-their-world-headquarters-in-lisbon/.

34. Soares Loja, "Islam in Portugal," p. 193.

35. Fernando Paulo Bento Ribeiro, "Normas laborais e liberdade de prática religiosa: o caso dos crentes do Islão em Portugal. Disertação de Mestrado em Migrações, Inter-Etnicidades e Transnacionalismo," *Universidade Nova de Lisboa*, (unpublished MA thesis, 2010), retrieved December 28, 2016, from https://run.unl.pt/bitstream/10362/5875/1/fernando.pdf.

36. Portuguese Association for Victim Support APAV, *ENAR Shadow Report 2011-2012. Racism and related discriminatory practices in Portugal* (Lisbon: ENAR, 2012), p. 10.

37. Aga Khan Development Network, "Portuguese Republic and Ismaili Imamat sign Research Cooperation Agreement," *akdn.org*, (May 12, 2016), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://www.akdn.org/press-release/portuguese-republic-and-ismaili-imamat-sign-research-cooperation-agreement.

Portugal's tradition of justifying colonialism, slavery and related racism in history schoolbooks has been analysed in recent years. In the case of slavery, any mentioning of racism is avoided and Portugal's role is trivialised by referring to "Arabs" – i.e. Muslims – as slave traders.[38] The entanglement of concepts of Europeanness, modernity, racism and slavery and their consequences on the present are neglected.[39] Racist descriptions of Africa and Africans as well as justifications of colonialism are recurrent. Similarly, the description of European history imparts stereotyped perceptions of supposed "Europeanness", tends to equate [white] Portugal and Europe with Western Europe's Roman Catholic Church,[40] and introduces the unchallenged concept of Muslims as threatening and as a people.[41]

In 2016, state representatives claimed that in national history books, the word *descoverta* (discovery) has been replaced by the term *expansão* (expansion)[42] and that in a colouring book and pencil project children were exposed to different skin tones represented by the colouring pencils.[43] It is questionable, however, whether such superficial changes have been accompanied by structural changes questioning relations of power and racism.

## Politics

On 9 March, Marcelo Rebeldo de Sousa was sworn in as the new president of Portugal. The very same day he participated at an interfaith ceremony in the Mosque of Lisbon and underlined his commitment as a defender of religious freedom in all its expressions.

On 5 September, 2016, the state's Commission of Religious Freedom[44] held a high-ranking conference on "Religious pluralism and citizenship". The conference was attended by high-ranking officials of the government and religious leaders and was opened by the Minister of Justice. In his inaugural speech, José de Sousa e Brito, co-author of the Religious Freedom Act, justice emeritus of the Constitutional Court in Lisbon and visiting professor at the Universidade Nova in Lisbon, commented on the relation between the Catholic creed and Islam. While he stressed that "Muslims have the

38. Marta Araújo/Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, "Slavery and racism as the "wrongs" of (European) history: reflections from a study on Portuguese textbooks," Douglas Hamilton/Kate Hodgson/Joel Quirk (eds.) *Slavery, Memory and Identity: National Representations and Global Legacies* (London, Brookfield: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), p. 160.

39. Ibid., p. 166.

40. Marta Araújo/Silvia Rodriguez Maeso, "History textbooks, racism and the critique of Eurocentrism: beyond rectification or compensation," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 7, (2011), p. 10.

41. One school book cited by Araújo and Rodriguez Maeso describes three "attacking peoples" that threatened Europe between the 7th and the 10th century: "the Muslims, the Normans and the Hungarians" (ibid., p. 10).

42. CERD, *Summary record of the 2501st meeting. CERD/C/SR.2501* (Geneva: CERD, 2016). Available from http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CERD%2fC%2fSR.2501&Lang=en (retrieved December 28, 2016).

43. Ibid., p. 7

44. Comissão da Liberdade Religiosa.

fundamental right not to be discriminated against",[45] he did not object to descriptions of Islam – also "European Islam" – as a "problem" and as inferior to the Catholic creed, and he did not counter assumptions of a supposed danger of a Muslim invasion. The Declaration for Dialogue, Religious Tolerance and Peace signed by 21 representatives from a broad variety of religious communities, however, underlines that the foundation for interfaith dialogue is the recognition of the equality of different creeds.[46]

## Media

The representation of Muslims in the Portuguese media has changed with time and has been closely related to political and economic developments. The emphasis on close and positive relations with Arab countries during the oil crisis[47] was replaced by more hostile images during the Gulf War of 1990/91 and extensive agreement in the media with Huntington's thesis of a "clash of civilizations". By the end of 1993, "terrorism was styled as militant and revolutionary Islam".[48] Von Kemnitz's analysis underlines that with short exceptions, "Portuguese Muslims often fall victim of biased concepts inherited from the past and contemporary international affairs. They can be detected in many comparisons made although there is no direct relationship between the cause and the comment. (…) In all these cases it is clear that the inheritance of the past, tributary to the spirit of the *Reconquista* and the Crusades is still prevailing".[49]

The Religious Freedom Act opened new spaces as it guarantees broadcasting time to religious communities.[50]

At present, media reports concerning Islam or Muslims focus extensively on terrorist acts committed by Muslims. Reports of Islamophobia in other European countries, especially Germany and France, are repeatedly publicised. Reports on Muslims in Portugal tend to focus on activities at the Mesquita Central de Lisboa and on the Ismaili community. Several of these media reports reflect anti-Muslim stereotypes.

Repeated terrorist attacks serve as trigger events to increase a charged atmosphere, also in reporting, as this illustrative example shows: in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Paris' Charlie Hebdo, the headline of an article summarising the position of the imam of the Mesquita Central de Lisboa reads "Those who are not

45. José de Sousa e Brito, "Pluralismo religioso e cidadania. Confêrencia - Debate Pluralismo Religioso e Cidadania," *clr.mj.pt*, (May 9, 2016), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://www.clr.mj.pt/sections/agenda/conferencia/conferencia-debate/conferencia-debate-pluralismo-religioso-cidadania_5set2016_fcgulbenkian/downloadFile/attachedFile_2_f0/discurso_do_Conselheiro_Jose_de_Sousa_Brito_5.9.2016.pdf?nocache=1476206570.77.

46. Declaracao Pelo Dialogo, Pela Tolerancia Religiosa E Pela Pez. (not dated), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://www.clr.mj.pt/sections/destaques/destaque-lateral-dir/assinatura-da-declaracao-dialogo-tolerancia-religiosa-paz-5set2016/downloadFile/attachedFile_f0/20160905-mj-lib-religiosa-declaracao.pdf.

47. Eva-Maria von Kemnitz, "Muslims as seen by the Portuguese press 1974-1999: Changes in the perception of Islam," W.A.R. Shadid/P.S. van Koningsveld (Eds.), *Intercultural relations and religious authorities: Muslims in the European Union* (Leuven, Paris, Dudley: Peeters, 2002), p. 13.

48. Ibid., p. 14f.

49. Ibid., p. 21.

50. Soares Loja, "Islam in Portugal", p. 200.

satisfied with living in a liberal country are free to emigrate".[51] A year and a half later and after the terrorist attack at a church in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, a longer and more elaborated message of the imam is summarised with the headline "A Muslim is not satisfied? So he should emigrate and leave us in peace with the discourse of hate".[52] In his discourse imam David Munir also refers to "problems of integration" of young Muslims in other European countries and stresses that Muslims in Europe are European Muslims. The complete quote from which the headline is extracted states "If a Muslim, whether he is born or not in Europe, is not satisfied with the freedom he was given, if he is not satisfied with the country where he lives, so he should emigrate, he should go to a different country where he can feel more fulfilled". While the statement of the imam also refers to problematic societal structures in other European countries, the headline and the illustration of the text are significantly more sinister than in 2015.

In 2015 and 2016, Imam David Munir gained the attention of the media due to an alleged case of domestic violence. The reports, which still available on the Internet, do not respect the basic rule of law that a person has to be considered innocent until proven otherwise.[53] One columnist called the alleged incident "an Islamic elbow strike" and exploited the news for disseminating anti-Muslim prejudice.[54] The closing of the case in April 2016 due to lack of evidence has not gained the same public media coverage on the Internet, and non-violence was not related to Islam.[55] In December 2016, more than half a year after the acquittal, the YouTube Canal M&M uploaded a vilifying report about the accusation and describes domestic violence as inherent in Islam.[56] Similarly, on 4 June, two months after the acquittal, "Alfonso do Portugal" posted a video on YouTube opposing the imam's visit to a girls' school, insulting the imam and accusing him of indoctrinating the girls.[57]

While this discriminatory reporting did not enter the *Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* (CERD) report procedure, it underlines

51. Anonymous, "Xeique Munir: "Se não estão satisfeitos em viver num país liberal, podem emigrar"", *Renascença*, (January 7, 2015), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://rr.sapo.pt/informacao_detalhe.aspx?did=174055.

52. Hugo Franco/David Munir, "Um muçulmano não está satisfeito? Então que emigre e nos deixe em paz com o discurso de ódio", *Expresso*, (July 27, 2015), retrieved December 28, 2016 from http://leitor.expresso.pt/#library/expressodiario/27-07-2016/caderno-1/temas-principais/um-muculmano-nao-esta-satisfeito-com-o-pais-onde-vive-entao-que-emigre-e-nos-deixe-em-paz-com-o-discurso-de-odio

53. Anonymous, "Sheik Munir acusado pela mulher de violência doméstica," *Jornal Sol* (August 8, 2015), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://sol.sapo.pt/artigo/406112/sheik-munir-acusado-pela-mulher-de-viol-ncia-domestica.

54. Maria João Marques, "A cotovelada islámica," *Observator* (August 12, 2015), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://observador.pt/opiniao/a-cotovelada-islamica/.

55. It was reported in the printed journal *Correiro* on April 5, 2016.

56. YouTube-Video "osheik david munir "agride mulher á cotovelada"", from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fU-TNVtKGlI (retrieved December 28, 2016).

57. YouTube-Video "David "cotovelada" Munir lava o cérebro das crianças madeirenses!", from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PNdNEm025mE (retrieved December 28, 2016).

CERD's concern about "the persistence of racist hate speech and behaviour (…) particularly against persons belonging to minorities, notably Roma, Muslims, Africans/people of African descent as well as migrants. The Committee is also concerned about the limited information provided on measures taken to prosecute and punish such acts."[58]

## Justice System

The Religious Freedom Act was passed by Parliament on 26 April, 2001, and significantly improved the legal status of religious minorities. Before the act's enforcement, religious communities other than the Catholic Church could only be recognised as "associations in private law".[59] The Religious Freedom Act guarantees the same tax regulations for all recognised religious communities and the right to religious instruction at schools.[60] Under the Religious Freedom Act the state recognises marriages according to the rites of the respective religion as legal marriages when the partners decide to combine civil and religious ceremonies.[61] Equal access to spiritual assistance is guaranteed for Muslim soldiers, patients and inmates; however, administrative procedures make access to prisons difficult.[62] Before the passing of the act, parents had to select the names of their children from lists approved by the government. The Religious Freedom Act includes the right of students to observe religious holidays and, in a more restricted way, guarantees the same right to employees.[63]

In contradiction to the Religious Freedom Act, in 2010, 19.4% of the population considered that the practice of Muslim faith had to be restricted significantly.[64]

There are no restrictions on the headscarf, the burkini or any other clothing related to Islam or other religions in Portugal.

## Internet

In addition to already mentioned films posted on YouTube, websites spreading anti-Muslim stereotypes include amigodeisrael.blogspot.de, maquinazero.wordpress.

58. CERD, "Concluding observations on the fifteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of Portugal CERD/C/PRT/CO/15-17," *tbinternet.ohchr.org*, (December 9, 2016), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/PRT/CERD_C_PRT_CO_15-17_26017_E.pdf.

59. Nina Clara Tiesler, "No bad news from the European margin. The new Islamic presence in Portugal," p. 448.

60. Fernando Soares Loja, "Islam in Portugal," p. 199f.

61. Ibid., p. 198.

62. Ricardo J. Rodrigues, "Os muçulmanos estão mais tristes do que toda a gente com o terrorismo," *Noticiasmagazine*, (March 16, 2015), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://www.noticiasmagazine.pt/2015/os-muculmanos-estao-mais-tristes-do-que-toda-a-gente-com-o-terrorismo/.

63. Fernando Soares Loja, "Islam in Portugal", p. 198f.

64. Detlef Pollack, "Studie „Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt". Bevölkerungsumfrage des Exzellenzclusters *Religion und Politik* unter Leitung des Religionssoziologen Prof. Dr. Detlef Pollack," *uni-muenster.de*, retrieved December 28, 2016, from https://www.uni-muenster.de/imperia/md/content/religion_und_politik/aktuelles/2010/12_2010/studie_wahrnehmung_und_akzeptanz_religioeser_vielfalt.pdf.

com and a group on Facebook with the name "Portuguese against Islam" (facebook.com/portuguesascontraoislao).

During 2015 and 2016, an Internet petition circulated against the construction of a mosque in Mouraria, Lisbon. Up to this time, the petition has been signed by 6,678 persons. Among other reasons, the petition argues that the construction would "contribute to social alarm, taking into consideration the expansionism of Islamic extremism in the Middle East and North Africa which threatens Portugal, since at the moment we know that there exist radical Muslims who strive for the integration of the Iberian peninsula into a great Islamic caliphate".[65]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

While Portuguese Muslims and non-Muslims tend to insist that there is no Islamophobia in Portugal, stereotyping of Muslims is widespread and has a long historical tradition. The perception of Muslims as non-Portuguese, non-European and therefore inferior and potentially dangerous is deeply rooted in the country's precolonial and colonial history. Similarly, the perception of racism as an "imported" problem echoes late colonial discourses.

Political parties in Portugal do no exploit anti-Muslim stereotypes in their election campaigns, and representatives of Muslim communities and the government co-operate at the highest level. This symbolic recognition is of crucial importance for the peaceful coexistence of a diverse population.

The analysis of schoolbooks however shows that euphemizing the colonial past and homogenizing constructions of "Europeanness" and "Portuguese identity" as white and Roman Catholic continue to prevail.

Portuguese media report critically on anti-Muslim racism in other countries. At the same time, when referring to members of the Portuguese Muslim population, media tend to replicate stereotypes and engage in processes of Othering (e.g. presenting Muslim men as violent and inclined to domestic violence, or Muslims as incapable of having humour, etc.). Anti-Muslim racism on the Internet goes unpunished even when defamations clearly contradict basic notions of the rule of law.

Systematic information about anti-Muslim harassment or protests is not available, as there is no NGO or institution that collects information about such incidents systematically.

Governmental institutions and NGOs should join forces to implement CERD's recommendation to "intensify the efforts to raise the awareness of public, civil servants and law enforcement officials of the importance of cultural diversity and inter-

65. Peticao Publica, "Contra a construção de mais uma mesquita em Lisboa," *peticaopublica.com*, (not dated), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://peticaopublica.com/pview.aspx?pi=PT76702.

ethnic understanding in order to combat stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination against refugees, migrants, Roma, Muslims, and Africans people of African descent".[66]

Legal measures against hate speech and defamation on the Internet should be further developed and proactively made known and accessible to representatives of Muslim communities as well as local associations.

Journalists and interviewers should receive specific training to reflect their role and responsibility in processes of Othering and stereotyping.

Schoolbooks and curricula should be revised in order to recognise the historical multicultural and multireligious tradition of Portugal as well as the legacy of colonialism and racism, and the related privileges of the majority population.

Special attention should be given to research, documentation and action in favour of people affected by intersectional discrimination, i.e., black, poor and female Muslims.

## Chronology

- **19 February:** Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa offers to relocate refugees as an act of solidarity with Greece.
- **7 March:** The Portuguese government gives the green light for the acquisition of the Henrique Mendonça House by the Aga Khan Foundation in order to serve as the new Ismaili world headquarters.
- **9 March:** Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa is sworn in as the new president of Portugal. The same day he participates at an interfaith ceremony in the Mosque of Lisbon and presents himself as a defender of religious freedom in all its expressions.[67]
- **12 May:** The Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education of the Portuguese Republic and the Ismaili Imamat sign an Agreement of Cooperation.

66. CERD, "Concluding observations on the fifteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of Portugal CERD/C/PRT/CO/15-17," p. 4.

67. YouTube-Video "Portugal - new president attends ceremony at Lisbon mosque | Editor's Pick | 9 March 16," from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szaWCvbSD4k (retrieved December 28, 2016).

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN RUSSIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

In contrast to many European countries, Muslims are indigenous to Russia. However, as a result of growing nationalist and isolationist sentiments and the narrow-minded consciousness of Russian society coupled with ill-conceived state confessional politics, Russian Muslims tend to be associated with "aliens" and even enemies by the average Russian.

According to the Constitution, Russia is a secular state. However, de facto Orthodoxy has historically enjoyed more privileges. The issue is so critical for the Russian Orthodox Church that when Muslim figures and organisations stand up for the principle of the secular nature of the state and equidistance of all religious denominations from the authorities and public institutions, it often leads to Islamophobic statements on the part of individuals and institutions that sympathize with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Islamophobic incidents in Russia, unlike in the rest of Europe, are not comprehensively monitored by NGOs, Islamic religious organisations or Muslim mass media. Human rights organisations here tend to have little interest in the violation of Muslims' rights. Muslim mass media prefer to write about Islamophobia in the West, leaving the problem in Russia almost unreported. The two exceptions are the online resources "Golos Islama" ("Voice of Islam"), which is based outside of Russia, and Ansar.ru. In the public space we hardly hear the voice of Islamic leaders on cases of discrimination and oppression of Muslims, although the problem exists. In such circumstances, local Muslim communities in Russian regions are often forced to confront the challenges that constantly emerge before them on their own without seeking support from the leaders of the two all-Russian Muftiates and human rights defenders.

The general attitude of the Russian authorities to Islam and Muslims can be described as cautious. In the eyes of the officials Muslims fall into two categories: extremists and non-extremists. To indicate the latter the term "traditional Islam" is often used; its main feature is loyalty to the governing regime. The significant number of cases of Muslims falling victims of the repressive measures of the law enforcement authorities come under the banner of the fight against extremism: religious organisations are categorized as extremist, Islamic literature is included in the list of extremist materials. Among the positive trends of recent years, we should note the state's continuing fight against xenophobia and racism in the public space.

# Краткая Аннотация Для Руководства

Отличительной особенностью России является то, что мусульмане здесь, в отличие от многих стран Европы, являются коренным населением. Тем не менее, в результате роста националистических и изоляционистских настроений в российском обществе в сочетании с непродуманной государственной конфессиональной политикой, российские мусульмане, как правило, ассоциируются в обывательском сознании с «чужими» и даже врагами.

Согласно Конституции, Россия является светским государством. Однако де-факто православие в стране обладает большими правами и пользуется большими привилегиями, чем другие религии. Одним из поводов для исламофобии со стороны отдельных лиц и институтов, симпатизирующих РПЦ, являются попытки мусульманских деятелей и организаций отстаивать принцип светского характера государства и равноудаленности всех конфессий от власти и государственных институтов.

Случаи исламофобии в мире отслеживаются различными правозащитными организациями и исламскими религиозными структурами и мусульманскими СМИ. В России наблюдается иная картина. Правозащитные организации, как правило, мало интересуются темой нарушения прав мусульман. Что касается мусульманских СМИ, то они предпочитают писать об исламофобии на Западе, мало затрагивая данную проблему в самой России. Исключение составляет электронные ресурсы «Голос Ислама», находящийся за рубежом, и Ансар.ру. Исламские лидеры редко публично комментируют случаи дискриминации и угнетения мусульман, хотя такие случаи существуют. В таких условиях местные мусульманские общины в регионах России часто вынуждены противостоять вызовам, которые постоянно возникают перед ними сами по себе, не рассчитывая на поддержку со стороны лидеров двух всероссийских муфтиятов и правозащитников.

Отношение российских властей к исламу и мусульманам в целом можно охарактеризовать как настороженное. В глазах чиновников мусульмане делятся на экстремистов и неэкстремистов. Для обозначения последних часто используется термин «традиционный ислам», одним из главнейших признаков которого считается лояльность по отношению к правящему режиму. Значительное число случаев, когда мусульмане становятся жертвами репрессий со стороны правоохранительных органов, как раз происходят под лозунгами борьбы с экстремизмом. При этом, как отмечают правозащитные организации, имеется немало примеров неправомерного применения антиэкстремистского законодательства, как в отношении отдельных лиц, так и в отношении религиозных организаций. Среди позитивных тенденций последних лет, следует отметить сохраняющуюся борьбу государства против ксенофобии и расизма в публичном пространстве.

# Introduction

A distinctive feature of Russia is that Muslims here, in contrast to many European countries, are considered as autochthonous people. The first Muslims appeared in the territory of contemporary Russia (in southern Dagestan) when Prophet Muhammad was still alive.[1] In 922, Islam was declared the state religion of Volga Bulgaria, a state located in the territory of contemporary Tatarstan, Chuvashia, the Samara region and some other Russian regions. In 1313, Khan Uzbek declared Islam the state religion of the Golden Horde. At that time most of the territory of modern contemporary Russia was part of the Golden Horde. Thus, Islam became the de facto official religion of the state which was a legal predecessor of Muscovite Russia that united the former territories of the Golden Horde in Eurasia.

In modern Russia, Islam is the second largest religion after Orthodoxy. Reliable data on the exact number of Muslims living in Russia, however, is absent and the subject of speculation by religious and political leaders.

The largest ethnic Muslim group in Russia is Tatars. They make up 5.31 million people. A substantial part of Tatars (approx. 60%) live outside of the Republic of Tatarstan. For example, in the two largest Russian cities, Moscow and St. Petersburg, the Tatar population amounts to 166,000 people and 35,600 people respectively. Among other major ethnic groups which traditionally follow Islam are Bashkirs (1.58 million people) and Chechens (1.43 million people).[2] Separate mention should be made of migrants from Muslim republics of Central Asia and Azerbaijan, both legal and illegal. According to various estimations their number in Russia is between 4.5[3] and 7 million people.[4]

According to the Constitution, Russia is a secular state (Article 14). However, de facto Orthodoxy has historically enjoyed more rights and privileges in comparison with other religions. Individuals and institutions display Islamophobic attitudes when Muslim figures and organisations stand up for the principle of the secular nature of the state and the equidistance of all religious denominations from the authorities and public institutions. For instance, the chairman of one of the major Muslim religious organisations, Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation (DUM RF), Ravil Gainutdin, who is known to uphold equal rights for Muslims, representatives of other faiths and atheists, has been declared a Wahhabi

1. Amri R. Shihsaidov, "Rasprostranenie Islama v Dagestane (The spread of Islam in Dagestan)," *Islamovedenie*, No. 1 (2010), p. 34.

2. All-Russian census, retrieved January 1, 2017 from www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/perepis_itogi1612.htm.

3. Yulia Florinskaya, "The scale of labor migration to Russia," *The Russian International Affairs Council* (RIAC), (September 13, 2013), retrieved January, 1 2017 from http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=2342#6

4. Elena Warshawskaya & Mikhail Denisenko, "The Russians are not ready to work," *Demoscope Weekly*, (2014), retrieved January 1, 2017 from http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2015/0663/tema01.php.

(which in the Russian context equates to an extremist) and a protector of Islamic radicalism by nationalist publicists.[5]

Islamophobic incidents worldwide are monitored by various human rights organisations, Islamic religious organisations and Muslim mass media. One can observe a different picture in Russia. Human rights organisations here tend to have little interest in the violation of the rights of Muslims. The exception is the situation of Crimean Tatars.[6]

As for the Muslim mass media, they prefer to write about Islamophobia in the West, leaving the problem in Russia almost unreported.[7] An exception is the online resource "Golos Islama" ("Voice of Islam"), which is run from outside of Russia by the Muslim political exile of Russian origin Dmitry Chernomorchenko.[8] This resource highlights acute problems of the Muslim community in Russia, including the problem of Islamophobia. Another Muslim mass media outlet that covers the problem of Islamophobia in Russia on a nationwide scale is the online resource Ansar.ru.

A significant role in the protection of the rights of Muslims can be played by religious leaders. However, in Russia, as the human rights protection center Sova rightly pointed out in one of its reports: "In the public space we hardly hear the voice of Islamic leaders on cases of discrimination and harassment of Muslims in Russia, although the problem exists."[9] If Muslim religious figures sometimes approach this topic, they tend to do this in a very careful way accompanying their words with a lot of reservations and complimentary words to the authorities.

This position is the result of a consciously chosen strategy. At present there is no single Islamic authority in Russia. Instead, there are two major Muslim religious associations (spiritual administrations) which claim to represent all Muslims of Russia: the Central Spiritual Administration of Muslims (TsDUM) with headquarters in Ufa and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Russian Federation (DUM

5. EurAsia Daily, "Roman Silantyev: pora stavit' vopros o zaprete vahhabisma v Rossii (Roman Silantyev: It's time to raise the issue of a total ban on Wahhabism in Russia)," *eadaily.com*, (January, 29 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017 from https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2016/01/29/roman-silantev-pora-stavit-vopros-o-polnom-zaprete-vahhabizma-i-deyatelnosti-soveta-muftiev-rossii.

6. Sova ("Owl") is perhaps the only all-Russian human rights organisation which focuses on the monitoring of Islamophobia. However, there is no special section dedicated to Islamophobia on the centre's website. Crimes against Islam tend to fall into the section on xenophobic acts of vandalism. Actions against Muslims are classified as both xenophobic and racist. On 30 December, 2016, the Ministry of Justice included Sova on the list of NGOs which are considered as foreign agents leading to excessive administrative and reporting obligations for the centre and more thorough control of its activities.

7. For example websites (http://islamreview.ru/ and http://islam-today.ru/) have sections on Islamophobia, but almost all of the materials mentioned are instances of Islamophobia in the West.

8. In 2012, Dmitry Chernomorchenko was forced to leave Russia for fear of persecution by the Russian secret service.

9. Ksenia Sergazina, "Osnovnye problemnye zony vo vzaimootnosheniah obshestva, religii i gosudarstva v Rossii v 2016 godu (Main problem areas in the relationship of society, religion and the state in Russia in 2016)," *Center for information and analysis Sova*, (November 3, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017 from http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/publications/2016/11/d35769/?print=1.

RF)[10] with headquarters in Moscow. Each of the two all-Russian Muftiates has its own strategy as far as relations with the authorities are concerned. TsDUM headed by Talgat Tadzhuddin has traditionally been loyal not only to the state administrations, but also to the Russian Orthodox Church. By recognizing Russia as an Orthodox state, the head of TsDUM balances his words and actions with the interests of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Another strategy was chosen by a competing Muftiate, the DUM RF. One of the cornerstones of the ideology of the DUM RF is criticism of TsDUM's loyal position in relation to the Russian Orthodox Church. At the same time, the DUM RF demonstrates complete loyalty to the secular authorities of Russia. Therefore, the Muftiate opposes manifestations of Islamophobia mainly in cases which have to do with the actions of the Russian Orthodox Church that violate, in the opinion of the head of the DUM RF Ravil Gaynutdin and his colleagues, the secular character of the state. Thus, it has less to do with protecting the interests of ordinary Muslims and more to do with the corporate interests of the DUM RF since the Russian Orthodox Church is its competitor in the struggle for influence over the secular power. The above may be the reason behind the silence of Islamic religious leaders in connection with the violation of the rights of Muslims in Crimea.[11]

In my opinion, understanding how Muslim affairs are administered in modern Russia is necessary to adequately assess the problem of Islamophobia and the spiritual associations' potential to protect the rights of Muslims.

As can be seen from the above, not only individuals, but also public authorities can be victims of Islamophobia. The general attitude of the Russian authorities towards Islam and Muslims can be described as cautious. In the eyes of the officials, Muslims fall into two categories: extremists and non-extremists. To indicate the latter the term "traditional Islam" is often used and its main feature is loyalty to the governing regime.[12] Those who do not fall into the category of followers of "traditional Islam" are labeled by some conservative commentators as Wahhabi and extremists.[13]

10. Later in this report I will also use another name for this organisation, namely the Council of Muftis of Russia.

11. Ksenia Sergazina, "Osnovnye problemnye zony vo vzaimootnosheniah obshestva, religii i gosudarstva v Rossii v 2016 godu ("Main problem areas in the relationship of society, religion and the state in Russia in 2016")," *Sova Center*, (November 3, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017 from http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/publications/2016/11/d35769/?print=1.

12. Thus, according to one of the most prominent Russian Islamophobes Roman Silantyev, "in Russia traditional Islam is that Islam which teaches Muslims to be law-abiding citizens of Russia and at the same time, of course, respect the Christian majority" (Andrey Mel'nikov, Anton Kurilovych, "Forced peaceful inter-confessional coexistence (Prinuzhdenie k mezhobschinnomu miru)," *NG-Religii*, (February 2, 2011), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.ng.ru/ng_religii/2011-02-02/1_islam.html.

13. Propaganda of this idea is a central thread of almost all publications of R. Silantyev mentioned above, including the recently published monograph: Roman A. Silantyev, *Sovet muftiev: istorija odnoi fitny (Council of muftis: history of one fitna)*, (Moscow: RISI, 2015).

A significant number of cases when Muslims fall victims of repressive measures by the state come under the banner of the fight against extremism. At the same time, as noted by human rights organisations, there are significant instances of misuse of anti-extremism legislation, both with regard to individuals and religious organisations.[14]

This report only considers cases where Muslims became victims of persecution because of their religious beliefs, including those cases when such views may have violated the current legislation of Russia.

The geographical scope of this report covers the territory of Russia, as well as the Crimean Peninsula, which is home to a significant Muslim minority, namely the Crimean Tatars. As of 2014, the territory has been under the jurisdiction of the Russian authorities; in other words, it is the Russian authorities who are responsible for Islamophobic incidents on this territory.

It is important to note that both in Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as in the Russian regions, there have been many cases which can be characterised as acts of Islamophobia. Therefore, for the purposes of this report I paid attention only to the most high-profile cases which have attracted much public attention in the country. It is also important to note that it is difficult to keep records of such cases for the following reasons. Firstly, law enforcement authorities have intensified the repression of crimes which are based on racism and xenophobia, and those who commit them are no longer inclined to declare them publicly for fear of prosecution. Secondly, the mass media now, unlike in the 2000s, pay little attention to such crimes. They follow the recommendations of the authorities to refrain from covering these incidents.[15] Thirdly, the victims themselves do not always go to the police.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Education

In June 2016, a young Muslim woman Sofia and her mother applied for admission to the College of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Both women were wearing *hijabs*. The chairman of the selection committee looked at Sofia's mother and advised her and her daughter to find another place to study. When the girl's mother demanded clarification, the chairman told her the following: "Yes, we're bi-

14. Olga Sibireva, "Problemy realizacii svobody sovesty v Rossii v aprele – iune 2016 goda (Challenges to Freedom of Conscience in Russia in April – June 2016)," *Sova Center*, (July 11, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017 from http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/publications/2016/07/d35008/.

15. Natalia Yudina & Vera Alperovich, "Xenophobia i radikal'ny nacionalizm i protivodeistvie im v Rossii v pervoi polovine 2016 goda (Xenophobia and radical nationalism and opposition to them in Russia in the first half of 2016)," *Sova Center*, (July 13, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017 from http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/publications/2016/07/d35018/. There is a rationale to such a strategy, since the perpetrators of crimes motivated by racial or religious hatred often commit these actions while striving for publicity.

ased, but we don't need Muslims here! You can, of course, submit your documents, but I can guarantee that your daughter won't be enrolled!"[16]

A week later, on 1 July, one more incident took place on the territory of MGIMO-University. This time Alfia, an enrollee who wears the *hijab*, was not allowed to enter the university building. The deputy security chief told her: "If you want to study, take off the *hijab*".[17] After much coverage in the media,[18] the university administration tried to silence the issue, and the girl was allowed to enter university grounds.[19] Since then, the story has not been covered in the press.

The topic of the resistance of authorities to Muslim women's traditional headscarf (*hijab*) has repeatedly appeared in the media in the course of 2016. One of the regions where this problem has received a great response was the Republic of Mordovia. Thus, in September 2016 the administration of the secondary school in the village of Altar stated that schoolgirls could no longer wear *hijabs* at school. If they didn't obey the ban, the school administration threatened to register them with the juvenile commission or expel them.[20] In December, the prohibition to wear *hijabs* was introduced for teachers of the secondary school in Belozerye in the Republic of Mordovia.

A meeting of the antiterrorist commission was held at the school during which the school teachers were accused as being responsible for the radicalization of the pupils. The former headmistress who was a Muslim was removed from office, and the new headmistress, a secular woman, issued an order which amended the school's internal regulations to prohibit teachers from wearing *hijabs* at work. Failure to do so will result in a fine.

In the end, as a result of the pressure, some teachers had to resign, and others agreed to uncover and to continue working. A few days later, on 26 December, the women who refused to disregard their moral principles and take off their *hijabs* were requested to write explanatory letters. When attorney Marat Ashimov came to help the women, this angered members of the antiterrorist commission and, as a precautionary measure, they called the FSB and the police. "As the law and public order were not disturbed by anyone, law enforcement and security service officers remained as outside observers," said the attorney.

16. Sova Center, "Women in the Muslim headscarf were not allowed to enter MGIMO and the College of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," *sova-center.ru*, (July 5, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harassment/non_state_discrimination/2016/07/d34976/

17. Ibid.

18. Marina Lemutkina, "Enrolee was not allowed to enter MGIMO-University," *Moskovskiy Komsomoletc*, (July, 3, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from www.mk.ru/social/2016/07/03/abiturientku-v-khidzhabe-ne-zakhotelipuskat-v-mgimo.html.

19. Sova Center, "Women in the Muslim headscarf were not allowed to enter MGIMO and the College of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," *sova Center*, (July 5, 2016), retrieved January, 1 2017, from www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harassment/non_state_discrimination/2016/07/d34976/.

20. Ansar, "In Mordovia schoolgirls are not allowed to wear hijabs again," *ansar.ru*, (September 30, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.ansar.ru/sobcor/v-mordovii-shkolnicam-vnov-zapreshhayut-platki.

Soon the officials left the school, and the next day, on 28 December, the teachers were again asked to write explanatory letters, but this time in the presence of the attorney. In the document the teachers noted that "they could not take off the *hijabs*, as it is contrary to their moral and ethical principles, as well as the requirements of their religion." Now, the attorney intends to file a complaint with the labour inspectorate and the prosecutor's office.

## Media

In Russia, there are many federal and regional media that publish Islamophobic materials. The newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and the radio station Komsomolskaya Pravda, which are owned by the same holding company, are the first that should be mentioned. In these media outlets there often appear materials containing openly Islamophobic statements. Almost every piece produced by journalist Darya Aslamova is devoted to the issues of Islam, where it is presented as an absolute evil opposed to the Christian civilization.[21]

Figure 1: Darya Aslamova (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*)

One of the typical activities of xenophobes and Islamophobes is to search for information about crimes in which the suspect or accused is a immigrant and use this information for injecting anti-immigrant and Islamophobic sentiments into the public space. Two news pieces have caused great public response and a wave of Islamophobia and xenophobia in the year under review: the 2016 New Year's Eve events in Cologne, where local women were attacked allegedly by immigrants, and the killing of a child by an immigrant nanny in Moscow. The line of conduct of the majority of Russian media, first of all the state-controlled media, in these two instances deserves special attention. The latter paid much attention to what happened in Cologne; however, the case of the nanny-murderer was almost passed over.

The federal media that actively covered the incidents in Cologne have greatly contributed to the rise of Islamophobia in Russian society at the beginning of 2016. The task of Russian semi-official media was to expose, for propaganda purposes, the many threats and challenges faced by Europe today, and to contribute to the idea of the apparent split of Western society. Numerous materials appeared that pointed

21. See for example: Darya Aslamova, "Esli nichego ne izmenitsa, zhitelyam Germanii ostanetsa libo islam libo Nazism (If nothing changes, the residents of Germany will have no choice other than Islam or Nazism)," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, (January 17, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.kompravda.eu/daily/26481.7/3351106/; Darya Aslamova, "Nashestvie bezhentcev: cherez desyat let Evropa prevratitsa v Evro-Arabiyu (Invasion of refugees: in ten years Europe will become a Euro-Arabia)," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, (July 13, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.kompravda.eu/daily/26554/3570567/; Darya Aslamova, "I Eiffeleva bashnya stanet minaretom. Samym vysokym v mire… (*And the Eiffel Tower will become the minaret. The highest in the world …*)," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, (July 15, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.kp.by/daily/26555/3571858/ and others.

out how dangerous it has become to live in Europe because of the influx of refugees and the avalanche of Islamization.[22] Some journalists represented the incidents in Cologne as the integral part of the Arab-Muslim culture.[23]

At the same time, the Russian media did not hesitate to engage in fabricating false news. So, on 16 January, in the story shown on the Russian "First Channel", it was told that three people (allegedly immigrants from the Middle East) had raped 13-year-old girl Lisa from a Russian-speaking family in Berlin.[24] The news was repeated by many Russian media. Later, it turned out that this story was made up by Russian journalists.[25] As expected, these stories predictably caused a wave of xenophobia and Islamophobia in Russia.

The federal Russian media reacted in a different way to a crime that took place in Moscow. On 29 February, Gyulchehra Bobokulova, a citizen of Uzbekistan, was arrested in Moscow near the October Field metro station. She held the severed head of a child in her hands. The woman was dressed in black and shouting "Allah Akbar".[26] Forty minutes passed before the police, who were nearby, arrested her.[27]

The investigation revealed that the woman had worked as the nanny of the murdered girl. When the victim's parents were gone, Bobokulova killed the child, severed the head and set the apartment on fire.

During a psychiatric examination it was established that the accused woman suffered from a mental disorder.[28] The woman said she had committed the crime in retaliation for the bombing in Syria.[29] Most of the federal TV channels did

22. Darya Aslamova, "Akcija protesta v Munchene: borotsa s islamizaciei vyshlo v 10 raz menshe lyudei chem borcov s protestuyushimi (The protest in Munich: Ten times fewer people went on the streets to protest against Islamization than to protest against this very action)," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, (January 11, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.kp.by/daily/26478.5/3348892/.

23. Yulia Latynina, "Taharrush po-rossiyski (Taharrush in the Russian way)," *Novaya Gazeta*, (January 13, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from

24. Chanel One Russia, "Germania: interview s rodstvennikami iznasilovannoy 13-letney devochki bezhencami v Berline (Germany: interview with relatives of the 13-year old girl raped by asylum seekers in Berlin)," video uploaded by You-Tube user *Achtung Partisanen*, (January 17, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9CwH_bdglA.

25. Deutsche Welle, "Policiya opровergla soobsheniya SMI ob iznasilovanii Russkoi devochki v Berline (The Police refuted the information that had been previously published by the media about a Russian girl having been raped in Berlin)," dw.com, (January 17, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.dw.com/ru/полиция-опровергла-сообщения-сми-об-изнасиловании-русской-девочки-в-берлине/a-18985480.

26. RBC.ru, "KPRF izobrazila zhenschinu s golovoy rebenka v rukah v materialah o migrantah (KPRF depicted a woman with a head of a child in her hands in the story about migrants)," *rbc.ru*, (March 2, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.rbc.ru/politics/02/03/2016/56d732f59a79474d07f9bae5.

27. Dni.ru, "Kak policiya zaderzhivala nyanyu-ubiytcu (How police arrested nanny-murderer)," *dni.ru*, (March 2, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from https://dni.ru/incidents/2016/3/2/329800.html.

28. Radio Svoboda, "Sud v Moskve snova prodlil arest nyane po delu ob ubiystve rebenka (The court in Moscow extended the term of detention of the nanny-murderer who is suspected of killing a child),f" *svoboda.org*, (October 24, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.svoboda.org/a/28072135.html.

29. Radio Svoboda, "Nyanya otomstila Putinu za Siriyu (Nanny took revenge on Putin for Syria)," *svoboda.org*, (March 3, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.svoboda.org/a/27587249.html.

not broadcast news of the incident.[30] Social network users were split in their assessment of the role of the media in reporting the incident. Some supported the decision of the management of federal channels to refrain from covering the story so as not to provoke ethnic conflict, while others blamed television for unnecessary tolerance.[31]

In the first hours after Bobokulova's arrest, hundreds of messages appeared in social networks that incited ethnic and religious hatred in connection with the murder of the girl. Charges were also heard against the "corrupt media and police".[32] It is noteworthy that of all Russian political parties the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) behaved in the most aggressive manner. The Moscow City Committee of the CPRF created a dedicated website, where they called to urgently tighten migration legislation in Russia and introduce a visa regime for the countries of Central Asia.[33] The site also published a picture where a silhouette of a Muslim woman in *hijab* was depicted with a bloody head in her hands. The image was placed in a red circle which was crossed out in red. The image provoked the criticism of politicians from the same party.[34] Leaders of the Communist Party were forced to make excuses and argue that the placement of the picture was the initiative of the Moscow City Communist Party.[35] The image was later removed from the website.

Figure 2: Islamophobic cartoon published on the website of the Moscow Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (rentv.ru)

30. Newsru.com, "Federal'noe TV proignorirovalo ubiystvo devochki v Moskve, a Kreml' podderzhal reshenie telekanalov (Federal television ignored the murder of the girl in Moscow and the Kremlin supported this decision)," *newsru.com*, (March 1, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.newsru.com/russia/01mar2016/channels.html.

31. About the reaction of social networks to this crime see: Ivan Belyaev, "Begushie politseiskie i molchaschie telekanaly (The running policemen and silent television)," *Radio Svoboda*, (March 1, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.svoboda.org/a/27582268.html.

32. Press.lv, "Nado bylo ee pristrelit'! V Rossii kritikuyut deistviya policii pri zaderzhanii nyani-ubiycy (They should have shot her! Policemen in Russia are being criticized for their conduct in the course of nanny-murderer's arrest)," *press.lv*, (March 2, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://press.lv/post/nado-bylo-eyo-pristrelit-v-rossii-kritikuyut-dejstviya-politsii-pri-zaderzhanii-nyani-ubijtsy/.

33. KPRF, "Ostanovim nelegalnuyu migratsiyu (Let's put an end to illegal migration)," http://stopmigration.kprf.ru/, (not dated), retrieved January, 1 2017.

34. For example, the State Duma deputy from the faction of "A Just Russia" Oleg Pakholkov asked the Russian Prosecutor General Yuri Chaika to check if the publication of this picture constituted a crime under Article 282 of the Criminal Code ("Inciting hatred or enmity") and accused the communists of inciting ethnic hatred.

35. Vzglyad.ru, "Zyuganov otkrestilsya ot risunka zhenschiny s golovoy v rukah na saite KPRF (Zyuganov says he didn't authorize the posting of the picture of a woman with a head in her hands on the KPRF's website)," *vz.ru*, (March 3, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://vz.ru/news/2016/3/3/797709.print.html.

