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# EUROPEAN **ISLAMOPHOBIA** REPORT --- 2017

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ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)

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REPORT

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# FOREWORD

SETA is pleased to present the third edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) succeeding the reports of 2015 and 2016. This year, 40 prominent scholars and civil society actors from various European countries who specialize in different fields such as racism, gender, and discrimination studies, present 33 country reports. In addition to highlighting the developments of Islamophobia in key fields such as employment, education and politics, they provide precious country-specific policy recommendations to counter this phenomenon and a detailed chronology of events. Since every year it applies the same methodological framework on a large number of European countries, the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) provides a unique collection of European-wide analyses in regard to anti-Muslim racism in Europe to policy makers, social scientists, and ordinary readers.

Monitoring Islamophobia in Europe became an urgent need in the last few years, since the phenomenon has sensibly increased, following economic recession and the rise of far-right politics. Today, Islamophobia constitutes a serious challenge for European democracies for at least four reasons:

- First of all, Islamophobia is severely impacting the life of millions of European Muslims facing racism at university, in the workplace, the public sphere, etc. In addition to representing a threat to their physical life, this racism undermines their place in society and their sense of belonging in European nation states.

- Secondly, the rise of Islamophobia both reflects and strengthens the normalization of far-right discourse in the political spectrum across Europe. Within a few months, neofascist parties entered the German Bundestag, accessed strategic ministries in Austria, and registered historical results in the French, Dutch and Italian elections.
- Thirdly, Islamophobia poses a problem of internal security as it intensifies tensions between communities, legitimizes hate crimes against individuals, and undermines the European Union ideals of peace and coexistence.
- Finally, Islamophobia represents an obstacle for European international relations, since it mars the EU image of tolerance worldwide and increases tension between EU member states and certain strategic partners, including Muslim countries.

Yet, even if Islamophobia objectively constitutes a threat for European democracies, many European intellectuals and politicians, both left- and right-wing, are still refuting the existence and the validity of the concept. Their worries about terrorist attacks and immigration are preventing them from acknowledging the daily racism that Muslims face in Europe. However, by denying Islamophobia, there is a risk – intended or not – to ignore the unacceptable reality experienced by millions of European citizens.

Based on this observation, as SETA, we decided to annually publish the *European Islamophobia Report* (EIR) in order to provide serious – yet accessible – analyses on a phenomenon that remains widely ignored and misunderstood. We hope this will be a vital contribution in the fight against Islamophobia in Europe.

Burhanettin Duran  
*General Coordinator of SETA*

# THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

This is the third issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year's *EIR* represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

In a presentation of the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey's selected findings on Muslims, the director of the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Michael O'Flaherty, stressed that their survey clearly contradicts the claim that Muslims are not integrated into European societies. On the contrary, the survey found that the trust of Muslims in the democratic institutions of Europe is higher than much of the general population. Furthermore, O'Flaherty pointed out that "every incident of discrimination and hate crime, however, hinders their [Muslims'] inclusion and reduces their chances of finding work. We risk that we alienate individuals and their community from us, with all possible consequences."<sup>1</sup>

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1. FRA, "Press Release: Muslims in the EU: High Levels of Trust Despite Pervasive Discrimination", Vienna, September 21, 2017.

As the report based on a survey of 10,527 people who identified themselves as Muslims published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe. In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the *European Islamophobia Report* project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in almost all states in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

However, NGOs and projects like the *EIR* cannot provide a European-wide daily monitoring mechanism given the colossal size of the problem and the funds required. Therefore, we think it is the duty of the nation states to put in place monitoring mechanisms and publish yearly data on anti-Muslim hate crimes in their respective countries. Yet, it is clear that we are far from that goal since there is no official documentation of anti-Muslim hate crime in the overwhelming majority of European nation states. Recently, Germany made an important step by including Islamophobia as a subcategory of “hate crimes” in the official police statistics of “politically motivated criminal acts.” We welcome this decision and urge other European nation states to follow suit, since Islamophobia is not only a fundamental threat to the coexistence of different religions and cultures but also a threat to the democratic foundations of Europe. Furthermore, tackling Islamophobia has also become an acute problem given the rise of racist, especially Islamophobic, anti-Semitic and anti-Roma far-right parties and the adaptation of their discourse by mainstream parties in many European nation states.

The first statistics, which were revealed for 2017 by the German State reveal around 71 attacks on mosques and 908 crimes against German Muslims (ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts). Germany also registered 1,413 attacks on refugees and 93 attacks on aid workers in Germany in the first 273 days of 2017. However, although the German state registered 71 attacks on mosques, the DITIB, which is an NGO, listed 101 attacks on mosques in Germany all throughout 2017. Therefore, bearing in mind also what the FRA revealed about the reluctance of Muslims to report incidents, one can claim that the estimated number of unknown cases might be more than eight times higher. There are various reasons for these phenomena; some of these include:

- Victims may not be aware of the reporting mechanisms.
- The victims' possible social isolation or proximity to the perpetrator.
- The victims' lack of trust in the authorities, due to fears that their claim will not be taken seriously.
- The victims' fear of being victimized again by police officers.

In this regard, the OSCE ODIHR points out to the fact that “governments have a central role to play in ensuring access to justice; from the initial assessment of victims' needs by police officers, to support mechanisms for victims through governmental or nongovernmental institutions.”<sup>2</sup>

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states. Intelligence services, such as the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, have realized the important role Islamophobia plays for right-wing extremist parties.<sup>3</sup> Still, it is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are no longer immune to this form of racism.

The recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance in Europe. Therefore, we welcome the Swedish government's decision to launch a National Plan to Combat Racism, which also acknowledges Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed. However, despite this positive step the Equality Ombudsman in Sweden followed the EU Court of Justice in ruling that company policies banning the Islamic headscarf are not discriminatory.

That is also why initiatives such as the report *The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All* by Conservative MP Dominic Grieve, in which the government was urged to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice along the lines of that adopted in 2016 for anti-Semitism, are so important. Successfully combating Islamophobia requires outspoken and brave initiatives and persons (politicians and activists) who challenge this widespread normalized form of racism.

With the help of the new president of the USA, who defends his “Muslim Ban” by referring to invented terrorist attacks such as the one in Sweden, the imagined figure of the all-time lurking Muslim enemy is kept alive. When Trump tweet-

2. OSCE, “Hate Crime against Muslims”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.osce.org/odihr/373441?download=true>.

3. BfV, “What is Right-Wing Extremism?”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/en/fields-of-work/right-wing-extremism/what-is-right-wing-extremism>.

ed “You look at what's happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They're having problems like they never thought possible,”<sup>4</sup> Swedish officials and reporters were bewildered since there were no major incidents that night. The climate of the age of fake news, which has always been central to the spread of conspiracy theories, is now exaggerated and expanded by leading politicians in the world, while the structural dimension of Islamophobia still exists at the heart of European societies and institutions. This situation requires a need for a clear stance by governing politicians, elites and intellectuals since they are bound by their constitutions and laws, and international and national human rights standards.

In this manner, British Prime Minister Theresa May criticized Trump for reposting material from the far-right Britain First, while the U.S. president answered her with the advice that it would be better if she dealt with the “destructive radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom” rather than focusing on him.<sup>5</sup> It is quite clear that Europe needs more courageous leaders such as Alexander Van der Bellen, the president of the Austrian Republic, who defended the rights of women to wear a headscarf in a country where the far right has become the leading political power.<sup>6</sup>

## Combatting Islamophobia on the European and the Supranational Levels

Combatting Islamophobia on national and regional levels is important but not enough. Therefore, there is a need for a concerted effort to combat Islamophobia first on the European level and second on the supranational level. In this regard both the coordination among different NGOs and the involvement of institutions such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the UN are essential. In 2017, there were some initial positive steps on the EU level, however, given the size of the problem there is still a long way to go.

As an NGO coalition statement following the 4th Roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred, which was organized by the European Commission (EC) and chaired by the EU coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred, David Friggieri, made clear, a “stronger and more concrete commitment and actions”<sup>7</sup> are needed to combat

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4. Chan Sewell, “Last Night in Sweden? Trump’s Remark Baffles a Nation”, retrieved December 12, 2017, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/europe/last-night-in-sweden-trumps-remark-baffles-a-nation.html>.

5. David Smith, “Donald Trump Attacks Theresa May over Her Criticism of His Far-right Retweets”, retrieved February 9, 2018, from [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/29/donald-trump-theresa-may-tweet-uk-us](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/29/donald-trump-theresa-may-tweet-uk-us).

6. Farid Hafez, “Austria’s President and the Islamophobia Debate: The Courage of One Man”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://en.qantara.de/content/austrias-president-and-the-islamophobia-debate-the-courage-of-one-man>.

7. NGO Coalition Statement following 4th European Commission Roundtable on anti-Muslim hatred, retrieved December 18, 2017, from <http://www.enar-eu.org/NGO-coalition-statement-following-4th-European-Commission-Round-Table-on-anti>.

Islamophobia. These civil society organizations argue that “there are still some misconceptions by the European institutions with regards to the issue of Islamophobia. With the generalised suspicion against Muslims, it is of utmost importance for EU policy makers not to fall into the trap of treating Muslims as potential problems but rather as human beings whose fundamental rights can be violated. Combatting Islamophobia is not about preventing radicalism or terrorism [...] it is about politically addressing structural forms of discrimination and racism affecting Muslims or those perceived as such.”<sup>8</sup>

Although the statements of high-ranking politicians such as Frans Timmerman, vice-president of the European Commission, in which he recognized the problem of Islamophobia are positive steps, the European Coalition against Islamophobia still sees a large potential for improvement regarding the fight against Islamophobia on the EU level. According to the European Coalition against Islamophobia, the EU and national legislations provide legal remedies for racist crime and discrimination, yet Muslims still suffer from violence, prejudice and exclusion in Europe.<sup>9</sup> In this context, the FRA recommends better implementation of the relevant EU and national legislation to combat widespread harassment and hate crime against Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

On March 14, 2017, the European Court of Justice (EJC) for the first time made two judgments to rule on non-discrimination at work on religious grounds.<sup>11</sup> The EJC ruled that employers would be able to prohibit the wearing of religious garments by their employees. This was despite the content of Article 9, which secures the freedom of thought, conscience and religion of the European Convention on Human Rights. The EJC ruled that banning visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs is “appropriate” to ensure a “policy of neutrality” if systematically applied as a company policy. Obviously, also observant Jews and other religious minorities will be affected by this as much as Muslim women and men. But the verdict has evolved in the context of the complaints of two Muslim women, one from France and one from Belgium. It will be Muslim women who will suffer from this regulation disproportionately. Amnesty International protested against this decision as potentially propelling increased discrimination on the basis of religious identity, especially against Muslim women. Also, many faith communities and vocal Muslim organizations in Brussels and beyond have objected to what they perceive a step towards further institutionalization of Islamopho-

8. Ibid.

9. European Coalition against Islamophobia, “Strengthening Actions against Islamophobia: Next Steps for the European Commission”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from [http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017\\_one-pager\\_ec\\_islamophobia.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017_one-pager_ec_islamophobia.pdf).