## Politics

It should be noted that racist remarks against Muslims made by representatives of both systemic and non-systemic (i.e. not represented in the parliament) opposition have already become commonplace in Russia. The only political party which until recently had stayed away from Islamophobic rhetoric was the Yabloko Party. This social-democratic party of the European type defends political and economic rights of citizens regardless of their religion and nationality. However, in August, shortly before the elections in the State Duma the statements made by one of the party leaders, Sergei Mitrokhin, caused a scandal. In the published record of an informal conversation with a journalist of the Islamnews website, Mitrokhin expressed insulting words against Islam.[36] After the scandal was uncovered, Mitrokhin apologized, noting that "the conversation was conducted in a specific way, with a tinge of irony, when statements cannot reflect what one actually thinks. I have always argued in favour of inter-ethnic and inter-religious peace in Russia."[37] According to some experts, Mitrokhin became the victim of a successful provocation aimed at discrediting the Yabloko Party in the eyes of Muslim voters.[38]

Among other important events that led to the appearance of Islamophobic materials in the media and social networks, we should note the Russian-Turkish conflict over Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane in the autumn of 2015. However, the orientation of most of the material was anti-Turkish rather than anti-Islamic.[39]

As far as the tragic events in Berlin in December are concerned, where a terrorist attacked people at a Christmas market, the reaction of Russian mass media was moderate, representing a mere statement of fact without speculations about the identity of the terrorist or the so-called European migrant crisis.

## Internet

A large number of Islamophobic materials can be found on the social networking site VKontakte. In fact, a list of extremist literature that is compiled by the Russian Ministry of Justice in accordance with Federal Law "On counteracting extremist activity" No. 114-FZ dated 25 July, 2002 (discussed in more detail below), is to a large extent made up by the materials found on this social networking site. Among Islamophobic materials that are worth noting here is a video entitled "The true face of Islam. Incest

36. Segodnia.ru, "Gopnik? Fashist? Xenofob? (Hooligan? Fascist? Xenophobe?)," *segodnia.ru*, (May 21, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.segodnia.ru/content/175970.

37. Moskovskoe Yabloko, "Sergei Mitrokhin prines ofitsialnie izvinenia (Sergei Mitrokhin apologized)," *mosyabloko.ru*, (September 9, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.mosyabloko.ru/node/324.

38. Golos Islama, "Kak Mitrokhin ot "Yabloka" musul'man otkusil (How Mitrokhin has thrown Muslims out of Yabloko)," *golosislama.com*, (August 9 2016), retrieved January, 1 2017, from https://golosislama.com/news.php?id=30050.

39. Radio Svoboda, "Strah i nenavist' v Rossii (Fear and hatred in Russia)," *svoboda.org*, (December 4, 2015), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.svoboda.org/a/27406894.html.

as a weapon of genocide of white people" which was posted on the personal page of Edward Rudnev on the social networking site VKontakte.[40]

One of the manifestations of Islamophobia is the creation of visual images, so-called demotivators. For instance, on the personal page of the Rodnoverie Party on the same social networking site (Vkontakte) there is a demotivator containing an image of women in black robes (*hijabs*) holding firearms in their hands and a comment: "If you don't fight against Islam, Islam will fight against you".[41] Another prohibited material that was found on the same personal page is a demotivator depicting sexual contact between men, accompanied by the text describing the concept of "limited homosexuality" and a comment: "ISLAM is so moral and uncorrupted".[42]

## Justice System

One of the tools used to enforce the anti-extremist legislation is a list of banned literature. Since 2007, Russia has been compiling a list of extremist literature ("Federal List of Extremist Literature") in accordance with the Federal Law "On Counteracting Extremist Activity" mentioned above. The list includes books, articles, pamphlets and brochures, issues of newspapers and magazines, movies, videos, musical works and artistic works. The list is updated and published on the website of the Russian Ministry of Justice each year. Circulation of the literature included on this list in Russia is prohibited and is subject to criminal prosecution. Pursuant to the decisions of Russian courts of different levels, various Islamic books and other materials have been included on the Federal List of Extremist Literature. It should be noted that along with literature with obviously extremist content, certain classical theological literature has also been included on the list. This may stem from the fact that investigative and judicial authorities often involve experts who have no special training in matters of Islam and in some cases are clearly opposed to Islam and Muslims. Inclusion on the list of banned literature of Islamic books that are, in the opinion of Muslims, not extremist (books by Said Nursi, Shamil Alyautdinov and others[43]), has in turn, led to an increase in bitterness on the part of Muslims and misunderstanding

40. Cited from the decision of Yevpatoria City Court of the Republic of Crimea on 21/03/2016. For more information see: Federal'ny spisok extremistskih materialov ("Federal list of extremist materials"), Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, (not dated), retrieved January, 1 2017, from http://minjust.ru/nko/fedspisok/%C2%BB.

41. Cited from the decision of Ustinovsky district Court of Izhevsk made on 26/04/2016. For more information see: Federal'ny spisok extremistskih materialov, Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, (not dated), retrieved January, 1 2017, from http://minjust.ru/nko/fedspisok/%C2%BB.

42. Cited from the decision of Ustinovsky District Court of Izhevsk on 26/04/2016. For more information see: Federal'ny spisok extremistskih materialov ("Federal list of extremist materials"), Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation, (not dated), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://minjust.ru/nko/fedspisok/%C2%BB.

43. It should be noted, however, that on 26 February, 2015, the Orenburg regional court ruled that 68 Islamic books with religious content may be taken off the list of prohibited extremist literature. Among those books were *Criterion of Action* by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali; *The Complete Forty Hadith* by Imam an-Nawawi; *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah* by Ibn Hisham; *Put' k vere i sovershenstvu* ("The path to faith and perfection") by Shamil Alyautdinov; and several other books. (for more information see: http://dumrf.ru/common/event/9041)

between them and the authorities. Furthermore, in the opinion of human rights organisations, the wording of the Federal Law "On Counteracting Extremist Activity" itself allows for wide interpretations of the concept of "extremist material".[44]

In 2016, only one Islamic organisation was included on the "list of organisations recognized as extremist by Russian courts", namely the religious group Mirmamed Mosque.[45] Also, during 2016, arrests of the followers of the previously banned Hizb ut-Tahrir Party[46] continued. According to some human rights activists, supporters of Hizb ut-Tahrir[47] are not extremists and charging them with the "propaganda of terrorism" solely on the basis of party activities (meetings, reading literature, etc.) is unlawful.[48]

On 11 July, 2016, the imam of Yardem Mosque in Moscow, Mahmoud Velitov, was arrested. Velitov was charged with violation of Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code ("Public incitement to terrorism"). In fact, Velitov suffered because of his statements made nearly three years before on 23 September, 2013 at the Yardem Mosque.[49] According to the investigating authorities, in his speech Velitov justified the actions of A. Gappaev, a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir - a terrorist organisation that is banned in Russia - , who was murdered by an unknown perpetrator near his home in 2013.[50]

Figure 3: Mahmoud Velitov (Islamnews.ru)

44. Human Rights Committee, "Final remarks on the 7th periodical report of the Russian Federation," *un.org*, (November 22, 2012), retrieved January 1, 2017, from https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G13/406/69/pdf/G1340669.pdf?OpenElement.

45. For more information see: Ansar, "Musulman presleduyut za film, pokazyvayuschiy istinnost Korana (Muslims are being persecuted for the film showing the true nature of Quran)," (April 26, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.ansar.ru/rfsng/imama-oshtrafovali-za-chudesa-korana.

46. Sova Center, "Nepravomerny antiextremism v oktyabre 2016 goda (Illegal anti-extremism in October 2016)," *Sova Center*, (November 7, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/publications/2016/11/d35772/ & "V Peterburge sud sankcioniroval arest shestyaryh musulman, podozrevaemyh v sotrudnichestve s "Hizb ut-Tahrir" (The court in St. Petersburg sanctioned arrest of six Muslims suspected of having connections with "Hizb ut-Tahrir")," *Sova Center*, (November 9, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/extremism/counter-extremism/2016/11/d35795/.

47. Sova Center, "V Sankt-Peterburge sud vynes prigovor v otnoshenii musulmanina Isy Ragimova, chlena "Hizb ut-Tahrir" (The court in St. Petersburg passed a sentence on Isa Ragimov, a Muslim, member of "Hizb ut-Tahrir")," *Sova Center*, (November 21, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/extremism/counter-extremism/2016/11/d35868/.

48. Sova Center, "Nepravomerny antiextremism v oktyabre 2016 goda (Illegal anti-extremism in October 2016)," *Sova Center*, (November 21, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/publications/2016/11/d35772/.

49. According to another version, he said this in an interview given to Islamic channel "al-Islami".

50. Gazeta.ru, "Imamom iz Otradnogo zanyalos' MVD (Imam from Otradnoe catches attention of the Ministry of Internal Affairs)," *gazeta.ru*, (July 12, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from www.gazeta.ru/social/2016/07/12/9677873.shtml.

It is noteworthy that representatives of other Muslim religious organisations were quick to distance themselves from their arrested coreligionist. The Chief Imam of the Moscow mosque Ildar Alyautdinov said in an interview that the Yardem Mosque "functions in isolation, as if it were a separate state: with its own rules, with its own laws. Unfortunately, sometimes these rules do not correspond to certain norms of Islam, and Muslims often hear a lot of complaints about it."[51] Apparently, the Muslim clergy serving in the Council of Muftis of Russia (which is part of DUM RF) is afraid to share Velitov's fate who said a good word about the deceased man. On 26 October, the Butyrsky district court of Moscow extended the term of M. Velitov's house arrest until 27 December, 2016.

In April, Imam Magomednabi Magomedov was arrested. On 24 October, the North Caucasus District Military Court in Rostov-on-Don sentenced the imam of Vostochnaya Mosque of Hasavyurt (Republic of Dagestan, Russia) to five years imprisonment for incitement to terrorism. Magomedov was arrested when he went to the police station and demanded the release of several detainees who were visitors of the mosque and had been arrested without presenting any explanations.[52] The imam was charged under Part 1 Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code ("Public incitement to terrorism or its justification"), and Part 1 Article 282 of the Criminal Code ("Incitement of hatred or enmity"). According to investigators, in February 2016, Magomedov "gave a speech at a mosque containing public justification of terrorism".[53] According to parishioners of the mosque where Magomedov served as imam, his sermon that day was focused on how to peacefully defend the rights of the Salafis.[54]

One more Muslim religious figure who has suffered for his words is Ali Yakupov, who served as imam in the mosque of Kurgan city in September 2015. The basis for the prosecution of this Muslim religious figure in January 2016 was a comment he allegedly left on the social networking site VKontakte on the article about the ban on wearing *hijab* in China.[55] In this comment Yakupov wrote about God's punishment which will inevitably befall on the Chinese communists. The imam denied that he had written the comment.[56]

51. Ibid.

52. Kavkazskiy uzel, "Imam Magomedov prigovoren k pyati godam zakluchenia (Imam Magomedov sentenced to five years in prison)," *kavkaz-uzel.eu*, (October 24, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/291421/.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid.

55. Ura.ru, "Byvshego imama Kurgana budut sudit' za razzhiganie nenavisti (Former imam of Kurgan will be tried for inciting ethnic hatred)," *ura.ru*, (November 21, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://ura.ru/articles/1036269575.

56. "May Allah destroy these Communists of the injustice and wickedness, which they are doing on the ground!" (Ansar, "V otnoshenii hafiza Ali Yakupova prekrascheno ugolovnoe delo (Criminal case against hafiz Ali Yakupov is closed)," *ansar.ru*, (October 14, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.ansar.ru/sobcor/v-otnoshenii-hafiza-ali-yakupova-prerashheno-ugolovnoe-delo.)

Earlier, in 2013, the prosecutor's office of the Penza region instituted a case against Yakupov for inciting ethnic hatred and calling for extremist activity (Articles 280 and 282 of the Criminal Code). However, after an investigation on 31 October, 2016 Yakupov's case was dismissed for lack of evidence and the prosecutor's office of the Penza region officially apologized to Yakupov "for unfounded criminal charges".[57]

Similar to the previous years, in 2016, there were situations when groups of citizens in various regions of Russia opposed the construction of mosques. These actions took place in the form of rallies and pickets, followed by the collection of signatures. The petition website Change.org was often used to collect signatures.

As a rule, opponents of the construction of mosques put forward the following arguments: (a) the mosque will cause noise and disturbance to residents of neighboring houses, (b) it will deprive the inhabitants of the right to enjoy a recreation area (if the mosque is to be constructed on park or green territory), (c) the mosque is an insult to orthodox feelings, (d) the mosque will create problems with transportation in the surrounding area, and finally, (e) it would serve as a cause of ethnic conflicts. In most cases, the opponents of the construction opted in favour of the transfer of the construction to another part of the city. Experience shows that such a transfer often leads to the construction projects being put on hold (including those that have already started, such as the mosque in Kaliningrad).

Below I describe some of the actions that aimed at disrupting the construction of mosques where the location of the future mosque had been already agreed with the city administration. I only present cases which occurred in large settlements (regional centres) and had considerable public outcry. I also took into account only those cases in which the opponents of the construction made Islamophobic statements or carried out actions which can be described as Islamophobic. It is noteworthy that in most of the regions referred to below Muslims (mainly Tatars and Bashkirs) are native people and have historically resided there before the arrival of Christianity.

It is also noteworthy that the implementation programme of the Russian Orthodox Church for the construction of Orthodox churches in Moscow, the so-called "200 temples" programme continued throughout 2016.[58] The programme envisages the construction of an Orthodox church or chapel in every district of Moscow. However, the construction of churches does not always go smoothly either. Churches are often erected on park grounds or in areas where the construction of

57. Ansar, "Prokuratura izvinilas' pered Hafizom Korana (The prosecutor's office apologized to hafiz of Quran)," *ansar.ru*, (November 12, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.ansar.ru/person/prokuratura-izvinilas-pered-ali-yakupovym-i-obvinila-vnov.

58. See official website of the program *200 temples* here: http://www.200hramov.ru/ (retrieved January 6, 2017).

a kindergarten or other socially important facilities had been proposed.[59] However, in the case of a protest against the construction of a church, the authorities tend to take the side of the Russian Orthodox Church leading to the arrest of the participants of such rallies and pickets.[60] The authorities have reacted quite differently to the actions against the construction of mosques. Participants of protests against the construction of mosques were not subject to any sanctions, and were free to hold their rallies and pickets.

In July, a petition against the construction of a mosque in the city of Omsk appeared on the petition website Change.org. The petition is characterised by the fact that its authors do not mince their words and point to the very existence of the mosque as the main cause of their dissatisfaction: "A huge mosque is planned to be built in Omsk on the Architects Boulevard opposite the trade and entertainment centre Mega. The location of the mosque in the area of the city with significant flow of people throughout the day does not promote a sense of belonging to the city, which is far from being Muslim, and of a feeling that this land is ours. The appearance of the building in a place where it will be constantly seen by citizens, the majority of whom are not Muslims, is unacceptable and offensive. We demand the cancellation of the decisions allowing the construction of a mosque in that place and the prevention of their occurrence in other similar places of attraction for people who are non-Muslims."[61] This petition has collected 2,033 signatures. As a result, the administration of Omsk refused to give permission for the construction of the mosque on the Architects Boulevard, as demanded by the authors of the petition.

On 6 July, the chairman of the State Corporation for Enterprise Development of the Ulyanovsk region Ruslan Gaynetdinov posted on his Twitter account about the construction of a mosque in Molodezhny Park in the Zasviyazhsky district of Ulyanovsk. He wrote that the construction of a mosque would be a gift to the Muslims of the city on the occasion of the feast of Eid al-Fitr.[62] Shortly afterwards, a public group against the construction of the mosque was created on the social networking site VKontakte

59. One of the last cases occurred in Torfyanka, where a group of residents protested against the construction of the Orthodox Church in Torfyanka Park. On 14 November, the police arrested several activists (Sova Center, "Zaschitnikov parka "Torfyanka" podozrevayut v oskorblenii chuvstv veruyuschih (The defenders of Torfyanka Park are suspected of insulting feelings of believers)," *Sova Center*, (November 14, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/harassment/intervention/2016/11/d35815/.

60. Rosbalt, "Moskovskaya politsiya zaderzhala neskolkih zaschitnikov parka "Torfyanka" (The Moscow police arrested several defenders of Torfyanka Park)," *rosbalt.ru*, (November 14, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.rosbalt.ru/moscow/2016/11/14/1566847.html.

61. Link to the petition: https://www.change.org/p/мэр-г-омска-не-допустить-строительство-мечети-в-г-омске-по-ул-бульвар-архитекторов-напротив-меги/u/17394785%20 (retrieved January 6, 2017). See also petitions in other cities, where the authorities have already granted the permission to build a mosque in a certain place (f.e. Bratsk).

62. Ekaterina Zelenaya, "Ulyanovcy vystupayut protiv stroitelstva mecheti (Residents of Ulyanovsk object to the construction of the mosque)," *8422city.ru*, (August 3, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.8422city.ru/news/1318111.

- the group was called "No mosque construction in Molodezhny Park!"[63]. The main slogan of the group was "A park is not a place for a mosque".[64] Public hearings on the construction of the mosque were scheduled to take place on 9 August but were subsequently postponed. As of the end of December, the issue regarding the construction site for the mosque in Ulyanovsk has not been resolved.

Figure 4: Poster against the construction of the mosque in Molodezhny Park in Ulyanovsk (https://vk.com/nomosque)

At the end of January, the Regional Spiritual Board of Muslims (RDUM) of the Perm Territory agreed with the mayor's office on the land plot for the construction of a mosque to be located on Krylov Street, Building 36b. The deputies of the Legislative Assembly supported the decision of the city administration.[65] However, on 7 September, a picket against the construction of a mosque at the above address took place in Perm. During the picket several dozen signatures were collected. The residents were afraid that "a migrant enclave" would be formed around the mosque located next to the market.[66] The protesters held posters stating the following: "Today a mosque near the market – tomorrow an enclave in the heart of the city"[67] and "Why a mosque for guests and not the park for our children?"[68] In interviews with reporters, the picketers stressed that they did not oppose the construction of the mosque per se, but were against the construction of a

63. Vkontakte, "Net stroitelstvu mecheti v parke Molodezhny (No to the construction of the mosque in Molodezhny Park!)," *vk.com*, retrieved January 1, 2017, from https://vk.com/nomosque.

64. Ibid.

65. Nakanune.ru, "Protivnikam stroitelstva mecheti v Permi otkazano v kollektivnom pikete u mesta provedenia Vserossiyskogo foruma natsionalnogo edinstva (The opponents of the construction of the mosque in Perm are refused permission to hold a collective picket near the place where All-Russian National Unity Forum is to be held)," *nakanune.ru*, (October 18, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.nakanune.ru/news/2016/10/18/22450432.

66."The emergence of a Muslim spiritual and cultural centre and attendant infrastructure (*halal* shops, etc.) on the Krylov Street will create a long-term basis for the compact settlement of migrants. As experience shows, including the experience of the European countries, such enclaves often become a source of threat to the public and prevent immigrants from assimilation." ("Mestnye zhiteli vozrazhayut protiv stroitelstva mecheti ryadom s permskim tsentralnym rynkom (Local residents oppose the construction of the mosque near the Perm central market)," *Periskop information agency*, (June 1, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://periscop.prpc.ru/news/2158-160601.)

67. Nakanune.ru, "Protestuyuschie protiv stroitelstva mecheti permyaki upreknuli glavu merii v falsifikatsii golosov "za" kultovoe sooruzhenie (The opponents of the construction of the mosque in Perm accused the mayor of the city of juggling votes in favour of the construction of the religious building), *nakanune*.ru, (September 29, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.nakanune.ru/news/2016/9/29/22448717/.

68. Nakanune.ru, "Vlasti gotovy k dialogu i nachali ego: v Permi proshla vstrecha, posvyaschennaya protestu poyavlenia v gorode "migrantskoy mecheti (The authorities are ready for the dialogue and have started it: a meeting was held to discuss the protests against the construction of the "migrants' mosque" in the city)," *nakanune.ru*, (October 26, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017 from http://www.nakanune.ru/news/2016/10/26/22451295/.

mosque in that particular place near the central market.[69]In September, the Regional Spiritual Board of Muslims received a letter from the governor of the Administration of the Perm Region with the recommendation to suspend the construction of the mosque. As of November, the construction of the mosque was put on hold.[70]

A separate mention should be made of the situation regarding the construction of a mosque in the city of Kaliningrad, a western Russian regional centre.[71] The issue of the construction of a mosque in the city has been raised by Muslims since 1993.[72] Finally, in 2009, Kaliningrad City Hall granted the permission to build a mosque on Dzerzhinsky Street, Building 32, in the grounds of Yuzhny Park. The construction began in 2010.[73] However, in December 2013, the construction was suspended as an interim measure ordered by the court in connection with an action brought by the Friedland Gate Museum, located in the neighborhood of the building under construction. It was stated in the action that the land allocated for the construction of the mosque was part of the area designed for a recreation area.[74]

Figure 5: Meeting against the construction of the mosque in Perm (Perm.ru)

On 1 April, 2014, the court of the Moscow district of Kaliningrad ruled that the construction of the mosque, which had been previously authorized by the city administration, was illegal. In 2016, after a series of trials, the Supreme Court of Russia ruled that the construction of the mosque in the grounds of Yuzhny Park was illegal. As a result, the mosque, which was almost completed, is now under threat of

69. RifeyTV, "Permyaki vyshli na piket protiv stroitelstva mecheti (Residents of Perm took part in the picket against the construction of the mosque)," uploaded on *YouTube.com*, (September 8, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQicmszjKJM.

70. *Ura.ru*, "Meriyu Permi obvinili v poddelke podpisei v zaschitu mecheti (The mayor's office of Perm accused of forgery of signatures in favour of the mosque)," *ura.ru*, (November 15, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://ura.ru/news/1052267756.

71.Before 1945 the present territory of the Kaliningrad region belonged to Germany. Therefore, it is quite problematic to talk about the indigenous population in the region.

72. According to the data of the population census of 2010, 4,534Tatars and 3,282 Azerbaijanis lived in the Kaliningrad region (The Federal State Statistics Service, retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-09.pdf).

73. Islamnews.ru, "Musul'mane RF prosyat ESPCh ob uskorennom rassmotrenii ih zhaloby (Muslims of the RF ask the EHRC to accelerate consideration of their complaint)," *Islamnews.ru*, (January 20, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from www.islamnews.ru/news-486128.html.

74. It is noteworthy that the plaintiff was represented in court by D. Karpovich who was also an attorney of A.D. Demushkin, one of the organizers of the "Russian Marches".

demolition. The building site is fenced in and worshippers cannot access it.[75] A local Muslim religious organisation has brought a claim against the ruling of the Supreme Court of Russia to the European Court of Human Rights; the claim is currently under consideration. According to D. Hasavov, who acts as attorney of the Muslim community of Kaliningrad, the actions aimed at preventing the construction of the mosque in the city were initiated by the prosecutor's office of the Kaliningrad region as well as by the Russian Orthodox Church.[76] The collection of signatures against the construction of mosques was also organised in other Russian cities such as Khabarovsk[77] and Volzhsky (Volgograd Region).[78]

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

One of the annual events during which Islamophobic incidents often take place is the so-called "Russian March". During the Russian March on 4 November in Moscow, which is held on the Day of National Unity, demonstrators carried posters with the following slogans: "No Islamism, no terrorism!"[79], "I am a Russian Orthodox person against Islamization"[80] and "Moscow is not part of the Caucasus, Allah is a fag!".[81] As seen, a significant number of materials contained offensive statements about the Islamic religion and its followers.[82]

75. The construction of the mosque was financed through donations (about 90 million rubles) without involvement of the budget funds: https://www.change.org/p/призидент-российской-федерации-спасем-первую-и-единственную-мечеть-в-г-калининграде

76. Novy Kaliningrad, "Hotyat zamylit': vlasti razdelili musulman v spore o mecheti v Kaliningrade (They want to hush it up: authorities divided Muslims in the dispute around construction of the mosque in Kaliningrad)," *newkalingrad.ru*, (November 18, 2014), retrieved January 1, 2017, from www.newkaliningrad.ru/news/community/4759263-khotyat-zamylit-vlasti-razdelili-musulman-v-spore-o-mecheti-v-kaliningrade.html

77. KhabTime, "V Khabarovske nachinaetsa "bitva protiv mecheti (A "battle around the mosque" is beginning in Khabarovsk)," *khabtime.com*, (January 20, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://khabtime.info/print/?id_blog=29640. A petition against the construction of a mosque in Khabarovsk on the Change.org petition website begins with the words: "We are against the construction due to the fact that it will increase the crime situation in the city and region!" Link to the petition: https://www.change.org/p/шпорт-хватит-строить-мечети?recruiter=285004256&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=vk&utm_campaign=vk_share_responsive.

78. IslamReview, "Zhiteli Volzhskogo ekstrenno sobirayut podpisi protiv stroitelstva mecheti (Residents of Volzhsky hastily collect signatures against construction of the mosque)," *islamreview*.ru, (March 17, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://islamreview.ru/news/ziteli-volzska-ekstrenno-sobiraut-podpisi-protiv-stroitelstva-meceti/.

79. Sova Center, "Russky marsh 2016 v Moskve (Russian march 2016 in Moscow)," *Sova Center*, (November, 4 2016), retrieved January, 1 2017 http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/racism-nationalism/2016/11/d35771/.

80. Sova Center, "Russkie marshi-2016 v regionah (Russian marches-2016 in the regions)," *Sova Center*, (November 8, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/racism-nationalism/2016/11/d35785/.

81. Ilya Varlamov, "The Russian march," *varlamov.ru*, (November 4, 2012), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://varlamov.ru/654147.html.

82. See, for example, a prohibited image, which depicts a crowd of Muslim men, one of them yells and points to the Quran page. Next to the picture there is another picture with white text on a black background *Quran to… Monkeys!!!* (See here: Federal'ny spisok extremistskih materialov ("Federal list of extremist materials"), retrieved January 1, 2017, available from: http://minjust.ru/nko/fedspisok/%C2%BB).

Against the background of tragic deaths and disappearances of Muslims in Russia, the instances where followers of Islam become victims of aggression in other regions of Russia are not so noticeable.

Figure 6: Sulaymon Saidov in hospital (News.tj)

For example, on 8 April, 2016 a migrant from Tajikistan, Sulaymon Saidov, was attacked in the Moscow metro. A 59-year-old resident of Moscow in the course of a quarrel shot Saidov. According to the victim, the reason for the attack was his origin: "My nephew and I were on our way home. I noticed the assailant when he began to push my nephew Muhammadjon Khakimov. He behaved very aggressively. He was very drunk. He became infuriated when he found out where we come from. There was no verbal skirmish between us. He shouted, insulted us, we were silent. And then he came up and started shooting."[83] As a result of the attack, Saidov lost his right eye and has undergone serious surgery. The attacker was arrested.

On 14 October, 2016, Iqbal Igbalhossinin, a citizen of Bangladesh, was beaten in Moscow. When he parked his car, he was approached by three men who started to beat him. Igbal managed to escape and run into the entrance of his apartment building. Later, he was taken to hospital. One of the attackers was soon arrested and told the police that he had taken Iqbal for a terrorist and decided together with his neighbours to apprehend him.[84]

An act of vandalism was committed on the night of 10 January, 2016 in the mosque undergoing restoration in the village of Ai-Ceres (Mezhdurechye) in the Sudak region of Crimea. An obscene drawing and crossed image of the tamga of the Giray dynasty (the national symbol of the Crimean Tatars) were drawn on the wall of the mosque. According to human rights activists, this action was not only of anti-Muslim but also of anti-Tatar character.[85] In May, two teenagers in Chapaevsk, the Samara region, painted a swastika on the wall of a local mosque. They were arrested, and their case was sent to the court.[86] On 3 March, an unknown assailant painted a

83. Anora Sarkorova, "Tadjikskomu migrantu udalili glaz posle napadenia v Moskve (Tajik migrant lost his eye after being attacked in Moscow)," *Русская служба BBC*, (August 9, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.bbc.com/russian/news-37028331.

84. Sova Center, "V Moskve izbit grazhdanin Respubliki Bangladesh (Bangladesh citizen beaten up in Moscow)," *Sova Center*, (October 20, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/news/racism-nationalism/2016/10/d35659/.

85. Sova Center, "V Krymu oskvernili mechet (A mosque desecrated in Crimea)," *Sova Center*, (January 11, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/extremism/counter-extremism/2016/01/d33592/.

86. Kirill Karimov, "V Chapaevske podrostki narisovali na stene mecheti svastiku (In Chapaevsk teenagers painted a swastika on the wall of the mosque)," *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, (May 19, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.samara.kp.ru/online/news/2397213/.

swastika and wrote xenophobic slogans on the wall of a mosque in the city of Ivanovo. According to the data from the surveillance cameras, two men were involved in the act of vandalism: one painted and the other recorded it on camera.[87]

On 8 September, the Novo-Tatar cemetery in Kazan was attacked by vandals. About 100 gravestones and monuments in this oldest Muslim cemetery of the city were destroyed or damaged by vandals.[88] President of Tatarstan Minnikhanov took the investigation of the case under his personal control; however, the perpetrators of this crime have not been found yet.

On 26 September, 2016, Ravil Kaybaliev, imam of the Nogai village of the Kara-Tube Neftekumsk district of the Stavropol region, was shot dead by an unidentified perpetrator in the Stavropol region. Kaybaliev was known as an advocate of the rights of Muslims. In particular, he had repeatedly appeared in court for the right of Muslim girls to wear *hijab* at school.[89] In April 2016, Deputy Imam of Nizhnevartovsk Vagif Nurbayev, an Islamic preacher who adhered to Salafi views, was killed by an unknown perpetrator in Nizhnevartovsk.[90] After Nurbayev's death, arrests of Muslims close to the deceased imam followed.[91] The disappearances of Muslims who are connected with the banned Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People and banned religious organisations like Hizb ut-Tahrir were also recorded in the Republic of Crimea.[92]

The main problem faced by Muslims in Crimea after the peninsula came under the jurisdiction of Russia were the legal restrictions related to the activities of a number of Muslim movements. Thus, for example, members of Hizb ut-Tahrir, a religious organisation which is banned in Russia but is allowed in Ukraine, were arrested. The same applies to the Muslim literature which can be legally distributed

87. *Islam-Today.ru*, "Vandaly oskvernili mechet v Ivanovo (Vandals desecrated a mosque in Ivanovo)," *islam-today.ru*, (March 3, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://Islam-Today.ru/novosti/2016/03/03/vandaly-oskvernili-mecet-v-ivanovo/.

88. Business Online, "Na Novo-Tatarskom kladbische Kazani ot ruk vandalov postradal pamyatnik Salikhu Saydashevu (The monument to Salikh Saidashev was vandalized at the Novo-Tatar cemetery in Kazan)," *business-gazeta.ru*, (September 9, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from https://www.business-gazeta.ru/news/322231.

89. Ikramutdin Khan, "Islamocide v Stavropolye: ubit esche odin imam (Islamocide in Stavropol region: one more imam killed)," *Golos Islama*, (September 27, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://golosislama.com/news.php?id=30254.

90. Timur Yusupov, "Dagestansky propovednik Vagif Nurbaev vzorvan v Nizhnevartovske (Dagestani preacher Vagif Nurbaev blown up in Nizhnevartovks)," *OnKavkaz.com*, (September 27, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://onkavkaz.com/news/871-dagestanskii-propovednik-vagif-nurbaev-vzorvan-v-nizhnevartovske.html.

91. Golos Islama, "Gosterror v Nizhnevartovske: novaya zhertva – Vladimir Romanyuk (State terror in Nizhnevartovsk: new victim – Vladimir Romanyuk)", *golosislama.com*, (April, 11 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://golosislama.com/news.php?id=29525; Golos Islama, "Nizhnevartovsk: terror silovikov protiv musulman (Nizhnevartovsk: terror by siloviki against Muslims)," *golosislama.com*, (April 7, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://golosislama.com/news.php?id=29501 and others.

92. Crym.Realii, "V Krymu propala krymsko-tatarskaya devushka (A Crimean-Tatar girl vanishes in Crimea)" *krymr.com*, (January 14, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://ru.krymr.com/a/news/27487142.html.; Golos Islama, "V Krymu ischez esche odin soblyudayushiy musulmanin (One more practising Muslim vanishes in Crimea), " *golosislama.com*, (October 3, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://golosislama.com/news.php?id=30277and others.

in Ukraine, but is included on the list of banned extremist materials in Russia. In addition, another reason for the persecution of the Crimean Tatars is the reluctance of many to recognise the results of the 16 March, 2014 referendum on the annexation of Crimea by Russia. According to the Head of Sova Human Rights Protection Centre A. Verkhovskiy, combating extremist activity on the Crimean Peninsula takes place using the following measures: (1) the search for and seizure of "extremist materials"; (2) the blocking of websites; (3) the prosecution for extremist posts and comments on social networking sites; (4) the prosecution for "incitement to separatism" and excitement of discord which are treated as aggravating circumstances in criminal cases of alleged ideological opponents; (5) the prosecution of members of Muslim radical organisations - primarily Hizb ut-Tahrir)".[93]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Muslims are indigenous to Russia. However, as a result of growing nationalist and isolationist sentiments and the narrow-minded consciousness in Russian society coupled with ill-conceived state confessional politics, Russian Muslims tend to be associated with "aliens" and regarded as enemies by the average Russian. Furthermore, there are no public figures among Russian Muslims who could represent and protect their interests at the federal and regional levels. There is no Muslim leader to whose opinion state officials and the general public in Russia would listen. Fragmentation of the Muslim community is partly the result of personal conflicts and power struggles between Muslim religious and community leaders.

When researchers discuss the relationship between the Russian Orthodox and Muslim religious organisations, they often neglect one important fact. The Russian reality is such that Orthodox and Muslim religious organisations do not interact as relatively independent entities, equidistant from the state, but in fact as different divisions of the state bureaucracy. The Russian Orthodox Church has for a long period of time been a part of the state apparatus. Therefore, when Muslim religious organisations interact with the Russian Orthodox Church, in actual fact, they deal with a manifestation of the state.

On the other hand, the Muftiates are not independent entities either. Again, the Russian reality is such that any appointment to the post of a mufti (both at the federal and regional levels) is tightly controlled by the authorities, namely the Russian security service FSB. Therefore, the top and middle management of Muslim religious leaders is actually appointed by the government and public officials. Consequently, they are accountable not only and even less so to Muslims, which do not choose

93. Dmitry Makarov, "Primenenie "antiekstrtemistskogo zakonodatelstva" Rossiyskoy Federacii na territorii Krymskogo poluostrova (Application of "antiextremist legislation" of the Russian Federation in the territory of the Crimean Peninsula)," *Sova Center*, (March 4, 2016), retrieved January 1, 2017, from http://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/publications/2016/03/d33986.

them, and, more so, to the state, which de facto appoints them. From this perspective, it is no surprise that Muslim organisations seem to care more about how to win the battle for the influence over the country's leadership (hence, access to resources), rather than the one for the rights of individual believers.

In such circumstances, local Muslim communities in Russian regions are often forced to confront the challenges that constantly emerge before them on their own, without the support of the leaders of the two all-Russian Muftiates and human rights defenders. An example of such practical issues is the construction of mosques.

One of the most active opponents of the construction of mosques in Russian cities (including the areas with dense Muslim populations) seems to be the Russian Orthodox Church. Remarkably, state officials tend to take into account the point of view of the Russian Orthodox Church in deciding on the construction of mosques.

Among the positive trends of recent years, we should note the state's continuing fight against xenophobia and racism in the public space. However, the flip side of this policy is that the Federal Law "On Counteracting Extremist Activity" has become a tool of political pressure on Muslims, including Muslim religious leaders, who are disloyal to the authorities. Only in a small number of cases initiated on the basis of this law, the court took the side of the accused and dismissed the case.

In order to carry out a more effective state policy towards Islam and Muslims, the following actions are advisable:

- Introduce the post of a Minister of Muslim Affairs. A candidate for this post must be a Muslim yet a person of the world. The minister's task will be to interact with Muslim religious leaders and act as a representative of the government in dealing with Muslims.
- When deciding on the inclusion of literature on the list of banned literature, the examination of the literature in question should be conducted exclusively by professional Islamologists. To qualify as an Islamologist a person must hold a degree in Oriental Studies, Regional Studies, or Religious Studies with specialization in the countries of the Muslim East; and be fluent in Arabic and one of the languages of the Muslim peoples of Russia.
- As far as the construction of mosques in Russian cities is concerned, the procedure of discussion of projects and decision-making at various stages of the project should be made as transparent as possible and involve the Minister of Muslim Affairs in the process. Representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church should not have a say in this decision-making process. The opinion of the clergy can only be taken into consideration as the opinion of ordinary citizens provided that they live near the site of the proposed mosque construction.
- In the application of anti-extremist legislation when it comes to public statements formally containing signs of extremism but actually not posing a danger to society, penalties rather than imprisonment should be sought to a greater extent.

It is also recommended that imprisonment be applied only in case of the recurrence of unlawful acts.

- The creation of a Muslim TV show on one of the federal channels. The programme must not only cover historical and ethnographic subjects, but also the most topical problems and practical issues faced by the Muslim community in Russia.

# Chronology

## January

- An act of vandalism is committed against a mosque undergoing restoration in Ai-Ceres (Mezhdurechye) village in the Sudak region of Crimea. An obscene drawing was depicted on the wall of the mosque.
- Ali Yakupov, imam of Kurgan mosque, is arrested for leaving a comment on the social networking site VKontakte on the article discussing the ban of wearing *hijab* in China. The imam denies writing the comment.

## February

- Gyulchehra Bobokulova, a citizen of Uzbekistan, is arrested for murdering the young girl she was hired to look after. When the police arrested her she was holding the severed head of the child in her hands. The woman was dressed in black and shouting "Allah Akbar". In the first hours after the arrest, hundreds of messages inciting ethnic and religious hatred in connection with the murder of the girl appeared on social networking sites.

## March

- An unknown person painted a swastika and wrote xenophobic slogans on the wall of a mosque in Ivanovo. According to the data obtained from the surveillance cameras, two men were involved in the act of vandalism: one painted and the other recorded the actions on camera.

## April

- Vagif Nurbayev, deputy imam of Nizhnevartovsk and an Islamic preacher who adhered to Salafi views, is killed in Nizhnevartovsk by an unknown perpetrator. After his death, the arrests of Muslims close to the imam followed.
- A migrant from Tajikistan, Sulaymon Saidov, is attacked in the Moscow metro. A 59-year-old resident of Moscow in the course of a quarrel shot Saidov. According to the victim, the reason for the attack was his origin. As a result of the attack, Saidov lost his right eye and underwent serious surgery. The attacker was arrested.

## May

- Two teenagers paint a swastika on the wall of a mosque in Chapaevsk (Samara region). Both were arrested, and their case was sent to the court.

### June

- A Muslim girl, Sofia, accompanied by her mother, and both dressed in *hijab,* applies for admission to the College of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO-University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. The chairman of the selection committee told the mother the following: "We do not want Muslims here! You can, of course, submit your documents, but your daughter won't be admitted, I can guarantee that!"

### July

- An enrollee Alfia wearing *hijab* is not allowed to enter the building of MGIMO-University. The deputy security chief tells her: "If you want to study, take off the *hijab*". After coverage in the media, the university administration tries to silence the affair. The girl is allowed to enter the university grounds.
- Mahmoud Velitov, imam of Yardem Mosque in Moscow, is arrested. Checks are carried out in the mosque and the imam's apartment during which literature banned in Russia is discovered. Velitov is charged with violation of Article 205.2 of the Criminal Code ("Public incitement to terrorism"). The reason for the institution of proceedings against Velitov was one of the opinions he expressed on 23 September, 2013 in the Yardem Mosque.
- A petition against the construction of a mosque in Omsk appears on Change.org, a petition website. The petition collected 2,034 signatures. As a result, the city administration refused to give permission for the construction of a mosque, as demanded by the authors of the petition.
- A public group against the construction of a mosque in Molodezhny Park in Ulyanovsk is created on the social networking site VKontakte. The main slogan of the group is "A park is not a place for a mosque". Public hearings on the construction of a mosque were scheduled for 9 August, 2016 but were subsequently postponed. As of the end of December 2016, the issue regarding the construction of the mosque in Ulyanovsk has not been resolved.

### August

- A record of an informal conversation between deputy chairman of Yabloko Party Sergei Mitrokhin and a journalist for the Islamnews.ru website appears on the Internet. In the conversation, Mitrokhin expressed insulting words against Islam. Shortly after the scandal was uncovered, Mitrokhin publicly apologized to Muslims.

### September

- The Novo-Tatar cemetery in Kazan (Republic of Tatarstan) is vandalised. This is the oldest existing Muslim necropolis in the city. Vandals destroyed or damaged approximately 100 gravestones and monuments. The perpetrators of the crime have not been found as yet.

- A picket against the construction of a mosque on Krylov Street is held in Perm. During the picket several dozen signatures were collected. The residents were afraid that a "migrant enclave" might be formed around the mosque which was planned to be built next to the market. The protesters held up posters with the following slogans: "Today a mosque near the market, tomorrow an enclave in the heart of the city" and "Why a mosque for the guests, not a park for our children?"
- Ravil Kaybaliev, imam of Nogai village of Kara-Tube in the Neftekumsk district of the Stavropol region, is shot dead by an unknown person. Kaybaliev was a vocal defender of the rights of Muslims. In particular, he had repeatedly appeared in court for the right of Muslim girls to wear *hijabs* at school.

## October

- A citizen of Bangladesh, Iqbal Igbalhossin, is beaten by a group of people in Moscowand taken to hospital. One of the attackers was later arrested and told the police that he had taken Iqbal for a terrorist and together with his neighbours they decided to apprehend him.
- M. Magomedov, imam of Vostochnaya Mosque of Khasavyurt (Dagestan), is sentenced to five years imprisonment for incitement to terrorism. Magomedov was arrested when he went to the police station and demanded the release of several detainees who were visitors of the mosque and had been arrested without any explanations. According to investigators, in February 2016, Magomedov "gave a speech at the mosque in which he publicly justified terrorism." According to parishioners of the mosque where Magomedov served, his sermon that day focused on how to peacefully defend the rights of the Salafis.

## November

- During the nationalist "Russian March" held in several Russian cities on 4 November, the Day of National Unity, certain demonstrators carried posters with the following slogans, among others: "No Islamism, no terrorism!", "I am a Russian Orthodox person against Islamization" and "Moscow is not the Caucasus, Allah is a fag!".