10. OSCE, “Bias against Muslims”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <http://hatecrime.osce.org/taxonomy/term/230>.

11. Court of Justice of the European Union PRESS RELEASE No 30 /17 Luxembourg, March 14, 2017, <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-03/cp170030en.pdf>

bia. While this verdict made clear that visible signs of political, philosophical or religious beliefs can be banned in private companies, it left many questions open regarding the decisions to be taken in the future.

As Bülent Senay, personal representative of the OSCE Chair-in-Office on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims, argued during the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2017, on a supranational level, institutions still lack means to fight Islamophobia. Amongst other important recommendations, he called the OSCE states to commit to recording hate crimes against Muslims as a separate disaggregated category. The OSCE ODIHR is also considering the preparation of a guide on hate crimes against Muslims and on the security needs of Muslim communities in the OSCE region. A similar guide has been prepared and published for Jewish communities.<sup>12</sup> We think this would be a positive step to combatting Islamophobia in the OSCE region and, therefore, welcome the preparation of such a guide.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance of the Council of Europe publishes an annual report on the ECRI's activities, in which Islamophobia is also analyzed under a separate heading. In the last report, which covered the year 2016, the ECRI points to the fact that "Muslims continue to experience discrimination in various areas of social life, including education, employment and housing."<sup>13</sup> The ECRI concludes that the "negative experiences of Muslims in Europe can fuel feelings of isolation within a larger community and hinder inclusive societies."<sup>14</sup> However, we think that the Council of Europe, which consists of 47 states, can play a wider role in the combat against Islamophobia in Europe.

The European Coalition against Islamophobia, which consists of 13 NGOs,<sup>15</sup> has published its suggestion for an action plan for 2018-2019 to fight Islamophobia in the European Union. This plan puts the recognition of Islamophobia at its center and among other important recommendations calls the European Parliament to adopt a resolution on combatting Islamophobia as it did on combatting anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsism.<sup>16</sup>

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12. OSCE, "Understanding Anti-Semitic Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Jewish Communities", retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://www.osce.org/odihr/317166?download=true>.

13. Council of Europe, "Annual Report on ECRI's Activities", retrieved March 25, 2018, from [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/Annual\\_Reports/Annual%20report%202016.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/Annual_Reports/Annual%20report%202016.pdf).

14. Ibid.

15. The members of this coalition are the following: European Forum of Muslim Women; Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations; Karamah EU; European Muslim Initiative for Social Cohesion; European Network against Racism; and the Collective against Islamophobia in France.

16. ENAR, "Strengthening Actions against Islamophobia", retrieved March 25, 2018, from [http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017\\_one-pager\\_ec\\_islamophobia.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/2017_one-pager_ec_islamophobia.pdf).

A resolution adopted by the UN Human Rights Council on March 23, 2016 (Resolution 31/16) expressed “concern over violent attacks motivated by anti-religious bias, targeting individuals belonging to religious minorities, as well as religious places, and recommended that states prevent, investigate and punish such acts.”<sup>17</sup> Although this is more a general resolution on freedom of religion it is still relevant to EU states which are witnessing an unprecedented rise of anti-Muslim hate crimes in the last decade. More concretely, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reported that “the fear of terrorism and racist and xenophobic speech often translate into increases in hate crimes targeting Muslims, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.” Like many others, the special rapporteur reiterated the importance of collecting disaggregated data on hate crimes targeting Muslims and others.<sup>18</sup>

## The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

Beyond the supranational level, there are observable trends in different European nation states. Firstly, the far-right political camp has moved from the periphery to the center and become integral to the political landscape in Europe. While most far-right parties are still in opposition, some have gained major influence by becoming governing parties such as in the cases of Austria, Bulgaria, and Finland. While others may still be in opposition, their Islamophobic discourse, which is so central to most of them, has become mainstream since their issues have been co-opted by former centrist political parties. In Sweden, for instance, the once marginal anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats became the third or second largest party in opinion polls, pushing most other parties to adjust their policies accordingly. Secondly, we also observe a stronger cooperation of various Islamophobic parties in Europe. For instance, the Czech Freedom and Direct Democracy Party (SPD) organized a meeting of representatives of its partners from the European Parliament in December 2017 in Prague. Politicians such as Geert Wilders (Dutch Freedom Party) and Marine Le Pen (Front National) were amongst some of the participants.

From Sweden to Greece, from Poland to the Netherlands, the rise of far-right parties is a vital threat to democratic order in Europe. What is more dangerous is the mainstreaming and normalization of the far-right policies within mainstream politics. Austria is a wake-up call and the prime example of this horror story which might repeat itself in many European countries if European societies do not seriously tackle this disturbing trend.

17. OSCE, “Bias against Muslims”, retrieved March 25, 2018, from <http://hatecrime.osce.org/taxonomy/term/230>.

18. Ibid.

## The Right Wing in Opposition

As mentioned above in the majority of EU countries far-right parties are still in opposition. However, when in opposition, right-wing political parties are even more explicit about their racist utopia and hence speak out in a harsher and more direct way against Muslims. By doing so, they are playing a crucial role in the normalization of anti-Muslim discourse in Europe.

There are many examples of this blatant anti-Muslim racism, some of which will be presented here. In this context, the Northern League's candidate for president of the Lombardy region of Italy warned that there is a "risk that the white race disappears and is replaced by migrants."<sup>19</sup> In Slovenia, right-wing populist and extremist parties are not strong enough to win elections, however they are very active on social media and in the organization of public events and protests. For instance, Nova 24TV in Slovenia broadcasted the following Islamophobic opinion: "Obviously, we do not have enough terrorists, rapists and other criminals in Europe. It seems that leading politicians want to bring even more. Only this can explain their desire for the ever-increasing inclusion of migrants and Muslims in European countries."<sup>20</sup>

In Latvia, numerous pre-election programs of various parties for the 2017 municipal elections demonstrated unambiguous Islamophobic positions. In Riga, the Action Party of Eurosceptics (Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija) published the following slogan in their program, "We are not against Muslims, we are against the Islamization of Latvia and Europe."<sup>21</sup> The National Alliance (Nacionālā apvienība) was even more radical in its program in which it stated that it was "in support of not letting into Liepāja illegal immigrants called 'refugees' – potential criminals, terrorists and idlers! There will be no mosques here!"<sup>22</sup>

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, anti-Muslim bigotry and negative trends towards Muslims were evident mainly 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.

For the first time since 1989 a right-wing extremist party managed to enter parliament in Slovakia. The opposition party 'We Are a Family – Boris Kolar' submitted

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19. Milano, "Fontana: 'Razza bianca da difendere'. Poi precisa: 'È stato un lapsus'. Salvini: siamo sotto attacco", retrieved March 25, 2018, from [http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18\\_gennaio\\_15/atilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml](http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18_gennaio_15/atilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml).

20. Nova 24TV, "Levičarske dobre vile muslimanom odpirajo vrata, Evropa pa hudičeva semena še kar zaliva" (The Left Good Fairies Open the Doors of Europe to Muslims, and Europe Still Waters the Devil Seeds), retrieved November 22, 2017, from <http://nova24tv.si/svet/levicarske-dobre-vile-muslimanom-odpirajo-vrata-evropa-pa-hudiceva-semena-se-kar-zaliva/>.

21. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija", retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=8k1v7yBEuCMERyWBkqtFTQ%3D%3D>.

22. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija, "Nacionālā savienīga Taisnīgums," retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=0zFqpAsLIE456csFZERqxQ%3D%3D>.

a bill to amend the laws to enable a ban on building mosques. Eleven members voted for the proposal, 48 against it, while more than a half of the MPs, 77 in total, abstained from the vote.

In Southern Cyprus, a newly established party, the far-right ELAM (Ethniko Laiko Metopo), which is a sister party to Greece's Golden Dawn, has significantly contributed to spreading Islamophobia in the southern part of the island. Although ELAM is a very small party and only managed to enter parliament in 2016 with 3.71% (allowing them 2 MPs), their views are widespread; the archbishop of southern Cyprus often expresses his agreement with ELAM'S positions.

The successful Swiss right-wing party SVP tried to introduce a full-face veil ban in Sweden. Another parliamentary initiative by National Councillor Yannick Buttet (CVP) demanded a "mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sales as well as an increase in the price of imported halal meat."<sup>23</sup> Although the National Council accepted the initiative, the Council of States rejected it.

In Switzerland, the parliamentary motion by Lorenzo Quadri from the regional right-wing party Lega, which was adopted in the National Council, instructed the Federal Council to draw up a bill, which, following the rules that apply in Austria, provides a guarantee for the following: "(1) The prohibition of Islamic places of worship and imams who accept funds from abroad; (2) The obligation for Islamic centers to disclose the origin and use of their finances; (3) The duty to conduct sermons in the language of residence."<sup>24</sup>

Meanwhile in the UK, UKIP's election manifesto promised a public ban on "face coverings" and proscribed sharia courts in the UK. In the Netherlands, radical parties such as the Dutch SGP (a radical Christian party) published a manifesto,<sup>25</sup> which argued that "the love offer of Jesus Christ and Muhammad's use of violence are as different as day and night."<sup>26</sup>

Beyond political parties, on the more extreme non-parliamentarian level or the grassroots level, far-right groups, such as the Identitarian movement or ones that function underground, pose a threat to Muslims in Europe, especially in their most violent form. Nationalist groups such as, among others, the Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement and the "Finland First" movement were active in spreading their ideology of hate.

23. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, "Motion 15.499: Import of Halal Meat from Animals Slaughtered without Stunning," retrieved January 18, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20150499>.

24. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, "Motion 16.3330: Islamische Gebetsstätten. Verbot der Finanzierung durch das Ausland und Offenlegungspflicht", retrieved January 9, 2017, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=41116>.