## December

- Muslim teachers in Belozerye village in the Republic of Mordovia are forced to take off their *hijabs* at work. The teachers' attorney intends to file a complaint with the labour inspectorate and the prosecutor's office.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SERBIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

In 2016 Parliamentary elections were held in Serbia. National Assembly structure is changed as several parties, among them pro-Russian nationalists, returned to parliament for the first time since 2012. The analyzes in the field of employment have not shown that discrimination exists in this regard, however Muslim community continues to be underrepresented in the local administration, judiciary or police in places where Muslims traditionally live in Serbia. This problem persists for more than two decades and it has been confirmed in the European Commission Report on Serbia for 2015 and also 2016. Media is arguably the most important in constructing and promoting Islamophobic positions and media reporting in Serbia is alarming as headlines are often inflammatory with harsh, almost pre-war rethoric which this report illustrates in details. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia judgements in cases of Radovan Karadzic and Vojislav Seselj caused polarization in Serbian society and received huge media coverage. As in many other countries, the news of the terrorist attacks in Europe, especially the attack in Berlin, in Serbian media had a major place. American elections also received considerable attention in public debates which often resulted with fake news on how Donald Trump will support Serbia especially regarding Kosovo question. Other significant events include Srebrenica commemoration but also demolition of Muslim cemetery "Gazilar" in Novi Pazar when 29 gravestones were destroyed. Many European countries have numerous counter-Islamophobia initiatives. On the counter-Islamophobia level, Serbia is lacking a single initiative towards confronting Islamophobia (there are no projects by the state nor by NGO's). The state need to address the issues of education and the teaching materials that are necessary to foster an awareness of diversity, the promotion of a non-violent culture of equality and non-discriminatory practice. Public awareness on Islamophobia should be raised and the very important role should be played by NGOs and media. An important signal came from the European Commison's Progress Report on Serbia for 2016 which highlighted the decrease in religiously motivated incidents which continued in 2016. However, most critical points of Islamophobia have been analyzed as incidents were present while policy recommendations for key actors have been provided.

# Izvršni Rezime

Tokom 2016. godine održani su parlamentarni izbori u Srbiji. Struktura Narodne skupština je promenjena jer se nekoliko stranaka, među njima i pro-ruskih nacionalista, vratilo u Parlament po prvi put od 2012. godine. Analize u oblasti zaošljavanja nisu pokazale da postoji diskriminatorna praksa prilikom zapošljavanja Muslimana, ali Muslimani i dalje nisu dovoljno zastupljeni u lokalnoj administraciji, sudstvu i policiji u mestima gde oni u Srbiji tradicionalno žive. Ovaj problem postoji duže od dve decenije i potvrđen je u Izveštaju Evropske komisije o Srbiji za 2015. ali I 2016. godinu. Mediji su verovatno najvažniji u konstruisanju i promovisanju islamofobičnih stavova i medijsko izveštavanje u Srbiji je alarmantno jer naslovi često sadrže oštru gotovo predratnu retoriku što ovaj izveštaj ilustruje detaljno. Presude Međunarodnog krivičnog suda za bivšu Jugoslaviju u slučajevima Radovana Karadžića i Vojislava Seselja podelile su spsko društvo i zadobili ogromnu medijsku pažnju. Kao i u mnogim drugim zemljama, vesti o terorističkim napadima u Evropi, a naročito napad u Berlinu, imao je glavno mesto u srpskim medijima. Američki izbori takođe su dobili zavidnu pažnju u javnim diskusijama i često su rezultirali lažnim vestima u kojima se govori na koji bi način Donald Tramp pomogao Srbiji kod kosovskog pitanja. Drugi značajni događaji uključuju obeležavanje Srebrenice ali i rušenje muslimanskog groblja "Gazilar" u Novom Pazaru kada je 29 spomenika uništeno. Mnoge evropske države imaju brojne inicijative za borbu protiv islamofobije. Na ovom nivou, Srbija nema nijednu inicijativu (niti od strane države niti od strane nevladnih organizacija). Država treba da obrati posebnu pažnju na oblast obrazovanja kao i na nastavna sredstva koja su neophodna komponenta za podsticanje različitosti, promociju nenasilne kulture jednakosti i nediskriminacije. Javnu svest o islamofobiji treba podizati i važnu ulogu trebalo bi da odigraju nevladine organizacije i mediji. Važan signal dolazi iz Izveštaja Evropske Komisije o napretku Srbije za 2016. godinu koji je naglasio da se pad u verski motivisanim incidenatima nastavio u 2016. Međutim, većina kritičnih tačaka islamofobije je analizirana jer su incidenti postojali dok su sa druge strane napisane i preporuke za ključne činioce.

# Introduction

Parliamentary elections were held in Serbia on 24 April, 2016.[1] The Serbian Progressive Party coalition retained its majority, winning 131 of the 250 seats. In contrast to the 2014 elections, a record-breaking seven non-minority lists passed the 5% threshold (in 2014, only four non-ethnic lists surpassed the 5% threshold and all the parties were, at least declaratively, pro-EU). However, in 2016 the National Assembly structure has changed as several parties, among them pro-Russian nationalists, returned to parliament for the first time since 2012;[2] namely the Serbian Radical Party led by nationalist politician Vojislav Seselj, who returned to politics this year after being acquitted by the UN war crimes tribunal in the Hague, and the coalition DSS/Dveri.[3] The incumbent cabinet of the government of Serbia, the second one led by Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić, was elected on 11 August, 2016, by a majority vote in the National Assembly.[4] According to the 2011 census, Islam is the third most widespread religion in Serbia after Christian Orthodoxy and Catholicism with 228,658 Muslims in Serbia (3.1% of the total population). The largest concentration of Muslims in Serbia can be found in the municipalities of Novi Pazar, Tutin and Sjenica in the Sandžak region, and in the municipalities of Preševo and Bujanovac in the Preševo Valley.[5] The general conclusion from the European Commission Report from 2016 is that the decrease in religiously motivated incidents has continued in 2016.[6]

This report will cover different topics related to Islamophobia, from media reporting, which is arguably the most important in framing public policies and discourses and in constructing and promoting particular positions and therefore in spreading Islamophobia, to the judgments of the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia which were very important for Serbian society as one of them decided on the case of the killing of more than 8,000 Muslims in Srebrenica in 1995. Other significant incidents in 2016 in Serbia will also feature in the report.

1. Republic Electoral Commission of the Republic of Serbia: 125th Session of the Republic Electoral Commission, (May 5, 2016), retrieved September 10, 2016, from http://www.rik.parlament.gov.rs/english/aktivnosti-sednice.php.

2. Radio Free Europe, "Official Tally Confirms Victory for Serbian Prime Minister's Coalition," *rferl.org,* (April 25, 2016), retrieved September 12, 2016, from http://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-parliamentary-elections-vucic-victory/27695340.html.

3. Radio Free Europe, "Nationalist Seselj Returns to Serbian Parliament", *rferl.org*, (June 3, 2016), retrieved September 9, 2016, from http://www.rferl.org/a/serbia-seselj-parliament/27777077.html.

4. Reuters, "New Serbian government gets parliament approval," *Reuters*, (August 11, 2016), retrieved from October 1, 2016, from http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-serbia-government-idUKKCN10M1TO.

5. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia: 2011 Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Serbia, Religion, Mother Tongue and Ethnicity, 2013.

6.European Commission, "Serbia 2016 Progress Report," *ec.europa.eu*, (October 11, 2016), retrieved October 20, 2016, from http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_serbia.pdf.

# Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

Novi Pazar is the cultural centre of the Bosniaks in Serbia (83%) and the historical region of Sandzak. Bosniaks are generally defined as South Slavs and the majority are Muslim by religion.[7] As of the 2011 census, the population of the municipal area of Novi Pazar was 125,000. Novi Pazar is one of the cities with the highest unemployment rate in Serbia.[8] The situation in the Sandzak area in 2016 was mostly stable and municipal elections were peaceful. The Bosniak community continues to be underrepresented in the local administration and the police. The area remains among the most underdeveloped with a high unemployment rate according to the latest European Commission Report.[9]

That the Bosniak community is underrepresented in the local administration was also stated in the *European Islamophobia Report* for 2015.[10] In 2016, the Bosniak National Council issued a statement that formulated the same issue and called it an act of discrimination; it proposed that in places where Bosniaks traditionally live, the structure of the state organs with public authorities should be coordinated according to the national structure of the population.[11]

The region of Presevo Valley – a region in southern Serbia composed of the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo[12] - remains underdeveloped and the ethnic Albanian population, who tend to be adherents of Islam, continues to be underrepresented in the public administration.[13]

## Politics

The presidential elections in the United States have drawn the attention of the whole world and Serbia was not an exception. However, the presence of Donald Trump in the media was incredible. The image that was created in the media often exceeded science fiction. The media reported on all of Trump's statements no matter how bizarre they were with no critical approach. Thus, his Islamophobic statements on banning Muslims from entering America and on the expulsion of Muslims were found on the pages of almost every newspaper. For example, "Trump: Islam un-

7. Philip Emil Muehlenbeck, *Religion and the Cold War: A Global Perspective* (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University Press, 2012), p. 183.

8.Bojan Perovic (2016), "Islamophobia in Serbia: National Report 2015," Enes Bayraklı/Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report 2015* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016).

9.European Commission Report, 2016.

10.Perovic, 2016, p. 448.

11.Bosniac National Council, *Odluka o primjerimadiskriminacijenadBosnjacima u Srbijisapredlogomrijesenjaz aotklanjanjediskriminacije*, October, 17, 2016.

12.Palka Eugene Joseph/Galgano Francis Anthony, *Military geography: from peace to war* (New York: McGraw Hill Custom Publishing, 2005), p. 301.

13.European Commission Report, 2016.

thinkably HATES the West";[14] "Trump: I would forbid the entry of Muslims in the United States, with one exception";[15] "TRUMP WARNS ON HATE: Muslims despise the West!";[16] "Shiptars in a panic: If Donald Trump wins, America will stand by Serbia!";[17] "ZEMAN ADORES HIM: He cheers for Trump because he doesn't let Muslims in the U.S.".[18]

The loudest Trump supporter in Serbia was Vojislav Seselj, a Serbian politician who spent 11 years in the United Nations Detention Unit of Scheveningen and on 31 March, 2016, was acquitted in a first-instance verdict on all counts by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) pending appeal. He is the leader of the right-wing Serbian Radical Party (SRS) which in the 2016 Serbian elections won 22 seats in parliament. Seselj and his supporters called everyone but especially the Serbian diaspora in the U.S. to vote for Trump ("Seselj called on Serbs in America: My brothers, with all your strength support Donald Trump!")[19]and organised protests against the official visit of U.S. Vice President Joseph Biden to Belgrade (because he supported the candidacy of Hillary Clinton) and rallies supporting Donald Trump in his race for president of America ("Radicals protest because of Biden's visit to Belgrade";[20] "Protests of SRS because of Biden and support for Trump").[21]

This political support wouldn't be anything surprising in the political arena but then an open letter appeared which urged Donald Trump to reject Vojislav Seselj's support. The letter was signed by former U.S. diplomats, academics and activists including professors from prestigious institutions such as Columbia University, Yale University, New York University, George Washington University. The letter stated

> "It is important to note that Bosniaks (Muslims) from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albanians from Kosovo were targeted and systematically killed during the Balkan Wars. For those among us who are survivors and are Muslim, Mr. Trump's statements calling for a ban of Muslims from entering the United States, if applied when we fled our homes, would have surely ended in our deaths. More recently, he has not distanced himself from Vojislav Seselj, indicted for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. During the Bosnian War, Seselj inspired terror in the hearts and minds of men, women and children during

14.Blic, "Tramp: Islam nezamislivo MRZI Zapad," *Blic*, March 10, 2016.

15.Blic, "Tramp: Zabraniobihulazakmuslimana u SAD, sa JEDNIM IZUZETKOM," Blic, May 5, 2016.

16. Informer, "TRAMP UPOZORAVA NA MRŽNJU: MuslimanipreziruZapad!," *Informer,* March, 10, 2016.

17.Kurir, "ŠIPTARI U PANICI: Akopobedi Donald Tramp, AmerikastajeuzSrbiju!," *Kurir*, September 10, 2016.

18.Alo, "ZEMAN GA OBOŽAVA NavijazaTrampajernepuštamuslimane u SAD," *Alo*, May 19, 2016.

19. Informer, "ŠEŠELJ POZVAO SRBE U AMERICI: Braćo, svimsvojimsnagamapodržiteDonaldaTrampa!," *Informer*, January 3, 2016.

20.Informer, "PROTEST RADIKALA ZBOG DOLASKA BAJDENA! Šešelj: Srbi u SAD, glasajte za Trampa!," *Informer*, August 16, 2016.

21. Blic, "Miting SRS protiv Bajdena i podrška Trampu," *Blic*, August, 2016.

> his militia's violent invasions of villages carrying out a campaign of murder, rape and torture in Eastern Bosnia. Today, Seselj is a member of the Serbian parliament and likely to run for Serbia's presidency in 2017. Apparently, Vojislav Seselj sees Donald Trump as an ally in his cause. Mr. Trump has done nothing to disavow Seselj's endorsement."[22]

The spread of "Trumpmania" is witnessed by the fact that in the respected weekly magazine *Nedeljnik* there appeared an interview with presidential candidate Trump in which he apologised for the NATO bombing of Serbia. This interview was cited in a sensationalist context ("TRUMP OPENED UP HIS SOUL: I apologise to Serbs for the bombing, you are good people!"[23]) in all Serbian media, not only tabloid but in more reputable newspapers and portals as well.[24] The media frenzy went so far that even experts and academics started debates on the influence of this interview while Professor Eric Gordy from the prestigious University College London (UCL) emphasized that this interview is "another sign that the presidential candidate is a Russian player" and that "this rhetoric is in accordance with the Russian line in Serbia, but also with the extreme right in the United States, which sees the conflicts in Yugoslavia as a battle between Christianity and Islam. They believe that Bosnia and Kosovo are the first place where Islam took root in Europe".[25] The farce attracted a lot of attention across the world, but eventually experienced its downfall when the Trump campaign in a statement officially declared that "Mr. Trump never gave an interview to the Serbian weekly magazine *Nedeljnik.*"[26] The editorial board of *Nedeljnik* reacted promptly stating that the interview with Trump took place through an intermediary, and that although the possibility that Trump for some reason changed his mind and decided to deny the interview cannot be

22. Balkan Insight, "Trump Urged to Reject Vojislav Seselj's Support," *Balkan Insight*, (October 19, 2016), retrieved January 19, 2017, from http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/us-activits-call-trump-to-disavow-seselj-support-10-19-2016-2; Open Letter by Tanya L. Domi, "Donald Trump Should Disavow War Criminals that Endorse Him and Clarify His Views on the Yugoslav Wars and NATO Interventions," *medium.com*, (October 18, 2016), retrieved January 19, 2017, from https://medium.com/@tanyaldomi/open-letter-to-donald-trump-c92f8a45573b#.r0099c7u3.

23.Kurir, "TRAMP OTVORIO DUŠU: Izvinjavam se Srbimazbogbombardovanja, vi stedobriljudi!," *Kurir*, October 13, 2016.

24. Al Jazeera, "Trump se izvinioSrbiji," *AlJazeera Balkans*, (October 13, 2016), retrieved November 15, 2016, from http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/trump-se-izvinio-srbiji; Radio Free Europe, "Tramp se izvinioSrbiji: Bombardovanje je bilovelikagreška," *slobodnaevropa.org*, (October 13, 2016), retrieved November 16, from http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/28050517.html; Vecernjenovosti, "Tramp se izvinio: Bombardovanje je bilovelikagreška, Srbisuveomadobriljudi," *novosti.rs*, (October 13, 2016), retrieved October 28, 2016, from http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/planeta.299.html:629837-Tramp-se-izvinio-Bombardovanje-je-bilo-velika-greska-Srbi-su-veoma-dobri-ljudi; Informer, "TRAMP O SRBIJI: Izvinjavam se zbogbombardovanja, kadpostanempredsednik OPET ĆEMO BITI PRIJATELJI!," *Informer*, (October 13, 2016), retrieved October 29, 2016, from http://www.informer.rs/vesti/politika/97036/TRAMP-SRBIJI-Izvinjavam-zbog-bombardovanja-kad-postanem-predsednik-OPET-CEMO-BITI-PRIJATELJI.

25. B92, "Trampovoizvinjenje Srbimanoviznak da je ruskiigrač," *B92.net*, (October 13, 2015), retrieved 30 October 2016, from http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=10&dd=13&nav_category=78&nav_id=1187572.

26. Trump Campaign Statement, "Mr. Trump never gave an interview to the Serbian weekly magazine Nedeljnik," *donaltrump.com*, (October 13, 2016), retrieved November 2, 2016, from https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/trump-campaign-statement6.

excluded, the editorial board takes full responsibility if it turns out that their source deceived them and made up a fictional interview.[27]

Donald Trump's victory in Serbia was welcomed in many circles. Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic said that officially Belgrade did not give support to any American candidate, but that he noticed a general enthusiasm in the country, and in the ranks of his own party after Trump's victory. Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Seselj and his fellow party members wore T-shirts with the image of Donald Trump, while the radical leader said that his heart was "as big as Zlatibor" (a Serbian mountain). President of the right-nationalist movement *Dveri* and MP in the Serbian Parliament Bosko Obradovic even convened a press conference after news of Trump's victory, during which he literally expressed his condolences to the Serbian government and the Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic because of, as he said, their misjudgments and support of Hillary Clinton.

While some politicians were fueled by the expectation of a change of U.S. policy towards Serbia and the Balkans, the Serbian tabloid fight could begin once again: "Trump can gives us back Kosovo"; "Albanians are desperate because of Clinton's defeat"; "Putin and Trump will return Kosovo to us"[28]; "Kosovo Albanians wail and weep: They spit on Trump and Melania because of Serbia"[29]; "PANIC AND ANXIETY IN KOSOVO AND IN ALBANIA! They fear that Trump will return Kosovo to Serbia!"[30]

In North Mitrovica (Kosovo) in the busiest street as well as in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, billboards with the image of Donald Trump appeared which supported the newly elected president of the United States. The billboards in Kosovo showed Trump's face with the message "Serbs supported! Serbs stood by him all the way", while the other billboards which appeared in Kosovo featured a large photo of Trump next to photos of Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama with quotations of their statement "I expect the victory of Clinton. Albanians, vote for her" and "Trump as president is a threat to Albania and the Albanian-American relations".[31]

27.Nedeljnik, "Saopstenjeredakcijepovodomslucaja Tramp," *nedeljnik.rs*, (October 13, 2016), retrieved October 15, 2016, from http://www.nedeljnik.rs/nedeljnik/portalnews/saopstenje-redakcije-povodom-slucaja-tramp/.

28.Radio Free Europe, "Kako se SrbijaradujeTrampovojpobedi," *slobodnaevropa.org*, (November 11, 2016), retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-tramp-tabloidi/28108742.html.

29.Telegraf, "AlbancisaKosovakukaju i placu- pljujuTrampa I MelanijuzbogSrbije," *telegraf.rs,* (November 11, 2016), retrieved November 22, 2016, from http://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/2450425-albanci-s-kosova-kukaju-i-placu-pljuju-trampa-i-melaniju-zbog-srbije-foto.

30.Intermagazin, "Panika I strahnaKosovu I Albaniji: Plase se da ce Tramp da namvrati Kosovo," *intermagazin..rs*, (November 11, 2016), retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.intermagazin.rs/panika-i-strah-na-kosovu-i-u-albaniji-plase-se-da-ce-tramp-vratiti-kosovo-srbiji/.

31. Radio Free Europe, "BilbordipodrškeTrampu u Beogradu i SevernojMitrovici," *slobodnaevropa.org*, (November 11, 2016), retrieved November 11, 2016, from http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bilbordi-tramp/28110287.html.

## Media

It has been stressed that Islamophobia is widely spread by the media. The tabloid press and nationalist web portals lead in this regard. The situation in the media is alarming. Just a few headlines will provide corroboration of this thesis: "Wahhabis recruits Serbs and threaten them that they will burn in hell if they do not convert to ISLAM"[32]; "Muslims make Germanistan of Germany"[33]; "Uncensored: How Shiptars systematically terrorize Serbs"[34]; "Shiptars are waiting for Clinton's victory to start the ethnic cleansing of Serbs in Kosovo!"[35]

In the 2015 *European Islamophobia Report* on Serbia, it was discussed in detail how the term 'Šiptar' is used in the Serbian language as a derogatory term for Albanians. Although the State Commissioner for Protection of Equality decided in two cases that the use of the term 'Šiptar' represents a violation of the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination this practice did not change in media in 2016.[36] In September 2016, the Independent Association of Journalists in Serbia condemned the usage of the term calling it hate speech.[37]

Headlines are often inflammatory with harsh, almost pre-war rhetoric: "DISCLOSED! Shiptar pays yellow duck: Haki Abazi, director of the Rockefeller Foundation gives millions for CHAOS IN SERBIA!"[38]; "EXCLUSIVE DunjaIlic escaped from Kosovo: I survived the hell, I thought Shiptars will kill me!"[39]; "ALARMING, Putin's intelligence warned Serbia: Ustashas and Shiptars are preparing an attack on the north of Kosovo?"[40]; "They destroy everything which is Serbian: Shiptars overthrow a truck with Serbian products"[41]; "THREAT FROM KOSOVO: Shiptars dream of creating a military power reliant on NATO and the international community?!"[42]

32. Informer, "VehabijevrbujuSrbe I preteim d ace goreti u pakluako ne predju u Islam," *Informer*, September 27, 2016.

33.Vidovdan, "МуслиманиодНемачкеправеГерманистан," *vidovdan.org*, (September 21, 2016), retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.vidovdan.org/2016/09/21/muslimani-od-nemacke-prave-germanistan/.

34. Srbin.info, "НЕЦЕНЗУРИСАНО: КакоШиптарисистематскитероришуСрбе," *srbin.info*, (June 27, 2016), retrieved September 27, 2016, from http://srbin.info/2016/06/27/necenzurisano-kako-siptari-sistematski-terorisu-srbe/.

35.Vidovdan, "ШиптаричекајупобедуХилариКлинтон, дабикренулисаетничкимчишћењемСрбанаКосо ву!," *vidovdan.org*, (September 13, 2016), retrieved October 22, 2016, from http://www.vidovdan.org/2016/09/13/siptari-cekaju-pobedu-hilari-klinton-da-bi-krenuli-sa-etnickim-ciscenjem-srba-na-kosovu/.

36.Perovic, 2016, p. 456-457.

37. Nuns, "NUNS osudiogovormržnje u Kuriru," *NUNS*, (September 13, 2016), retrieved October 13, 2016, from http://www.nuns.rs/info/statements/28840/nuns-osudio-govor-mrznje-u-kuriru-.html.

38.Informer, "OTKRIVAMO! ŠIPTAR PLAĆA ŽUTU PATKU: HakiAbazi, direktorRokfelerfondacijedajemilioneza HAOS U SRBIJI!," *Informer*, August 8, 2016.

39.Kurir, "EKSKLUZIVNO DUNJA ILIĆ POBJEGLA S KOSOVA: Preživjelasampakao, mislilasam da će me Šiptariubiti!," *Kurir*, July 7, 2016.

40. Informer, "ALARMANTNO, PUTINOVI OBAVEŠTAJCI UPOZORILI SRBIJU: Ustaše i šiptarispremajunapadna sever Kosova!," *Informer*, October 25, 2016.

41. Srbin.info, "УНИШТАВАЈУ СВЕ СРПСКО: Шиптарипреврнуликамионсасрпскимпроизводима," *srbin.info*, (March 3, 2016), retrieved June 3, 2016, from http://srbin.info/2016/03/03/unistavaju-sve-srpsko-siptari-prevrnuli-kamion-sa-srpskim-proizvodima/.

42. Informer, "PRETNJA SA KOSOVA: Šiptarimaštaju o stvaranjuvojnesileoslonjenina NATO i međunaro dnuzajednicu?!," *Informer*, September 18, 2016.

The Bosniak National Council[43] in a meeting held on 17 October, 2016, adopted a decision based on the examples of discrimination against Bosniaks in Serbia which proposed solutions to eliminate discrimination. In Part 10, dedicated to the media reporting on Muslims, the council stresses that

> "Serbian media with national frequency often use offensive terms for Muslims/Bosniaks, equate them with crime, extremism and terrorism, and hate speech is extremely present. In addition, some Serbian media persistently and maliciously try to connect Muslims/Bosniaks with extremist criminal organisations which participate in the battlefields of the Middle East and North Africa."[44]

In relation to the foreign media, Serbian media mostly covers sensationalist texts. These news stories are usually directly imported without through research or a critical review of the topics covered. However, it must be emphasised that this "copy paste" method is sometimes beneficial as text are reprinted that point to the problem of Islamophobia in the world - even in the tabloid press: "Human Rights Watch Report: The world is ruled by Islamophobia"[45];"Islamophobia: Teenage Muslims beaten up in front of the New York mosque"[46]; "Austria: The increase of xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism".[47] On the other hand, many newspapers and portals give space to obscure and bizarre news related to Islam: "Dutch right-wing politician will not be silenced: My mission is to stop the Islamic invasion"[48]; "Hungarians are furious: Obama wants Muslims in Europe"[49]; "They danced from happiness: Muslims rejoiced after attack in Brussels"[50]; "Fico: No one will force us to haul Muslims in Slovakia"[51]; "Jambon: A significant part of the Muslim community celebrated the attacks in Brussels"[52]; "German's right: Islam is not in accordance with the Constitution of Germany, prohibit the wearing of the burqa and minarets"[53]; "Orban: Our Constitution prohibits Islamization"[54]; "English imam disgusted the world 'Islam allows you to have female slaves and to have sex with

43.The Bosniak National Council is the highest representative body of Sandzak Bosniaks in Serbia. It was founded on 11 May, 1991, under the name "Muslim National Council of Sandzak".

44.Bosnjackonacionalnovijece, Odluka o primerimadiskriminacijenadBosnjacima u Srbijisapredlogomres enjazaotklanjanjediskriminacije, Broj: 847-09/2016, Novi Pazar, October 17, 2016.

45.Alo, "IZVJEŠTAJ HRW Svetomvladaislamofobija," *Alo*, January 27, 2016.

46.Blic, "ISLAMOFOBIJA Tinejdžerimuslimanipretučeniisprednjujorškedžamije," *Blic*, July 5, 2016.

47.Blic, "Austrija: Povećanjeksenofobije, islamofobije i antisemitizma," *Blic*, May 2, 2016.

48.Kurir, "HOLANDSKI DESNIČAR NE DA DA GA UĆUTKAJU: Moja misija je da zaustavim islamsku invaziju," *Kurir*, October 28, 2016.

49.Alo, "MAĐARI BESNI Obama želimuslimane u Evropi," *Alo*, May 19, 2016.

50.Alo, "PLESALI OD SREĆE Muslimanisu se radovalinapadu u Briselu," *Alo*, April 17, 2016.

51.Blic, "Fico: Nikonasnećenaterati da dovlačimo u Slovačkumuslimane," *blic.rs*, (February 11, 2016), retrieved January 20, 2017, from http://www.blic.rs/vesti/svet/fico-niko-nas-nece-naterati-da-dovlacimo-u-slovacku-muslimane/xxrpc0m.

52.Blic, "Zambon: Znacajandeomuslimanskezajedniceproslavljaonapade u Briselu," *Blic*, April 16, 2016.

53.Blic, "Nemačkadesnica: Islam nije u skladusaUstavomNemačke, ZABRANITI NOŠENJE BURKI i MINARETE," *Blic*, April 17, 2016.

54.Blic, "Orban: NašUstavzabranjujeislamizaciju," *Blic*, April 26, 2016.

them'"[55]; "Prime Minister of Slovakia: We will not allow the eruption of Muslim ghettos on our territory"[56]; "Sobotka: We do not want increased presence of Muslims"[57]; "Miloš Zeman: I have nothing against refugees from Russia or Serbia, but Muslims to be deported from Europe!"[58]; "TERROR IN THE POOL Muslims spit on swimmers shouting 'Allahu Akbar'".[59] The terrorist attacks that occurred during the year were covered by the media. Although the media often make sensational reports it should be noted that linking terrorism with religion does not occur, at least in mainstream Serbian media - a fact that is very positive. All terrorist attacks were reported but the attack in Berlin where 12 people were killed attracted the greatest attention. A detail that arguably affected this attention is that the terrorist is linked to a German citizen of Serbian origin, namely Boban Simeonović. Serbian media reported more on this terrorist attack ("Boban Simeonović is fanatic even for Islamists, he was the guru of the Berlin assassin"[60]; "The murderer from Berlin lived with a Serb who recruited for ISIS!"[61]; "Who is behind the terrorist: Serb recruited executioner from Berlin"[62]; "Father of Serbian jihadist in shock: He can't believe his son is a terrorist!"[63]; "Shocking secret document: Serb in charge of recruitment and training of terrorists!".[64] Even in this case, however, there appears a clear distinction between terrorism and religion even in the tabloid media.

# International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

## Radovan Karadzic

On 24 March, 2016, Radovan Karadzic was found guilty of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and sentenced to 40 years imprisonment. He was found guilty of genocide for the Srebrenica massacre, which aimed to eliminate the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica by killing the men and boys of Srebrenica and forcibly removing the women, young children and some elderly men and systematically exterminating the Bosnian Muslim community. He was also convicted of persecution, extermination, deportation, forcible transfer (ethnic cleansing) and murder in

55.Blic, "ENGLESKI IMAM ZGROZIO SVET "Islam vamdozvoljava da imaterobinje i sekssanjima," *Blic*, July 31, 2016.

56.Blic, "PremijerSlovačke: Nećemodozvoliti da nanašojteritorijiniknumuslimanskageta," *Blic*, February 14, 2016.

57.Blic, "Sobotka: Ne želimovećeprisustvomuslimana," *Blic*, August 23, 2016.

58. Informer, "MILOŠ ZEMAN: NemamništaprotivizbeglicaizRusijeiliSrbije, alimuslimani da se deportujuizEvrope!," *Informer*, October 2, 2016.

59.Alo, "TEROR NA BAZENU Muslimanipljuvalikupačeuzvikujući "Alahuekber," *Alo*, July 27, 2016.

60. Informer,"BobanSimeonović je FANATIK i za same islamiste, BIO JE GURU UBICE IZ BERLINA!," *Informer,* December 24, 2016.

61.Blic, "UbicaizBerlina ŽIVEO KOD SRBINA koji je regrutovaoza ISIS!,"*Blic*, December 21, 2016.

62.Alo, "KO STOJI IZA TERORISTE SrbinregrutovaokrvnikaizBerlina," *Alo*, December 22, 2016.

63. Informer, "OTAC SRBINA DŽIHADISTE U ŠOKU: Ne može da poveruje da mu je sin terorista!," *Informer*, December 23, 2016.

64.Alo, "ŠOKANTAN TAJNI DOKUMENT Srbinglavnizavrbovanje i obukuterorista!," *Alo*, December 24, 2016.

connection with his campaign to drive Bosnian Muslims and Croats out of villages claimed by Bosnian Serb forces.[65]

Virtually all the world's media reported on Karadzic's verdict, from CNN writing that "The Butcher of Bosnia" was sentenced to 40 years in prison,[66] the BBC calling his trial "as one of the most important war crimes trials since World War Two",[67] the *New York Times* describing the trial "as the most important in the 23-year history of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia",[68] while the *Daily Mail* highlighted that "Karadzic is the highest ranking person to face the UN Tribunal at the Hague and being sentenced".[69] Many of the influential international figures like U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon commented by hailing the verdicts as a "historic result for the people of the former Yugoslavia and for international criminal justice" and by expressing support for the victims who suffered under Karadzic's leadership.[70]

Most of the mainstream media in Serbia reported the news in a sensationalist manner: "The Hague has no mercy for Serbs: Karadzic sentenced to 40 years in prison"[71]; "The Hague rapes Serbs again! Radovan sentenced to 40 years on the 17th anniversary of the NATO aggression!"[72]; "Karadzic's verdict is a revenge of the West!"[73]; "Reaction after Karadzic's verdict: Biljana Plavsic: If it is genocide, then women and children are killed too, and I've seen them saved".[74]

The Serbian Radical Party organised a protest against Karadzic's verdict while their leader sent out the message that "Karadzic is innocent but sentenced only because he is a Serb. This is a judgement against the entire Serbian people, Serbian history and

65. ICTY, "Trial Judgement Summary for Radovan Karadžić," *icty.org,* (March 24, 2016), retrieved July 28, 2016, from http://www.icty.org/x/cases/karadzic/tjug/en/160324_judgement_summary.pdf.

66. Tim Hume/Tiffany Ap/Milena Veselinovic, "Radovan Karadzic found guilty of genocide, sentenced to 40 years," *CNN*, (March 25, 2016), retrieved July 22, 2016, from http://edition.cnn.com/2016/03/24/europe/karadzic-war-crimes-verdict/.

67. BBC, "Radovan Karadzic jailed for Bosnia war Srebrenica genocide," *bbc.com*, (March 24, 2016), retrieved July 23, 2016, from http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35893804.

68.Marlise Simons, "Radovan Karadzic, a Bosnian Serb, is convicted of genocide," *New York Times*, (March 24, 2016), retrieved July 24, 2016, from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/world/europe/radovan-karadzic-verdict.html.

69. Jennifer Newton/Matt Hunter/Sara Malm, "Ex-Bosnian-Serb-leader-Karadzic-faces-war-crimes-verdict-UN-court," *Daily Mail*, (March 30, 2016), retrieved July 27, 2016, from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3506950/Ex-Bosnian-Serb-leader-Karadzic-faces-war-crimes-verdict-UN-court.html.

70. United Nations News Centre, "UN welcomes 'historic' guilty verdict against Radovan Karadžić," *un.org,* (March 24, 2016), retrieved July 28, 2016, from http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53537#.WDdLvfkrLIU.

71.Informer, "HAG NEMA MILOSTI ZA SRBE! Radovan Karadžić osuđen na 40 godina zatvora!," *Informer*, March 24, 2016.

72.Informer, "HAG opet siluje SRBE! Radovanu 40 godina na 17. godišnjicu NATO agresije!," *Informer*, March 25, 2016.

73. Vecernje Novosti, "Presuda Karadžiću je osveta Zapada," *Vecernje Novosti*, March 27, 2016.

74. Vecernje Novosti, "REAKCIJE POSLE PRESUDE KARADžIĆU: Biljana Plavšić: Ako je genocid, onda ubijaju žene i decu, a ja sam videla da ih spasavaju," *Vecernje Novosti*, March 24, 2016.

nation."[75] One of the Serbian daily newspapers in their weekend edition gave a poster of Radovan Karadzic as a free gift to its readers.[76] In the following days, a very dangerous, but already known, thesis was promoted in many Serbian newspapers and web portals. In this context there is a statement by Karadzic after the verdict, which left him in shock, whereby he allegedly said "Is it possible that after Paris and Brussels, Europe still don't see what we fought against?"[77]

This certainly indicates and renews the thesis which was already pointed out in last year's report during the trial before the ICTY of Ratko Mladic, in whose defence Milorad Dodik, president of *Republika of Srpska*, testified. In brief, Dodik said that what are seeing around the globe - the blood and suffering of innocent Western men and the establishment of Daesh/ISIL based on Sharia law – had its beginnings in the political movement of the Bosnian Muslims. Just as the Serbs had to defend themselves, the whole world today must do the same; they should not accuse anyone of any crimes when dealing with such evil. Testifying in defence of Ratko Mladic, Dodik said that Alija Izetbegovic and his Party of Democratic Action, "in a sense were the forerunners of the current ideology of radical Islam that we see in the world".[78]

## Vojislav Seselj

On 31 March, 2016, the Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) delivered its first instance judgment acquitting Vojislav Šešelj of criminal responsibility on all counts of the indictment,[79] with the dissenting opinion of Judge Lattanzi expressing criticism of the judgement in harsh tones. Judge Lattanzi emphasized that the ICTY had set aside all the rules of international humanitarian law in order to acquit Vojislav Šešelj and concluded "On reading the majority's judgement, I felt I was thrown back in time to a period in human history, centuries ago, when it was said – and it was the Romans who used to say this, to justify their bloody conquests and the murders of their political opponents in civil wars: '*silent enimleges inter arma*' (In time of war, laws fall silent)."[80]

75. Vecernje Novosti, "ZAVRŠEN MITING RADIKALA: Šešelj: Srbija da traži ukidanje Haga i povratak osuđenih," *Vecernje Novosti*, March 24, 2016.

76.Informer, "SAMO U VIKEND IZDANJU INFORMERA!Poklon poster RadovanaKaradžićasastihovima GavrilaPrincipa!," *informer.rs*, (March 25, 2016), retrieved November 25, 2016, from http://www.informer.rs/vesti/politika/62836/VIDEO-SAMO-VIKEND-IZDANJU-INFORMERA-Poklon-poster-Radovana-Karadzica-stihovima-Gavrila-Principa.

77.VecernjeNovosti, "Karadžić: ZarEvropaposlePariza i Brisela ne znaprotivkogasmo se mi borili?," *VecernjeNovosti*, March 25, 2016.

78.Perovic, 2016, p.459.

79. International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, "Trial Judgement Summary for Vojislav Šešelj," *icty.org*, (March, 31, 2016), retrieved September 22, 2016, from http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/tjug/en/160331_judgement_summary.pdf

80. International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, "Summary of the partially dissenting opinion, Judge Flavia Lattanzi," *icty.org*, (March 31, 2016), retrieved September 27, 2016, from http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/tjug/en/160331_summary_of_the_partially_dissenting_opinion.pdf

Vojislav Seselj, a Serbian politician (from 2016, he is an MP in the Serbian Parliament) and the founder and president of the far-right Serbian Radical Party (SRS), was charged with crimes against humanity and violations of the laws or the customs of war by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). The crimes in the indictment included, among others, that Seselj, both individually and as part of a "joint criminal enterprise", engaged in "the permanent forcible removal […]of a majority of the Croat, Muslim and other non-Serb populations from approximately one-third of the territory of the Republic of Croatia ("Croatia"), and large parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and from parts of Vojvodina, in the Republic of Serbia ("Serbia"), in order to make these areas part of a new Serb-dominated state".[81]

The verdict provoked different reactions in the domestic and international publics, and in academic and political circles. While Seselj, his political party and his supporters celebrated, some others were furious with the outcome of the trial. Some of the local NGOs protested stating that "Seselj's judgment is a reward for a crime"[82] while others stated that "Seselj was chief propagandist of the 1990s war".[83] Some local media have promoted the thesis that the release of Seselj is a trap set up by the West to overthrow Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic ("The ICTY gave a strong impetus to the chief of SRS, while stabbing the knife right in the heart of Prime Minister Vucic!").[84] Mayor of Srebrenica Camil Durakovic said that "SRS sympathisers celebrated Seselj's judgement in Srebrenica by circulating in cars decorated with flags of the SRS, with shouts that they will slaughter again".[85] While Russian Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin "congratulated his friend Seselj on his victory",[86] Croatian President Grabar-Kitarovic called Seselj "one of the greatest criminals in our region and … [that] this judgement is a huge blow of international criminal law".[87] He sent letters to the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the UN Security Council regarding the judgment of Vojislav Seselj, in which she expressed that she was disappointed and worried.[88] His

81. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, "The Prosecutor of the Tribunal against Vojislav Seselj, Indictment," *icty.org*, (not dated), retrieved September 13, 2016, from http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/ind/en/ses-ii030115e.pdf

82.Blic, "Žene u crnom: PresudaŠešelju je skandalbezpresedana," *Blic*, April 1, 2016 .

83.Blic, "PROMOTER MRŽNJE I RATA Srbiji je Šešeljkriv i bezHaga," *Blic*, March 31, 2016.

84.Informer, "ZAPAD SRUŠIO VUČIĆA!PosleoslobađajućepresudeŠešelju u Srbijivišeništanijeisto!," *Informer*, April 1, 2016.

85.Blic, "RADIKALI SLAVILI U SREBRENICI Duraković: Opet nam prete klanjem," *Blic*, March 31, 2016.

86. Informer, "VICEPREMIJER RUSIJE ROGOZIN: Čestitam mom drugu Šešelju na pobedi!," *Informer*, March 31, 2016.

87. Blic, "Kolinda o presudi: Šešelj je najveći zločinac na ovim prostorima, ovo je sramota međunarodnog prava," Blic, March 31, 2016.

88. N1 Zagreb, "Grabar Kitarovićpisala UN: Razočaranasampresudom Šešelju," *N1Info*, (April 19, 2016), retrieved November 3, 2016, from http://rs.n1info.com/a153369/Svet/Region/Grabar-Kitarovic-pisala-UN-Razocarana-sam-presudom-Seselju.html.

acquittal was described by *The Economist* as "a victory for advocates of ethnic cleansing" while in the words of the UCL Professor Eric Gordy, a sociologist and expert on war crimes in the Balkans, the Seselj verdict is "a great victory for bloated, violent lunatics everywhere".[89] Prominent International Law Professor Marko Milanovic from the University of Nottingham wrote

> "The main issue is not with the acquittal, which may or may not be the appropriate result, but with how that result was reached. The entire judgment is a reductionist dismissal of the case presented by the prosecution...I also have no doubt that with its many flaws the judgment will be reversed on appeal. But what good exactly will that accomplish? Its principal damage – that of reinforcing diverging ethnic realities in the Balkans – will already have been done."[90]

## Srebrenica Commemoration

Every year on the eve of the commemoration of the murder of thousands of Muslims in Srebrenica, media, politicians and academics in Serbia send political temperatures rising. This year was no exception: from politicians who deny the existence of the crime to scientists who for more than twenty years deny the events at Srebrenica. The prime example can be summarised in a single column published in the most prominent Serbian daily *Politika*: "The Srebrenica tragedy and the political myth which is formed, as Edward Herman noted long ago, was and will be one of the twentieth century's biggest inexhaustible resources for the unarmed but not less fierce fight, which will be ruthlessly exploited." This text continues, "Bosnian Muslims will not easily give up the undeserved moral capital that bestowed on them the status of the nation-victim with this 'crime of the crimes', and even less so will they give up the political valuables which that capital is likely to be converted into."[91]

Dr Dejan Ilic questions the arguments presented by the author and highlights the fact that Professor Herman, whose arguments sre used in the text,[92] has been severely criticised. But the real problem is that these texts are then used by

89. The Economist, "Vojislav Seselj's acquittal is a victory for advocates of ethnic cleansing," *economist.com*, (March 31, 2016), retrieved November 17, 2016, from http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21696145-international-tribunal-creating-confusing-standards-war-crimes-and-politicians-vojislav.

90.Marko Milanovic, "The Sorry Acquittal of Vojislav Seselj," *Blog of European Journal of International Law*, (April 4, 2016), retrieved November 3, 2016, from http://www.ejiltalk.org/the-sorry-acquittal-of-vojislav-seselj/#more-14187.

91.MirjanaRadojicic, "GodišnjicaSrebrenice i poruke," *Politika*, (June 26, 2016), retrieved September 18, 2016, from http://www.politika.co.rs/sr/clanak/357546/Pogledi/Godisnjica-Srebrenice-i-poruke.