25. SGP, "Manifest islam in Nederland", retrieved January 26, 2018, from <https://www.sgp.nl/actueel/manifest-islam-in-nederland/6125>.

26. Ibid., p. 2.

## The Right Wing in Power

Currently, there are a few governments in Europe, which include right-wing parties that have focused heavily on using Islamophobia as a means of gaining public support and political power. After the general elections in Norway, the Progress Party, which is often regarded as a right-wing populist party and which had an openly Islamophobic election campaign, governs together with the conservatives in a coalition. Consequently, for the first time in Norwegian history, there are government representatives who do not shy away from using Islamophobic discourse. The Progress Party's minister for immigration and integration, Sylvi Løsthaug, suggested a prohibition against hijabs at elementary schools, which was not supported by the coalition partner. The party also proposed to ban the circumcision of baby boys, which also found no support in parliament. A third proposal, a national ban of the face veil in schools and institutions of higher education, won broad parliamentary support and is currently being circulated for consultation.

In the Czech Republic, a new party called ANO won the elections. Its leader supported the notorious Islamophobic politician, Czech President Miloš Zeman. The leader of the right-wing populist party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), which campaigns continuously for a legal ban of Islam, became vice-chair of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. Although there is a tiny Muslim community in the country, the 2017 national elections were the first in the history of the Czech Republic, during which attitudes towards Muslims were a central issue.

In Bulgaria, a hostile language towards Muslims is winning ground. Especially, during election campaigns, anti-Muslim rhetoric was at its peak. Many extreme right-wing political parties such as ATAKA, NFSB (National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria), and IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) are part of the current government and form a coalition with the leading party.

In Serbia, there are ministers such as Aleksandar Vulin, minister of defense, and Nebojša Stefanovic, minister of the interior, who attract attention by stirring ethnic and religious hostilities. Today, we can witness a revival of political parties and forces from the 1990s in the political arena. Currently, the strongest parties are those that were the most important players in the aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. A rise in nationalism and hate speech targeting Muslims can be seen in the public sphere. Crimes committed against Muslims are glorified.

## Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

We observe a general trend within centrist political parties to co-opt the Islamophobic discourse of right-wing political parties. The former president of Romania, Traian Basescu, proclaimed in the midst of a debate on a mosque in Bucharest that this was

“a risk to national security,” and argued that “part of the Islamization of Europe is building mosques everywhere.”<sup>27</sup> During a local council election in Bucharest in June 2016, several leading Bucharest mayoral candidates argued for a referendum on the mosque, amongst them the current mayor Gabriela Firea of the Social Democratic Party (Partidul Social Democrat – PSD).<sup>28</sup>

In Poland, there is no nominal right-wing political party, but a conservative party in power, which nevertheless allows an unambiguous negative image of Islam to be spread in state institutions. State-funded media outlets seem to carefully select their guests, who spread a stereotypical portrayal of Muslims as “violent,” “terrorists,” “Jihadists,” “sexists,” “rapists,” “uncivilized,” “double-faced,” and in general “a threat” to European and Christian values. While a research commissioned by the Commissioner of Human Rights on the attitudes among Polish secondary school students was published in 2017, showing that the majority of the 396 respondents reveal strong anti-refugee, Islamophobic and homophobic prejudice,<sup>29</sup> the Ministry of Education shut down anti-discrimination programs in Polish schools and instead promoted programs supporting patriotism and a national and cultural Polish identity.<sup>30</sup>

In Spain, former president of Madrid and of the senate, and former minister of culture, Esperanza Aguirre, tweeted that January 2 was a glorious day for Spanish women who otherwise would not enjoy any freedom under the rule of Islam.<sup>31</sup> In Slovakia, former president Robert Fico argued that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia.”<sup>32</sup>

In Hungary, the ruling conservative Fidesz competed in Islamophobic rhetoric with the far right. It finally managed to make anti-Muslim narratives become un-

27. Gandul, “Băsescu nu vrea moschee la București și-l trimite pe Iohannis să se facă muftiu la Sibiu. România trebuie să rămână creștină” (Basescu Doesn’t Want a Mosque in Bucharest and Sends Iohannis to Become a Mufti at Sibiu. Romania Must Remain Christian), retrieved December 26, 2017, from <http://www.gandul.info/politica/basescu-nu-vrea-moschee-la-bucuresti-si-l-trimite-pe-iohannis-sa-se-faca-muftiu-la-sibiu-romania-trebuie-sa-ramana-crestina-15154001>.

28. Euractiv, “Firea: Moschee în București doar după un referendum local/Orban: Nu voi autoriza moscheea lui Ponta” (Mosque in Bucharest Only After Local Referendum / Orban: I Won’t Authorize Ponta’s Mosque), March 25, 2016, retrieved December 23, 2017, from <http://www.euractiv.ro/politic-intern/firea-despre-construirea-unei-moschei-la-bucuresti-doar-dupa-un-referendum-local-3920>.

29. Gajos-Kaniewska, Dorota, “RPO: młodzież nie chce uchodźców – wyniki badania wśród uczniów szkół średnich”, retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://www.rp.pl/Edukacja-i-wychowanie/309069922-RPO-mlodziemnie-chce-uchodzcow---wyniki-badania-wsrod-uczniow-szkol-srednich.html>.

30. Newsweek, “Patryotyzm – tak, tolerancja – nie. Prawicowa ideologia od września wchodzi do polskich szkół” retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/koniec-zajeciami-antydiskryminacyjnymi-w-szkolach-edukacja-narodowa-wedlug-pis,artykuly,412809,1.html>.

31. El Diario, “Esperanza Aguirre, sobre la Toma de Granada: “Es un día de gloria para las españolas. Con el Islam no tendríamos libertad,” retrieved October 24, 2017, from [http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Esperanza-Aguirre-Toma-Granada-Islam\\_0\\_597390772.html](http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Esperanza-Aguirre-Toma-Granada-Islam_0_597390772.html).

32. Juraj Koník, “Premiér Fico je opäť svetový, prerazil výrokmi o moslimoch, ktorých k nám nepusti”, *denník N*, (January 8, 2016) retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://dennikn.sk/338314/premier-fico-opat-svetovy-prerazil-vyrokmimoslomoch-ktorych-nam-nepusti/>.

contested and thus realized a support of an overwhelming portion of the population. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán became famous for the alleged conspiracy of George Soros to Islamize Europe with the help of “hordes of migrants raping Europe.”<sup>33</sup>

During the national presidential elections in France in 2017, Islamophobia was omnipresent not only in the campaign of the Front National but also in an array of other candidates’ campaigns. Also during the national elections in the Netherlands in 2017, there was a race between the right-wing populist party of Geert Wilders (PVV) and the center-right party of Mark Rutte (VVD). Some intellectuals, before the elections, discussed whether the number of Muslims could be reduced by deportation. Prominent Law Professor Paul Cliteur was present during the debate and discussed how this could be made possible legally.

In Denmark, the leader of the Social Democrats, Mette Frederiksen, argued that there is no need for Muslim private schools and that they would be strengthening the isolation of Muslims. Frederiksen argued that “a school with a foundation in Islam is not part of the majority culture in Denmark.”<sup>34</sup> Bias against Muslims within the oppositional social democratic party intensified. This is also true for the conservatives in Austria. There, the then-leader of the conservatives and now chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, argued that there should not be any private Muslim kindergartens in the country.

## Denying the Suffering

In many European countries, the very existence of Islamophobia itself is denied. In countries like Austria and Norway, leading journalists of editorial boards shift the focus from Islamophobia as a problem to Islamophobia as a “combat term,” arguing that the term itself is used by Islamists to delegitimize any debate on Islam and Muslims. Hence, there is a reluctance to use the term “Islamophobia” in the public sphere. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, there is a denial of the anti-Muslim genocide. Nationalist movements and even parts of the Croatian political establishment argue that the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to be territorially divided in order to secure peace and security. Convictions such as in the case of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague fueled Islamophobia within these separatist and nationalist movements. Republika Srpska, continued its separatist policy in 2017 and was supported by visits from abroad, especially members of the right-wing Austrian FPÖ, which now forms a government with the conservative ÖVP.

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33. Farid Hafez, “When Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia Join Hands”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/anti-semitism-islamophobia-join-hands-170809084731114.html>.

34. Andreas Karker and Jacob Friberg, “Mette Frederiksen i brutalt opgør: Luk alle muslimske friskoler”, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/politiko/mette-frederiksen-i-brutalt-opgoer-luk-alle-muslimske-friskoler>.

## The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

An unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish an Islamic State in Sweden was published by a Swedish state agency. The Administrative Court of Appeal later dismissed the report as of “highly limited” value. The author is a senior fellow at the Brussels-based think tank European Foundation for Democracy, which plays a central role in disseminating this conspiracy theory, which helps in defaming Muslim civil society actors. Also in Austria, a report was published on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy by another senior policy advisor of the same think tank in cooperation with a state agency. The report had no serious impact, since it was presented a few days before the elections and did not receive major coverage due to other political scandals. The current chancellor of Austria Sebastian Kurz has been central in sponsoring ‘studies’ on Muslims in Austria (one on Muslim kindergartens, the other on mosques), which would serve his increasingly Islamophobic agenda. Also, Islamophobia is a threat, when good initiatives are legitimized for the wrong ends. Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama defended the need for religious instruction in public schools with the prevention of the radicalization of young Muslims.

## Online Islamophobia

Islamophobic groups are especially active on the Internet. Often, the Internet is where right-wing groups emerge before materializing in “real life.” Therefore, better regulations are needed in this sphere to combat the spread of Islamophobic content which is the main source in the radicalization of far-right terrorist groups or lone wolves.

Groups such as the explicitly Islamophobic Identitarian Movement that represents the postmodern face of the New Right, is active in countries like Slovenia, Hungary. Malta witnessed the emergence of its first far-right party, the Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin (Maltese Patriots). While doing poorly in elections, their media campaign and social media advertisements presented many Islamophobic statements. In countries with a negligible Muslim population like Latvia, Islamophobic attitudes are still mostly voiced on the Internet. In Italy, a significant research on intolerance based on an analysis of Twitter realized by Voxdiritti in 2016 ranked Muslims as the fourth most targeted group (6% of all tweets).<sup>35</sup>

## Legalizing Islamophobia

Early in 2017, the Austrian government, made up of social democrats and conservatives, passed a law that outlawed the veiling of the face. Romania followed