92. Professor Herman called Srebrenica: "*the greatest triumph of propaganda to emerge from the Balkan wars... the link of this propaganda triumph to truth and justice is non-existent*" in his "The Politics of the Srebrenica Massacre," published on July 7, 2005. Available on http://www.globalresearch.ca/the-politics-of-the-srebrenica-massacre/660 (retrieved January 20, 2017).

high-ranking political officials. Dr Ilic analyses how Marko Djuric, from the ruling party, has used sections of this text in his own political statements.[93]

Civil society organisations[94] held a press conference on the eve of the 21st anniversary of Srebrenica.[95] It was stated that "bearing in mind the atmosphere of the last years when marking the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, we believe that it is of great importance that the highest representative body in Serbia takes a clear stance regarding this event. We remind that commemorative actions last year were prohibited by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Serbia, with the explanation that the state institutions are unable to ensure the safety",[96] The Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR) submitted an open letter to the National Assembly calling the MPs to dedicate a commemorative session to Srebrenica's victims, adopt a declaration condemning the Srebrenica genocide, and to join the commemoration organised by NGOs.[97]After the submission of the letter, the YIHR stated

> "…with regret and deep embarrassment we observe the attitudes of the highest representatives of institutions, politicians and some media related to the upcoming anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide when more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed. In Serbia, there is a continuation of policy of insult, disqualification and threats to those who call the Srebrenica genocide by its real name. Thus, Serbian Progressive Party MP Vladimir Djukanovic expressed 'deepest possible disgust' towards the YIHR because of the letter that the initiative sent to all MPs, and expressed regret that the members of the Initiative 'were not arrested'. Almost identical vocabulary and arguments were used by the representatives of the opposition parties - the Serbian Radical Party, Dveri, Zavetnici, which describes the unity of nationalist politics."[98]

However, this year's anniversary commemoration was held. The event was secured by the police and there were no incidents.[99]

93.DejanIlic, "Istine i lazi," *Pescanik*, (July 4, 2016), retrieved November 3, 2016, from http://pescanik.net/istine-i-lazi/.

94.Inicijativamladihzaljudskaprava, Fond zahumanitarnopravo, Žene u crnom, Civil Right Defenders, Centarzaevroatlanskestudije i Kućaljudskihprava.

95. YUCOM, "NVO: Skupština da se odredipremaSrebrenici," *yucom.org*, (June 10, 2016), retrieved November 13, 2016, from http://www.yucom.org.rs/nvo-skupstina-da-se-odredi-prema-srebrenici/.

96. Youth Initiative for Human Rights, "Parlament da se odredipremagenocidu u Srebrenici," *yihr.rs*, June 8, 2016, retrieved November 12, 2016, from http://www.yihr.rs/bhs/parlament-da-se-odredi-prema-genocidu-u-srebrenici/.

97. Youth Initiative for Human Rights, "Otvorenopismoposlanicima i poslanicamaNarodneSkupšti neuočikomemoracijegenocida u Srebrenici," *yihr.rs*, (June 10, 2016), retrieved November 13, 2016, from http://www.yihr.rs/bhs/otvoreno-pismo-poslanicima-i-poslanicama-narodne-skupstine-uoci-komemoracije-genocida-u-srebrenici/.

98.Youth Initiative for Human Rights, "Genocid u Srebrenici – poštovanježrtava, a nepolitizacija," *yihr.rs*, (July 8, 2016), retrieved November 14, 2016, from http://www.yihr.rs/bhs/genocid-u-srebrenici-postovanje-zrtava-a-ne-politizacija/.

99. B92, "Sećanjenasrebreničkežrtve i Milošević u centru BG," *B92*, (July 11, 2016), retrieved November 14, 2016, from http://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2016&mm=07&dd=11&nav_category=12&nav_id=1154063.

## Bill on Amendments to the Criminal Code (Denial of Genocide)

On 15 November, 2016, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia opened the debate on the Bill on Amendments to the Criminal Code, which prohibits public approval and denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. As the Srebrenica Massacre is still the subject of debate, including those who deny the existence of any crime in Srebrenica, this proposal has caused a huge hysteria not only in the media but also in Parliament and academia.[100]

Headlines in the media include: "CAUTION: If you deny the Srebrenica genocide, you might go to jail!"[101]; "Appeal against the prosecution of citizens for denial of 'genocide' in Srebrenica"[102]; "Be careful what you say about Srebrenica, because you might end up in jail!"[103]; "GOVERNMENT LOSES COMPASS: Denial of genocide in Srebrenica would be a criminal offense in Serbia".[104] Parliamentary debate turned into a discussion of whether there was a genocide or not in Srebrenica (Liberal Democratic Party leader claimed that Srebrenica is a genocide while Serbian Radical Party leader claimed the opposite),[105] while professors wrote columns about how the adoption of this article "will declare Serbian people genocidal" and that it represents a "a masochistic act that introduces power to proven Islamists ".[106] The highlight of this completely unnecessary hysteria culminated with certain websites giving instructions on how to fight against this article of law.

"If you do not want to allow the adoption of amendments to Article 387 of the Criminal Code, which would make the denial of "genocide" in Srebrenica punishable, make use of your civic and democratic right to contact the National Assembly of Serbia. Go to the web site of the Assembly, which is located here: http: // www. parlament.gov.rs Then fill in the fields provided for your name, email and comment. Finally, click on the blue button "SEND" and your comment will be handed over to members of the Parliament of Serbia. If they ignore your attitude, remember this and punish them in the next election."[107]

100.NSPM, "Vlada Srbije usvaja zakon po kome će negiranje "genocida u Srebrenici postati krivičnodelo! NelaKuburović: Na ovaj način ispunjavamo svoje obaveze premaevropskim dokumentima," *NSPM*, November 16, 2016.

101.Espreso, "OPREZ: Ukoliko negirate genocid u Srebrenici, možete u zatvor!," *Espreso*, November 16, 2016.

102. Serbian Point, "Апел против кривичног гоњења грађана за негирање „геноцида" у Сребрници," *Serbian Point*, November 18, 2016.

103.Vesti online, "Paziteštagovorite o Srebrenici, jermožete u zatvor!," *Vesti online*, November 11, 2016.

104. Srbin.info, "ВЛАДА ГУБИ КОМПАС: Негирањегеноцида у Сребрницићебитикривичнодело у Србији," *srbin.info*, (November 17, 2016), retrieved November 24, 2016, from http://srbin.info/2016/11/17/vlada-gubi-kompas-negiranje-genocida-u-srebrenici-ce-biti-krivicno-delo-u-srbiji/.

105.Blic, "OD SREBRENICE DO KONGA Novi Krivičnizakon: Koji genocidmožete da negirate, a zbogčegaidete u zatvor," *Blic*, November 16, 2016.

106. NSPM, "Povodom jedne izmene u KrivičnomzakonikuSrbijeilisrpskimazohistički barbarous," *NSPM*, (November 20, 2016), retrieved November 25, 2016, from http://www.nspm.rs/komentar-dana/povodom-jedne-izmene-u-krivicnom-zakoniku-srbije-ili-srpski-mazohisticki-barbarus.html?alphabet=l.

107.Serbian Point, "Апелпротивкривичноггоњењаграђаназанегирање „геноцида" у Сребрници," *Serbian point*, November 18, 2016.

Returning to the essence of the proposal will demonstrate how pointless this whole charade was since the proposed article doesn't even mention Srebrenica and anyone with a legal background or with knowledge of the war crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia wars would notice this at first glance. The bill provides that a new Paragraph 5 should be added to Article 387 of the applicable Criminal Code, which will read as follows

> "Anyone who publicly approves, denies the existence or significantly reduces the weight of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against a group of persons or a member of a group determined on the basis of race, colour, religion, origin, state, national or ethnic affiliation, in a way that can lead to violence or incitement of hatred against such a group of persons or member of that group, if those offenses have been established by a final judgment of a court in Serbia or the International Criminal Court, shall be punished by imprisonment for six months to five years."[108]

The International Criminal Court and the Serbian courts have never provided verdicts regarding the Srebrenica genocide. The judgements of the International Court of Justice and the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia have established that genocide was committed in Srebrenica, but the courts included in the proposed article have made no such ruling.

# Other Significant Incidents

## The Case of Muamer Zukorlic

Muamer Zukorlic was chief mufti of the Islamic Community in Serbia until 2016, when he decided to campaign with the Bosniak Democratic Union of Sandzak in the Serbian elections; in 2016, he became an MP.[109] Zukorlic also ran for president of Serbia in 2012.[110] He is a businessman, the founder and first rector of the International University of Novi Pazar, and the first dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies.[111]

The scandal escalated when Zukorlic told N1 TV that there is no legal permission for his construction sites in downtown Novi Pazar, and when the TV host commented that "there can't be illegal construction", Zukorlic without hes-

108.Parlament Republike Srbije, "Predlog Zakona o izmenama i dopunama Krivicnog Zakonika," *parlament.gov.rs*, (2016), retrieved 22 November 2015, from http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/lat/pdf/predlozi_zakona/2769-16%20-Lat..pdf.

109.National Assembly of Serbia "Composition, Members of Parliament, MuamerZukorlic," (not dated), retrieved November 25, 2016, from http://www.parlament.gov.rs/national-assembly/composition/members-of-parliament.986.488.html.

110.RTS, "Konačni rezultati prvog kruga," *rts.rs*, (May 10, 2012), retrieved November 22, 2016, from http://www.rts.rs/page/stories/sr/story/1950/izbori-2012/1099120/konacni-rezultati-prvog-kruga.html.

111.International University of Novi Pazar, "Rijecrektora", *uninp.edu.rs*, (not dated), retrieved November 24, 2016, from http://www.uninp.edu.rs/page/rijec-rektora/.

itation responded "You see that there can".[112] The media started reporting with headlines like "Who can stop Zukorlic?"[113]; "We build illegally because we can: Zukorlić confirmed that he builds without permits in the center of Novi Pazar".[114] The media reported that the building inspection in Novi Pazar for two months unsuccessfully tried to shut down construction and demolish the illegal building activity, but that the local police together with the Ministry of Interior were silent the entire time and allowed the violation of the law.[115] However, this wasn't even the start of the scandal. Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic said on the subject of the illegal assets of the former Mufti Muamer Zukorlic that he does not want any violence or conflict, but a peaceful conversation to resolve the situation. The prime minister went on to say

> "Do you want to have a conflict between the Orthodox Christians and Muslims? I don't. This does not mean that every Muslim can do something against the law, but give us a way to see how we can apply the law and to try to find a way, and not to start a war and conflicts."

He further stated that he "does not want to send 1,000 gendarmes to fight against Muslims" and does not want bloodshed in Serbia. The prime minister concluded, "Do you think that the mufti will just let someone crash his buildings without 5,000 people present? He won't and he already said so and now I ask you to advise me how to bring that down."[116] The Protector of Citizens of the Republic of Serbia (Ombudsman) issued a statement which included the following:

> "A declaration that he will not stop the illegal construction in the center of Novi Pazar, which is being built under the auspices of an MP of the ruling coalition (Zukorlic) and that he will not 'break heads' with Muslims, Aleksandar Vucic abuses the function of the Prime Minister and turned off the last light of the rule of law and created religious intolerance in Serbia. Aleksandar Vucic has no right to suspend the laws of the Republic of Serbia by his own assessment. His statements that the law will not be applied in the most outrageous case of illegal construction in Novi Pazar destroy the rule of law, legal security, property rights and equality before the law. His evaluation that the demolition of the illegal objects would mean 'a

112. N1 Belgrade, "Zukorlić: Islamskazajednicagradibezdozvole," *N1info*, (November 18, 2016), retrieved November 22, 2016, from http://rs.n1info.com/a208320/Vesti/Vesti/Zukorlic-o-izgradnji-objekta-Islamske-zajednice-u-centru-Novog-Pazara.html.

113. Radio Free Europe, "Komoze da zaustaviZukorlica?," *slovodnaevropa.org*, (November 11, 2016), retrieved November 23, 2016, from http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-muamer-zukorlic/28124152.html.

114.Blic, "GRADIMO NA DIVLJE, JER MOŽEMO:Zukorlićpotvrdio da gradibezdozvole u centruNovogPazara," *Blic*, November 17, 2016.

115.Blic "ZUKORLIĆ ŠEF GRADILIŠTA Poslanikbahatotvrdi da nemaveze s divljomgradnjom, aligaslikedemantuju," *Blic*, November, 18, 2016.

116.Blic, "SLUČAJ ZUKORLIĆ Vučić: Hoćete rat pravoslavaca i muslimana? Janećukrvoproliće u Srbiji," Blic, November, 18, 2016.

> war with Muslims' and 'breaking heads' is the grossest manipulation as illegal construction is not characteristic of Muslims but an expression of lawlessness, which, clearly, exists among members of all faiths and nations. During a recent visit to Novi Pazar, municipal authorities, as well as a large number of citizens, of which a large number of the Muslim religion, asked the Ombudsman to influence the competent national authorities to work under the law which must be the same for all."[117]

Zukorlic welcomed the prime minister's statements saying that he is "real statesman" while "Ombudsman incites citizens".[118] Ombudsman Jankovic received fierce criticism from the government, police and the prime minister's Serbian Progressive Party.[119] The Vice President of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party Milenko Jovanov said in a statement broadcasted from the ruling party that the Ombudsman Jankovic is "a liar, fraud and thief";[120] State Secretary of the Ministry of Internal Affairs Jana Ljubicic said that the Ombudsman Saša Janković started a presidential campaign and called him hypocritical;[121] while Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dacic and Minister of Labor, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs Aleksandar Vulin also criticised the Ombudsman.[122] The Bosniak National Council expressed "protest over the fact that Aleksandar Vucic, publicly placed above the law a member of his governing coalition, the so- called 'Mufti Zukorlic'", which eliminated the principle of equality before the law.[123]

## Desecration of Muslim Cemetery in Novi Pazar

It is customary that on the Ramadan Feast (Eid al-Fitr), after praying in the morning, Bosnian Muslims visit the graves of their deceased relatives. In Novi Pazar, the Muslim cemetery Gazilar was attacked during the night of the most sacred holiday, when 29 gravestones were destroyed, as stated by the spokesperson of Novi Pazar Prosecutor Jovan Milanovic.[124] It was stated by the prosecutor's office that appropri-

117. Ombudsman of the Republic of Serbia, "ЗаштитникграђанапредседникуВладе: Државанесмедабудеједанчовек," *ombudsman.rs*, (November 21, 2016), retrieved November 25, 2016, from http://www.ombudsman.rs/index.php/2011-12-25-10-17-15/2011-12-26-10-05-05/5005-z-sh-i-ni-gr-d-n-pr-ds-dni-u-vl-d-drz-v-n-s-d-bud-d-n-c-v.

118.VecernjeNovosti, "Zukorlićbranipremijera: Vučićpostupiodržavnički, ombudsman huškagrađane," *VecernjeNovosti*, November 22, 2016.

119. Radio Free Europe, "Vučićevasnagakaomanjakpravnedržave,", *slobodnaevropa.org*, November 23, 2016, retrieved November 26, 2016, from http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-vucic-zukorlic/28133323.html

120. Informer, "JOVANOV ODBRUSIO JANKOVIĆU: Ti sinajobičnijilažov, šibicar i prevarant!," *Informer*, November, 21, 2016.

121.Kurir, "LJUBIČIĆ: SašaJanković je počeopredsedničkukampanju," *Kurir*, November, 21, 2016.

122.Radio Free Europe, "Vučićevasnagakaomanjakpravnedržave," *slobodnaevropa.org*, (November 23, 2016), retrieved November 26, 2016, from http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srbija-vucic-zukorlic/28133323.html.

123.Bosniak National Council, "VUČIĆ RUŠI PRAVNU DRŽAVU I VLADAVINU PRAVA," *bnv.org*, (November 21, 2016), retrieved November 26, 2016, from http://www.bnv.org.rs/vucic-rusi-pravnu-drzavu-i-vladavinu-prava/.

124. Radio Free Europe, "Novi Pazar: Porušeno 29 spomenikanamuslimanskomgroblju," *slobodnaevropa.org*, (July 5, 2016), retrieved October 10, 2016, from http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/27839904.html.

ate criminal charges will be brought against the perpetrators, and that the Prosecutorial Office has video footage from the security cameras.[125]

Novi Pazar Mayor Nihat Biševac strongly condemned the desecration of the monuments in the cemetery, pointing out that this act of vandalism was committed in the evening after the end of Ramadan and beginning of the three-day holiday of Eid. The Bosniak National Council strongly condemned the act of vandalism,[126] while the Serbian Ortodox Church also condemned the acts and appealed to the investigative authorities to find the perpetrators.[127] In this case, the police reacted promptly and two suspects were arrested;[128] work on the reconstruction of the gravestones began the same day with the support of Novi Pazar Municipality.[129]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The latest European Commission 2016 Progress Report on Serbia observed that freedom of thought, conscience and religion is guaranteed by the constitution and generally respected but more importantly that the decrease in religiously motivated incidents has continued. Another positive development noted in the report was that the problem with school textbooks (especially for Albanian and Bosniak students who are predominantly Muslims) improved and that agreements on printing textbooks in minority languages were reached with representatives of eight national minorities (Bosniak, Albanian, Bulgarian, etc). However, the procedure for approving textbooks in minority languages should be facilitated and the teaching of Serbian as a second language needs to be better developed. Two more points from the report deserve to be highlighted as these regions are predominantly inhabited by Muslims. Municipal elections in Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja were held in a calm atmosphere. The government's coordinating body worked efficiently and increased funding for infrastructure development. For the first time, an ethnic Albanian was appointed police chief in Bujanovac. The political dialogue between the central authorities and local ethnic Albanian leaders on a comprehensive programme of integration and economic recovery has still not resumed. The region remains underdeveloped and the ethnic Albanian population continues to be underrepresented in public administration. The situation in the Sandzak area was mostly stable and municipal elections peaceful. Court interpreters for the Bosnian language were ap-

125.Telegraf, "Na najsvetijimuslimanskiprazniksrušeno 29 nadgrobnihploča u NovomPazaru!," *Telegraf*, July 5, 2016.

126.Bosniak National Council, "BNV NAJOŠTRIJE OSUĐUJE SKRNAVLJENJE MEZARJA NA NOVOPAZARSKOM GROBLJU "GAZILAR," *bnv.org*, (July 5, 2016), retrieved October 24, 216, from http://www.bnv.org.rs/bnv-najostrije-osuduje-skrnavljenje-mezarja-na-novopazarskom-groblju-gazilar/.

127. Informer, "CRKVA OSUDILA VANDALIZAM NA GROBLJU U NOVOM PAZARU: KomšijamasrećanBajram, policija da nađepočinioce!," *Informer*, July 6, 2016.

128. Radio Free Europe, "Novi Pazar: 30 danapritvorazaskrnavljenjegrobljanaBajram," *slobodnaevropa.org*, (July 14, 2016), retrieved October 28, 2016 from http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/27858439.html.

129. Informer, "NOVI PAZAR: Počelaobnovanadgrobnihspomenika," *Informer*, July 5, 2016.

pointed. The Bosniak community continues to be underrepresented in the local administration and the police. The area remains among the most underdeveloped with a high unemployment rate.[130] In conclusion, positive signals exist which is encouraging, but there is also room for improvement.

A positive sign discussed in last year's *European Islamophobia Report* on Serbia was the fact that Serbia was one of the countries in Europe with no far right political party in parliament – this was the case for the first time since the breakup of former Yugoslavia. This, however, changed after the 2016 elections when two far right nationalist parties won seats in Parliament. Additional effort from the ruling coalition and other progressive parties, therefore, is needed in order to keep Islamophobic speech out of Parliament.

The state needs to address the issues of education and that of the teaching materials that are necessary to foster an awareness of diversity, the promotion of a non-violent culture of equality, and non-discriminatory practice. On the other hand, educational programmes and seminars on Islam and on how one should deal with Islamophobia should be organised for local authorities, public officials and politicians.

Public awareness of Islamophobia should be raised and a very important role should be played by NGOs and media. Last year's recommendations also stressed the need for a comprehensive programme or project by NGOs to deal with these issues. Unfortunately, this has not changed in 2016. In this regard, there are no NGOs in Serbia that work on human rights protection; it would be very beneficial if NGOs could play a direct role in challenging and combating Islamophobia. This recommendation might be further strengthened with the inclusion of academics, Muslim communities and activists who would then work together to raise awareness on Islamophobia. Therefore, NGOs need to take a strong and proactive role in pointing out negative perceptions, prejudices and discriminations targeting Muslims.

As can be observed by the topics covered in this report, the media are arguably the weakest link in the Islamophobia network. There is an urgent need for very strong efforts on raising awareness among journalists (print media, TV, Internet) on Islamophobia. Tabloid reports exist in most countries but in Serbia there is a serious need to prevent the spread of hate speech in the media. This can be achieved by preparing and organising training sessions and seminars for journalists and editors.

130. European Commission, "Serbia 2016 Progress Report," *ec.europa.eu*, (October 11, 2016) , retrieved October 20, 2016, from http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2016/20161109_report_serbia.pdf.

# Chronology

## March

- **On 24 March 2016,** ICTY found Radovan Karadzic guilty of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (including the murder of 8,000 Muslims in Srebrenica).
- Karadzic's verdict was followed by a media frenzy which lasted for months.

## March-April

- **On 31 March 2016**, Vojislav Seselj was acquitted in a first instance verdict on all counts by the ICTY pending appeal.
- The media frenzy regarding Seselj's acquittal, similarly to Karadzic's case, lasted for months.

## July

- **On 5 July 2016**, the Muslim cemetery Gazilar in Novi Pazar was desecrated and 29 gravestones were destroyed. This act of vandalism was committed in the evening after the end of Ramadan and the beginning of the three-day holiday of Eid.

- **On 11 July 2016,** the Srebrenica Commemoration was organised by Serbian NGOs and unlike previous years, this year's event passed without incident as police secured the commemoration grounds. However, there was still a harsh reaction from political elites regarding a letter by an NGO (YIHR) submitted to the National Assembly.

## September

- **On 13 September 2016,** the Independent Association of Journalists in Serbia condemned the usage of the term "Shiptar" classifying the usage as hate speech.

## November

- **On 15 November 2016**, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia opened the debate on the Bill on Amendments to the Criminal Code, which prohibits public approval and denial of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. As the Srebrenica Massacre is still the subject of debate, including those who deny any existence of a crime in Srebrenica, this proposal has caused a huge hysteria not only in the media but also in Parliament and academia.

- The scandal involving the illegal construction sites of former Mufti Zukorlic escalated in November when the latter confirmed that his constructions do not have legal permits. The highest state representatives of Serbia were involved in the media scandal.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SLOVAKIA NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

Islamophobic tendencies in Slovakia are observed in three contexts: politics, mass media and in the perceptions of the ordinary citizens of Slovakia. Certain individual declarations of politicians may be classified as Islamophobic; they are rare, but appear repeatedly in the case of certain politicians. Muslims in Slovakia consider the amendment to the *Law on freedom of religious faith and the status of churches and religious associations* No. 308/1991 as Islamophobic. This law increases the number of required members of a religious community from 20,000 to 50,000 to be able to aspire to state registration. The coexistence of Islamic migrants and citizens of Slovakia is peaceful. There are, however, some individual instances of negative experiences by migrants when communicating with state officials. Muslim women routinely go veiled in public; year by year their numbers increase, so that they become less unusual and people become accustomed to their presence. However, when an incident related to veiling occures abroad and the mass media inform the public about it, there is more interest and emphasis on the subject among citizens of Slovakia. This remains at the level of discussions, without further implications. Credit for accepting schoolchildren of Islamic religious groups belongs to teachers who with their approach within the educational process instil in children mutual love, understanding and respect of those whose religious, ethnic or racial anchoring is different from that of the majority of the community in the classroom and school. The prevention of Islamophobia is also aided by educational and entertainment programmes on television and radio shows, where meetings, sharing cultural practices, interviews with children or adult foreigners of Muslim faith, demolish exisitng prejudices, misconceptions and hostility towards the unknown. On the academic level, as the prevention of Islamophobia in Slovakia has been important for years, lectures on Islam by experts are prepared for the public, including debates; and representatives or believers of Islam are invited to academic courses in the fields of Religious Studies, Ethnography, Cultural Studies, Political Science, etc., where students can directly get acquainted with the contents of the Muslim faith and religious practices. Islam as a world religion is also included in textbooks of Religious Education, which, in Slovakia, has a Christian background.

## Zhrnutie

Islamofobické tendencie v Slovenskej republike vnímame v troch kontextoch: v politickom, masmediálnom a v kontexte vnímania bežných občanov Slovenskej republiky. Určité individuálne vyhlásenia politikov sa dajú klasifikovať ako islamofóbne; sú to ojedinelé,ale u daných politikov opakované prípady. Vyznávači islamu vnímajú ako islamofóbnu novelizáciu *Zákona o slobode náboženskej viery a postavení cirkví a náboženských spoločností* č. 308/1991, ktorou sa zvyšuje počet potrebných členov náboženstva ašpirujúceho na registráciu štátom z 20 000 na 50 000. V spolužití s občanmi Slovenskej republiky sa nevyskytujú problémy, skôr individuálne záporné skúsenosti migrantov v komunikácii s úradníkmi s xenofóbnym nastavením. Moslimské ženy chodia bežne na verejnosti zahalené; rokmi pribúda takýchto outfitov na uliciach, stávajú sa menej nezvyčajnými a občania toto neriešia. Keď sa však vyskytne zahraničný incident spojený s problematikou zahaľovania, úlohu zohrávajú masmédiá, ktoré sprostredkovaním správ vzbudia väčší záujem a akcent na túto tému aj u občanov. Zostáva však v rovine diskusií, nie praktických konzekvencií. Zásluhu za akceptovanie školopovinných detí islamského vierovyznania detským kolektívom, majú učitelia, ktorí svojím prístupom v rámci edukačného procesu vštepujú deťom vzájomnú lásku, rešpekt a pochopenie iného človeka, resp. dieťaťa, ktorého náboženské, etnické či rasové zakotvenie sa líši od toho, aké má majorita kolektívu v triede i škole. Ako prevencia pred islamofóbiou slúžia aj edukačné a zábavné programy v televízii a relácie v rozhlase, kde sa formou stretávania, zdieľania kultúrnych zvykov, rozhovorov s deťmi či dospelými cudzincamimoslimského vierovyznania, búrajú predsudky a nepriateľstvo voči neznámemu a nepochopenému. Na akademickej úrovni sú ako prevencia islamofóbie v Slovenskej republikedôležité rokmi praktizované laikom prezentované prednášky expertov na islam s diskusiou, pozývanie predstaviteľov či vyznávačov islamu na univerzitné predmety religionistiky, etnografie, kulturológie, politológie, etc., kde sa študenti môžu priamo oboznámiť s obsahom viery a náboženskou praxou moslimov, pýtať sa a diskutovať, a to bez interpretačného vkladu pedagóga, ktorý je vždy potenciálnym pri jeho individuálnej prednáške na hocijakú tému. Islam ako svetové náboženstvo je aj v učebniciach pre Náboženskú výchovu, ktorá má v Slovenskej republike kresťanské pozadie.

# Introduction[1]

The Slovakian Muslim community, which counts about 5,000 members, is not a registered religious community and therefore is not financially supported by the state. In general, we can say that in Slovakia there are three particular professional groups that adhere to Islam:[2] students, intellectuals, and families who are working in the catering industry. Muslim gastronomic specialties are highly appreciated both by locals and foreigners. There is a peaceful coexistence of the Muslim community and other social groups or communities. Rare Islamophobic incidents nevertheless disturb this harmony and we will focus in detail on these negative features in the report below.

# Significant Incidents and Developments

The Slovak nation is peaceful. Nevertheless, exceptions such as neo-Nazis and extremist individuals or groups, who participate in public protests to attract attention to themselves, also exist. These individuals exhibit Islamophobic tendencies. The majority of the population, however, condemns such manifestations. Isolated Islamophobic manifestations among Slovak citizens were recorded in the following cases:

- One of the hotels in Bratislava refused to accommodate Turkish students on the ground that for security reasons they do not provide accommodation for Turks and citizens of Arab countries. Turkish Ambassador Gülhan Ulutekin classified this case as an act of racism. The hotel employees dismissed the accusation claiming that they do not accommodate any citizens of countries where there is still a military conflict or military change of government, in order to protect their clients.[3]
- The attack on guests at the restaurant Döner Istanbul Kebab in Piešťany. Reporter Ľubo Trautenberger reported the incident on TV Joj and the police has started a criminal investigation.[4]

1. The author of this report tried to record extensively and dispassionately the important events and attitudes affecting the direction of the country and the mood of ordinary citizens in relation to the issue of Islamophobia in Slovakia. Nevertheless, she is aware that she may have unintentionally made some mistakes, which someone could find offensive, and for that she apologizes in advance. The author would like to express special thanks to her precious academic colleagues, political scientists PhDr. Tomáš Jahelka, PhD and PhDr. Jozef Lenč, PhD, as well as to her long-term esteemed associates, President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia Mohamad Safwan Hasna and JUDr. Abdulwahab Al-Sbenaty.

2. See an article on three personal stories of influental Moslims living in Slovakia: Jozef Tvardzík, "Ako žijú moslimovia na Slovensku? TREND.sk prináša tri príbehy," *trend.sk*, (October 7th, 2014), retrieved January 1st, 2017, from http://www.etrend.sk/ekonomika/ako-ziju-moslimovia-na-slovensku-trend-sk-prinasa-tri-pribehy.html.

3. Zuzana Dzurdzíková, "Bratislavský hotel odmietol ubytovať tureckých študentov, veľvyslankyňa hovorí o rasizme," Denník N, (August 3, 2016), retrieved November 7, 2016, from https://dennikn.sk/527569/bratislavsky-hotel-odmietol-ubytovat-tureckych-studentov-velvyslankyna-hovori-o-rasizme.

4. Rasťo Striško, "Útok v Piešťanoch," *Noviny. sk*, (August 18, 2016), retrieved November 2, 2016 from https://www.noviny.sk/slovensko/trnava/165098-mladik-chcel-robit-poriadky-s-arabmi-skoncil-v-rukach-policie.

- Repeated assaults on a Somalian woman and her young son. A detailed interview with the victim who experienced six attacks in Slovakia was published on 6 September, 2016.[5]
- The website Sympatizanti Ľudovej strany – Naše Slovensko (Supporters of People's Party - Our Slovakia)[6] published a photo of a praying Muslim woman in Nové Zámky with the comment that somebody tried to shoot her and ran away. In a short time, this photo got many "likes" and was shared many times. There were comments under the photo that were hateful and malicious. The author of the blog Denník N, was informed about this incident, and made a complaint to the police who started to investigate the case. As of yet, the case is still under investigation.[7]
- Islamophobic comments of Slovak citizens to veiled Muslim women in Slovakia.
- Two anti-Islamic demonstrations were organised in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. The first was on 29 May, 2016,[8] and the second.on 25 June, 2016. In the second demonstation, there were two groups of people: a group of extremists, who were also anti-Islamic, and a group that was antifascistic.[9]

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

There are no reports that show that there have been problems in this area. However, an instance is cited by a colleague working at the university, who openly declared his Islamic faith and on this basis had some problems from influential people in the university environment, while the head of his department received anonymous letters about his person.[10]

## Education

According to the President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) Mohamad Safwan Hasna "we know of no change in 2016, but the problem exists, especially in the historic description of the function of the Ottoman Empire in our country, which

5. Roman Cuprik, "Somálčanka sa bratislavskej hromadnej doprave vyhýba, napadli ju šesťkrát," *domov.sme.sk*, (September 6, 2016), retrieved January 12, 2017, from http://domov.sme.sk/c/20264509/bratislavska-mhd-somalcanku-napadli-sestkrat.html.

6. This political party started its work in 2009. Its leader is Marián Kotleba. The party's programme is based on "Ten Commmandments" that are available in Slovak and English on its the official website: http://www.naeslovensko.net/en/our-program/.

7. Blog Denníka N, "Modliť na verejnosti sa neoplatí, niekedy na vás môžu aj vystreliť," *Denník N*, (October 2, 2016), retrieved November 6, 2016, from https://dennikn.sk/blog/trestne-oznamenie-na-sympatizantov-kotlebu-alebo-ako-slobodne-nenavidiet/.

8. Video recording of this demostration is available on YouTube:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXjHNqc_mUM.

9. Veronika Šoltinská/Tomáš Ferenčák, "Bratislava zažila dva protesty. Extrémisti slovne útočili na prezidenta aj europoslankyňu Smeru," *HNonline.sk*, (July 25, 2016), retrieved September 6, 2016, from https://hnonline.sk/slovensko/686049-bratislava-zazila-dva-protesty-extremisti-slovne-utocili-na-prezidenta-aj-europoslankynu-smeru.

10.Information given by the political scientist Jozef Lenč in our written communication.

subsequently creates stereotypes in children, which they carry into their adulthood and sometimes act upon... The subject, however, would deserve detailed elaboration."[11]

## Politics

The greatest impact on public opinion in terms of Islamophobic statements has occurred in relation to the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels; by the opinions of Prime Minister Robert Fico and like-minded politicians and media activists that "Islam is not compatible with our culture"[12] and the equating of Islam as a religion to the destructive phenomenon of terrorism. The parliamentary elections in March 2016[13] have intensified this issue, particularly in the context of the so-called refugee crisis and the campaign of extremist political parties: "Kotleba – ĽSNS and Sme rodina – Boris Kollár, but also by the political comments and campaign slogans by the majority of mainstream political parties, namely SMER-SD, SaS, SNS. A broad political base was created, which in 2016 encouraged more pronounced manifestations of Islamophobia in Slovakia than several years ago."[14]

The process of acceptance of the amendment Act No. 308/1991 *Law on freedom of religious faith and the status of churches and religious associations* raised additional Islamophobic reactions from politicians, which we will analyze in the section dedicated to the discussion of Islamophobic incidents in the justice system.

The concept of Islamophobia is most associated – both in Slovakia and abroad- with the names of the following Slovak politicians: Fico, Sulík, Danko, Kotleba, and Kollár. A very interesting case occurred in the political scene in connection to the book *Samostudijní kurz politického islámu* (Self-study Course of Political Islam) by the famous conspiracy author Bill Warner, which was delivered to parliamentarians by the Centrum pre štúdium politického islamu Slovensko (Centre for the Study of Political Islam Slovakia) before the voting about the amendment of the Law No. 308/1991 (see Justice System below). The President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) Mohamad Safwan Hasna claimed that the sending of this book to parliamentarians could be considered lobbying.[15] The leader of the largest opposition party Sloboda a solidarita (Freedom and Solidarity) R. Sulík went as far as to reference this book for the description of the life of the Prophet.[16]

11.Position given by the President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) Mohamad Safwan Hasna in our written communication.

12.Tomáš Pilz, "Sulík bez servítky: Islam nie je kompatibilný snašou kultúrou," *Parlamentné listy*, (August 18, 2016), retrieved December 13, 2016, from http://www.parlamentnelisty.sk/arena/monitor/Sulik-bez-servitky-Islam-nie-je-kompatibilny-s-nasou-kulturou-275050.

13. Besides the already meantioned politicians, Islamophobic rhetoric was also recorded in speeches by, among others, Podmanický, Kotleba, Mazurek, Mizík.

14.Information given by the political scientist Jozef Lenč in our written communication.

15. Ibid.

16.ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Slovenskí poslanci dostali protiislamskú knihu. Autorom je známy konšpirátor," *islamonline.sk*, (October 28, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2017, from http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/10/slovenski-poslanci-dostali-protiislamsku-knihu-autorom-je-znamy-konspirator/.

## Media

Many TV stations inform the public primarily of negative news, such as violence and disasters. This covers the domain of Islam as well. The public lacks positive information on the cooperation of members of the Islamic community in Slovakia in various fields with members of other confessions, predominately from Christian denominations. This positive side of the coexistence of different religions should be presented to the same extent, or even more than negative information. Good examples and mutual acceptance is what society needs to see as real and factual; such stories can diminish the fear of Islam as a religion, which so far is mostly associated with terrorism and introducing conflict into previously peaceful areas and relationships. For major mainstream Slovak TV stations, radio, newspapers, websites and other sources of information we can say that they maintain objectivity and inform promptly, professionally and without unnecessary affects, which are present in some alternative information sources.

Mass media cover both national and foreign affairs in relation to Islam, its different aspects and its consequences on ordinary life. The greatest focus is given to Muslim extremist actions that are often perceived as sufficient reason for a general condemnation of Islam by readers, listeners and viewers. After our research of Slovak mainstream sources of information we conclude, that they can not be characterised as Islamophobic. Those that we can labelled as Islamophobic are of a conspirative and alternative nature.

- The assaults on women in Cologne and in Pegida's demostration on New Year's Eve in 2016 have been well documented in Slovak media.[17] In February, there was another demostration of Pegida in Dresden counting 8,000 people, which was factually reported by Slovak media.[18]
- The police action in Molenbeek was presented in Slovak media as an anti-terrorism act. Mayor Francoise Schepmans expressed her concernes about the "influence of the conservative wing of Islam that may be characterized by the use of violence. Already eight-year-old girls often wear a headscarf".[19] Such statements from abroad have an impact on the greater sensitivity of the Slovak population on the aspect of Muslim women's clothing.

17. VZ, "Búrlivé demonštrácie v Kolíne. Islam je rakovina a Pegida je liek. Bohom je daná povinnosť chrániť naše ženy. História Merkelovej nikdy neodpustí. Do kancelárky sa pustil aj Paška," *parlamentnélisty.sk*, (January 10, 2016), retrieved September 26, 2016, from http://www.parlamentnelisty.sk/arena/monitor/Burlive-demonstracie-v-Koline-Islam-je-rakovina-a-Pegida-je-liek-Bohom-je-dana-povinnost-chranit-nase-zeny-Historia-Merkelovej-nikdy-neodpusti-Do-kancelarky-sa-pustil-aj-Paska-259899.

18. ČTK, "Na demonštráciu Pegidy v Drážďanoch prišlo 8-tisíc ľudí," *Správy.Pravda.sk*, (February 6, 2016), retrieved September 29, 2016, from http://spravy.pravda.sk/svet/clanok/382596-na-demonstraciu-pegidy-v-drazdanoch-prislo-8-tisic-ludi/.

19. TASR, "Hrozba islamu v Molenbeeku. Domové prehliadky odhalili stovky podozrivých,"*Aktuálne.sk*, (September 20, 2016), retrieved December 6, 2016, from http://aktualne.atlas.sk/zahranicie/europa/obyvatelia-stvrte-molenbeek-pocitili-domove-prehliadky-obavy-z-konzervativneho-islamu-su-stale-aktualne.html.

- The shooting at the Islamic centre in Zürich was reflected on the webpage Konzervatívny výber (Conservative Digest) according to the report of SITA on 20 December, 2016.[20] Another website, Webnoviny.sk, states the following: "Swiss police has not detected any Islamist or far-right motive by the offender. The local head of the criminal police Christiane Lentjes Meili stated that the investigation of the attack by the suspected perpetrator – a 24-year-old Swiss man - continues...The man was, according to current knowledge, interested in the occult and had a number of objects relating to this field in his home. So far, however, there is no evidence that he underwent an psychiatric treatment. The Swiss man held a permit for a firearm and after the incident at the centre shot himself."[21]
- The attack on the Berlin Christmas Market on 19 December, 2016 was given the most publicity of all stories covered by the media at the end of 2016. Denník N has until now published articles amounting to 12 pages on this topic alone.[22] The first information was published on 19 December, 2016 at 8:43 p.m. and the last on 14 January, 2017 at 10:12 p.m.[23] All the information is factual. Slovak citizens perceived the attack on a market associated with the great Christian feast as a great scandal.

## Justice System

According to Islamic author and translator Abdulwahab Al-Sbenaty, who lives in Slovakia, in the justice system, we can observe "hidden regulations and tools of inter-insitutional nature which are directed against Muslims. A very good example is the issue of temporary residence on the territory of Slovakia, its granting and extension."[24]

In November 2016, the amendment of the *Law on freedom of religious faith and the status of churches and religious associations* No. 308/1991 was approved. This amendment is very important mainly for the aspiring religious communities which are not yet officially registered, but have been trying for a long time to fulfill the requirements and become nationally recognized. The problem of the Muslim community in Slovakia is the radically increased number of the required members of communities aspiring to offical recognition. This number increased from 20,000 into

20. SITA, "Švajčiarsko: Streľba v islamskom centre v Zürichu, útočník je mŕtvy," *Konzervatívny výber*, (December 20, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.konzervativnyvyber.sk/v2/svajciarsko-strelba-v-islamskom-centre-v-zurichu-utocnik-je-mrtvy/14517/.

21. SITA, "V islamskom centre v Zürichu sa strieľalo, útočník zomrel," *Webnoviny, sk*, (December 19, 2016), retrieved January 5, 2017, from http://www.webnoviny.sk/svet/clanok/1126836-v-islamskom-centre-v-zurichu-sa-strielalo-hlasia-zranenych/.

22. Take a closer look at all these articles on the website: https://dennikn.sk/tema/utok-vianocne-trhy-berlin/.

23.Since this report will be submitted on 15 January, 2017, it is not possible to take into account further development and articles published after this date.

24. The opinion of JUDr. Abdulwahab Al-Sbenaty from our written communication.

50,000.[25] The proposal of changes in the aforementioned law were brought to parliament by parliamentarians of the National Council of the Slovak Republic A. Danko, D. Tittel, E. Smolíková, A. Hrnko, S. Kmec, and T. Bernaťák. Danko, the leader of Slovenská národná strana (the Slovak National Party), stated that his proposal was aimed against the Islamic community.[26] Some parties proposed even higher criteria, specifically 250,000 members for an aspiring community. "Parliamentarians of the Kotleba's party ĽSNS (parliamentarian Mizík) proposed the increase of required members to 250,000. This proposal was supported by the parliamentarians of the party Sme rodina (We are family) – Boris Kollár, three independent parliamentarians (Šimkovičová, Marček a Holúbek) and was supported in the voting also by the parliamentarian Kondrót (SMER-SD)."[27]

### Internet

According to experts, the websites spreading Islamophobic stereotypes in Slovakia are the following: nazorobcana.sk, medzicas.sk, hlavnespravy.sk, konzervativnyvyber.sk, slobodnyvysielac.sk/?v=13dd621f2711, niejetotak.sk, zemavek.sk, magnificat.sk, sho.sk.[28] Also worth mentioning are naseslovensko.net/casopis-nase-slovensko/, protiprudu.org, panobcan.sk, as well as some Facebook sites and groups like *We do not want Islam in Slovakia*.[29] The tacit tolerance of the existence of websites spreading hatred and Facebook groups including anti-Muslim content was considered as a real problem by the President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska in his statements on a TV session on RTVS.[30]

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

President of Slovakia Andrej Kiska has in his public speeches and official statements for the press clearly taken an anti-Islamophobia position. This attitude is repeatedly evidenced by his meetings with the President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) Mohamad Safwan Hasna. At the beginning of last year, on 14 January, 2016, in their meeting Hasna expressed the worries and uncertainty of highly educated

25. Národná rada Slovenskej republiky, "Detaily návrhu zákona. Návrh skupiny poslancov Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky na vydanie zákona, ktorým sa mení a dopĺňa zákon č. 308/1991 Zb. o slobode náboženskej viery a postavení cirkví a náboženských spoločností v znení neskorších predpisov," *NR SR*, (November 30, 2016), retrieved January 14, 2017 from http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=zakony/zakon&MasterID=6090.