35. See VOX, “Ecco la nuova Mappa dell’Intolleranza”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.voxdiritti.it/ecco-la-nuova-edizione-della-mappa-dellintolleranza>.

with a legislative proposal for the ban of face veiling in educational institutions initiated by the ruling People's Movement Party (PMP). The asserted aim was the prevention of violence and terrorism. The law was launched by 26 MPs from three parliamentary parties. Also, in Latvia, where – similar to Romania – there are nearly no Muslims, a draft law on the restriction of wearing a face veil was prepared by the Ministry of Justice in 2015 and is still under consideration. In Belgium, the parliament voted for limitations on ritual slaughter including the prohibition of Muslim halal slaughter. Also, a debate on a state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium began. In a small village in Hungary, a mayor passed a law to ban the construction of mosques and minarets, the Muslim call for prayer, the chador, niqab, burqa, and burkini. The mayor argued that he wished to set a positive example for other Hungarian municipalities in order to guarantee the 'centuries-old traditions' of local communities in the face of mass migration to the country.<sup>36</sup> After massive protests in the entire country, the mayor had to withdraw the legislation for contradicting a number of basic rights guaranteed by the Hungarian Constitution.<sup>37</sup> In November 2017, however, the local council voted in favor of the same legislation that was amended after merely removing any words referring to Islam from the text. Also, the Dutch Christian-Democrats (CDA) included a ban on the financing of mosques from abroad and were wary of "radical Islam" in their campaign program.

In Finland, a citizens' initiative<sup>38</sup> was launched to amend a law in favor of a "Burka Ban." Among the initiators was Terhi Kiemunki,<sup>39</sup> a former member of the Finns Party, who was convicted of incitement to hatred due to texts on her blog defaming Muslims.<sup>40</sup> A spokesperson of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, current chairman of the Finnish Defense League (FDL), who proclaims to be fighting against "Islamic extremism"<sup>41</sup> and is known for other smaller initiatives such as demonstrations against "Islamization" before a school. In Denmark, a ban on full-face veils, a so-called "mask ban" (popularly referred to as the "niqab ban") was proposed by the Danish

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36. HVG, "Toroczkai odacsap a bevándorlóknak: megtiltják a mecsetépítést Ásotthalmon", retrieved February 5, 2017, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124\\_toroczkai\\_asonthalom\\_muszlim\\_tiltas](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124_toroczkai_asonthalom_muszlim_tiltas).

37. HVG, "Elmeszelte Toroczkai rendeletét az Alkotmánybíróság", retrieved January 9, 2018, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412\\_alkotmanybirosag\\_toroczkai\\_asonthalom](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412_alkotmanybirosag_toroczkai_asonthalom).

38. "Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing the proposal that an act be enacted" as defined in "MOT Eduskuntasanasto," a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister's Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?UI=fied&height=147>.

39. Cf. "Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016" in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017.

40. For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki's court case, see *Ibid.*

41. Homepage of the Finnish Defense League, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <http://www.fdl.fi/about/>.

People's Party following the verdict by the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>42</sup> This initiative was not only supported by the right wing, but also the Social Democrats and the Danish Social Liberal Party, arguing that they would, thus, empower Muslim women. There is also a law prohibiting male circumcision under way in Denmark.

## Terrorist Attacks against Muslims

In Europe, the largest number of attacks which could conclusively be affiliated to terrorist organizations were carried out by racists, nationalists and separatist extremists (99), followed by left-wing extremist attacks (27). Nevertheless, Jihadist terrorist attacks (13) and the general Muslim population in Europe associated with it are largely seen as the greatest threat to European societies.<sup>43</sup> Irresponsible politicians and media play their part in supporting this trend.

There are worrying signs of far-right terrorist groups and lone wolf far-right terrorists increasing their activities and targeting Muslims in Europe. Attacks against mosques and Muslim institutions have become a daily routine. For instance, according to the DITIB in Germany there were 101 attacks on mosques throughout 2017. However, the attacks against Muslims, persons who are perceived as Muslims, and persons who are vocal in their support for Muslim or refugee rights are becoming more and more frequent and violent. In Germany, the government registered around 908 hate crimes in 2017 against German Muslims, ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts. As a result of these Islamophobic attacks in Europe, there are already victims of Islamophobic terrorist attacks who have either been killed or severely injured. Below we have summarized the most important attacks in 2017.

On the night of April 15, 2017, the 22-year-old Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed al-Gohary was killed in a hit-and-run incident in Cottbus, Germany. The most shocking part is that while she lay injured on the street, people started insulting her in racist ways, believing she was a refugee. The attackers eventually came back on foot and said things like "Well, they gotta check the street first, since they don't have streets at home. They should fuck off to their damn country."

In Germany, the conservative mayor of Altena, Andreas Hollstein, known for his welcoming stance towards refugees was stabbed in the neck and seriously injured in a knife attack at a kebab restaurant.<sup>44</sup>

42. Lizzie Dearden, "European Court of Human Rights Upholds Belgium's Ban on Burqas and Full-Face Islamic Veils," retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/belgium-burqa-ban-upheld-european-court-of-human-rights-dakir-v-full-face-islamic-veils-headscarf-a7835156.html>.

43. EUROPOL, "European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation 2017", retrieved March 24, 2018, from [www.europol.europa.eu](http://www.europol.europa.eu).