26.Information given by the political scientist Tomáš Jahelka in our written communication.

27.Information given by the political scientist Jozef Lenč in our written communication.

28. Information given by the President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) Mohamad Safwan Hasna in our written communication.

29.Information given by the political scientist Tomáš Jahelka in our written communication.

30.ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Prezident Kiska upozornil na nenávistné webové stránky na Slovensku, vrátane protimuslimských,"*islamonline.sk*,(May 8, 2016), retrieved November 10, 2016, from http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/05/prezident-kiska-upozornil-na-nenavistne-internetove-stranky-na-slovensku-vratane-protimuslimskych/.

Muslim Slovak citizens about their well-being and that of their families as a result of the statement of Prime Minister Robert Fico, to prevent the creation of a coherent Muslim community in Slovakia. Hasna pointed out that the long-standing coexistence of Muslims and Slovaks has shown that the Muslim community in Slovakia is fully integrated and peaceful, and that Slovakia unlike other countries has not had to deal with riots. On the immigrant topic Hasna noted that it can not be seen as crucial, because Slovakia has almost no new illegal refugees. Slovak Muslims have a special relationship, according to Hasna, with Slovak non-governmental organisations such as the Human Rights League (HRL), the Center for Research of Ethnicity and Culture (CVEK), and the Open Society Foundation.

On the occasion of the New Year's meeting with the church and religious representatives, President Kiska openly said that the current established use of the word "Muslim" in politics creates the impression that it is synonymous with the words *fear* and *danger*. This approach has the impact of projecting hostility on ethnic, religious or minority groups. According to the head of state it encourages fear, open hostility or hatred: "This does not belong in today's Europe, it can not be justified and awakens demons of the past." The President of the Central Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia Igor Rintel said that the terror tempts us to perceive immigrants as a threat, another source of terror, or the beginning of the extiction of Western civilization. He subsequently stated: "We condemn the persecution of any group of people and we call for honour and respect for every man and religion." Rintel continued, "I wish us all in this year to find the strength to face fear and prejudice, but especially to lend an auxiliary hand to those who knock on our door without side intentions, and learn to recognize those, who are at this door knocking to cause us pain."[31]

In the academic sphere in Slovakia we are not just fighting Islamophobia, but also preventing it for years to come. Examples include lectures for the public by experts on Islam, followed by debates; inviting guests and Muslim community leaders in Slovakia for lectures and discussion in undergraduate programmes, so that they familiarise students with the thinking and practices of Islam from the perspective of their faith and religious experience; the organization of scientific conferences and publications that analyze the phenomenon of Islamophobia from various aspects – an example of such a conference was the conference organised under the heading "Religiophobia – Reality, Prevention and Education".[32]

The Hanns Seidel Stiftung Slowakei (HSS) and the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO)[33] on 12 December, 2016 organised at the Goethe-Institut Slowakei in Bratisla-

31. Topky.sk, "Odborníci z moslimskej komunity uvažujú o odchode zo Slovenska: Majú strach o svoje rodiny," *topky.sk*, (January 14, 2016), retrieved November 12, 2016, from http://www.topky.sk/cl/10/1521761/Odbornici-z-moslimskej-komunity-uvazuju-o-odchode-zo-Slovenska--Maju-strach-o-svoje-rodiny.

32.The author of this paper first introduced this practice in her university courses more than 10 years ago.

33. The abbreviation IVO is derived from the Slovak name of the institute: *Inštitút pre verejné otázky.*

va a discussion on the topic Extremism in Slovakia: how to defend democracy?" The discussants were the authors of the study entitled "*The current right-wing extremism and ultra-nationalism in Slovakia. Status, trends, support*",[34] namely political scientist Grigorij Mesežnikov and sociologist Oľga Gyárfášová of the Institute for Public Affairs (IVO). The publication, among others, dealt with the issue of Islamophobia.[35]

Very important steps in the prevention of Islamophobia and xenophobia are taken by Christian churches and religious communities. Of the many initiative, we mention only some:

- 13 April, 2016 – a public debate on Christianity and Islam at the Kunsthalle Bratislava. The main debaters were the Head of the Department of Comparative Religious Studies of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University Professor Milan Kováč; writer and preacher of Brethren Church Daniel Pastirčák; political scientist and Professor Jozef Lenč; and President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) Mohamad Safwan Hasna.[36]
- 26 April, 2016 – a remembrance meeting of the tragedy of 27 August, 2015, when 71 migrants died of suffocation in a delivery truck close to the Slovak borders in Austrian Parndorf. The meeting took place in the Big Lutheran Church in Bratislava. The main speakers were the evangelical priest of the host parish Anna Polcková, writer and preacher of Brethren Church Daniel Pastirčák, Rabbi Miša Kapustin, and President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (INS) Mohamad Safwan Hasna. The Slovakia-Austrian children's choir Superar participated as well.[37]
- 17 May, 2016 – a public debate on society's acute problems in the form of an interreligious dialogue in the cultural centre Prielom. The debaters were President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia Mohamad Safwan Hasna, official of the European Parliament Branislav Škripek, doctor and Professor Vladimír Krčméry, as well as missionary and Professor Ladislav Bučko.[38]

34.Grigorij Mesežnikov/Oľga Gyárfášová, *Súčasný pravicový extrémizmus a ultranacionalizmus na Slovensku: Stav, trendy a podpora* (Bratislava: IVO, 2016).

35.Institute for Public Affairs, "Public debate on extremism at the Goethe Institut,"*Institute for Public Affairs*, (December 12, 2016), retrieved January 13, 2017, from http://www.ivo.sk/7987/sk/aktuality/verejna-diskusia-o-extremizme-v-goethe-institute.

36.ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Diskusia o kresťanstve a islame v Bratislavskom Dome umenia," *islamonline.sk*, (April 14, 2016), retrieved December 29, 2016, from http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/04/krestan-muslim-politolog-a-religionista-diskutovali-o-krestanstve-a-islame/.

37.ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Predseda Islamskej nadácie hovoril vo Veľkom evanjelickom kostole v Bratislave o pomoci utečencom," islamonline.sk, (April 26, 2016), retrieved December 29, 2016, from http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/04/predseda-islamskej-nadacie-hovoril-vo-velkom-evanjelickom-kostole-v-bratislave-o-pomoci-utecencom/.

38.ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Muslimsko-kresťanský dialóg na Slovensku realitou,"*islamonline.sk*, (May 17, 2016), retrieved December 26, 2016, from http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/05/muslimsko-krestansky-dialog-na-slovensku-realitou/.

- 25 July, 2016 – an international meeting of the Central European Interfaith Forum (CEIF) in Nitra, Slovakia. It was attended by well-known personalities from the political, scientific and public scene in Slovakia and abroad.[39]
- 6 October, 2016 – a meeting of two Muslims with asi twenty young people, the members of Community of Sant'Egidio, in the Roman Catholic parish in Bratislava with the goal of getting to know the Muslim faith, way of life, and values.[40]
- 8 October, 2016 - Festival Arteterapia in Bratislava (5-8 October, 2016) dedicated the last day of its agenda to the topic of interreligious dialogue. The main debaters were the Ambassador of the Parliament of the World Religions, founder and the Chairman of the Slovak-Indian Friendship Society and the National Coordinator of European Anti-Poverty Network Anna Galovičová, President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia Mohamad Safwan Hasna, writer and preacher of Brethren Church Daniel Pastirčák, and political scientist Jozef Lenč.[41]
- 8 November, 2016 – a public debate between the Bishop of the Czechoslovak Hussite Church Juraj Dovalaand and the President of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia Mohamad Safwan Hasna. It was attended by 35 people and stands as evidence of a dignified and constructive relationship between two Abrahamic religions.[42]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

- Politicians should responsibly acquire knowledge on Islam, whether from individual study or consultations with experts, and only then publicly comment on Islam or cite specific authors as universally accepted researchers of Islam, Islamophobia, etc. Such an approach will minimise offensive public discourse.
- Politicians should not spread hatred, lies, and verbal abuse of refugees.
- Improving public education and the quality of information on Islam by making accurate statements about its teachings, practices, history and its role in the world.
- Politicians should call upon representatives of Islam in Slovakia to publicly condemn the malicious interpretations of the Quran and its implication in terrorist attacks; and to publicly confirm that they cultivate respect of the Constitution of

39. Central European Interfaith Forum, "Stredoeurópske medzináboženské fórum – CEIF 2016," *Central European Interfaith Forum*, (July 25, 2016), retrieved November 5, 2016, from http://fwr.sk/ceif-2016/.

40.ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Nechcú sa báť, chcú spoznávať. Mladí kresťania v Bratislave pozvali muslimov na faru," *islamonline.sk*, (October 6, 2016), retrieved December 12th, 2016 from http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/10/nechcu-sa-bat-chcu-spoznavat-mladi-krestania-v-bratislave-pozvali-muslimov-na-faru/.

41. Malá scéna STU, "Festival Arteterapia 2016,"*Malá scéna STU*, (September 16, 2016), retrieved October 8, 2016, from http://www.malascena.sk/aktuality/festival-arteterapia-2016.html.

42. ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Husitský biskup a muslimský duchovný sa stretnú na katolíckej fare. Výsledok? Skvelá debata!," *islamonline.sk*, (December 9, 2016), retrieved December 28, 2016, from http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/12/husitsky-biskup-a-muslimsky-duchovny-sa-stretnu-na-katolickej-fare-vysledok-skvela-debata/.

Slovakia and the principles of religious freedom in a democratic country in their congregations. This step could decisively change the general understanding of the status of the Islamic community in Slovakia and open new opportunities for mutual cooperation between the state and the Islamic community.

- A serious discussions must follow for a mutual agreement on the legislative status of Islam in Slovakia.
- Practical steps should be taken by state authorities in combating all manifestations of racism, antisemitism and Islamophobia in verbal and practical form (notably on the Internet or as attacks on the representatives of these minorities).
- NGOs should highlight the false information and warn against demagogic campaigns spreading hatred.

## Chronology

- **29 May, 2016:** Anti-Islamic demonstration in Bratislava.
- **25 June, 2016:** Anti-Islamic demonstration in Bratislava.
- **3 August, 2016:** One of the hotels in Bratislava refused to accommodate Turkish students on the ground of security reasons. They claimed not to provide accommodation for Turks and citizens of Arab countries.
- **18 August, 2016:** The attack on the restaurant Döner Istanbul Kebab in Piešťany.
- **6 September, 2016:** An interview with a Somalian woman and her young son who were attacked six times in public is published.
- **2 October, 2016:** Shots at praying Muslim woman in Nové Zámky.
- **November 2016:** The amendment of the *Law on freedom of religious faith and the status of churches and religious associations* No. 308/1991.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SLOVENIA
## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

ANJA ZALTA

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# Executive Summary

Islamophobia is present in Slovenian society. Its consequences can be detected in the stereotyping of Muslims based on the ignorance of the heterogeneity of Islamic tradition and the rejection of Islam as a European (and consequently Slovenian) religion. Muslims in Slovenia have become targets of increased hostility especially with the so-called refugee crisis and with the emergence and publicity of acts of terrorism in Europe and the Middle East. The acts of vandalism and graffiti that have occurred in Slovenia equate refugees and asylum seekers with Islamists and "Islamic terrorists".

The year 2016 witnessed one of the first known Islamophobic acts to be given media publicity in the country: heads of pigs and jars of blood were dumped on the building site of an Islamic religious and cultural centre. Islamophobia is felt most by those Muslims, who outwardly show their religious affiliation (either visually by way of dress and/or participation in the media). The report presents the list of public Facebook pages that are spreading hate speech of the most extreme form directed against Muslims, as well as, among others, Islamophobic reactions in certain media outlets, based on the so-called refugee crisis, the fear of 'Islamization', and the rejection of the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) in Ljubljana.

Islamophobia in Slovenia is also a political problem, since it is stimulated by certain political parties and actors, who are exploiting the Islamophobic sentiment among the population in order to gain political points. Special attention is given to the representation of Islam and Muslims in Slovenian school textbooks, with a special recommendation to update school textbooks that cover the issue of Islam and Muslims, and to educate and inform the general public about the heterogeneity and diversity of Islamic traditions.

## Povzetek

Islamofobija je prisotna tudi v slovenski družbi. Njene posledice lahko med drugim prepoznamo v stereotipizaciji muslimanov na podlagi nepoznavanja heterogenosti islamske tradicije, ter zavračanje islama kot slovenske in evropske religije. Muslimani so tudi v Sloveniji postali tarče povečane sovražnosti predvsem z begunsko krizo, ter z medijsko odmevnostjo terorističnih dejanj v Evropi in na Bližnjem vzhodu. Pojavili so se vandalizem in grafiti, ki enačijo begunce in prosilce za azil z islamisti in "islamskimi teroristi".

V letu 2016 smo priča tudi enemu prvih medijsko znanih islamofobnih dejanj v Sloveniji, ko so neznanci na gradbišču islamskega verskega in kulturnega centra odvrgli svinjske glave in kozarce s krvjo. Islamofobijo najbolj občutijo tisti muslimani, ki navzven kažejo svojo versko pripadnost (bodisi vizualno z načinom oblačenja in/ali s participacijo v medijih). Poročilo navede seznam Facebook strani, ki širijo sovražni govor proti muslimanom, kakor tudi islamofobne reakcije nekaterih medijev kot odziv na tako imenovano 'begunsko krizo', strah pred ‚islamizacijo' in zavračanje islamskega verskega in kulturnega centra v Ljubljani.

Islamofobija v Sloveniji je tudi politični problem, saj jo podpihujejo določene politične stranke in posamezniki, ki za nabiranje političnih točk izkoriščajo islamofobne sentimente, nastale predvsem na podlagi strahu in nepoznavanja islama. Posebej je omenjena prezentacija islama in muslimanov v slovenskih šolskih učbenikih s priporočilom poposodobitve tistih tematskih sklopov, ki obravnavajo vprašanje islama in muslimanov, kakor tudi javno informiranje o heterogenosti in raznolikosti islamske tradicije.

# Introduction

In 1991, the census registered 29,361 Muslims, representing 1.5% of the population. In the 1991 Population Census the question of national affiliation was answered by 87.5% of the 29,361 Muslims polled. As many as 20,435 (69.6%) declared themselves to be Muslims mainly from Bosnia-Herzegovina; 2,481 (8.1%) as Albanian Muslims from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia; 1,196 (4.1%) stated regional affiliations; 1,121 (3.8%) declared themselves as Yugoslavs; and 818 (2.7%) as Slovenes.[1]

According to the population data of the 2002 census, there were 47,488 members of the Islamic religious community living in Slovenia (2.4% of the entire population), which means that the Islamic community is the second largest religious community in the country, following Catholics. The difference in the number of Muslims is considered to be a result of the fact that many believers had not declared themselves to be followers of the Muslim faith in the 1991 census. According to estimates by the Islamic community, there are Muslims who in the 2002 census did not declare themselves to be Muslims as well; therefore, one can expect that the actual number is a bit higher.

One of the first great influxes of Muslims into Slovenian territory occurred during the First World War, when Bosniaks fought on the Soča Front on the side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Later, migrations of larger Muslim populations to Slovene territory took place in the time of the former Yugoslavia, in the 1960s, mostly due to the expansion of industry. It was on 12 September, 1967, that the Islamic Community in Slovenia was founded. Since 1981, a masjid, a house of prayer, has been operative in Slovenia's capital Ljubljana, and there are similar places of worship in other cities, but the mosque or so-called Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) in Ljubljana, which is still under construction, has become a central symbol of their efforts for recognition in Slovenian society, as well as a source of Islamophobia among the Slovene population.

As early as 1969, the Muslims living in Slovenia appealed for a mosque to be built in Ljubljana. Discussions on the mosque were, all these years, extraordinarily burdened with contradictory views and principles as well as material and symbolic interests, prejudice and ignorance. In the discussions, we can recognize Islamophobic reactions and resistance, which is much older than the reaction to the terrorist attacks; rather it should be seen as a reaction to the "failure of compulsive assimilation. Muslims living in Slovenia did not become a disturbing element when they moved to the country, but only when they publicly re-

1.Mojca Piko, *Politično geografska problematika Islamske verske skupnosti v Sloveniji* (Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, Filozofska fakulteta, 2004), p. 51.

jected assimilation."[2] Delays in the mosque's construction are the result of misinterpretations of Islam in Slovenia.[3] From the very beginning the mosque has been treated as a "foreign body" and (although not yet built) believed to represent a potential security threat.

Figure 1: Graffiti equate refugees and asylum seekers with Islamists in Ljubljana, Šiška.[5]

On 14 September, 2013, the cornerstone for the mosque was finally laid, and on 6 May, 2015, the mayor of Ljubljana and the mufti of the Islamic Community poured concrete for the foundation stone, which symbolized the beginning of construction.

Yet Islamophobic discourses, mainly related to the construction of the mosque as the central symbol of Muslim presence in the country, are continuing, in particular on Internet networks and public forums, but also in certain media outlets (which will be discussed in the next chapters). These kinds of discourses are not (only) a result of the fear of terrorist attacks, but are fueled by the fear of medieval Turkish incursions, embedded in the Slovenian collective memory.

These incursions are seen as being one of the darkest periods in Slovenian history. Through folk poetry and prose the Slovenian collective memory preserves the recollection of the horror of the incursions of Ottoman mounted units that plundered, killed and hunted men and boys for slavery.[4] Though these invasions are not necessarily representative of the Islamic faith, they still bear an impact on public opinion and attitude towards Islam in Slovenia. The Turks and their religion have survived throughout Slovenian history as something completely "different", alien and dangerous. The Slovene word for a Turk ("Turek") became an expletive. This is the reason why many Slovenes associate the word Islam first and foremost, in a very stereotypical way, with this stigma of the past and do not allow themselves to broaden their knowledge towards the positive aspects of Islam.

2. Dragoš, Srečo, "Islamophobia in Slovenia," *Intolerance Monitor Report*, Vol. 03, (2004), p. 11. Available from:http://mediawatch.mirovni-institut.si/nestrpnost/porocilo/03/nestrpnost.pdf (retrieved January 19, 2017).

3. Nedžad Grabus, *Sožitje je našapot: Intervjuji in govori muftija dr. Nedžada Grabusa* (Ljubljana: Zavod Averroes,2011).

4. Ignacij Voje, *Slovenci pod pritiskom turškega nasilja* (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1996).

5. Photo taken by Anja Zalta on 1 December, 2016 in Ljubljana, Šiška.

# Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

There is no official report regarding discrimination in the labour market due to Islamophobia in Slovenia. There is only unofficial evidence pointing to discrimination in the field of employment, especially of Muslims whose appearance bears visible traces of their religious affiliation. In particular, Muslim women can be doubly discriminated on the basis of gender and on the basis of religion. Muslim women who wear headscarves are, according to unofficial data, discriminated and it is very difficult for them to get a job in the public sector.[6] Most of these women are unemployed, or are employed in the private sector as self-employed or as workers in private enterprises.

In Slovenia, there is no law that relates to the religiously prescribed dress of Muslim women, but in accordance with the religious freedom guaranteed by Article 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, the wearing of headscarves can be interpreted as an expression of religious freedom. Covered women in Slovenia are permitted to wear their headscarves in photographs for passports, driving licenses, or any other official document, as the headscarf is an integral part of religious clothing (Rules on the Implementation of the Law of Identity Cards, 2013).

The lack of information about Muslim discrimination in the labour market prevents the authorities from being properly informed about the situation. On the other hand, Muslims do not usually report discriminatory acts. Therefore, the monitoring and collection of information is essential.

Although Slovenia insists on the principle of a secular state, public holidays include religious holidays of the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church, but no Islamic holidays that would require non-working day(s). Problems can also occur regarding diet in the workplace, if the company does not offer diversity in its menu.

## Education

The issues of Islam and Muslims in Slovenia in textbooks for primary schools are dealt with by focusing on the teaching of the Turkish invasions. Islam as a religion is presented in the 6$^{th}$-grade history textbooks of elementary schools, in combination with Islamic expansionism. The limited data offered to students about Islam is extremely one-sided and stereotypical. Islam in Slovenian textbooks is given some space, but the role of the Muslim community is completely absent. As Tanja Uršič stated "Islam is most often discussed in relation to something, either the Byzantine state or Slovenian lands, rather than as a separate unit."[7]. The content of Slovenian

6. The information is based on the interview with Faila Pašić Bišić, an activist, the director of non-governmental organization *UP Jesenice*, and one of the most visible Muslim public figures in Slovenia. Interview was made in Ljubljana, 9. 11. 2016.

7. Tanja Uršič, *Prezentacija islama v slovenskih šolskih učbenikih, Igra prisotnosti in odsotnosti* (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, , 2010) p. 43

textbooks in regard to Islam and Muslims is not considered up-to-date and does not expose the heterogeneity and diversity of Islamic traditions, identity and groups. New generations, thus, are deprived of a higher quality of knowledge about world religions, including Islam. Negative stereotypes, which prevail in the interpretation of Islam in Slovenian primary schools, should be removed from the subject of Religions and Ethics, which students can choose from the 7th grade onward. The subject curriculum provides a significantly broader and deeper understanding of Islam, but is problematic in so far as the subject is optional and not compulsory for all students. In addition, in recent years, Religion and Ethics is not available in all elementary schools. The latter might be related to the fact that there is a lack of subject-trained teachers. Finally, at state level there is no additional training for teachers on this subject – this was also the case in the past.

## Politics

On 31 August, 2016, the online media Svet 24 published an article about a written parliamentary question sent by the deputy parliamentary opposition party SDS (Slovenian Democratic Party) to the Minister of the Interior in relation to security issues regarding face-covering in public places.[8]

The article was a reminder that the SDS in late November 2015 filed a bill in the National Assembly that would ban the wearing of the burqa and the niqab in public places and tighten the conditions for obtaining asylum in Slovenia. The motive for introducing the ban is security reasons (on account of face-covering in public places), and cultural reasons, since, according to the SDS - as presented in the article - face-covering is not in compliance with Slovenian customs and traditions. The SDS calls for a penalty of 100 euros for the violation of the ban. This is comparable with penalties for begging or sleeping overnight in a public place.

Re-opened discourse on the ban has sparked further Islamophobic reaction on the Internet. The political proposal to ban the wearing of the burqa and niqab in the existing Slovenian context signifies fear mongering. In Slovenia, women who conceal their face with a burqa or niqab are extremely rare. Muslims in Slovenia and refugees and asylum seekers normally use headscarves, but not the burqa. The proposed ban on face-covering is problematic also in the context that the entire Islamic religion is reduced to just one symbol, which is the easiest to use and manipulate.

## Media

The so-called refugee crisis, the fear of "Islamization", the rejection of the Islamic religious and cultural centre, etc., raise Islamophobic reactions in some media. One

8.Svet24.si, "SDS: Kdaj prepoved nošenja burk in nikabov?," *svet24.si*, (August 31, 2016), retrieved January 19, 2017, from http://svet24.si/clanek/novice/slovenija/57c690b4d1d09/sds-znova-za-prepoved-nosenja-burk-in-nikabov.

of the most Islamophobic records can be found in the journal *Reporter*. The instance was dealt with by the Council in response to its hostile and discriminatory language.[9] The article, which contains hate speech, is signed by J.B. (probably Jože Biščak), and bears the quotation that "Islam is a criminal ideology that deserves to be included in the same category as Nazism, fascism and communism – It is contrary to the principles of European law, and it should be, like its predecessors, overcome - the West must crush Islam if it wants to survive." The article was published on the website of the *Reporter* on 23 May, 2016.

The same author develops similar claims in an article entitled "Ljubljana on the way to Islamization: a crescent moon is fixed on the minaret." The article was published in the *Reporter* on 30 May, 2016. In the article, Biščak writes that the Ljubljana Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre will become "a hotbed of radicalization and terrorism."

The Council also examined a third article by Biščak, published in the same magazine on 20 September, 2016 for its hostile and discriminatory language. The article bears the title "Meet Ljubljana's First Sharia Ghetto?" and is subtitled "A new residential neighbourhood will grow near the mosque. Experience from Europe shows that such neighbourhoods are populated mostly by Muslims, and are where terrorists find shelter." The article explains that Ljubljana will get the first real Muslim ghetto, which could be transformed into an area controlled by Sharia militia who will terrorize neighbouring residents and force them to embrace the Muslim way of life. The Council made it clear that with his allegations Biščak is spreading fear of Islam and Muslims, and inciting hatred and Islamophobia on the basis of stereotypes.[10]

## Internet

Public Facebook pages that are spreading hate speech of the most extreme form that are directed against Muslims originated at the time of last year's arrival of refugees in Europe and their mass transition across Slovenia. Some of these pages are: Radical Ljubljana (Radikalna Ljubljana); Stop islamizaciji Slovenije (Stop Islamisation of Slovenia); Generation Identity Slovenia (Generacija identitete Slovenija); Slovenia Secure Borders (Slovenija Zavaruj Meje); Slovenian Militia (Slovenska milica); and We do not want refugees and migrants in Slovenia, We do not want a mosque in Ljubljana (Nočemo beguncev in migrantov v Sloveniji, Nočemo džamije v Ljubljani). These groups maintain a mass audience on social networks and are gaining new followers, even though the period of mass transition of refugees across Slovenia has already passed. Their Facebook pages

9. Mirovni Institute for Contemporary Social and Political Studies. Available from: http://www.mirovni-institut.si/govor/ (retrieved January 19, 2017).

10. Mirovni Institute, "Drugi odziv Sveta za odziv na sovražni in diskriminatorni govor," *mirovni-institut.si*, (October 20, 2016), retrieved January 19, 2017, from http://www.mirovni-institut.si/drugi-odziv-sveta-za-odziv-na-sovrazni-in-diskriminatorni-govor/.

regularly publish Islamophobic material, e.g. photos of pigs with users then leaving comments like '(This is) Your food, Muslims;-) You must eat;) Allah eats, too' (12.02.2016). Islamophobic rhetoric on the Internet shows signs of religious illiteracy that reduces Islam to stereotypical images; the posts in which Muslims are fully dehumanized are especially worrying. These are the posts that carry mobilization potential. (See Figure 2)

Figure 2: Islamophobic rhetoric and dehumanization of Muslims on the Internet are especially worrying.

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

Reluctance towards the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) has been ongoing for years. The so-called refugee crisis in the past year has only deepened this reluctance, which is additionally fueled by certain politicians and media.

In the night of 12 January, 2016, an Islamophobic attack took place on the construction site of a mosque, where unknown persons threw the heads of pigs and jars filled with blood. The attack was repeated on the night of 31 January, 2016. (Figure 4)[11]

Figure 3: Construction site of a mosque in Ljubljana

Figure 4: The heads of pigs and jars filled with blood on the construction site of mosque in Ljubljana [11]

The Islamic community tagged the two events as hostile attacks on the minority community. The attacks were strongly condemned by leading politicians and representatives of other religious communities.

11. Courtesy of the Islamic community's archives.

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The report has demonstrated that the main Islamophobic attacks in Slovenia in 2016, as in the previous year, revolved around the so-called refugee crisis and around the central symbol of Muslims and Islamic presence in Slovenia, namely the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre in Ljubljana. The targets of Islamophobic attacks in the media and in cyberspace are the public figures who visibly show their religious affiliation, such as Mrs. Faila Pašić. Knowledge of Islam in Slovenia is largely restricted to sensationalist generalizations and stereotyping, which stem from a lack of religious literacy.

**Policy recommendations include the following:**

- Updating school textbooks that cover the issue of Islam and Muslims, and increasing the debates on racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia.
- Monitoring and collecting information on Islamophobia in the labour market.
- Enabling effective integration of Slovenian Muslims in political, cultural, social and economic institutions.
- Facilitating the visibility of Muslims in the media – creating a radio station and television shows, for and by Muslims
- Educating and informing the general public about the heterogeneity and diversity of Islamic traditions.
- Examining and implementing options for suitable nourishment of Muslims in kindergartens, schools, hospitals, workplaces, prisons, etc.
- Examining the possibilities of spiritual care in hospitals and in the military. The Ministry of Defence does not employ a military imam. The Islamic community in Slovenia has repeatedly expressed its desire to be integrated into the system of spiritual care of the Slovenian Armed Forces.
- Muslim communities and societies should be active in offering more activities and public events and discussions, and there should be intercultural and interreligious platforms to address urgent and current issues.
- Political parties and civil society should be included in campaigns against Islamophobia and should promote research in the field of Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims.

## Chronology

- **12 January**: At night, heads of pigs and jars filled with blood were thrown on the construction site of a mosque.
- **15 January**: Protest against refugees takes place at the asylum centre of Kidričevo.
- **31 January**: An attack on the construction site of a mosque occurs during the night.
- **February**: Protests against accommodation centres for refugees in Lenart, Vrhnika, Ljubljana, Šenčur, and Kranj take place.
- **April**: The rise of the minaret in the construction site of the mosque in Ljubljana.
- **May**: The top is added to Ljubljana's minaret. The event sparked additional Islamophobic reactions, especially on the Internet (forums and Facebook pages), but also in certain media.
- **31 August**: Discussion on face-covering was once again reopened in the media.
- **12-13 October**: Protests against asylum centers in Črnomelj and Maribor.
- **29 November**: A protest against refugees and against the asylum center in Velenje.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SPAIN NATIONAL REPORT 2016

ABDUL HALIK AZEEZ, CARMEN AGUILERA-CARNERERO

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# Executive Summary

The year 2016 has been extremely arduous for the Islamic community worldwide. Spain is not alien to this infectious attitude towards the Muslim community. The number of Islamophobic incidents during 2015 increased by 35% as reported by the organisation *Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia* and the situation in 2016, as this report illustrates, has not improved. Geographically, the greatest number of incidents has occurred in Barcelona, the community of Valencia and Madrid. Some political initiatives forwarded by city halls, regional governments, civil society institutions and private organisations confirm the problem is real, serious and one that must be combated at its roots.

In our opinion, the main problems, in terms of the speed of production as well as impact, are the offences and crimes related to hate speech and specifically those confined to the Internet (cyber Islamophobia). Cyber hate speech seems to be the easiest way to offend, insult, denigrate and threaten Muslims both in terms of effort and minimum risk of being arrested or punished by the law. The so-called gendered Islamophobia or assaults on Muslim women, and attacks and acts of vandalism targeting mosques or Islamic centres (particularly in the aftermath of any terrorist attack in a Western country) have also been frequent in this year.

Institutional Islamophobia still forms a barrier in the granting of rights to Muslims agreed upon in 1992 by the Spanish state. The problems with the provision of imams in prisons and the number of available Muslim cemeteries are important issues that remain unresolved by the public administration. Dealing with the problem of Islamophobia is a common public responsibility, from individual citizens to the powerful state apparatus through civil society, media and academic institutions. Only when these social actors join forces to work together towards a common goal will Islamophobia be effectively tackled.

# Resumen Ejecutivo

El año 2016 ha sido especialmente arduo para la comunidad musulmana en todo el mundo. España no es ajena a esta actitud contagiosa con la comunidad musulmana. El número de incidentes de carácter islamófobo ocurridos durante 2015 se incrementó en un 567.35% según la organización Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia y la situación durante 2016, tal y como muestra este informe, no ha mejorado. Desde un punto de vista geográfico, el mayor número de incidentes se concentra en Barcelona, la comunidad Valenciana y Madrid. Algunas iniciativas políticas puestas en marcha por ayuntamientos, gobiernos regionales, instituciones en el ámbito de la sociedad civil y organizaciones privadas confirman que el problema es real, serio y tiene que ser atajado de raíz lo antes posible.

En nuestra opinión, el principal problema, en cuanto a la velocidad de producción así como a su impacto, son los delitos y faltas relacionadas con el discurso de odio y, específicamente, aquellos que se producen en el ámbito de Internet (ciberislamofobia). El ciberdiscurso de odio parece ser la manera más fácil de ofender, insultar, denigrar y amenazar a los musulmanes tanto en términos de esfuerzo invertido como en el riesgo mínimo de ser detenido y castigado por la ley. La llamada islamofobia de género o ataques a las mujeres musulmanas así como los actos vandálicos contra mezquitas o centros Islámicos (particularmente en los días posteriores a cualquier ataque terrorista en algún país occidental) han sido frecuentes en este año tal y como la cronología de incidentes islamófobos en este informe muestra.

La islamofobia institucional es todavía una barrera para los derechos que el estado español tiene que garantizar a los musulmanes según los acuerdos de 1992. La carencia de provisión de imanes a las cárceles as así como la escasez de cementerios musulmanes disponibles son asuntos importantes que tienen que ser resueltos por la administración pública. El problema de la islamofobia es una responsabilidad pública común: desde los ciudadanos particulares al poderoso aparato estatal, pasando por la sociedad civil, los medios de comunicación y las instituciones académicas. Sólo cuando estos actores sociales unan sus fuerzas para trabajar hacia un objetivo común la islamofobia será solventada eficientemente.

# Introduction

According to the 2015 annual report *Demographic Study of the Muslim Community* (*Estudio Demográfico de la Comunidad Musulmana*)[1] carried out by the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (*Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España*, UCIDE), there are 1,887,906 Muslim citizens in Spain; 41% are Spanish Muslims whereas the remaining 59% are immigrants, mostly from Morocco. The number of Muslims has increased an 8.4% from the previous year and according to the study[2] carried out by the Pew Research Centre in 2015, Islam is the religion which will increase its followers the most in the future. Still and despite this data, 95% of Muslim communities in Spain lack a cemetery.[3]

Cataluña and Andalusia are the preferred Muslims settlements, followed by Madrid and Valencia. The Spanish territories of Ceuta and Melilla are the European Union's only land borders with Africa and have therefore become a focal point for immigrants seeking to enter Europe, who either climb over the border fences or swim along the coast.[4] Spain has stepped up security in 2014 and 2015 with the help of funding from the EU and made it harder for border crossers to apply for asylum.[5] However, Spain's practice of deporting illegal immigrants en masse has brought the country under criticism by human rights watchdogs.[6]

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

In the area of employment, several Islamophobic events happened last year. The *Unión de Comunidades Islámicas* (Islamic Communities Union) has reported the

1. Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España, "Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana," *ucide.org, (2016), retrieved November 6, 2016, from*http://observatorio.hispanomuslim.es/estademograf.pdf.

2.Pew Research Center, "The future of World Religions: Population, Growth Projections, 2010-2050," *www.pewforum.org*, (April 2, 2016), retrieved November 6, 2016, from http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/.

3. Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España, "Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana," *ucide.org, (2016), retrieved November 6, 2016, from*http://observatorio.hispanomuslim.es/estademograf.pdf.

4.The wire mesh fences separating the two Spanish autonomous regions stretch 8 km long in Ceuta and 12 km long in Melilla. They are gory constructions with sharp blades and other obstructions to prevent immigrants from climbing over them, causing a lot of pain and bodily harm to those who try. (Editorial board, "Morocco, Ceuta and Melilla: a failed immigration policy," *Mediterranean Affairs*, (December 3, 2014), retrieved November 17, 2016, from http://mediterraneanaffairs.com/morocco-ceuta-and-melilla-a-failed-immigration-policy/.

5. Reuters, "African migrants storm Spanish enclave Ceuta," *breitbart.com*, (October 31, 2016), retrieved November 17, 2016, from http://www.breitbart.com/london/2016/10/31/african-migrants-storm-spanish-enclave-ceuta/.

6. Editorial Team, "Stop deportations: Spain's human rights violations and the story of Belleti," *Beatingborders.org*,(April 11, 2015), retrieved November 17, 2016, from https://beatingborders.wordpress.com/2015/04/11/stop-deportations-spains-human-rights-violations-and-the-story-of-belleti/.

discrimination that Muslims suffer in their jobs[7] since most of their employers do not respect the law that guarantees that any employer or employee has the right to ask for a day to celebrate his or her religious holidays; in some cases, Muslim workers are just given a couple of hours to commemorate the festivals of Eid ul-Adha and Eid ul-Fitr.

The Muslim community, especially Muslims who have settled down in Ceuta and Melilla, have reported the discrimination they suffer in the national calendar of bank holidays[8] since 6 out of the 9 national bank holidays are directly related to Catholic celebrations, and therefore ignore the thousands of Muslims who have their own religious celebrations.

Ana Saudí, a Spanish Muslim woman working at the airport of Palma de Mallorca, has sued her employer, the company Acciona, demanding the company respects her right to wear the hijab at work.[9] Since she told her boss she had decided to wear the hijab, she claims to have suffered harassment at work and to have been sanctioned with 7 disciplinary punishments, resulting mainly in unpaid days off work.

Another case of discrimination at work was suffered by the member of the Security Forces A. B. Abderrahman, who was denied a promotion with the reasoning that "his ethnic perspective was in opposition to institutional values"[10] as if both aspects are mutually exclusive or as if either ethnicity or the said institution are limited to one particular religion.

## Education

The census of Muslim students in Spain in 2016 announced their number at 281,725, 112,214 of which are Spanish and 163,110 are immigrants. According to the Cooperation Agreements of 1992 signed between the state and the Muslim community, every Muslim student is guaranteed the right of an Islamic education in a state and state-subsidised school of preschool, primary, or secondary education when a minimum of 10 students have made such a request. This demand is met in the autonomous communities of Andalusia, Aragon, Basque Country, Canary Islands and the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, leaving Muslims in the greater part of the country without the possibility of taking classes in Islamic education. The number of teach-

7. Agencia EFE, "Comunidad Islámica denuncia discriminación a los musulmanes en las escuelas," *El Confidencial*, (June 21, 2016) retrieved October 26, 2016, from http://www.elconfidencial.com/ultima-hora-en-vivo/2016-06-21/comunidad-islamica-denuncia-discriminacion-a-los-musulmanes-en-las-escuelas_944002/.

8. Editorial Team, "Los musulmanes en España denuncian discriminación en el calendario festivo laboral," *Despierta info*, (October 10, 2016), retrieved January 7, 2016, from http://www.despiertainfo.com/2016/10/10/los-musulmanes-en-espana-denuncian-discriminacion-en-el-calendario-festivolaboral/.

9. J. F. M. Palma, "Una mujer musulmana exige llevar velo en el trabajo," *El diario de Mallorca*, (December 23, 2016), retrieved January 7, 2016, from http://www.diariodemallorca.es/mallorca/2016/12/22/mujer-musulmana-exige-llevar-velo/1175464.html.

10. Editorial Team Abna, "Niegan el acceso a un guardia civil musulmán bajo la excusa de anteponer su perspectiva étnica a los valores institucionales," *Web Islam*, (September 1, 2016), retrieved November 20, 2016, from http://www.webislam.com/articulos/111416-niegan_el_ascenso_a_un_guardia_civil_musulman_bajo_la_excusa_de_anteponer_su_per.html.

ers of Islamic religion in 2015 was 48, one more than in 2014 according to the data provided by the Andalusi Observatory (*Observatorio Andalusí*). In June 2016, the Islamic Commission of Spain denounced that there is still discrimination of Muslim students in schools compared to their Christian classmates based on the above facts.[11]

Since March 2016, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports passed a law on the implementation of the subject of Islamic religion in schools and high schools commencing in the academic year 2017-2018. The choice of the teachers and the contents of the subject will be a controlled by the Spanish Islamic Commission [*Comisión Islámica de España* (CIE)].

On the subject of the existence of halal menus in schools, the Islamic Commission stated that in most of the cases its availability depends on the good will of the school. In this sense, the Muslims of Madrid (through the Spanish Islamic Commission) have talked to the community of Madrid about the topic;[12] in Cataluña, the organisation 'Muslims against Islamophobia' (*Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia*) has succeeded in getting a halal menu for one school and continues to try for other schools.

In September 2016, Spanish Muslim student Takwa Rejeb was forbidden from wearing the hijab at a public high school in Valencia that was applying its rule of not allowing students to attend classes with covered heads. The *Conselleria de Educació* (Secretary of Education) of the Valencian community declared they would modify the law to let Muslim students attend classes while wearing the hijab in order to promote the cohabitation of religious and cultural diversity in educational centres. The case set an example for inclusive education.[13]

In order to avoid this kind of problems in the future, the Basque government quickly reacted and sent a letter to the schools of the region encouraging them not to prevent any public schools from accepting girls wearing the hijab. However, barely a month later in the region, the Spanish Muslim girl Meryem Echaniz was denied entrance to the high school she was studying for wearing the niqab. The characteristics of the niqab which covers the whole face except for the eyes are absolutely different from the hijab that only covers the head - and most of the times also the neck - but leaves the face uncovered. Amelia Barquín, professor of multicultural education at Mondragon University, argues that communication is essential in education and in

11.Editorial team, "Comisión Islámica denuncia discriminación a los musulmanes en las escuelas," i*slamhispania. blogspot.com*, (notdated), retrieved October7, 2016,from http://islamhispania.blogspot.com.es/2016/06/comunidad-islamica-denuncia.htm.

12.Sol Carreras, "Los musulmanes reclaman menús sin cerdo en los colegios públicos de Madrid," *La Vanguardia*, (June 12, 2016), retrievedOctober 5, 2016, fromhttp://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20160612/402453563116/los-musulmanes-reclaman-menus-sin-cerdo-en-los-colegios-publicos-de-madrid.html.

13.Inma Lidón, "La alumna musulmana podrá acudir al instituto con su 'hiyab'," *El Mundo*, (September20, 2016), retrievedOctober 31, 2016, fromhttp://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/2016/09/19/57dff21322601d736d8b4647.html.

the whole process of learning, and that the face plays a vital role in education.[14] The Islamic community agreed with this line of thought.[15]

Another interesting aspect is the way Muslims and Islam are presented in textbooks. Mayoral Arqué, Molina Luque and Samper Rasero[16] (2012) analysed the images of Muslims and Islam in 246 textbooks from Catalonia. Although the authors claim that the material scrutinised cannot be qualified as Islamophobic, the absence of Muslims and Islam in the curriculum and their stereotypical and almost anecdotal portrayal when in fact presented (especially through images) could lead to what it has been called 'Euroracism' (Allen and Macey, 1990).[17] The strategy of invisibility of Muslims and Islam could be interpreted as a subtle form of Islamophobia.

## Politics

The year 2016 has been very unstable and atypical in the political scene in Spain. In December 2015, there were general elections that led to a new victory of the former conservative government, *Partido Popular* (People's Party); the party, however, did not get enough votes to form an independent government and tried to form a coalition. The situation led to a series of unfruitful discussions among the leaders of the main political parties (*Partido Popular*, PSOE, *Ciudadanos* and *Podemos*) in an effort to form coalitions and, in the end, led to a new election process in June 2016. Finally, in November 2016, a new conservative government started a new term with the political support of *Ciudadanos* (Citizens).

All parties made a series of promises that potentially affected the Muslim community of Spain but, in this report, we will focus on the main parties in terms of electoral popularity. The leader of the Socialist Party (PSOE), Pedro Sánchez Castejón, held a series of interviews with several Muslim leaders from the Islamic Community of Spain where he announced his party's firm commitment to prevent the spread of

14. According to Amelia Barquín, covering the whole face with the niqab would hinder not only the mouth, through which the voice comes, but also hide facial expressions. The use of the niqab would affect not only the process of learning but also the social interrelations of the student. (Arantxa Aldaz, "Hay alumnas que van a la escuela con velo sin problemas," *Diario Vas*co, (October18, 2016), retrievedOctober 31, 2016, fromhttp://www.diariovasco.com/gipuzkoa/201610/18/alumnas-velo-escuela-problemas-20161018001532-v.html.

15. Aziz Messaoudi, representative of the Islamic Federation of the Basque country, and Badar Hijra, from the Islamic University opened in San Sebastian, both claimed Meryem should not cover her face to attend high school and, like Barquín, they clearly distinguished the use of the hijab (allowed in high schools) from the exceptional case of the niqab. (See: Vozmediano, Ana, "'Si Meryem quiere estudiar, debe destaparse el rostro', advierte la Federación Islámica," *El Correo*, (October16, 2016), retrievedNovember9, 2016, fromhttp://www.elcorreo.com/bizkaia/sociedad/201610/16/meryem-quiere-estudiar-debe-20161015215728.html.

16.Dolores Mayoral Arqué/Fidel Molina Luque/Lluis Samper Rasero, "¿Islamofobia o currículo nulo? La representación del Islam, las culturas musulmanas y los inmigrantes musulmanes en los libros de texto en Cataluña,"*Revista de educación*, Vol. 357(Enero-Abril 2012), p. 257-279.

17.Sheila Allen/Marie Macey, "Race and ethnicity in the European context," *British Journal of Sociology*, 41 (1990), p. 375-393.

hate speech targeting the Muslim population.[18] The Medina group (a federal Arab group within the socialist party) communicated with the representatives of the organisation *Plataforma Ciudadana Contra la Islamofobia* to be informed of the cases of Islamophobia in Spain.

The two parties occupy opposite ideological extremes of the political spectrum; *Podemos* ('We can') and *Partido Popular* are seen as having two radically different approaches to the Muslim community.

*Podemos* has been accused by conservative sectors of the opposition as having a very anti-Christian attitude, a firm opposition towards the Catholic Church, an inherent secularism, and a warm approach to Islam.[19] The Muslim sector of the party, however, has rejected some of the measures contained in the party's political programme such as the acceptance of homosexual marriage which they see as contravening the principles of their religion.[20] Among other measures, *Podemos* claimed the Spanish state should apologise for the reconquest of Granada from the Muslims – an event which signified the end of the presence of Islam in Europe.[21]

The conservative party leading the government, *Partido Popular*, is the party that has always received the most accusations of being Islamophobic. Two of the party's most controversial figures are the Mayor of Getafe Juan Soler, who was accused of promoting Islamophobia, hate speech and inciting confrontation with Muslims,,[22] and the former Major of the city of Badalona Xavier García Albiol, who stated his intent of erasing any trace of multiculturalism in the city in his last political campaign.[23]

The minority conservative party, VOX, has also been accused of promoting Islamophobia. In this sense, its leader Santiago Abascal launched a video[24] explaining that the party is in favour of the defense of Christian values and against the appli-

18.Agencia Europa Press,"La comunidad islámica aborda con Pedro Sánchez el papel de los imanes y pide apoyo contra la islamofobia," *Agencia Europa Press*, (November 18, 2015), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.europapress.es/sociedad/noticia-comunidad-islamica-aborda-pedro-sanchez-papel-imanes-pide-apoyo-contra-islamofobia-20151118181609.html.

19.Miguel Angel Ruiz-Coll, "Iglesias felicita el Ramadán a los musulmanes mientras se burla de la Navidad Católica," *OK Diario*, (June 12, 2016), retrieved October 15, 2016, from https://okdiario.com/espana/2016/06/12/iglesias-felicita-ramadan-musulmanes-mientras-burla-navidad-catolica-204259.

20. Fátima G.Manzano, "Los musulmanes de Podemos rechazan el matrimonio homosexual," *La Gaceta*, (June 20, 2016), retrieved October 20, 2016, from http://gaceta.es/noticias/circulo-musulmanes-rechaza-matrimonio-homosexual-20062016-0022.

21. Editorial Team, "Podemos exige que España pida perdón al islam por la toma de Granada," *La Gaceta*, (January 4, 2016),retrieved October 20, 2016, from http://gaceta.es/noticias/exige-espana-pida-perdon-islam-toma-granada-04012016-2226.

22.Roberto Benítez, "La red de inmigración acusa a al PP de Juan Soler de promover la islamofobia en Getafe," *Getafe el Bercial*, (September 9, 2016),retrievedNovember9, 2016, from http://www.elbercial.com/2016/09/09/red-inmigracion-acusa-pp-juan-soler-promover-Islamofobia-getafe/.

23.Àngels Piñol, "El PP lanza en L'Hospitalet una campaña de tintes xenófobos," *El País*, (April 15, 2015), retrieved November 17, 2016, from http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2015/04/14/catalunya/1429042608_257547.html.

24. Editorial Team, "¿Facha, islamófobo, euroescéptico? VOX desmonta las críticas," *La Gaceta*, (June 21, 2016), retrieved November 17, 2016, from http://gaceta.es/noticias/facha-islamofobo-euroesceptico-vox-desmonta-criticas-21062016-1221.

cation of Islamic law in Spain, an approach that he calls 'freedom' rather than 'Islamophobia'. The vice secretary of the youth of the organisation, InmaSequí, posted some controversial tweets in July in which she accused the Association of Young Muslims of not condemning DAESH and thus of being accomplices by virtue of their silence.[25]

## Media

Media discourse, as Van Dijk[26] (2000) contends, is the main source from which citizens obtain their knowledge and build their attitudes and ideologies. The responsibility of the media in creating, spreading and encouraging hate speech is undeniable; more specifically, the media's role in fostering Islamophobia is essential.

Due to space constraints, we will briefly analyse some representative samples of Islamophobia in the media and social media.

- '*PP y Podemos se ponen de acuerdo... para permitir una mezquita ultra en Las Palmas*'.[27] (PP and *Podemos* agreed… to allow the building of an ultra mosque in Las Palmas).

The above headline is an example of a biased presentation of a piece of news. The headline announces the unexpected agreement between the two most antagonistic political parties, PP (the conservative party heading the government) and *Podemos* (a far left party), to allow the building of a new mosque in Las Palmas. The unexpected nature of the news is not caused by this strange coalition but by the subject of the agreement expressed by the journalist through the use of ellipsis. The use of the adjective 'ultra' introduces an alarmist nuance since it predicts the mosque could potentially be a training centre for terrorists. Furthermore, the use of the phrase '*en suelo público*' (on public soil) highlights the fact that the mosque will be paid for by taxpayers' money.

- "*La edil musulmana de Podemos-CUP pide a los musulmanes que se aprovechen de occidente*".[28] (The Muslim local politician of *Podemos*-CUP asks Muslims to take advantage of the West.)

25.L. Rodríguez, "'La niña de Vox' la vuelve a liar: hoy tocan los jóvenes musulmantes," *El Plural*, (July 29, 2016),retrieved November 19, 2016, fromhttp://www.elplural.com/2016/07/29/la-nina-de-vox-la-vuelve-liar-hoy-tocan-los-jovenes-musulmanes.

26.TeunVan Dijk, "New(s) Racism: A Discourse Analytical Approach," Simon Cottle(ed.),*Ethnic Minorities and the Media* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 33-49.

27. Olmo, J. M., "PP y Podemos se ponen de acuerdo … para permitir una mezquita ultra en Las Palmas," *El Confidencial*, (May 4, 2016), retrieved December 9, 2016, from http://www.elconfidencial.com/espana/2016-05-04/pp-y-podemos-pactan-en-diferido-para-permitir-una-mezquita-ultra-en-las-palmas-en-suelo-publico_1194257/.

28. This article was on the Internet for many months until recently when it was removed from the original page. http://www.baluartedigital.com/articulo/separatismo/edil-musulmana-podemos-cup-pide-musulmanes-aprovechen-occidente/20160126124500001408.html. Still one can find the article on many other Internet sites (blogs, forums, etc) that reproduce it like http://elperroflauta.com/2016/01/27/la-edil-musulmana-de-podemos-cup-pide-a-los-musulmanes-que-se-aprovechen-de-occidente/; https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=1015405247009472 8&id=51727889727 or http://amaprojimo.blogspot.com.es/2016/01/la-edil-musulmana-de-podemos-cup-pide.html among others (retrieved December 9, 2016).

The above headline identifies the subject of the action ("to ask") not by her proper name (Fátima Taleb Moussaqui), as it is mentioned later in the article, but by her religion (Muslim), her political affiliation (*Podemos*-CUP), and position (local representative in the city hall). By using this linguistic strategy, the writer chooses to shadow her individuality in order to foreground the idea that this is the typical expected behaviour of both Muslims and politicians affiliated to *Podemos*. From the privileged position that allows her discourse to address a larger number of people, the politician incites the Muslim community to take advantage of the social benefits that Western society offers its citizens.

The coverage by the media of all news related to terrorist attacks where Muslims are involved is also biased. On the 20 December, a terrorist attack shook the city of Berlin when a lorry driven by a terrorist killed 12 and injured 48 in a Christmas market.[29] The DAESH claimed responsibility for the event the following day. On the very same day, an Islamic centre in Zurich was attacked by a Swiss man who killed one and injured three more before committing suicide.[30] Though both news stories appeared in the written press, the amount of detail, time and attention devoted to both clearly differ. On national television, many channels did not even mention the Zurich attack while all channels devoted time to explain thoroughly the Berlin terrorist attack with the fear-inducing idea that Europe was threatened again by "Islamic terrorism".

## Justice system

After the terrorist attacks in Paris in 2015, the government and most of the political parties[31] with representation in the Spanish Congress signed the antiterrorism agreement. Special emphasis was placed on the spread of terrorist discourse online, the praise of any terrorist activity and the toughening of the sentences for terrorism.[32] The criminal law was substantially changed to adapt to the new terrorism of groups like DAESH and there was a strengthening of the functions of security forces, prison officers, judges and prosecutors.

There are almost 7,000 Muslim prisoners in Spanish prisons. In 2006, a decree law on religious assistance for minority religions in prisons was passed and in 2015, an agreement for religious assistance in centres with foreign in-

29.Luis Doncel, "Un hombre mata a 12 personas con un camión en Berlín y reaviva el miedo al terrorismo en Europa," *El País*, (December 20, 2016), retrieved January 9, 2017, from http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2016/12/19/actualidad/1482176155_449814.html.

30. Agencia Bloomberg,"El ataque en una mezquita de Zúrich. Vinculada al ocultismo y no al terrorismo," *La Vanguardia*, (December 20, 2016), retrieved January 7, 2017, from http://www.lavanguardia.com/internacional/20161220/412753893159/mezquita-zurich-atentado.html.

31.Most of the political parties signed the agreement except Convergencia Democrática de Cataluña (CDC), Esquerra Republicana de Cataluña (ERC), Izquierda Unida (IU), el Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV) y Podemos rejected it.

32.Editorial Team, "¿Qué es el pacto antiyihadista?," *La Nueva España*, (November 28, 2015), retrieved January 9, 2017, from http://www.lne.es/espana/2015/11/26/pacto-antiyihadista/1847153.html.

mates was signed. However, the number of imams in the prisons is still insufficient and in many autonomous communities, like Baleares, there is no imam assisting Muslim inmates.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has created a plan to deradicalise the prisoners[33] with the support of imams, psychologists and prison officers. However, the participation of imams in this project is facing many difficulties such as the lack of enough religious leaders; the mistrust of the inmates; the tight budget imposed by the administration; the number of candidates proposed by the Islamic communities who are rejected by the authorities; and the lack of knowledge of Spanish.

Muslims also lack hospital support since no imams have been hired in health facilities and there is no religious assistance despite the guarantees offered in the Cooperation Agreement signed in 1992.

## Internet

With the advent of the Internet, cyber Islamophobia has seen a large increase (Awan 2012[34]; Larsson 2007[35]), with spaces on the Internet now becoming a platform for the spreading of such rhetoric. Cyber Islamophobia takes place primarily in blogs and social media, and also in online sites of traditional media outlets.

To check the existence and degree of cyber Islamophobia in Spain, we analysed 1,000 tweets from the social media platform Twitter[36] in 2016 - a number large enough to draw some representative conclusions concerning trends of thought and discursive patterns. The tweets were retrieved based on a number of popular Islamophobic hashtags such as *#StopIslamización* (#StopIslamization).[37] The content of the tweets follow the same patterns we have observed in our previous studies on cyber Islamophobia where the tweets were in English and the countries of origin were the U.S., England and Ireland.[38]

33.Ana Carbajosa, "Imanes para combatir el lavado de cerebro en la cárcel," *El País*, (December 4, 2016), retrieved January 9, 2017, from http://politica.elpais.com/politica/2016/11/29/actualidad/1480445877_689530.html.

34.Imran Awan, "'I'm a Muslim not an Extremist': How the prevent strategy has constructed a 'Suspect Community'," *Politics&Policy*, Vol. 40, No. 6 (2012),p. 1158-1185.

35.Göran Larsson, "Cyber-Islamophobia? The case of WikiIslam," *Contemporary Islam*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2007), p. 53-67.

36.Twitter has been a global favourite and an immensely popular social network since its beginning. In July 2014, it had more than 500 million registered users, 271 million of whom are active - that is to say, they frequently post 140-character messages called "tweets".

37. We also retrieved tweets that contained the following hashtags: *#EuropaDespierta* (#WakeupEurope); *#EslaYihad* (#ThisistheJihad); *#IslamesPaz* (#IslamisPeace); *#StopCristianofobia* (#StopChristianphobia); *#StopYihadismo* (#StopJihadism); *#niunomas* (#Notanyonemore); *#nosinvaden* (#Theyareinvadingus); *#nosdestruyen* (#Theyaredestroyingus); *#vuelveimperioespañol* (#TheSpanishEmpirecomesback); *#stopcensura* (#StopCensorship); *#concerdonohaymezquita* (#there is no mosque with a pig); *#stopmezquita* (#stopmosque).

38.Abdul HalikAzeez/Carmen Aguilera-Carnerero, "The Cyberdiscourse of Inclusion and Marginalization: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Muslims in Ireland on Twitter 2010-2014,"PilarVillarArgáiz (ed.), *Irishness on the Margins: Minority and Dissident Identities* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, forthcoming); Abdul Halik Azeez/Carmen Aguilera-Carnerero, "The discourse of Transitional Justice in post-war Sri Lanka" (forthcoming, report funded by *USAID*); Abdul Halik Azeez/Carmen Aguilera Carnerero, "'Islamonausea, not Islamophobia': The many faces of cyber hate speech," *Journal of Arab and Muslim Media Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1, (September 2016), p. 21- 40.

**The observed general patterns in the content of the tweets, both textual and visual, follow the following clichés:**

- Mention of felonies, offences or crimes committed by individual Muslims from any country (not necessarily Spain) that are generalised as the typical behaviour of the whole religious community, and are therefore extended to Spanish Muslims. Especially frequent are the tweets with content related to male adult Muslims physically and emotionally abusing children and women.
- The lexical choices used to refer to Muslims and Islam include pejorative terms such as the nouns: *chusma*, *basura* (rubbish) or *trapo* (cloth, to refer to the hijab); lexical phrases such as ¡*quéasco de moros*! (How nauseating Moors are!), *religión de la paz* (the religion of peace, used in an ironic sense usually after the report of a crime committed by a Muslim). The settlement of Muslims in Europe is described as 'the Black Black Plague of Europe'.
- Propensity to take pro-Israel stances which are conflated with anti-Palestine stances or, in more simplistic terms, being pro-Jewish and anti-Muslim.
- Tendency to identify the leftist political parties, especially *Podemos,* as pro-Islam and anti-Christian. In this sense, voting for *Podemos* is presented in a fear-inducing context which brings in the aspects mentioned above.

(1) La secreta relación entre el islam y los progresistas... *#StopIslamizacion* #PodestaEmails

The secret relationship between Islam and the progressists[39] #StopIslamization #PodestaEmails

Figure 1: The real relationship between progressists and Islam. (From Twitter, retrieved 11 December 2016)

- Most of the profile pictures and sometimes the handle names and display pictures of Islamophobic speakers contain symbols related to the Spanish nation. In most cases, it is the constitutional Spanish flag, other times an image of former warriors (mainly Templars or crusaders) as it can be seen in figure 2. By putting the flag by their handle name the speakers vindicate their position as genuine patriots and the incompatibility of the latter with the acceptance of Islamic values. An example of such a tweet is the following:

(2) El Islam es incompatible con nuestra cultura, *#StopIslamización* Ni una mezquita más.

Islam is incompatible with our culture #StopIslamization. Not another mosque.

39. By the use of the term 'progressists', most of the Islamophobes refer to people whose political opinions are closer to those of the leftish parties - *Podemos* is considered one of the most outstanding such parties.

Figure 2: It bears the caption "The Crusaders in fight against Islam". (From Twitter, retrieved 11 December 2016)

Figure 3: Photos illustrating some of the tweets encouraging the ban of any new mosque built on Spanish soil.

- Particularly striking (because of the frequency of tweets with this content) are the tweets encouraging a campaign against the building of any new mosque. The suggested procedures to prevent this include urging citizens to bury parts of pigs on the chosen land. Usual hashtags include *#concerdonohaymezquita* (#there is no mosque with a pig) and *#stopmezquita* (#stopmosque). (Figure 3)

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

Both civil society and political initiatives were taken in 2016 to counter Islamophobia at different levels. The annual reports on Islamophobia published, among others, by organisations such as *Plataforma ciudadana contra la Islamofobia o el Observatorio Andalusí*, conferences, seminars,[40] workshops, meetings and talks[41] stand as proof of this.[42] The result of the work, which takes place in cooperation with public and state institutions, is essential to start tackling the problem.[43]

In this sense, there have been other steps to stop the daily occurrence of Islamophobia, aside from the ones already mentioned in this report, such as a plan launched by the city hall of Barcelona,[44] the bill presented by the political party

40.Fundación de Estudios Euroárabe, "Jornadas de "Creación contra la Islamofobia"," *fundea.com*, (June 15, 2016), retrieved October 6, 2016, from http://www.fundea.org/es/noticias/jornadas-creacion-contra-Islamofobia.

41. A radio show where Aroa Ortega talks about some initiatives to eradicate Islamophobia (See: *Radio 2 luces*, "Algunas iniciativas para reducir el grado de islamophobia," Progr. nº 375 16-10-2016 (October 16, 2016), retrieved December 7, 2016, from http://www.nurainmagazine.info/radio2luces/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=3160:algunas-iniciativas-para-reducir-el-grado-de-Islamofobia&Itemid=154.

42.Ignacio Díaz, "Expuesto en Sevilla un informe sobre el ascenso de la Islamofobia en la sociedad española," *Sevilla Directo*, (September 23, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.sevilladirecto.com/se-celebra-un-encuentro-sobre-la-Islamofobia-en-la-fundacion-tres-culturas/.

43.Inés Herrero, "La islamofobia se dispara," *Las Provincias*, (April 30, 2016 ), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.lasprovincias.es/comunitat/201605/01/islamofobia-dispara-20160430234640-v.html.

44.Meritxell M. Pauné, "Barcelona lanzará un plan contra la islamofobia en diciembre," *La Vanguardia*, (July 27, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.lavanguardia.com/local/barcelona/20160727/403490647562/barcelona-plan-Islamofobia-diciembre.html.

*Compromís* to address hate speech directed to Muslims, women and children,[45] or the award by the government of Valencia to people fighting hate speech.

The Andalusian government launched the '*red anti-rumores*' (anti-gossip network) as a project involving different social agents such as social organisations, experts on migrations and people working towards more egalitarian societies. The aim of the project is to bring about positive change and favour perceptions and attitudes on cultural diversity.[46] The culture section of the Andalusian government also gave state funding to the city of Ceuta to foster educational projects in the Islamic Community.

The academic world is not oblivious to the reality of Islamophobia and a group of students from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) designed a campaign against Islamophobia in November and December. A student organisation from the University of León, criticised the speeches by Raad Salam which were organised by the city hall for the spreading of Islamophobia and hate speech targeting Muslims.

Other important and relevant initiatives carried out by individuals include the meeting of outstanding representatives of both the Christian and Islamic faith to encourage believers of both faiths to work together for peace.[47]

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report has presented some of the realities related to Islamophobia in Spanish society in 2016 at institutional, social, discursive and interpersonal levels. Islamophobia in Spain is unfortunately an increasing reality that requires awareness of the dimension of the problem in order to eradicate it.

To reach this target, the conjoint effort and cooperation of the state, academic institutions, civil society and media are necessary. While a minority sector of the population is inherently Islamophobic, there is a majority of citizens whose rejection of Islam is due to mere ignorance of the principles of the religion and fear derived directly from lack of knowledge.

Research is needed to identify and assess the factors contributing to the rise of Islamophobia in Spain. Following this, it would be easier to convey the real consequences of both structural and social Islamophobia to public bodies such as the Security Forces and the justice system.

45. Agencia EFE, "Les Corts piden al Consell que emprenda acciones contra la islamofobia," *La Vanguardia*, (October 25, 2016), retrieved November 17, 2016, from http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20161025/411315530710/les-corts-piden-al-consell-que-emprenda-acciones-contra-la-Islamofobia.html.

46. Junta de Andalucía, "Red anti-rumores frente a estereotipos de la inmigración,"*juntadeandalucia.es*, (not dated), retrieved 19 November 2016 from: http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/organismos/justiciaeinterior/areas/politicas-migratorias/redantirumores.html.

47.Jesús Bastante, "Omella visita el Centro Cultural Islámico y aboga para que los musulmanes y cristianos trabajen juntos por la paz," *Periodista Digital*, (April 2, 2016), retrieved November 24, 2016, from http://www.periodistadigital.com/religion/espana/2016/04/02/omella-visita-el-centro-cultural-islamico-y-aboga-para-que-musulmanes-y-cristianos-trabajen-juntos-por-la-paz-religion-iglesia-islam-dialogo-interreligioso.shtml.

Education, as always, is the key. Not only the education of future generations of citizens but also that of future educators is paramount. This education must involve how to tackle discrimination and must enable citizens to face and deal with such practices with the best possible tools. In this sense, education offering direct knowledge of the Muslim community could help the majority of citizens learn about the true nature of Islam and Muslims, and could remove many of people's prejudices, judgments and a priori opinions.

The media should also be educated since a section of the media is responsible of many of the images and stereotypes about Muslims and Islam among citizens. The media frequently offer skewed and partial information.

Civil society needs more institutional support and resources from the state since it is the best vehicle to channel individual complaints and organise them; civil society can be the push that triggers the change in institutions.

Legislation on hate speech and, above all, cyber hate speech should get tougher. There is a strong need for more control on the spread of racism online.

The state should make a serious commitment to implement the demands of the Muslim community whose basic needs are guaranteed by law but often ignored, such as the right to bury their dead.

To summarise, dialogue between state, civil society, academia and media is absolutely essential to eradicate the problem of Islamophobia in Spain.

## Chronology

- **23 March:** Posters were hanged a far right group [48]on the façade of the Al Rahman Mosque in Salamanca containing Islamophobic messages.
- Attack on the M-30 Mosque in the course of which posters with Islamophobic messages were placed on it and fireworks were thrown at it. The perpetrators belong to a neo-Nazi group.[49]
- Attack on a mosque in Zamora.[50]
- Attack on a mosque in Granada.[51]
- Attack on a mosque in Soria.[52]

48.Redacción, "Un grupo de extrema derecha cuelga pancartas islamófobas en la mezquita de Salamanca," *El Norte de Castilla*, (March 23, 2016), retrieved November 27, 2016, from http://www.elnortedecastilla.es/salamanca/201603/23/grupo-extrema-derecha-cuelga-20160323172501.html.

49.EFE, "El grupo neonazi Hogar Social Madrid lanza bengalas contra la mezquita de la M30," *El diario*, (March 23, 2016), retrieved October 9, 2016, from http://www.eldiario.es/madrid/Hogar-Social-Madrid-mezquita-M30_0_497650300.html.

50.Editorial Team, "La mezquita de Zamora sufre el primer ataque islamófobo tras los atentados de Bruselas," *La Opinión de Zamora*, (May 2, 2016), retrieved October 7, 2016, from http://www.laopiniondezamora.es/zamora/2016/05/02/mezquita-zamora-sufre-primer-ataque/922406.html.

51.Guillermo Marín, "Cuatro mezquitas atacadas en España después de los atentados de Bruselas," *Cadena Ser*, (March 24, 2016), retrieved October 7, 2026, from http://cadenaser.com/ser/2016/03/24/sociedad/1458822281_002295.html.

52.Ibid.

- **28 March:** Attack on Hamza Mosque in Barcelona and on the Islamic Cultural Centre with pig skin, guts and blood just 6 days after the Brussels attacks.[53]
- **30 March:** Islamophobic graffiti on the cultural Islamic Centre al Annor in Denia (Alicante) hours after the Brussels attacks.[54]
- **12 April:** 2,000 kg of items (including clothes, shoes and hygiene products) for the refugees of Calais are burnt in Mérida. Racist graffiti is found around Calais.[55]
- **25 April:** Youssef El Arabi, a forward of Granada Football Club from the Spanish Premier League, was insulted by Diego Mariño, the goalkeeper of the opponent team (Levante Football Club), who told him he was "a shitty Moor who was going to fail the penalty".[56]
- **26 April**: A member of the Security Forces killed a Moroccan citizen after an argument on Highway A3 in Madrid.[57]
- **2 June:** Controversy in Moralzarzal for the opening of an Islamic centre.[58]
- **14 June:** Archbishop Cañizares is sued for the words he used against what he called "the gay empire" (i.e. the gay lobby) and refugees.[59]
- **22 June:** The movement against intolerance criticises the institutional apathy on increasing racism, xenophobia and intolerance.[60]
- Salamanca stands out as the region with greatest number of groups of neo-Nazi ideology.[61]
- **4 July:** Demonstration in Corella (Navarre) against the building of a Salafi mosque. [62]

53. Editorial Team, "Atacan una mezquita con carne y sangre de cerdo en Barcelona," *El Español*, (March 28, 2016), retrieved October 7, 2016, from http://cronicaglobal.elespanol.com/vida/atacan-una-mezquita-con-carne-y-sangre-de-cerdo-en-barcelona_35676_102.html.

54.Editorial Team, "Denia condenará el ataque al Centro Cultural Islámico Annor," *denia.com*, (March 30, 2016), retrieved October 7, 2016, fromhttp://www.denia.com/denia-condenara-el-ataque-islamofobo-al-centro-cultural-islamico-al-annor/.

55. Jesus Conde, "2000 kgs de ayuda para los refugiados de Calais amanecen carbonizados y rodeados de símbolos nazis en Mérida," *El Diario*, (April 12, 2016), retrieved November 7, 2016, from http://www.eldiario.es/eldiarioex/sociedad/contingente-toneladas-Calais-carbonizado-Merida_0_504650382.html.

56.Editorial Team, "El Arabi: 'Mariño me dijo: Vas a fallarlo moro de mierda'," *Marca*, (April 25, 2016), retrieved November 9, 2016, from http://www.marca.com/futbol/granada/2016/04/25/571dfa9dca474109298b467c.html.

57.F. Javier Barroso, "Detenido un guardia civil por matar a un hombre en una discusión de tráfico," *El País*, (April 26, 2016), retrieved December 8, 2016, from http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2016/04/25/madrid/1461572242_336130.html.

58.Editorial Team, "Polémica en Moralzarzal por la apertura de un centro cultural islámico," *Telemadrid*, (June 2, 2016), retrieved December 9, 2016, from http://www.telemadrid.es/noticias/madrid/noticia/polemica-en-moralzarzal-por-la-apertura-de-un-centro-cultural-islamico.

59.Toni Cuquerella, "Fiscalía abre diligencias contra el cardenal Cañizares por sus palabras sobre el 'Imperio Gay'," *El Diario*, (June 14, 2016), retrieved September 23, 2016, from http://www.eldiario.es/cv/politica/Fiscalia-diligencias-cardenal-Canizares-palabras_0_526697424.html.

60. Editorial Team, "Critican la apatía institucional ante el aumento del racismo, xenofobia , e intolerancia," *estebanibarra.com*, (June 23, 2016), retrieved November 4, 2016, from http://www.estebanibarra.com/?p=2830.

61. Ibid.

62.Rosalina Moreno, "Corella se manifiesta contra la mezquita salafista," *La Gaceta*, (July 4, 2016), retrieved October 7, 2016, from http://gaceta.es/noticias/corella-moviliza-construccion-mezquita-salafista-04072016-1251.

- **27 July**: A report on Islamophobia commissioned by the city hall of Barcelona recommends the building of a large mosque in the city.[63]
- **6 August:** The political party *Compromís* makes a proposal to the government of Valencia to deal with bullying and hate, gender crimes and offences.[64]
- **29 August:** A young woman is threatened by a neighbour because she was wearing the hijab. She saw her own photo posted on the neighbour's Facebook wall together with threatening and insulting messages.[65]
- **1 September:** A young member of the Security Forces of Spain is denied promotion with the excuse that he would prioritise his ethnic perspective over his institutional duties.[66]
- **3 September:** A Moroccan man is stabbed to death by a neighbour in Murcia.[67]
- **4 September:** Neighbours in Abarán (Murcia) collect signatures to make a formal claim against the construction of a mosque.[68]
- **7 September**: A pregnant woman who wears the niqab is attacked by two individuals in Barcelona.[69]
- **16 September**: Islamophobic posters appear on the door of the Benlliure High School in Valencia after the school forbade the attendance of a student wearing a hijab.[70]
- **19 September**: A popular event in Mataró (Barcelona) that included the cooking of paella is qualified as discriminating since it contained pork in a neighbourhood

63.Andrea Pérez, "Un studio sobre islamofobia encargado por el ayuntamiento de Barcelona recomienda abrir una gran mezquita," *El diario*, (July 27, 2016), retrieved October 25, 2016, from http://www.eldiario.es/catalunya/barcelona/Islamofobia-Ayuntamiento_de_Barcelona-Lola_Lopez_0_541746868.html.

64. Editorial team, "Compromís presenta cuatro PNL con medidas para prevenir y luchar contra los delitos de odio," *Europa Press*, (August 6, 2016), retrieved December 7, 2016, from http://www.europapress.es/comunitat-valenciana/noticia-compromis-presenta-cuatro-pnl-corts-medidas-prevenir-luchar-contra-delitos-odio-20160806114210.html.

65. José M. Baselga, "Una cambrilense convertida al islamm denuncia amenazas por llevar velo," *Diari de Tarragona*, (August 29, 2016), retrieved November 14, 2016, from http://www.diaridetarragona.com/costa/68719/una-cambrilense-convertida-al-islam-denuncia-amenazas-por-llevar-velo-#.V8Si-5LIfJw.twitter.

66.Editorial Team Abna, "Niegan el ascenso a un guardia civil musulmán bajo la excusa de anteponer su perspectiva étnica a los valores institucionales," *Web Islam*, (September 1, 2016), retrieved October 7, 2016, from http://www.webislam.com/articulos/111416-niegan_el_ascenso_a_un_guardia_civil_musulman_bajo_la_excusa_de_anteponer_su_per.html.

67.Editorial Team, "El asesino de Lorquí utilizó un cuchillo jamonero para apuñalar a su vecino," *La Opinión de Murcia*, (September 3, 2016), retrieved November 7, 2016, from http://www.laopiniondemurcia.es/municipios/2016/09/02/muere-hombre-lorqui-apunalado-vecino/764283.html.

68. Editorial Team, "Vecinos de Abarán, Murcia, se oponen a la construcción de una mezquita en la localidad," *La Gaceta Europea*, (September 4, 2016), retrieved December 9, 2016, from http://www.lagaceta.eu/2016/09/vecinos-de-abaran-murcia-se-oponen-la.html.

69. Editorial Team, "Detenidos en Barcelona por agredir a una embarazada con niqab," *El Mundo*, (September 7, 2016), retrieved December 9, 2016, from http://www.elmundo.es/cataluna/2016/09/07/57cfedc746163fa76f8b4638.html.

70. Editorial Team, "Nuevo caso de Islamofobia: el Instituto público de Valencia I.E.S. Benlliure prohíbe la entrada a una estudiante musulmana," *Plataforma para musulmanes*, (September 16, 2016), retrieved November 7, 2016, from https://plataformaparamusulmanes.wordpress.com/2016/09/16/nuevo-caso-de-Islamofobia-el-instituto-publico-de-valencia-ies-benlliure-prohibe-la-entrada-a-una-estudiante-musulmana/.

highly populated by Muslims.[71]

- **27 September:** The mosque of Estrecho and Tetuán (Madrid) are vandalised with Islamophobic graffiti.[72]
- **28 September:** The principal of a state-subsidised school sends an Islamophic and homophobic letter to the students' parents.[73]
- **7 October**: The Andalusian government makes a call to fund educational projects related to the Islamic community in the city of Ceuta.[74]
- **12 October:** The University of León, joined later by the political party IU (*Izquierda Unida*) asked for the cancellation of a talk by Raad Salam on the grounds that he encourages hatred towards Muslims.[75]
- **21 October:** Hicham Mohamed, a young man from Ceuta, is shot by a member of the Security Forces (First Sergeant of the Legion) when he tried to defend a group of kids from two men.[76]
- **31 October:** Neighbours of Cartaya (Huelva) oppose the building of a mosque.[77]
- **1 November:** Protestants and Muslims ask the new government for more cemeteries adjusted to their religious faith and the legal regulation of the burials according to the Islamic ritual.[78]
- **7 November:** The director of religious affairs of the Catalan government states a sector of the public cemetery of Lérida will be devoted to Islamic burials.[79]

71. B. M., "Polémica en Mataró por una paella popular con cerdo y alcohol," *El Periódico*, (September 19, 2016), retrieved December 9, 2016, fromhttp://www.elperiodico.com/es/noticias/mataro/desata-polemica-mataro-por-una-paella-popular-con-cerdo-alcohol-5387851.

72. Europa Press, "Denuncian la aparición de pintadas ofensivas en la mezquita de Tetuán," *El Mundo,*(September 27, 2016), retrieved December 9, 2016, from http://www.elmundo.es/madrid/2016/09/27/57ea953dca47418b628b45c0.html.

73.Almudena López, "El director de un colegio manda una carta islamófoba a los padres de los alumnos," *Córdoba Internacional*, (September 28, 2016), retrieved December 9, 2016, from http://www.cordobainternacional.com/el-director-de-un-colegio-manda-una-carta-islamofoba-los-padres-de-los-alumnos/.

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- The local police of Córdoba trains 40 officers on hate crimes and offences.[80]
- **9 November:** A mosque is vandalised with Islamophobic graffiti in Tenerías (Álava).[81]
- **12 November:** A mosque in Vitoria (Basque Country) is vandalised with graffiti and a pig's head. [82]
- **22 November:** The government of Madrid discusses a bill against hate crimes and offences that could fine up to 45,000 euros to perpetrators.[83]
- **26 November:** Agreement among all political parties to build a Muslim cemetery in Sagunto (Valencia).[84]
- **20 December:** Lola Merino and Andrea Levy, members of the party in government (*Partido Popular*), blame both the refugees (in the first case) and the whole Islamic civilization (in the second) for the Berlin attack.[85]
- **23 December:** A Spanish Muslim woman sues her company in order to be able to wear the hijab to work.[86]
- **27 December:** Spain refuses to give Spanish nationality and residence to Muna, the baby who was born in the sea and rescued by the Spanish frigate "Navarra", and to her mother.[87]

80.Editorial Team, "La Policía Local de Córdoba forma a 40 mandos y agentes sobre delitos de odio," *Cordópolis*, (November 7, 2016), retrieved December 9, 2016, from http://cordopolis.es/2016/11/07/la-policia-local-de-cordoba-forma-a-40-mandos-y-agentes-sobre-delitos-de-odio/.

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86. J. F. M. Palma, "Una mujer musulmana exige llevar velo en el trabajo," *El diario de Mallorca*, (December 23, 2016), retrieved January 7, 2017, from http://www.diariodemallorca.es/mallorca/2016/12/22/mujer-musulmana-exige-llevar-velo/1175464.html.

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# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN SWITZERLAND NATIONAL REPORT 2016

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# Executive Summary

This study has collected and analysed data on the phenomenon of Islamophobia with the aim of informing the public and giving stakeholders tools to address discrimination and deconstruct prejudice. The report shows that the situation of Islamophobia has not only worsened due to the geopolitical context but also due to a policy of exclusion against migrants reinforced by a specific and exclusive conception of the nation. The creation of a scapegoat makes it possible to strengthen the identity of the national community, at the expense of the respect of human rights and rationality. During the research period (January 2016-December 2016), a wide range of sources (media, data, academia) were examined. If the number of federal votes against foreigners also corresponds to a form of Islamophobia, the specificities of Islamophobia itself must be observed. This form of cultural racism often focuses on women's clothes. The issue of the veil in school has become a recurring theme - in the name of a secularism in many ways fantasized by its promoters. The emblematic case of the two teenagers who refused to shake hands with their teacher reveals tensions and an inability to build a constructive dialogue. In contrast to this hysterical treatment of a news item and to the production of stereotypes, however, a space for exchange and mutual understanding exists in Switzerland. It is this mission that education can ensure, notably through the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society of the University of Fribourg which opened its doors in 2016. In this report, I sought to identify the main incidents of the past year in order to provide comprehensive and useful insights for discussion and prevention. In particular, I examined the extent to which these incidents took place in the workplace and school and how Islamophobia affected the political debate. It is also revealing that physical violence lies upon on verbal violences, discourses and ideologies favoring an essentialist representation of Islam and Muslims, to the detriment of debate based on rationality and inter-knowledge. This affects not only the minorities but the entire population, creating a deleterious climate that does not favor the common good.

## Zusammenfassung

Im vorliegenden Bericht wurden islamophobe Vorfälle gesammelt und analysiert, um diese einer breiten Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen und InteressensvertreterInnen Mittel zur Bekämpfung von Diskriminierung und Vorurteilen anzubieten. Es hat sich gezeigt, dass sich die Situation von MuslimInnen nicht nur aufgrund von geopolitischen Ereignissen verschlechtert hat, sondern auch aufgrund politischer Ausgrenzung von MigrantInnen; verstärkt durch die enggefasste und exkludierenden Konzeption von ‚Nation'. Die Erschaffung eines Sündenbockes ermöglicht die Stärkung nationaler Identitäten gestärkt auf Kosten der Menschenrechte und Vernunft. Während des Forschungszeitraums (Jänner 2016 - Dezember 2016) wurde eine Vielzahl von Daten untersucht. Wenn die Zahl der eidgenössischen Abstimmungen gegen Ausländer eine Art von Islamophobie ist, müssen Besonderheiten der Islamophobie selbst beobachtet werden. Kleidungsvorschriften für Frauen stehen oft im Fokus von Kulturrassismus. Das Thema der Haarbedeckung in der Schule ist zu einem immer wiederkehrenden Thema geworden. UnterstützerInnen des Verbots beriefen sich auf den Säkularismus. Der symbolische Fall zweier Jugendlicher, die das Händeschütteln mit Lehrerinnen verweigerten zeigte nicht nur eine aufgeladene Diskussion, sondern auch die Unfähigkeit, konstruktiven Dialog zu führen. Im Gegensatz zu dieser medial verbreiteten Hysterie und Wiedergabe von Stereotypen im Falle der Jugendlichen besteht in der Schweiz Raum für Austausch und gegenseitiges Verständnis. Es ist die Aufgabe der Bildung und der Bildungseinrichtungen diese (Werte) sicherzustellen. Ein gelungenes Beispiel hiefür wäre das Schweizerische Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft (SZIG) der Universität Freiburg, welche im Jahr 2016 ihre Tore öffnete. Im vorliegenden Bericht gehe ich auf die Hauptvorfälle des vergangenen Jahres ein, um umfassende und nützliche Daten für Diskussionen und Präventationsarbeit zur Verfügung zu stellen. Ich habe insbesondere untersucht, wie oft solche Vorfälle am Arbeitsplatz oder in der Schule stattgefunden haben und inwiefern die Diskussion über Islamophobie in politische Debatte eingeflossen ist. Es zeigte sich auch, dass körperliche Gewalt auf verbale Gewalt, Diskurse und Ideologien basiert. Diese unterstützen entgegen einer rationalen Debatteeine essentialistische Repräsentation des Islam und der Muslime . Dies betrifft nicht nur die Minderheiten, sondern erzeugt in der gesamten Bevölkerung ein schädliches Klima, das dem Wohl aller schadet.

# Résumé

Cette étude a recueilli et analysé des données sur le phénomène de l'islamophobie en Suisse dans le but d'informer le public et de fournir aux différentes parties des outils pour traiter la discrimination et déconstruire les préjugés. Le rapport montre que la situation de l'islamophobie n'a pas seulement empiré en raison du contexte géopolitique mais aussi du fait d'une politique d'exclusion contre les migrants, elle-même renforcée par une conception spécifique et exclusive de la nation. La création d'un bouc-émissaire permet assurément de renforcer l'identité de la communauté nationale au détriment du respect des droits de l'homme et de l'exercice de la raison. Au cours de la période de recherche (janvier 2016-décembre 2016), on a examiné un large éventail de sources (issues des médias, des recherches universitaires et de différents rapports). Si le nombre de votations contre les étrangers correspond aussi à une forme d'islamophobie, il faut encore observer les spécificités propres à l'islamophobie elle-même. Cette forme de racisme culturel vise en priorité la tenue vestimentaire des femmes. La question du voile à l'école est devenue un thème récurrent au nom d'une laïcité à bien des égards fantasmée. En outre, le cas emblématique des deux adolescents qui ont refusé de serrer la main à leur enseignante et la mise en scène spectaculaire de ce fait divers dans le champ médiatique est révélateur de tensions et d'une incapacité à promouvoir un dialogue constructif. A rebours de la production de stéréotypes, cependant, un espace d'échange et de compréhension mutuelle existe en Suisse. C'est cette mission que l'éducation peut précisément assumer, notamment par le biais du Centre Suisse, Islam et Société de l'Université de Fribourg qui a ouvert ses portes en 2016. Dans ce rapport, nous avons cherché à recenser les principaux incidents de l'année passée en vue d'offrir un éclairage global et utile à des fins de discussion et de prévention. Nous avons plus particulièrement examiné dans quelle mesure ces incidents s'inscrivaient dans le milieu du travail et de l'école, avant de nous intéresser plus largement au contexte politique. Il est aussi révélateur de noter que les violences physiques prennent appui sur une violence verbale et des discours dont l'idéologie favorise, au détriment d'un débat fondé sur la rationalité et l'entre-connaissance, une représentation essentialiste de l'Islam et des Musulman.e.s. Celle-ci affecte l'ensemble de la population et crée un climat délétère qui ne favorise en rien le bien commun.

## Introduction

In 2016, the geopolitical context of previous years as well as the terrorist attacks launched by DAESH contributed to reinforce Islamophobia in Europe. Despite the obvious fact that such acts of terror and their consequences are either killing Muslims or impacting their daily lives, Islamophobic discourses and racism against migrants have increased in Europe. In Switzerland, the Islamophobic discourses are carried out in the form of a threat against the "imagined political community",[1] a threat embodied by teenagers who refused to shake their teacher's hand or schoolgirls not attending swimming lessons. Such anecdotes attracted significant media attention, both local and international. Politicians and columnists use them as pieces of evidence of a so-called "clash of civilizations". It is mostly the far right Central Democratic Union (UDC) which is acting as the spokesperson for Islamophobia and racism against migrants in Switzerland.

It needs to be reminded that the UDC achieved its best result in the federal elections of 18 October, 2015 with 29.4% of the vote. This party has long been conducting a campaign against Islam and Muslims.[2] As stated in its programme, "the UDC is committed to the Christian and Western culture that underpins our identity and our cohesion. It is not without reason that the flag of our country carries a cross and that our national anthem has the form of a hymn".[3] The prominent figures of this party, active throughout various conservative movements or associations (such as the Association for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland at the Egerkinden Committee) have participated to the construction of a "Muslim problem". The Federal People's Initiative of the Egerkinden Committee Against the Construction of New Minarets, approved by 57.5% of the votes in November 2009, was one of the first signs of the assimilation of this Islamophobic discourse by important segments of the population. The committee is also an actor of the federal initiative against the concealment of the face in public spaces, inspired by the "anti-burqa initiative" adopted in Ticino in 2013. These legislative measures contribute to the exclusion and designation of Muslims as scapegoats. Another initiative of the UDC, in Valais, was to ban the wearing of the veil at school. In 2016, the same party tried to prohibit the creation of the Swiss Centre for Islam & Society (University of Fribourg).

The UDC also performs what may be conceptualised as a *necro-Islamophobia*. Indeed, members of the UDC launched a petition against the establishment of a Muslim square in the cemetery of the Bois-de-Vaux in 2015.[4] The petitioners

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London/New York: Verso, 1983).

2.Dario Lopreno, "Les musulmans en Suisse entre islamophobie et xénophobie,"*La Brèche*, No. 4 (December 2015).

3.See here: https://www.udc.ch/positions/themes/religions/ (retrieved February 5, 2017).

4.RTS, "Pétition de l'UDC contre un carré musulman dans un cimetière lausannois,"*rts.ch*, (April 11, 2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://www.rts.ch/info/regions/vaud/6693648-petition-de-l-udc-contre-un-carre-musulman-dans-un-cimetiere-lausannois.html.

worried about what they called "the arrival of a large number of deceased Muslims" from other communes to Lausanne, or a post-mortem invasion that allows us to understand Islamophobia through the theoretical framework of necropolitics.[5] The major events and topics which dominated the Swiss political debate, however, remain related to the questions of global terrorism, migration and the assimilation of Muslim minorities.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

In December 2016, the day after the terrorist attack in Berlin, a gunman wounded three people attending prayers at the Islamic Centre of Zurich.[6] It is not the first time an Islamic centre has been attacked in Switzerland. In 2004, a Frenchman stabbed the imam of a Lausanne mosque.[7] The Islamic Central Council of Switzerland[8] said the 2016 shooting was "an alarm signal". Subsequently, the association Islamic Youth Switzerland organised a march and underlined the fact that "terrorism and Islamophia were two faces of the same coin".[9]

Islamophobia manifests itself through discourses and discriminatory practices, mostly directed against women wearing the hijab. If Switzerland has not adopted such laws as are present in France,[10] the wearing of hijab and niqab in public spaces are often turned into identitary fetishes serving as foils for contrast with a conception of feminism excluding the very principle of free choice. This so-called feminism aims to unveil Muslim women for their benefit but it neglects structural inequalities affecting the daily lives of Muslim and non-Muslim women, such as the gender wage gap - which is above the EU average in Switzerland.[11] Focusing attention on Islam and Muslims is, a usual, a fast and convenient way to distract citizens from more sensitive social questions.

5.Achille Mbembé, "Necropolitics,"*Public Culture*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter 2003).

6.Daniel Gonzalez, "Une attaque dans un centre islamique à Zurich fait trois blessés,"*Le Nouvelliste*, (December 19, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.lenouvelliste.ch/articles/suisse/une-attaque-contre-un-centre-islamique-a-zurich-fait-trois-blesses-614720.

7.See RTS, "L'imam du Centre islamique de Lausanne a été poignardé pendant la prière aujourd'hui,"*rts.ch*, (October 8, 2004), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.rts.ch/play/tv/19h30/video/limam-du-centre-islamique-de-lausanne-a-ete-poignarde-pendant-la-priere-aujourdhui?id=119274.

8.Islamischer Zentralrat Schweiz, "OffeneFragennachAnschlagaufZürcherMoschee,"*izrs.ch*, (December 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.izrs.ch/der-islamische-zentralrat-verurteilt-den-anschlag-auf-eine-zuercher-moschee-scharf.html.

9.24heures, "Manif contre le terrorisme et l'islamophobie,"*24heurs.com*,(December 24, 2016) retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.24heures.ch/suisse/manif-terrorisme-islamophobie/story/19666878.

10.The Funambulist, "State Misogyny: France's Colonial UnveilingHistoryAgainstMuslimWomen,"*thefunambulist.net*, (not dated), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://thefunambulist.net/history/state-misogyny-frances-colonial-unveiling-history-against-muslim-women.

11.Malcolm Curtis, "Rising Swiss gender pay gap above EU average,"*The Local*, (March 5, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.thelocal.ch/20150305/swiss-pay-gap-for-women.

In a report Swiss trade unionist, Dario Lopreno,[12] has shown how the Islamic veil became a fetish for Islamophobes. He noticed that in recent years there have been campaigns to collect signatures and votes on the following initiatives: Against the Construction of Minarets (accepted in November 2009 by 57.5% of voters); For the Dismissal of Foreigners (accepted in November 2010 by 52.4% of voters); Against Mass Immigration (accepted by 50.3% of voters); and the campaign to collect signatures for the initiative For the Effective Dismissal of Foreigners (156,000 signatures while 100,000 are needed) in 2016. As outlined by Lopreno, the first initiative attacked Muslims directly, while the other three attacked them indirectly as part of their campaigns. For example, the "foreign criminal" easily had a name and appearance suggesting a Muslim Balkan person, or "mass immigration" was staged by a graph indicating "Soon a million Muslims" with the same woman in black burqa that was featured in the poster of the initiative against the minarets, appearing here in overprint. There was also a vote in Ticino, in September 2013, of the initiative Banning the Concealment of the Face in Public Places Open to the Public, commonly called the "anti-burqa initiative" even by its promoters, which was largely inspired by French legislation.

The irony here is that factually the only women wearing a burqa in Ticino are wealthy tourists, unlikely to be affected by the legislative effects of Islamophobia and protected by the interests of the luxury industry. Other Muslims, namely refugees, are less fortunate.

Other more specific incidents and developments in 2016 include the public debate about the burkini (August 2016) and the adoption of an initiative against the wearing of hijab in schools in Valais (March 2016). According to Martine Brunschwig Graf,[13] president of the Federal Commission against Racism, "the burkini allows women to go to the beach, so to free themselves, not the other way around". She observed that such a debate was actually a pretext for stigmatising Muslims. In Valais, the initiative collected 4,385 signatures and aims to produce a legislative text against the wearing of headscarves in public schools in the coming years.

## Employment and Education

The rise of Islamophobia has been challenged by the process of interreligious dialogue and education. In this respect, a significant example is provided by the creation of the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society.[14] The Swiss Centre for Islam and Society (CSIS) was officially inaugurated in June 2016 in Fribourg. All speakers emphasised

12.Ibid.

13.http://www.24heures.ch/suisse/politique/La-burqa-est-un-pretexte-pour-s-en-prendre-a-lislam/story/25438900

14.See here: http://www.unifr.ch/szig/fr (retrieved February 5, 2017).

its crucial role in dialogue and tolerance. "The University of Fribourg is proud to host this centre of competence at the national level," said its president Astrid Epiney. "The University must contribute to cultivating openness and tolerance," she stressed. "Only a society in which we can live together respecting differences allows for each person a life in dignity".[15]

Unfortunately, it may not be the kind of society some politicians dream of. Indeed, the far right party UDC interfered and tried to slow down the process. They rejected a "state formation for imams" (which is basically not the aim of the centre) and mentioned the sufferings of "Eastern Christians", a category of people whose misfortunes are usually instrumentalised by the European far right when they are running short of arguments to justify their lack of humanism or their outright Islamophobia. In contrast with the academic endeavour to promote dialogue and mutual understanding, it has been noted by Dario Lopreno that "the very tough and political Islamophobia of the authorities and the governmental parties of Switzerland is not a racist policy but is an assimilationist policy. The aim is to try to obtain from all foreigners, each one taken as an individual in the liberal sense of the term (…) that all these people correspond to the very selective requirements of naturalization (LN, Article 14). But this is just to get a work permit, a residence permit or establishment. These persons must thus be a part of the 'Swiss community' puzzle, they must be accustomed to 'the Swiss way of life and customs', conforming to the 'Swiss legal order' (…). This system is de facto also aimed at Swiss people with a culture, religion or customs considered as non-insertable (…). In case of non-compliance, the consequences are the withdrawal or non-renewal of permits for foreigners, the withdrawal of citizenship for 8 years for naturalised persons, the withdrawal of the permit for 5 years for foreigners married to Swiss citizens. In addition, this system makes it possible to put even more pressure on asylum seekers (in process or unsuccessful), provisionally admitted (…). It is a very selective lottery for those very rare who, lucky winners of the race for assimilation, do obtain a residence permit." [16]

A significant number of news items were turned into so-called pieces of evidence of the non-compliance of Muslims to the Swiss community. "*Les faits divers, ce sont aussi des faits qui font diversion*" (News items can create diversion) as the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu[17] used to say. In April 2016, two Muslim boys in Northern Switzerland refused to shake hands with female teachers. What could have been

15.swissinfo.ch, "Centre suisse islam et société officiellement inauguré à Fribourg,"*swissinfo.ch*, (June 13, 2016), retrievedFebruary 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.swissinfo.ch/fre/centre-suisse-islam-et-société-officiellement-inauguré-à-fribourg/42224320.

16.Dario Lopreno, "Les musulmans en Suisse entre xénophobie et islamophobie (III): communauté et intégration," La Bréche, (July 17, 2015), retrievedFebruary 5, 2017, fromhttps://cerclelabreche.wordpress.com/2015/07/17/les-musulmans-en-suisse-entre-xenophobie-et-islamophobie-iii-communaute-et-integration/.

17.Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur la télévision* (Paris: Seuil, 1996).

discussed in a rational way in the very space of the classroom became a polemic widely disseminated in the media, mixing the prejudices against migrants with other ingredients such as idle theological talk by so-called experts, confused perceptions of agency and a disgusting appetite for sensationalism. This unimaginative mixture was supposed to solve the tricky problem (to shake or not to shake hands) posed by two boys respectively aged 14 and 15 - a serious threat to the Swiss community and the eternal values of Freedom and Sex Equality !

Even Justice Minister Simonetta Sommaruga intervened. She insisted on Swiss television that "shaking hands is part of our culture".[18] The head of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education, Christoph Eymann, also made his contribution to the heroic defence of Swiss culture by saying "We cannot tolerate that women in the public service are treated differently from men". Here is the classic argument of feminism used as a culturalist argument to bring down Arab (and by extension, Muslim) men, as if the gesture of two teenagers in a Swiss village could sum up a religion and produce the contrast that helps to define, negatively, a community, a collective "we" into which some cannot fit.

By contrast with this compliance of the mainstream media and politics to the Huntingtonian paradigm, the opening of a Museum of the Civilisations of Islam[19] in May 2016 in La Chaux-de-Fonds (Neuchâtel) shows that the dichotomy between so-called "West" and "Islam" is merely a product of ignorance; civilisations are not fixed essences but they interact through exchange, cross-fertilisation and sharing, as Edward Said observed. This museum is neither funded by states or Swiss institutions. The director of the museum, Nadia Karmous, has collected sponsorship and funds for 16 years, mainly from women from Switzerland or the Gulf states. The museum seeks to dispel erroneous notions about Islam, clarify misunderstandings and promote cultural curiosity.

Unfortunately, Islamophobia still has an impact on employees' lives. In January, thirty men were arrested at Geneva Airport. These luggage handlers had no criminal records but they were French Muslims, which was adequate ground for being suspected. As was underlined in the previous report: "Such incidents of discrimination against Muslims became rampant after the January 2015 attacks in Paris due to the heightened security concerns in Switzerland".[20] Other companies, such as Swissport and Dndata also took measures against Muslim employees. A trade unionist observed that the luggage handlers had precarious contracts and their arrest was not in accordance with the Swiss Constitution.

18.The Local, "Muslim boys refuse to shake hands with female teachers,"*thelocal.ch*, (April 5, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.thelocal.ch/20160405/muslim-boys-refuse-to-shake-hands-with-female-teachers.

19.http://mucivi.ch/

20.Saira Bano Orakzai (2016): Islamophobia in Switzerland: National Report 2015, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2015, Istanbul, SETA, 2016

## Politics

In November 2014, National Councilor Walter Wobman (UDC Solothurn), already a member of the Initiative Committee for the Prohibition of New Minarets, filed a parliamentary initiative (National Council). Wobman intervenes very regularly against Muslims. In particular, in 2012, he rejected the dialogue established by the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP) with the Muslim population and put forward the parliamentary question under the title "Towards an Islamization of Administration?" He also suggested to no longer grant asylum to Iraqi and Syrian Muslims, in order to avoid «dangerous terrorists infiltrating» Switzerland.

This is a just an example of the most pernicious form of cynism that confuses terrorists with those who are turned into refugees by terrorism. In July 2016, more than two thirds of the 1,300 refugees stopped at the Swiss Italian border were sent back to Italy by Swiss officials.[21] This strict policy does not prevent UDC members from giving in to a populist rhetoric in which "the migrant" embodies what Giorgio Agamben[22] calls "homo sacer". Extrapolating from ancient Roman law, "homo sacer" defines someone outside the law, a depoliticised naked life which is excluded from the normal limits of the state. Though at the same time, this very figure testifies to the politicised norm. As a matter of fact, in September 2016, the Swiss authorities noticed that 40% of the migrants who claim asylum in Switzerland "disappeared" from reception centres.[23] According to the Federal Migration Office spokeswoman, Chloe Kohlprath, "many migrants took advantage of the system by saying they wished to claim asylum in Switzerland and then disappeared before their request could be formally registered".[24] How does "homo sacer" dare not be registered! Indeed, this is a scandal for the administration and reinforces the usual (racist) discourse within which the migrant "only takes advantage of the system".

After the 2009 elections, journalist Rachad Armanios was right to comment that "the unexpected extent of this success of the hard-line and Christian right-wing is commensurate with the punch received by the defenders of a Switzerland based on respect for minorities. Being the first Western country to include such religious discrimination in its Constitution, it undermines the rule of law, based on equity of treatment." [25] He also pointed out the fact that "the whole world, stunned, observed

21.Swissinfo, "Como reports more migrants turned away by Switzerland,"*swissinfo.ch*, (July 15, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/crossing-borders_como-reports-more-migrants-turned-away-by-switzerland/42302178.

22.Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

23.20 Minutes, "Ces requérants qui disparaissent dans la nature,"*20min.ch*, (September 4, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.20min.ch/ro/news/suisse/story/Ces-requerants-qui-disparaissent-dans-la-nature-25031461.

24.The Local, "'Disappearing' migrants on the rise in Switzerland,"*thelocal.ch,* (September 5, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttp://www.thelocal.ch/20160905/disappearing-migrants-on-the-rise-in-switzerland

25.Rachad Armanios, « La Suisse, laboratoire de l'islamophobie », Le Courrier (30 novembre 2009). http://www.lecourrier.ch/la_suisse_laboratoire_de_l_islamophobie.

the cradle of humanitarian law turn into a laboratory of Islamophobia. But it is not yesterday that xenophobia has poisoned minds. The minaret ballot is part of a long list of exclusionary votes, including the tightening of the right of aliens and asylum, or the denial of facilitated naturalisation".

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

The discrimination rate against Muslims has increased in Switzerland. This also was the main finding in the report of the Federal Commission against Racism (CFR) for the year 2015.[26] The number of hostile acts towards Muslims had increased by 11% (53 incidents) compared to previous years. The year 2015 seems to have been a turning point as the report shows that "the year 2015 was marked by an upsurge of hostile demonstrations against Muslims. Migratory movements, the crisis in Syria and, above all, terrorist acts carried out on behalf of the Islamic State group are often the cause of more or less explicit rejection reactions". The document indicated 239 cases of racial discrimination from the 18 member centres of the Network of Counseling Centres for Victims of Racism throughout Switzerland. The study also revealed a rise of antisemitic acts (+ 3%) which ranked fourth, just behind Islamophobic and racist acts against the population from the Balkan area.

## Media and Internet

In 2014, Anaïd Lindemann and Jörg Stolz published a comprehensive article about the "use of Islam in the definition of foreign otherness in Switzerland".[27] They have analysed Swiss newspapers between 1970 and 2014 in order to investigate how the category of the "Muslim foreigner" is socially constructed in journalistic discourses. They noticed an Islamization of media discourses on immigration: "foreigners affiliated to a religious tradition are necessarily Muslim, since other religions are not represented when foreigners are discussed in Swiss newspapers." The researchers also observed an overrepresentation of Muslim migrants in Swiss media: "We can assert that Swiss newspapers represent religious affiliations of the migrant population in a way that is not in numerical accord with the sociological reality".

Lindemann and Stöltz underline the fact that "journalists often unintentionally contribute to negative images of Islamic immigration by displaying more negative claims than positive alternative views regarding Muslim foreigners." But they also want their study to raise awareness among journalists and "serve as a warning and recommendation to the Swiss media concerning their handling of immigrant issues, and more specifically Muslims, to prevent the formation of negative stereotypes and stigmas".

26.Federal Department against Racisms (EKR), "Incidents racistes recensés par les centres de conseil," *ekr.admin.ch*, (Juni 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/rassismusbericht_2015_web_f.pdf.

27.Anaïd Lindemann/ Jörg Stoltz, "Use of Islam in the Definition of Foreign Otherness in Switzerland: A Comparative Analysis of Media Discourses Between 1970-2004,"*Islamophobia Studies Journal*, No. 1 (Spring 2014), pp.44-58.

On the Internet, several blogs promote Islamophobia. In Switzerland, the most frequented is the site of the association Switzerland Vigilance Islam.[28] This site aims to resist the pressures of «Islamically correct» and is promoting a neo-conservatism à la Suisse. By claiming to fight in favour of secularism and "Western values", the authors of the site actually show Islamophobia. They perpetuate the myth that all mosques are radical and participate in the usual debates about Muslim women's choice of clothing. Subsequently, their writers are experts in burqas, niqabs, hijabs, burqinis and other textile fears. Interestingly, the only Muslims authorised to express their opinions on this website are those who either doubt their faith or frankly criticise Islam. The action of this association is both ideological (intervention in the public debate, invitation of Islamophobic authors) and political (collection of signatures, willingness to weigh in on the democratic debate). In 2016, they participated in the collection of signatures in Valais, sent letters to the elected representatives of Fribourg and invited well-known French Islamophobes to speak in Switzerland. This blog is unfortunately becoming mainstream as Swiss journalists interviewed Mireille Vallette, the founder of the website, in popular Swiss newspapers such as *La Tribune de Genève*, *Le Temps*, etc. According to her and the title of her book : « *Islamophobia is self-defense*. » As usual, this is an incitement of racial hatred against Muslims masked by the demand for freedom of expression.

It is interesting to notice that here Islamophobia takes the form of a "cultural racism".[29] It has been defined by Ramòn Grosfoguel and Eric Mielants as "a form of racism that does not even mention the word 'race'. It is focused on the cultural inferiority of a group of people. Usually it is framed in terms of the inferior habits, beliefs, behaviours, or values of a group of people (…) In the new cultural racist discourse, religion has a dominant role. The contemporary tropes about 'uncivilised', 'barbarian', 'savage', 'primitive', 'underdeveloped', 'authoritarian', and 'terrorist' inferior people are today concentrated in the 'other's' religious practices and beliefs. By focusing on the 'other's' religion, the Europeans, Euro-Americans and Euro-Israelis manage to escape being accused of racism."[30]

To escape being accused of racism is a matter of absolute necessity, that is precisely why an entire page of the website in question is dedicated to explaining why Islamophobia has allegedly nothing to do with racism.

28.http://www.vigilanceislam.com/

29.Ramòn Grosfuguel, Eric Mielants, « The Long-durée EntanglementbetweenIslamophobia and Racism in the Modern/Colonial Capitalist/Patriarchal World-System », *Human Architecture : Journal of the Sociology of Self Knowledge*. http://www.okcir.com/Articles%20V%201/GrossfoguelMielants-FM.pdf

30.Op. cit.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommandations

In conclusion, the fact that Islamophobia in Switzerland takes the form of a political discourse that holds negative views not only about Muslims but also about migrants must be emphasised. The figure of the foreigner is particularly important to grasp the specificity of Islamophobia in Switzerland. This figure of the foreigner makes it possible to define the boundaries of a divided community whose coherence is constructed in opposition to what it excludes. The year 2016 was marked in Europe by terrorist attacks claimed by the sect of DAESH and by an influx of people victims of the wars and the exactions of this same DAESH. The trauma produced by these events also deeply affects European citizens of Muslim faith.

In Switzerland, there is a willingness for interreligious dialogue, mutual knowledge and recognition that would reflect cultural diversity. In contrast to the hateful stereotypes that undermine the ability of people to live together in peace, we can identify a few lines of recommendation:

- Strengthening interreligious dialogues and institutionalising these meetings, within the framework of the Swiss Center for Islam and Society;
- Including in these discussions members of the civil society and not reserving the meetings for members of the academic community;
- Ensuring equality in relations between men and women, even when they do not exclusively involve Muslims (for example, fight for equal pay instead of stigmatising and targeting Muslims). Moreover, are all the Swiss employers who create this wage discrimination between men and women Muslims who do not fully understanding the principle of gender equality?
- Making sure not to repeat in the French-speaking part of Switzerland the aggressively secularist speeches and legislation applied in France;
- Maintaining the existence and the exercise of a critical discourse in schools, high schools and universities which truly honour the Swiss tradition of thought based upon the respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law.

# Chronology

## January

- The UDC collects 9,700 signatures against the Swiss Center for Islam and Society.
- Thirty male bagage handlers are arrested at the Geneva International Airport. These employees are Muslims from France suspected because of their religion and despite the fact they have no criminal record.

## February

- The UDC initiates a legislative text against the veil in public schools.

## March

- The Grand Conseil declares the UDC constitutional initiative against the Swiss Center for Islam and Society null and void. The text was declared contrary to the Federal Constitution, according to two experts in constitutional law, Pascal Mahon from the University of Neuchâtel and Benjamin Schindler from the University of St. Gallen. According to them, it is discriminatory, based on a denominational difference, and directed against the people of a single religion.

## May

- Inauguration of the Museum of the Civilisations of Islam, Chaux-de-Fond (Neuchâtel). The Museum was established mainly by Swiss companies and financed entirely by private donations. The 750-square-metre, two-storey building has a public library with some 20,000 books, a conference room, rooms for artists' workshops, round table discussions and exhibition spaces.

## June

- Official opening of the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society in Fribourg in the presence of representatives of the federal, cantonal and city authorities of Fribourg. Many faculty members, members of Christian churches and Muslim communities, as well as curious members of the public, made the trip to support this academic and societal approach to «inter-knowledge».

## July

- A woman wearing a burkini and her three children were denied access to a swimming pond in Carouge (Genève). The French debate about the burkini and how Muslims should swim contaminated Switzerland with multiple articles in national newspapers.

## December

- Shootings at the Islamic Centre in Zurich. Three people were seriously injured.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN UNITED KINGDOM

## NATIONAL REPORT 2016

ARZU MERALI

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# Executive Summary

The year began with policy announcements from the erstwhile Prime Minister David Cameron regarding funding for English language classes for Muslim women he deemed were 'traditionally submissive' and therefore unable in some cases to combat the radicalisation of their sons.

The event signalled another shift in discourse that targeted perceived cultural and social lack amongst Muslims and tied them to social ills, often but not exclusively linked with terrorism. Other forms of discursive Islamophobia emerged or escalated around the issues of radicalisation of children; disloyalty to Britain and British values; and immigration, migration and refugees.

Policies and laws reflected this shift, with further laws mooted to combat extremism, which were criticised by some police figures as creating thought policing. Policies in education further reflected this shift and the year saw the official schools inspectorate announced it would downgrade schools that allowed girls and young women to wear nikab.

The focus on women continued with more attacks against women reported as victims of reported Islamophobic hate crimes, in particular the assault of a pregnant woman who miscarried as a result. Nevertheless the Casey review into integration lay the blame for Muslim marginalisation on Muslim failure to integrate into society.

Media representation of Muslims continued to be problematic, however a number of campaigns and initiatives, sought to tackle individual infractions of existing press regulation codes, as well as more strategic campaigns focusing on effecting more structural change.

The statutory Prevent duty continued to cause alarm, with more cases of Muslim profiling of children as young as 4 years of age being reported.

The two highly significant electoral events of the year – the mayoral contest for London and the EU Referendum – both had highly charge campaigns that instrumentalised Islamophobic and racist discourse.

Civil society mobilisation, particularly amongst Muslim groups, was further curtailed by the shifting narrative which continued to delegitimise mobilisation around issues of racism.

## Introduction

The year saw a consolidation of the Prevent strategy by the government, with numerous cases of outrageous and prejudiced referrals of children being reported. The prevalence of a 'British values' narrative continued within political and media circles, and became part of the educational inspectorate's criteria for grading schools.

Whilst there were few 'dramatic' events e.g. new laws or high profile, UK security related incidents (e.g. attacks or plots), there continued to be a steady discourse in institutional, political and media circles that either directly or indirectly securitised the idea of Muslims, in many cases dovetailing the narrative with that of 'British values' thus marking out Muslims as an existential threat by virtue of cultural non-compliance. This blurring and mixing of subalternising narratives and tropes became a feature of the first half of the year, starting with the erstwhile Prime Minister's conflation of Muslim women's alleged inability to speak English properly and the 'radicalisation' of their sons.

In the aftermath of the referendum to leave the EU in June, a spike in hate attacks across minority communities, highlighted the impact of demonised rhetoric across the campaign with a spike in hate attacks across communities. This legitimisation of not just Islamophobic discourse (already a key facet of the environment) but other forms of racist discourse continued with the media focus on the U.S. presidential election campaign. Thus ideas e.g. of banning Muslims became widely discussed on social media platforms by right-wing activists. However the lauding of Trump amongst parts of the right leaning commentariat provided wider legitimisation of such ideas, leaving the year's end with a discernible deterioration in discursive practice vis-à-vis, Islam and Muslims.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

The first half of the year continued to be shaped by ongoing discursive practice from the Conservative government, sections of the media, including parts of the commentariat regarding Muslims through the lens of the following tropes: the subjugation of Muslim women; terrorism and security related issues; radicalisation of children; disloyalty to Britain and British values; and immigration, migration and refugees.

The election campaign for the Mayoral Election in May, and the campaign for the EU referendum were both characterised by accusations of racism. The murder of MP Jo Cox by a man shouting 'Britain First' brought an eventual spotlight onto the rise of far-right extremism, however it had little impact on the outcome of the referendum or in bringing an understanding amongst the electorate at large of the prevalence of racism. The end of the year saw the leader of Ukip (the main proponent of the UK leaving the EU) accusing the widower of the deceased MP and his wife of supporting 'extremists'.

The impact of the shock Leave victory in the EU referendum (Brexit) on 23 June saw a huge spike in anti-Muslim and other racist attacks, and the second half of the year saw a rise in a particular enmeshing of Islamophobic tropes and other forms of racism in political discourse around immigration. The connection between Brexit and the rise in hate crime was acknowledged by police forces and figures.[1]

Whilst there were examples of mobilisation against racism, the post-Brexit environment has proven to be an extended heightened period of disarray and instability that has made effective political intervention at every level difficult and unchartered.

# Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

## Employment

In April, a report by Nabil Khattab and Shereen Hussein presented a report involving the data analysis of survey data from 245,000 women in the UK that found inter alia, that the unemployment rate for Muslim women was between 5.9% and 27%, depending on their ethnic background, and that for white non-Muslim women was 3.5%.

The proportion of Muslim women working in professional and managerial jobs varied from 8.5% to 23%, depending on their ethnicity, compared to 32% for white non-Muslim women.

The researchers then adjusted the data to compare Muslim and non-Muslim women who had the same level of education, family situation and age, and found that Muslim women were less likely to be employed. Significant results were obtained for:

- First-generation Muslim women of Bangladeshi origin, who were over six times more likely to be unemployed than white non-Muslim women with the same background. First generation Muslim Pakistani and Muslim Black women were four times more likely to be unemployed.
- The proportion of Muslim women who had managerial or professional jobs varied from around 20% to 40% of that of white British women, depending on their ethnicity.[2]

The Employment Lawyers Association[3] reported at the end of 2015 in the case of Naeem v Secretary of State for Justice that in a case brought regarding the lower pay afforded to Muslim chaplains in prison than to Christians was non-discriminatory.

1. Alex Wellman/Mikey Smith/Dan Bloom, "First Muslim peer sent white powder and racist 'P*** filth' note, sparking security alert in Parliament," *Daily Mirror*, (July 7, 2016), retrieved February 4, 2017, from http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/first-muslim-peer-sent-white-8369757.

2. British Sociological Association, "Educated Muslim women much less likely to be in professional jobs than white women," *Phys.Org*, (April 12, 2016), retrieved December 23, 2016, from http://phys.org/news/2016-04-muslim-women-professional-jobs-white.html#jCp.

3.Thomson Reuters, "Non-discriminatory explanation for lower pay of Muslim prison chaplains," *Employment Lawyers Association*, (December 10, 2015), retrieved April 1, 2016, from http://www.elaweb.org.uk.

Regardless of the prevalence of such data and cases,[4] public narrative regarding the factors contributing to Muslims' lower employment rates failed to highlight the role of discrimination based on religion. According to Nabeel Khattab,[5] Muslims face the worse job discrimination than any other group in the UK, with Muslim men 76% less likely to have a job of any kind compared to white male British Christians. Saied Ameli and Arzu Merali's analysis of survey data found over 45% of Muslim respondents had experienced discrimination at work.

Yet the end of the year saw the situation described in a government commissioned review[6] on integration, as a sign that Muslims had failed to integrate rather than the result of systemic and systematic discrimination and structural disadvantage.

## Education

Systematic research into issues surrounding curricula at schools is unavailable, however anecdotal complaints about the contents of some textbooks abound. This includes complaints being reported regarding inclusion of content on ISIL/DAESH in geography books, as well as poor or extremely biased material on Israel/Palestine.[7]

The school and university continued to be undermined as safe spaces for Muslim students with a number of incidents of attacks, graffiti, vandalism of Muslim spaces reported e.g. a pig's head was left outside Markazul Aloom School in Blackburn.[8] Various incidents of students being attacked while near school or campus were reported including cases targeting women and girls who wear headscarves or nikabs e.g. the students attacked at King's College, London, whilst security guards watched in March.[9] In another incident, an 11-year-old boy had bleach poured into his eyes by other schoolchildren in Great Barr, on his way home in September.[10]

The impact of Brexit on Muslims' (and others') experience of racism in school spaces was dramatic with reports of children being abused by other children and told to "Go home", as well as by strangers approaching the school to shout at Muslim,

4. See: Arzu Merali, "Islamophobia Report 2015," Enes Bayrakli/Farid Hafez (eds), *European Islamophobia Report 2015* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016), p. 557-559.

5. Roger Dobson, "British Muslims face worst job discrimination of any minority group, according to research," *The Independent*, (November 30, 2014), retrieved November 30, 2016, from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/british-muslims-face-worst-job-discrimination-of-any-minority-group-9893211.html.

6. Louise Casey, "The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration,"*gov.uk*, (December 5, 2016), retrieved December 5, 2016, from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf.

7. Unpublished data from Islamic Human Rights Commission (a) for the year 2016.

8. Press Association, "Pigs' heads dumped outside Islamic school", *The Guardian*, (December 22, 2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/dec/22/pigs-heads-dumped-outside-islamic-school.

9.Areeb Ullah, "Female Muslim Students Assaulted Outside Strand Campus," *roarnews.co.uk*, (March 4, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://roarnews.co.uk/?p=21289.

10.Tanveer Mann, "Boy 11, pinned down and had bleach poured in his eyes by other schoolchildren,"*metro.co.uk*, (September 29, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://metro.co.uk/2016/09/29/boy-11-pinned-down-and-had-bleach-poured-in-his-eyes-by-other-school-children-6159380/.

black and Eastern European children,[11] specifically referring to the Brexit vote which was seen by perpetrators of such acts as legitimization of their prejudices and their acts.

The mutual constitution of a hate environment[12] within education as an institution and within educational spaces continued with a number of policies, the dovetailing of the continued implementation of Prevent and the focus on the provision of teaching of fundamental British values (itself a term coined in the development of Prevent), as well as the continuing fall-out from the so-called Trojan Horse affair. As the situation stands, all schools are expected to teach fundamental British values across the curriculum [as well as in specific lessons of citizenship in state school curriculum where teaching of 'spiritual, moral, social and cultural' (SMSC) values is traditionally located] according to slightly different requirements according to school type. HM Schools Inspectorate Oftsed claims to assess schools inter alia on the basis of promotion of British values in SMSC, the curriculum and in leadership.[13]

In January, a website was launched by the Department for Education claiming to provide parents, teachers and school leaders on protecting children from radicalisation. It was launched by Education Secretary Nicky Morgan in January 2016, at Bethnal Green Academy in East London – the secondary school where 4 students left for Syria to join DAESH. However the DfE failed to consult a single Muslim organisation during the website's development. A Freedom of Information (FOI) response showed that the government consulted 29 organisations including government departments, faith-based groups, various teaching associations, and charities over the content of the Educate Against Hate website — but none representing Britain's Muslim community.[14]

In January, the issue of nikab came to the fore again, as the Schools Inspectorate Ofsted stated they would downgrade the rating of any school that allowed girls to cover their faces with a nikab.[15] In May, it was reported a school in Leeds with a majority Muslim intake prevented a student from wearing a jilbab. The reasons cited involved 'safeguarding' a term initially associated with discourse surrounding child welfare, in particular with regard to vulnerability to abuse, but which has been co-opted into PREVENT language vis-à-vis supposed radicalisation. In either event it is another marker of how Muslim identity, rather than being accommodated is increasingly demonised and criminalised.

11.Unpublished data, Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2017.

12. Saied R. Ameli/ArzuMerali, *Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK* (Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2015).

13.Citizenship Foundation, "Schools must promote British values, says UK Government" doingsmsc.org.uk (undated) retrieved 21 February 21, 2017, from http://www.doingsmsc.org.uk/british-values/

14.Jenna Corderoy/Ben Bryant, "Exclusive: UK Did Not Consult Any Muslim Organizations about Flagship Anti-Radicalization Website," *vice.com*, (April 6, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://news.vice.com/article/uk-government-did-not-consult-any-muslim-organizations-about-flagship-anti-radicalization-website.

15. Samira Shackle, "What Do British Teachers Think About Banning Face Veils in Schools?,"*vice.com*, (January 28, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/british-schools-face-veil-ban-niqab-887.

The repercussions of the Trojan Horse/Hoax affair of 2014 continued. Numerous banning orders were issued against people allegedly involved in the affair, however some legal challenges had impact on the pronouncements of the Department of Education. WaseemYaqub O.B.E. was chair of the board of governors at Al-Hijrah Islamic School, the entirety of which was dismissed by the DfE after a two-year campaign by Birmingham City Council to destabilise one of the best schools in the city. The dismissals came after an inspection following the so-called Trojan Horse affair in which six other schools with majority Muslim board of governors were subjected to an Islamophobic witch-hunt after the circulation of a hoax letter suggesting a sinister plot by radical Muslims to take over some Birmingham schools.

Al-Hijrah School, which caters for pupils aged 4-16, was one of the most sought after schools in Birmingham until it was placed in special measures in 2014. All official inquiries cleared Al-Hijrah School governors of any involvement in the 'Trojan Horse Conspiracy'.

Education Secretary Nicky Morgan wrote to Mr Yaqub on 29 June, 2015 informing him of her intention to issue a direction preventing him from assuming the post of governor again. The letter invited him to send in representations as to why that would not be appropriate, which Mr Yaqub did by instructing solicitors to challenge the DfE's conduct. As soon as the DfE received the legal letter, it ran for cover and tried to retract its original letter. In fresh correspondence sent on 29 February, 2016 the DfE says that while it rejects the criticisms made by Mr Yaqub's solicitors it wishes to withdraw the earlier letter.

Later in the year a judge found that the Schools Inspectorate Oftsed's claim that the schools targeted by its actions were discriminating against women by imposing gender segregation in school was incorrect and that no legal breach had taken place. The judge stated that there is no evidence that gender segregation disadvantages women, and that further as both sexes were denied interaction there was no disadvantage to one over the other.[16] This did not however translate into a major revision of the narrative against either the Trojan Horse teachers and schools, or the trope in general that Muslims push gender segregation as a way to disadvantage Muslim women. Indeed the stigma of being a student from a Trojan Horse school has surfaced in 2016 in an employment discrimination case. A Muslim teaching assistant sacked after objecting to children being shown a graphic video of the 9/11 horrors found that that staff had raised concerns about her background, mentioning her position of Head Girl at Saltley School - one of the schools implicated in the 'Trojan Horse' scandal.

16. Richard Adams, "Ofsted wrong to penalise Islamic school over gender segregation, court rules," *The Guardian*, (November 8, 2016), retrieved December 22, 2016, from https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/nov/08/ofsted-wrong-to-penalise-islamic-school-over-gender-segregation-court-rules.

Two teachers, who had been banned from teaching as a result of their association with the affair, had their bans quashed by the High Court in October.[17]

Despite the foregoing, no apologies, redress or restitution have been made regarding the affair. The school space as an arena for Muslim parents, teachers and governors to express their agency as individuals or groups, in a manner similar to other citizens and other citizens' groups, remains curtailed. As the militarization of British public space continues apace,[18] it was highly significant that one of the so-called Trojan Horse schools, Park View, now rebranded as Rockwood School opened a military cadet unit that was widely reported across national television as being the first to do so in a predominantly Muslim school.[19] The symbolism of the move and the reporting dovetails with the Fundamental British Values agenda, used against the schools involved, replacing perceived Muslim deviance (Muslim identities) with Muslim loyalty (inculcation in the British Armed Forces).

The impact of the Counter-Terrorism Act and the Trojan Horse affair combined is impactful not just in arenas where prejudice and anti-Muslim sentiment already exists, but has been instrumental in creating division and undermining educational institutions that have taken principled stances against racism. According to Rob Ferguson, the two are instrumental and creating suspicion within institutions, as well as panic that these institutions could be targets.[20]

Numerous referrals of children to the police and/or the Channel (government mandate deradicalisation) programme were reported across the year. According to figures obtained by the Press Association, a total of 4,611 people, including more than 2,000 children and teenagers, were earmarked for possible intervention by the Channel scheme from the start of July 2015 to the end of June 2016 - equivalent to 12 a day. The tally was a 75% rise on the previous year, when there were 2,632 referrals.[21]

Many of the cases that came to light were roundly criticised by civil society and highlight the level of prejudice operating in the consideration of Muslim children's behaviour. Referrals included, a 4-year-old child who drew a picture of a cucumber at nursery which he mispronounced 'cucum bum',[22] and a 10-year-old boy who

17. 5Pillars, "Ban on two "Trojan Horse" Muslim teachers quashed," *5pillarsuk.com*, (October 15, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://5pillarsuk.com/2016/10/15/ban-on-two-trojan-horse-muslim-teachers-quashed/.

18.Ameli/Merali, *Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK*.

19.BBC Midlands Today, "A Birmingham school which was once at the heart of the so-called Trojan Horse affair has now opened up a military cadet unit," *facebook.com/midlandstoday/,* (uploaded on October 4, 2016), retrieved December 6, 2016, from https://www.facebook.com/midlandstoday/videos/10154549900864761/?pnref=story.

20. Robert Ferguson, "Preventing Violent Extremism?," *Islamic Human Rights Commission*, (London: June 13, 2015), retrieved February 4, 2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbumv-d0U68.

21. Press Association, "Jump in Channel referrals as duty to combat extremism introduced," *The Daily Mail*, (September 12, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/pa/article-3784603/Jump-Channel-referrals-duty-combat-extremism-introduced.html#ixzz4XjtO4odv.

22.Prevent Watch, "The Cucumber Case," *preventwatch.org*, (January 2016), retrieved February 5, 2016, from http://www.preventwatch.org/the-cucumber-case/.

wrote responses in a creative writing task that a character lived in a 'terrorist' house (meaning a 'terraced' house).[23]

## Politics

The two major electoral events of the year featured Islamophobia heavily. The election campaign run by Conservative Mayoral candidate for London, Zac Goldsmith, was accused of using Islamphobia to target his Labour opponent and eventual winner Sadiq Khan. This included accusing Khan of supporting extremism and sharing a platform with an extremist.[24] The accusation was then repeated in Parliament by the Prime Minister and subsequently out of Parliament by the Defense Minister Michael Fallon. The campaign was roundly criticised, including by Goldsmith's sister Jemima herself a convert to Islam.[25]

Additionally, the campaign survey results for potential voters in London found that 1 in 3 did not want to see a Muslim become mayor of London.[26]

The campaign for the Leave group in the EU Referendum held on 23 June was also accused of instrumentalising Islamophobia both as a trope against Muslims already in the UK, as well as raising the specter of increased Muslim immigration by remaining within the EU. Two pieces of advertising for the Leave campaign came in for particular criticism. A poster unveiled by Ukip leader Nigel Farage two weeks before the referendum featured a line of what appeared to be Syrian migrants in Europe. The picture, an actual piece of reportage from the so-called migrant crisis, was captioned: "Breaking point: the EU has failed us all." (Figure 1)

This came less than four weeks after the poster for the Leave campaign entitled "Turkey (a country of 76 million) is joining the EU: Vote Leave." (Figure 2) The poster was accompanied by comments from the campaign stating:

Figure 1: 'Breaking point: The EU has failed us all' poster, 2016

23. Caroline Mortimer, "Schoolboy questioned by Lancashire police because he said he lived in a 'terrorist house'," *The Independent*, (January 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/schoolboy-questioned-by-lancashire-police-because-he-said-he-lived-in-a-terrorist-house-a6822231.html.

24. Caroline Mortimer, "Zac Goldsmith accuses Sadiq Khan of 'giving platform, oxygen and cover to extremists'," *The Independent*, (April 13, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/zac-goldsmith-accuses-sadiq-khan-of-giving-platform-oxygen-and-cover-to-extremists-a6983516.html.

25. Jack Boyle/Inderdeep Baines, "Appalling' Zac crushed by Sadiq: Even his sister slams campaign as London gets a Muslim mayor," *TheDaily Mail*, (May 7, 2016), from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3578078/Appalling-Zac-crushed-Sadiq-sister-slams-campaign-London-gets-Muslim-mayor.html#ixzz4XobAmzQ9.

26. Matt Dathan, "One in three Londoners feel 'uncomfortable' with the prospect of a Muslim Mayor, poll finds," *The Independent*, (August 13, 2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/one-in-three-londoners-feel-uncomfortable-with-the-prospect-of-a-muslim-mayor-poll-finds-10453528.html.

> "Since the birthrate in Turkey is so high, we can expect to see an additional million people added to the UK population from Turkey alone within eight years. This will not only increase the strain on Britain's public services, but it will also create a number of threats to UK security. Crime is far higher in Turkey than the UK. Gun ownership is also more widespread. Because of the EU's free movement laws, the government will not be able to exclude Turkish criminals from entering the UK."[27]

Figure 2: 'Turkey (Population 76 million) is joining the EU' Vote Leave poster, 2016

The resignation of a leading member of the Leave campaign days before the EU referendum over an anti-Muslim tweet was a frightening reminder of the hate-filled political climate that prevailed.

Arabella Arkwright, a businesswoman who sat on the board and finance committee of Vote Leave, was forced to resign after details of her Twitter activities were exposed in the media.

They included an image of a white girl in the middle of a group of people wearing burqas saying: "Britain 2050: why didn't you stop them Grandad?" and a link from Tommy Robinson, the founder of the far right English Defence League, suggesting UK Muslims were trying to build an Islamic state in Britain. The fact that such a high-ranking member of the Leave campaign has chosen to engage publicly in such repugnantly Islamophobic chatter is illustrative of what Ameli and Merali described as the environment of hate that governs the perception and treatment of minorities.[28]

The year was punctuated with various interventions from political figures, including erstwhile Prime Minister David Cameron beginning the year with a speech claiming that Muslim women were 'traditionally submissive' and lacked English skills, making them unable to tackle the radicalisation of their sons. The announcement deeply offended many Muslim women who started the hashtag trend on Twitter #traditionallysubmissive with pictures of themselves listing their achievements. (Figure 3) Despite the outcry from civil society figures over these comments, Cameron did not retract them.

27. Daniel Boffy/Toby Helm, "Vote Leave embroiled in race row over Turkey security threat claims," *The Guardian*, (May 22, 2016), retrieved November 30, 2016, from https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/may/21/vote-leave-prejudice-turkey-eu-security-threat.

28.Ameli/Merali, *Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK.*

Figure 3: Montage of some of the #TraditionallySubmissive tweet images in protest at David Cameron's comments.

The year ended with the launch of the Casey Review into Integration and Opportunity.[29] The report supposedly looked at the challenges faced by communities. It was widely lauded by UKIP, some government ministers and politicians, and various parts of the commentariat. However it was also deeply criticised for methodological failings, and an obsession with Islam and Muslims, with the word Muslim used 249 times in a 200 page report (with the Polish community mentioned only 12 times), and Islam mentioned over 100 times.[30] Many critics charged it with likely to worsen community relations.[31]

29. Louise Casey, *The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration*.

30. Matthew Taylor, "Casey report criticised for focus on UK Muslim communities," *The Guardian*, (December 5, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/dec/05/casey-report-criticised-for-focus-on-uk-muslim-communities.

31.Ibid. and Alan Travis, "Louise Casey's integration plan is behind the times," *The Guardian*, (December 5, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/dec/05/louise-caseys-integration-plan-is-behind-the-times.

The report summarised a shift in political discourse regarding social mores generally, which has instrumentalised Islamophobic rhetoric and tropes to legitimise a move away from the idea of government responsibility vis-à-vis social issues like poverty, disadvantage and racism. Thus the rhetoric of the Casey Review echoed tropes about Muslims and minorities who suffer disadvantage in employment as bearing the responsibility for this by not integrating (enough). The effect of racism on such disadvantage or social and economic factors relating to class or regional disadvantages is entirely overlooked, and even portrayed as fictitious.[32]

The coming to power of Theresa May after the resignation of David Cameron as Prime Minister was seen as concerning given May's history of anti-Muslim policy and rhetoric. Various commentators and civil society organisations pointed to her history as Home Secretary in enacting laws and pursuing policies, particularly counterterrorism policies that targeted Muslims. These included the expansion of the Prevent duty and making it a legal duty, as well as the revocation of nationality of dual nationals which led to the stripping of citizenship of dozens of British nationals on the pretext of the national interest.[33]

It is significant that there has been a consistent feeling that political discourse has worsened with regard to Islamophobia and racism, particularly after the murder of MP Jo Cox. This is alarming not least because the survey of Muslims in 2014 by the IHRC found that between the 2010 and 2014 results for the question, "How often have you heard Islamophobic comments by politicians?" had significantly worsened. (Figure 4) Significantly the 'sometimes' experience had trebled and the 'never hearing such comments' had reduced by over half. The qualitative responses for that survey laid blame across party lines, with leaders in particular being blamed regardless of party.[34]

| Hearing Islamophobic comments by politicians | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2010 | 2014 |
| Never | 40.8 | 16.8 |
| Rarely | 14.6 | 17.4 |
| Sometimes | 9.5 | 28 |
| Often | 16.7 | 22.6 |
| Always | 18.4 | 15.2 |
| **Total** | **100** | **100** |

Figure 4: Percentage of frequency of experiencing hearing Islamophobic comments by politicians by 1,784 respondents. Source: IHRC.[35]

32. Arzu Merali, "Louise Casey's common (non)sense and the illogic of racism," *Middle East Eye*, (December 6, 2015), retrieved December 12, 2016, from http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/louise-casey-s-common-nonsense-and-illogic-racism-125551279.

33.Victoria Parsons, "Citizenship stripping: new figures reveal Theresa May has deprived 33 individuals of British citizenship," *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, (June 21, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/2016/06/21/citizenship-stripping-new-figures-reveal-theresa-may-deprived-33-individuals-british-citizenship/.

34.Ameli/Merali, *The Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK.*

35. Ibid

## Media

The media came under intense scrutiny from campaigners who highlighted the focus of certain newspapers, in particular the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, for an inappropriate focus on migrants, immigration and Muslims. By the end of the year a campaign entitled Stop Funding Hate had targeted advertisers in some of these publications to stop their contracts as a protest against the continued demonisation of migrants.[36]

Sections of the commentariat continued to promote Islamophobic narratives including raising the specter of Muslims: as a terror threat and inimical to British values; sexual abusers; misogynists; downtrodden women; potential terrorists. A case study in point is the work of former reality TV star Katie Hopkins turned commentator and broadcaster. In December 2016, she issued an apology as did the paper that hosts her column *The Daily Mail*, as well as paying out £150,000 in damages to a family they accused of having terrorist connections.[37] During the year she had taken aim at migrants[38] and the Mayor of London.[39]

The TV show *Citizen Khan* was criticised by a group of Labour MPs in Parliament as Islamophobic. The MPs raised for the first time in Parliament a complaint that media culture has an unrestrained Islamophobic temper at the current time.[40]

In July, the UK Parliament was shut down and MPs were evacuated after a package containing white powder. On the same day suspicious letters containing a white powder and racist abuse had also been sent to several Islamic centres in London. The letters also featured drawings of a mosque that was crossed out. The same message was sent to Labour Party peer for Rotherham Lord Ahmed.[41] This type of hate attack is familiar to many Islamic centres and personalities, and has been a feature over the years. However the scale of this and the fact that the UK Parliament was also targeted suggests an escalation in bravado as well as ambition and organisation on the part of perpetrators. The far-right narrative of British institutional betrayal of the 'white' nation 'for

36. Website of *Stop Funding Hate*, (not dated), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.stopfundinghate.org.uk.

37. Mail Online, "The Mahmood family – an apology," *dailymail.co.uk*, (December 16, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/article-4046558/The-Mahmood-family-apology.html.

38.See e.g. Katie Hopkins, "It's a Jungle in Calais all right but the desperate migrants menacing our truckers aren't the real problem - it's the ones we never see that you need to worry about," *dailymail.co.uk*, (August 26, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/mostread/article-3760011/It-s-Jungle-Calais-right-desperate-migrants-menacing-truckers-aren-t-real-problem-s-one-s-never-need-worry-KATIE-HOPKINS-runs-gauntlet-lorry-drivers-Britain-s-border.html#ixzz4XootEhGv.

39. See e.g. Katie Hopkins, "Please don't make me run naked down Regent Street with a sausage up my bum. Vote Zac, you know it makes sense," *dailymail.co.uk*, (May 7, 2016) retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3573340/KATIE-HOPKINS-don-t-make-run-naked-Regent-Street-sausage-bum-Vote-Zac-know-makes-sense.html#ixzz4XopzAgLb.

40. BBC News Online, "BBC sitcom Citizen Khan 'Islamophobic', says MP," *BBC News online*, (April 14, 2016), retrieved December 12, 2016, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-36048059.

41. op. cit. (1)

the sake' of Muslims, can be seen to undergird this, and its post-Brexit timing must raise the question as to how much the Leave campaign's iconography and discourse contributed to the worsening environment within which such attacks and such narratives escalate.

## Justice System

The Extremism Bill mooted by the Tory government came under fire from its own police lead Simon Cole, as so flawed that it risked creating a "thought police".[42] The Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill envisages introducing a new civil order regime such as ASBO's to restrict so-called extremist activity. Currently the government defines extremism as "the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs". It is so wide that it is capable of ensnaring so-called terrorist sympathisers but also those who oppose the government or hold conservative views such as disapproval of abortion or same-sex marriage.

The difficulty experienced by the government in drawing up a watertight definition highlights the obvious dangers of criminalising what people think and say, particularly in relation to what it calls non-violent extremism. All kinds of views could be deemed extremist. To prosecute those holding them is clearly interfering with their right to freedom of belief and speech.

The bill also proposes introducing new powers of intervention to tackle the so-called radicalisation of children in "unregulated education settings". This effectively means government oversight of the Muslim religious education sector dominated by after-school madrasas. Quite how the madrasa sector is breeding extremists has never been shown but the government seems intent on reining in their independence regardless.

Critics argued that the anti-terrorism policy is part of a wider social engineering exercise designed to control and shape Islam and Muslims in Britain. The bill once enacted will add to an ever-growing body of laws that while presented as colour-blind are clearly directed at Britain's Muslim communities.

Last April, on a visit to the UK, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Freedom of Assembly said that Britain's anti-terrorism policies were counter-productive, undermining democracy and victimising the Muslim community. Maina Kiai criticised the ever-widening PREVENT strategy for its Orwellian impact on free speech and its adverse effect on Britain's Muslim minority.[43]

42. Vikram Dodd, "Anti-radicalisation chief says ministers' plans risk creating 'thought police'," *The Guardian*, (May 24, 2016), retrieved November 30, 2016, from https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/may/24/anti-radicalisation-chief-says-ministers-plans-risk-creating-thought-police.

43.IHRC, "UK: Extremism bill will destroy our freedoms not protect them,"*ihrc.org.uk*, (May 18, 2016) retrieved December 22, 2016, from http://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/press-releases/11683--press-release-uk-extremism-bill-will-destroy-our-freedoms-not-protect-them.

The judiciary came under scrutiny when a group of judges from ethnic minority communities brought claims against the Ministry of Justice for racial discrimination.[44] Whilst not specific to the experiences of Muslims, it highlights the concern that despite the UK's evolving demography, diversity in its institution is failing even when it nominally exists.

The issue of racial and religious profiling continued, with disproportionality reported in police stops and searches of ethnic minorities. Additionally the ruling in March by the European Court of Human Rights effectively clearing of criminal responsibility security officials responsible for the killing of Charles De Menezes in 2005, effectively legitimized extrajudicial killings based on prejudice. Mr De Menezes was trailed and then shot dead at London's Stockwell tube station by jumpy security officers who mistook him for a suicide bomber a fortnight after multiple bombings on the capital's transport network in 2005. Subsequent investigations confirmed that the police apprehended and pinned down their victim before firing seven shots into his head and one into his shoulder.

The incident highlighted the racialised bias under which police were operating, apparently selecting their victim on the basis of his darker than white skin colour. It also brought to the fore a controversial 'shoot to kill' policy targeting British Muslims who were presumed to be suicide bombers. The ruling was a body blow not only to the De Menezes' family's campaign for justice but also for due process. It effectively upheld the right of the authorities to kill innocent people on the basis of mere supposition and racial/religious prejudice.[45]

Later in the year, the College of Policing released guidelines on Stop and Search asking for all police officers to be trained to recognise their own biases in an effort to counteract racial profiling.[46]

## Internet

Far right group Britain First became more high profile this year. Despite having no electoral representation or demonstrable electoral support, it has more followers on Facebook than any political party in the UK, with over one and half million likes. The group's aims while averring to issues like moral decline (conservative agenda) and politicians' expenses scandals, its focus is identitarian and claims to be: "…not just a normal political group, we are a patriotic resistance and 'frontline' for our long suffering people." After raising themselves in pseudo militaristic terms

44. Diane Taylor, "Lord chief justice intervenes in case of judge suing MoJ for race discrimination," *The Guardian*, (April 7, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://www.theguardian.com/law/2016/apr/07/lord-chief-justice-intervenes-suing-moj-race-discrimination-peter-herbert.

45.IHRC, "De Menezes ruling: the cover-up continues," *ihrc.org.uk*, (March 23, 2016), retrieved December 22, 2016, from http://ihrc.org.uk/activities/press-releases/11650-press-release-uk-de-menezes-ruling-the-cover-up-continues.

46. Paul Quinton/Daniel Packham, "College of Policing stop and search training experiment," *College of Policing*, (2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://whatworks.college.police.uk/Research/Documents/SS_training_OVERVIEW_Final_report.pdf.

(resistance/frontline), they continue by conflating immigration, Islam, attacks on liberal values and the breakdown of service provision in the following terms:

> "Immigration is spiralling out of control placing unsustainable demands upon this country's resources, with health care, housing and the environment all being seriously damaged by these unbearable and unfair burdens."
>
> "Britain is a small, overcrowded, densely populated island with barely enough space and resources for our own people."
>
> "We have millions of British citizens born here who are unemployed and desperately need employment, so for these reasons we will slam shut the door to any further immigration."
>
> "The rapid growth of militant Islam is leading to the suppression of women, freedom of speech and racist attacks."
>
> "Britain First has a proven track record of opposing Islamic militants and hate preachers and this fightback will continue."
>
> "Britain First seeks to lobby, cajole, expose, demonstrate and organise on behalf of our beleaguered people."
>
> "We will make Britain a beautiful country once again where you can leave your door unlocked and your children can play in the streets."

In its crudest terms, the manifesto outlined above reimagines the discursive practice of political and media actors, and resamples it for a marginalised white working class audience. This rise in the far right is considered by Ameli and Merali not to be a cause of Islamophobia so much as an outcome of Islamophobia praxis in the form of hate policy (laws and institutional policies) and hate representation (media and political discourse) which culminate in a hate environment within which individual acts of hatred, neo-fascism and other forms of racist street mobilization take place.[47] It is notable that post-Brexit the analysis was borne out that as a result of the legitimisation of Islamophobia, other racisms would be legitimised. The upsurge in hate attacks post-Brexit saw even the police services claiming a link between the campaign, the victory for Leave and the rise in xenophobic acts of hatred. Figures from July alone released by the Home Office stated that in the month after the vote there was a 41% increase in hate crime reported,[48] with the police reporting that there were 289 reported incidents on the day of the referendum result alone, and almost five and half thousand reported in July. (Figure 5)

47.Ameli/ Merali, *The Environment of Hate: The New Normal for Muslims in the UK.*

48. Matthew Weaver, "Hate crimes soared after EU referendum, Home Office figures confirm," *The Guardian*, (October 13, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, fromhttps://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/oct/13/hate-crimes-eu-referendum-home-office-figures-confirm.

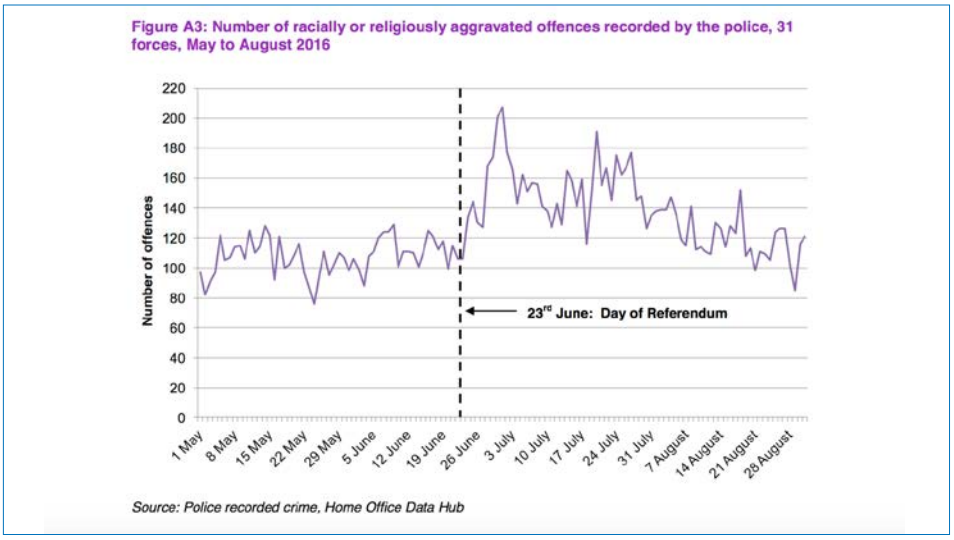


Figure 5: Data showing spike in hate crimes the day after the Referendum. Source: Home Office.[49]

Whilst almost all ethnic and religious minorities (as well as LGBTQI groups) suffered from this upsurge, Muslims continued to be targeted in increasingly violent ways. The year saw notable cases of violence, in particular against Muslim women, with a woman miscarrying twins after she was kicked in the stomach by an attacker in Milton Keynes, whilst her husband was also brutally assaulted.[50] There were also more reports of women having their hijabs ripped off. This relentless focus on Muslim women's attire at street level arguably mirrored the ever increasing media and political obsession around Muslim women's dress. A Yougov poll in September (in the wake of the burkini bans in France), found the majority of respondents were in favour of both burkini and burka bans in the UK. Whilst ostensibly this can be argued as a response to events in France, a review of ten years worth of such polls by Merali showed an incremental climb in negative responses towards this form of attire in the UK indicating a shift in mores once the dress had been brought into the political spotlight in 2006 by a former minister, and in which it stayed for a decade.[51] The role of the cycle of media-commissioned repeated polling over years exemplifies how demonisation reproduces itself. A social experiment conducted on a British beach in September showed that beachgoers confronted with the spectacle of a police officer asking a Muslim woman to disrobe from her burkini (as had happened in France)

49. Hannah Corcoran/Kevin Smith, "Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2015/16," *The Home Office*, (October 13, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from http://report-it.org.uk/files/hate-crime-1516-hosb1116.pdf

50.Vikram Dodd/Damien Gayle, "Man arrested over assault on pregnant woman who lost baby," *The Guardian*, (September 14, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/sep/14/man-arrested-over-assault-on-pregnant-woman-who-lost-unborn-child.

51. Arzu Merali, "The Creeping Petty Pace of Anti-Muslim Hatred and the Tomorrow of Burka Bans," *Middle East Eye*,(September 2, 2016), retrieved December 12, 2016, from http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/creeping-petty-pace-anti-muslim-hatred-and-tomorrow-burka-bans-uk-98681380.

were split on ethnic lines, with black and Asian women coming to help the Muslim woman while white beachgoers said nothing or applauded.

This process is mirrored on social media. One particularly jarring piece of research was the Demos[52] report on the digital aftermath of Brexit. In a random sample of 100 tweets on the subject, 78 were found to be hateful. According to the report's authors some 16,500 tweets in the period 19 June – 1 July that they could sample contained terms such as:

- RefugeesNotWelcome
- DefendEurope
- WhiteGenocide
- WhitePower
- SendThemHome
- MakeBritainWhiteAgain
- Get Out We Voted Leave
- Londonistan
- Rapefugee
- StopImmigration
- f..kIslam

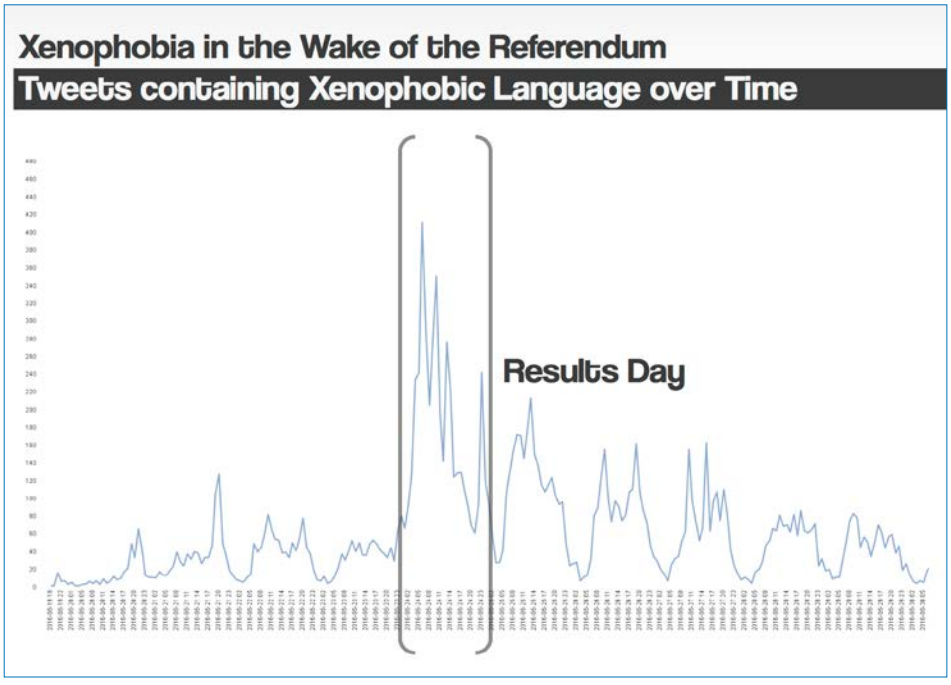


Figure 6: Xenophobia in the wake of the Referendum measured through tweets. Source: Demos.[53]

52.Carl Miller et. al., "Brexit: The Digital Aftermath," *DEMOS*, (not dated), retrieved December 12, 2016, from https://www.demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Dispatches-Brexit-Demos.pdf.

53.Ibid.

The level of derogatory and xenophobic content peaked on the results day but in its wake was contested by roughly twice as many supportive messages. However the Demos report showed that whilst the level of supportive tweets dwindled over time, the level of xenophobic and derogatory tweets maintained, showing cyberspace as being a prime incubator of Islamophobia and xenophobia. (Figure 6)

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives Undertaken to Counter Islamophobia

A number of initiatives to tackle Islamophobia have been highlighted above, but it is worth noting that such initiatives themselves, as well as those that undertake them have been subjected to attacks by the media and politicians. The election of Malia Bouattia as President of the National Union Students polarised attention on her pro-Palestinian views and advocacy. She was routinely attacked as an anti-Semite despite overseeing various activities to challenge anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and other forms of racism.[54] Regardless, the NUS has put tackling Islamophobia and all forms of racism at the forefront of its agenda, initiating the Students not Suspects campaign with the NUS Black Students' Campaign, Federation of Student Islamic Students (FOSIS), the University and College Union (UCU) and Defend the Right to Protest (DtRtP).[55]

The annual Islamophobia conference organised by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (as part of the Decolonial International Network) and supported by various civil society organisations[56] was attacked in parts of the right-wing media for its 'provocative' poster. The conference brought together senior academics and activists to discuss 'The Environment of Hate and the Police State'. On two occasions, it was reported that posters placed by IHRC in Luton to advertise a pro-Palestinian march in July, and the aforementioned Islamophobia conference, were labelled 'anti-Semitic' and posted to Getty Images as such.[57] (Figures 7 and 8) On both occasions, it has been claimed that Bedfordshire Police took out ads to cover the posters. (Figure 9)

54.Iman Amrani, "Attacks on the new NUS president show the limit of free expression for Muslims," *The Guardian*, (April 21, 2016), retrieved February 3, 2017, from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/apr/21/new-nus-president-muslims-malia-bouattia.

55. NUS "Students not Suspects" (undated) retrieved February 21, 2017 from https://studentsnotsuspects.com

56. The supporting organisations were Lewisham Islamic Centre, Intifada Street, CAMPACC, SACC, Bandung2 Movement, Malcolm X Movement, NUS Black Students, Islamic Centre of England, Cambridge Stop the War see http://www.ihrc.org.uk/events/11774-islamophobia-conference-2016-the-environment-of-hate-and-the-police-state

57. Tony Margiocchi, "Anti- Semitic Poster In Luton," *GettyImages.co.uk*, (January 10, 2017), retrieved February 4, 2017, from, http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/bedfordshire-police-have-placed-huge-posters-campaigning-news-photo/631383940?#bedfordshire-police-have-placed-huge-posters-campaigning-for-into-picture-id631383940; and Tony Margiocchi, "Anti- Semitic Poster In Luton,"*GettyImages.co.uk*, (January 10, 2017), retrieved February 4, 2017, from http://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/posters-advertising-an-islamophobia-conference-by-the-news-photo/631383972?#posters-advertising-an-islamophobia-conference-by-the-islamic-human-picture-id631383972.

Likewise MEND-initiated Islamophobia Awareness Month was undermined by the actions of Bedfordshire police, after they removed tweets promoting the event. According to reports, they removed the tweets after thousands of far right activists complained that the logo depicted a gesture used by DAESH.[58] The gesture was in fact an allusion to the Islamic declaration of the oneness of God, however this did not stop the police force from removing all social media posts supporting the event, as well as their press release in support of the event from their site, and issuing an apology for the original posts. This level of capitulation to far right activism is an alarming development and its nexus with pro-Zionist activism vis-à-vis the labelling of pro-Palestinian and anti-Islamophobia posters as anti-Semitic severely curtail the space for anti-racist advocacy within civil society, as well as mark this police force as complicit in the production of Islamophobia.

Figure 7: IHRC Poster in Luton advertising annual pro-Palestinian demonstration, 'Al-Quds Day', labelled on GettyImages.com as 'Anti-Semitic Poster'. Source: GettyImages.com.

Figure 8: IHRC Poster in Luton for annual Islamophobia Conference labelled on GettyImages.com as 'Anti-Semitic Poster'. Source: GettyImages.com.

Figure 9: Alleged replacement poster placed by Bedfordshire Police for IHRC annual Islamophobia Conference poster. Source: GettyImages.com.

Actions to curtail media excesses were less formal, and the activities of individuals in challenging racist representation characterised the year. Whilst enterprises

58. Scott Campbell, "Bedfordshire Police remove tweet supporting 'Islamophobia Awareness Month' featuring one-fingered salute similar to one used by ISIS," *Daily Mirror*, (November 16, 2016), retrieved February 4, 2017, from, http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/bedfordshire-police-remove-tweet-supporting-9270756.

like that of Miqdaad Versi[59] brought successful challenges to media misrepresentation using existing complaints mechanisms, they undergirded the fact that structural racism as a point of mobilisation for oppressed communities has not registered as a need for social transformation. The Stop Funding Hate campaign took a more strategic view, recognising both the role and responsibility of media as institution(s) and arguing that advocacy related to their corporate interests would be the best way to bring about change. Thus, acknowledging that the campaign to get large companies to remove advertising would effect change due to damage to business interests rather than a cultural shift or acknowledgement of moral culpability.

In tackling Prevent a number of initiatives continued throughout the year, as well as new research and programmes. This included the report by Cageprisoners[60] 'The Science of Pre-Crime'; the mobilisation against PREVENT resource pages by Together Against Prevent[61] and IHRC[62]; the Prevent Resource Pack for Parents[63] (IHRC); as well as the Safeguarding our Children from Prevent workshops (IHRC). Prevent Watch continued to take on cases of children and adults referred to Channel or affected by Prevent in other ways. As part of the Students Not Suspects Campaign, the NUS launched a confidential helpline to help students affected in confidence.[64]

Again, it is worth noting that a number of civil society events organised to critique or campaign against Prevent have been cancelled by police authorities in 2016.[65] Additionally it appears the specter of anti-terrorism laws has become part of a fear culture that impacts on civil society mobilisation. A conference on Islamophobia, racism and xenophobia organised by the British Institute of Turkish Affairs (BITAF) and the Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) with the collaboration of the SOAS Turkish society was cancelled in December 2016, one hour before it was due to go ahead, due to complaints from PKK sympathisers. However, one of the panelists, Dr. Salman Sayyid stated that "about five-sixths of the panel recently cancelled with the excuse of the 'laws against terrorism'."[66]

59.Miqdaad Versi, "The UK media too often misrepresents Muslims – with dangerous results," *The Guardian*, (January 23, 2017), retrieved February 4, 2017, from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/23/uk-media-misrepresents-muslims-islam-prejudice-press.

60. Cage, "The 'science' of pre-crime: The secret 'radicalisation' study underpinning PREVENT," *cageuk.com*, (September 29, 2016), retrieved February 4, 2017, from https://cage.ngo/publication/the-science-of-pre-crime/.

61. Together Against Prevent, "Resources", (not dated), retrieved February 4, 2017, from http://togetheragainstprevent.org/resources/.

62. IHRC, "The PREVENT Strategy: Campaign Resources," *ihrc.co.uk*, (June 21, 2015), retrieved February 4, 2017, from http://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/projects/11472-the-prevent-strategy-campaign-resources.

63. IHRC, "PREVENT Resource Pack for Parents,"*ihrc.co.uk*,(October 28, 2016), retrieved February 4, 2017, from http://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/campaigns/11779-prevent-resource-pack-for-parents.

64.NUS, "NUS launches helpline for students affected by Prevent" nus.org.uk (undated), retrieved February 21, 2017 from https://www.nus.org.uk/en/take-action/welfare-and-student-rights/nus-launch-helpline-for-students-affected-by-prevent/

65.Islamic Human Rights Commission (b), unpublished data 2016

66.Mustafa Kırıkçıoğlu, "Freedom of speech in UK questioned after SOAS cancels Islamophobia event", Daily Sabah (December 21, 2016) retrieved February 21, 2017 from https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/2016/12/21/freedom-of-speech-in-uk-questioned-after-soas-cancels-islamophobia-event

Social media saw various mobilisations against Islamophobia, including the #traditionallysubmissive Twitter storm, the response to the racist play on the film title #LondonHasFallen after the victory of Sadiq Khan in the London Mayoral Election,[67] and the responses to American author Janie Jones' tweet that London was 'all Islamic'.[68] The use of humour in responding to UK Islamophobes was a predominant feature. The satirical annual Islamophobia Awards early in the year also used comedy as its method to subvert Islamophobia.[69]

# Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

## Civil Society

As averred above, the space for critique and dissent, let alone advocacy against Islamophobia is becoming smaller, with legitimate civil society action targeted by media and state, particularly when undertaken by Muslim organisations.

Whilst responding to increased Islamophobia in particular and racism in general is difficult in such circumstances, it is imperative for civil society organisation to take concerted, united, educated and brave actions.

**As such the following recommendations are offered:**

- To be mindful of the need to understand and promote an understanding of institutional racism and the racist state. The idea of the UK as a post-racial society has been debunked effectively in many quarters.[70] This is not only an urgent task but requires effective and strong leadership from Muslim and anti-racist organisations. Current advocacy narratives that focus on the rise of far right mobilisation as a cause of Islamophobia rather than an outcome of rising Islamophobia at a structural level effectively promulgate the government narrative of (a) the UK as a post-racial society that had no responsibility for racism; and (b) that part of the solution if not the entire blame for the rise in Islamophobia can be placed at the door of the Muslim community.
- To adopt a better understanding of the emotional needs and the right to have expectations and grievances that citizenship inheres. Current advocacy narratives that simply regurgitate ideas of more political engagement via political parties,

67.Mark Chandler, "Londoners reject racist 'London Has Fallen' tweets with messages of unity after Sadiq Khan victory", The London Evening Standard (may 7, 2016) retrieved February 21, 2017 from http://www.standard.co.uk/news/mayor/londoners-reject-racist-london-has-fallen-tweets-with-messages-of-unity-after-sadiq-khan-victory-a3242526.html

68.Sam Haysom, "US author tweets London is 'all Islamic' gets immediately shut down", Mashable.com (December 5, 2016) retrieved February 21, 2017 from http://mashable.com/2016/12/05/janie-johnson-tweet-shut-down/#UH4L_dWwLOqo

69.RT, "Islamophobia Awards 2016: Worst anti-Muslims of the year to get 'Racism Oscars'" RT on youtube.com (Jan 29, 2016) retrieved February 21, 2017 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLB6cXYi8uU

70.See e.g. Salman Sayyid, *Do Post-Racials Dream of White Sheep? Tolerace Working Paper* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 2010) and Katy Pal Sian, "Spies, surveillance and stakeouts: monitoring Muslim moves in British state schools," *Race Ethnicity and Education*, Vol. 18, Issue 2 (2015).

or challenging the media through existing regulatory powers can have the effect (often deliberately so) of placing the blame for Islamophobia on Muslims' lack of activism. Such arguments also fail to understand that structural racism exists against which using established structures can only give individual victories and small succour when a large scale mobilisation against inequality and discrimination is required.

- Neither (i) nor (ii) mean that established activism through political parties or established complaints systems etc, should be disregarded, however without an understanding of the sources of Islamophobia as structural such activism can be self-defeating and give succour to Islamophobic narratives.
- Creating alliances within and without the Muslim community is imperative. Intra-Muslim sectarianism as well as sectarian politics in progressive movements have ultimately fuelled the disintegration of progressive alliances that existed hitherto on civil liberties' issues.

## Policy Makers and Institutions, the 'Great and the Good'

The rise of Islamophobic discourse in media, politics, legislative culture and educational settings mutually constitute each other. For there to be peaceful transformation institutions must initiate change within their own cultures. Transformations on issues of sexuality, anti-Semitism have taken place over the last some forty years.[71]

- An acknowledgment of institutional Islamophobia (and racism per se) is not impossible and there have been precedents in the past when e.g. Greg Dyke, then Director General called the BBC institutionally racist.[72] In the past year, there has been a number of what are known as the 'great and good' who have made stands against rabid racism, including celebrities like Lily Allen and Gary Lineker. Pockets of critique within the mainstream also have come to light in the last year. The requirement for sustained critique is needed by those within institutions and within mainstream culture.
- Mainstream political culture has been capitulating to right-wing narrative for several decades. Issues of immigration, Muslim expectations and grievances, inequality and racism have been slowly subsumed by terminology more associated with right-wing rhetoric. Concurrently policies have been enacted that are emboldened but the shift in terminology. Just as multiculturalism has been demeaned as a positive norm in society, the idea of community cohesion has been introduced

71. Saied R. Ameli/Arzu Merali, *Hijab, meaning, identity, otherization and politics: British Muslim women* (Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2006).

72. Source GettyImages.comerence sterr placed by mophobia Conference, tion. 'obic ng not least because the survey of Muslims in 20 Sayyid, S., Law, I., & Sian, K., " Analysis of integration policies and public State- endorsed institutions at national/regional levels: Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)", Tolerance, Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies, University of Leeds (CERS/U Leeds, 2013) retrieved February 4, 2017 http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/tolerace/media/WP2/ WorkingPapers%202_UK.pdf

which places inevitably blame for societal ills on groups within society. As politicians and media focus on Muslims as the outliers causing problems, so too do other groups within society. Various government initiatives in the past have called out institutional racism, including the Scarman Report (1981) which critiqued in particular racist policing, and the McPherson Report (1999) and Mubarek Inquiry (2004) which recommended institutions must acknowledge and understand the phenomenon before any serious transformation can take place. This is the imperative facing the political culture in particular currently.

- Additionally, the mobilisation of the far right is, unlike in the 1970s and 1980s, not just at street level. As the removal of Islamophobia Awareness material from a police force's website and social media referred to above highlights how organised activism, in this case sending complaint emails and messages can push institutions towards Islamophobic practice that further strengthens Islamophobic narratives. There should be no capitulation to far right narratives or activism.

## The Media

As with previous reports, this report concludes with recommendations for the media adapted from the Kerner Report (1967). The racialisation of Muslims makes these recommendations pertinent to communities like Muslims in the UK.[73] The media needs to:

- Expand coverage of Muslim community affairs and of race and Islamophobia problems through permanent assignment of reporters familiar with the issues around these affairs, and through establishment of more and better links with the Muslim community. The Muslim community is a diverse one, and the media needs to engage with that diversity and not promote or rely on sensationalist or apologetic voices that simply help propagate deeply held negative ideas.
- Integrate Muslims and Muslim activities into all aspects of coverage and content, including newspaper articles and television programming. The news media must publish newspapers and produce programmes that recognise the existence and activities of Muslims as a group within the community and as a part of the larger community (adapted from Kerner, 1967). Ameli et. al.[74] emphasise the idea that a dual space for minorities is essential for any society to foster a sense of citizenship among minorities. To do this, a space for minorities to call their own is essential and a media that is supported in the conceptual sense by dominant society

73. Saied R. Ameli et. al., *Once Upon a Hatred: Muslim Experiences in the USA* (Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2013).

74. Saied R. Ameli/Arzu Merali, *Dual Citizenship: British, Islamic or Both? Obligation, Recognition, Respect and Belonging* (Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2004); and Saied R. Ameli/Syed M. Marandi/Sameera Ahmed/Seyfeddin Kara /Arzu Merali, *The British Media and Muslim Representation: The Ideology of Demonization* (Wembley: Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2007).

is essentially a part of that. Likewise, the mainstream media must also show as a norm that Muslims are an integral part of society.

- Recruit more Muslims into journalism and broadcasting and promote those who are qualified to positions of significant responsibility. Recruitment should begin in high schools and continue through college; where necessary, aid for training should be provided.
- Accelerate efforts to ensure accurate and responsible reporting of news concerning Muslims and all minorities through adoption by all news gathering organisations of stringent internal staff guidelines.
- Cooperate in the establishment of and promotion of any existing privately organised and funded independent institute(s) to train and educate journalists in Muslim affairs, recruit and train more Muslim journalists, develop methods for improving police-press relations, review coverage of Muslim related issues, and support continuing research in these fields.
- In conclusion, there has yet again been a considerable shift in Islamophobic discourse over the year. As argued before, the fact that Islamophobia was not legitimised through law and discourse, would see a rise in hitherto taboo racisms being aired in narratives and ultimately in hate attacks. The configuration of Islamophobic and other racist narratives in the run-up to the EU referendum, the murder of MP Jo Cox, days before the event itself and the subsequent spike in hate crimes in the weeks after, support this contention. The year was topped and tailed by ideological announcements from the government which again sought to place social ills on Muslims, and delegitimised grievances that they had. The United Kingdom sits on a precipice where the environment of hate is so extreme it may no longer be possible to change it without radical mobilisation and transformation by progressive movements.

# Chronology

- **17 January:** Prime Minister David Cameron reported to have stated he wants more Muslim women to learn English in order to prevent their sons turning to terrorism. The 'traditionally submissive' affair caused a backlash amongst Muslim women who objected this characterisation through social media.
- **30 March:** Security officials responsible for the killing of Charles De Menezes in 2005 cleared of responsibility by the European Court of Human Rights.
- **13 April:** MPs criticise Islamophobic media culture, targeting entertainment as well as news.
- **5 May:** London Mayoral Elections sees Muslim Sadiq Khan win after a campaign by his main opponent characterised as 'dog-whistle' politics.
- **18 May:** Extremism Bill mentioned for the second time in the Queen's Speech.
- **23 May:** The Leave campaign's 'Turkey' poster unveiled.
- **24 May:** Simon Cole, the police lead for the government's own Prevent anti-radicalisation programme, criticises the mooted Extremism Bill as risking creating "thought police".
- **9 June:** Ukip's 'Breaking Point' poster unveiled.
- **16 June:** MP Jo Cox is murdered by a far right activist shouting "Britain First".
- **23 June:** EU Referendum resulting in a surprise win for the Leave campaign. A large spike in hate crimes was reported after the result.
- **7 July:** Receipt of racist letter and white powder by Muslim peer Lord Ahmed results in Parliament security lockdown.
- **13 July:** Theresa May, the former Home Secretary routinely accused of Islamophobia, becomes Prime Minister.
- **6 August:** Pregnant woman is kicked in stomach and husband severely beaten. Unborn twins are miscarried.
- **13 October:** Home Office confirms that the month after Brexit saw a 41% spike in reported hate crime.
- **5 December:** Casey Review into Integration and Opportunity published.

This is the second edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* which was presented for the first time in 2015. New countries are included in this year's *EIR*; while 25 countries were covered in 2015, the report for 2016 includes 27 country reports. *EIR 2016* is the result of 31 prominent scholars who specialise in different fields such as racism, gender and Islamophobia Studies.

Islamophobia has become a real danger to the foundations of democratic order and the values of the European Union. It has also become the main challenge to the social peace and coexistence of different cultures, religions and ethnicities in Europe. The country reports of *EIR 2016*, which cover almost all the European continent from Russia to Portugal and from Greece to Latvia, clearly show that the level of Islamophobia in fields such as education, employment, media, politics, the justice system and the Internet is on the rise. Since the publication of the last report there is little improvement. On the contrary, one can see from the country reports that the state of democracy and human rights in Europe is deteriorating. Islamophobia has become more real especially in the everyday lives of Muslims in Europe. It has surpassed the stage of being a rhetorical animosity and has become a physical animosity that Muslims feel in everyday life be it at school, the workplace, the mosque, transportation or simply on the street.

**About SETA**

Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research (SETA) is a non-profit research institute based in Turkey dedicated to innovative studies on national, regional and international issues. SETA is the leading think tank in Turkey and has offices in Ankara, Istanbul, Washington D.C. and Cairo. The objective of SETA is to produce up-to-date and accurate knowledge and analyses in the fields of politics, economy, and society, and inform policy makers and the public on changing political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Through research reports, publications, brain storming sessions, conferences and policy recommendations, SETA seeks to guide leaders in government, civil society, and business, and contributes to informed decision making mechanisms.

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