44. Samuel Osborne, "German Pro-refugee Mayor Stabbed in Politically-Motivated Knife Attack", retrieved March 25, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-pro-refugee-mayor-andreas-hollstein-altena-knife-attack-politically-motivated-angela-merkel-a8079806.html>.

In Sweden, three members of the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement were sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison. The trio was found guilty of bombings of two refugee housings and a libertarian socialist trade union office in Gothenburg, which severely wounded one person. They were trained in urban guerrilla warfare by a Russian radical nationalist and anti-Muslim paramilitary organization. The perpetrators were influenced by Islamophobic and anti-Semitic discourse, which was clear in a recorded video prayer to All-Father Odin in which they vowed to “retake our land” and “take the fight against you who have defiled our country.” “Oh Jew, oh Muslim / We Norsemen have awakened / You should fear us / We are coming after you / The rage of the Norsemen thunder / Be assured / Oh, Jew and Muslim / The Norsemen are coming after you.”<sup>45</sup> The fact that Islamophobia goes hand in hand with other forms of racism, such as anti-Semitism in this case, should be a symbolic reminder for those, who are aware of European history.<sup>46</sup> Beyond this example of a right-wing extremist movement, the case of Hungary, where the ruling Fidesz party mobilizes against George Soros while portraying him as a conspirator alongside Muslims to change the European population,<sup>47</sup> reveals again that racism will eventually target every minority.

On September 27, 2017, four members of the banned neo-Nazi group National Action in the UK were arrested on suspicion of preparing and instigating acts of terrorism. According to the UK's Defense Ministry some of them were soldiers serving in the British army.<sup>48</sup>

In Germany, two supporters of a neo-Nazi terrorist group were arrested on January 14 after 155 kg of explosives were discovered in their home.<sup>49</sup> On April 27, a German soldier posing as a Syrian refugee was arrested for allegedly planning a “false flag” shooting attack against politicians that would be blamed on asylum seekers.<sup>50</sup>

On October 17, 2017, 10 far-right militants were arrested by French anti-terrorist police in France. According to the TV station M6, they were suspected of

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45. Nationella åklagarmyndigheten, Ansökan om stämning, Ärende AM-8443-17, Inkom 2017-06-09MÅLN: B 618-17, AKTBIL: 206; Säkerhetspolisen, Huvudprotokoll, dnr 0105-K98-16 0105-K8-17 0105-K9-17, Inkom 2017-06-09.

46. Farid Hafez, “Comparing Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia: The State of the Field”, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Volume 3, Issue 2, Spring 2016, pp. 16-34.

47. Farid Hafez, “When Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia Join Hands”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/08/anti-semitism-islamophobia-join-hands-170809084731114.html>.

48. DW, “Serving British Soldiers among Neo-Nazi Terror Suspects Arrested in UK”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.dw.com/en/serving-british-soldiers-among-neo-nazi-terror-suspects-arrested-in-uk/a-40370114>.

49. Lizzie Dearden, “German Police Investigating Neo-Nazi Terror Plot after Bomb Branded with Swastika Discovered”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-neo-nazi-right-wing-extremism-terror-plot-attack-refugees-oldschool-society-explosives-a7527116.html>.

50. Lizzie Dearden, “German Soldier Posing as a Syrian Refugee Arrested for Planning False Flag Terror Attack”, retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/german-soldier-syria-refugee-false-flag-terror-attack-posing-arrested-frankfurt-france-bavaria-a7705231.html>.

planning attacks on French politicians and on Muslim places of worship.<sup>51</sup>

In Russia, between 2012 and 2016, five imams were killed in the Stavropol region. The cases remain unresolved to this day. All the assassinated imams were involved in civic activism and they openly resisted the prohibition of the hijab in the Stavropol region.

On June 19, 2017, a man drove his van deliberately into a crowd of Muslim worshippers leaving the north London Finsbury Park Mosque. As a result of this attack, one person was killed and eleven were injured.

In Poland, a Pakistani Muslim man was severely beaten by a group of men in Ozorków on January 3, 2017. On April 8, 2017, three Pakistani Muslim men were severely beaten in Swidwin Polan.

## Threatening the Religious Infrastructure

More than two decades after the Agreements of 1992 between the Islamic communities and the Spanish state, basic rights such as access to religious education or the possibility of burying the Muslim dead in an Islamic cemetery have not been put into practice in most of the Spanish regions; small steps, however, are being taken in this sense. In Malta, there were debates about the legitimacy of teaching Islam to Muslim pupils.

In Slovakia, there has been a parliamentary debate on a draft law that toughened the registration of churches and religious communities and a draft has been submitted by members of the government of the Slovak National Party (SNS). This trend of discrimination against Muslims, who are a small minority in Slovakia and thus directly affected by these amendments, has been noticed by the U.S. Department of State, which in its report on religious freedom in the world noted the disparity in the approach to religious rights in the country. Today, it is impossible for the Muslim community to become an officially registered religious community in Slovakia.

In Greece, three mosques located inside non-governmental organizations belonging to members of the Muslim Turkish minority were closed by the Greek police - one of them had existed for 12 years. Officially, the closures were due to the lack of the necessary permissions to function a house of prayer inside the premises.

In Bulgaria, an indifference from the part of governments to the religious needs of Muslims can be observed. There is a lack of funding by the state be it in the area of religious education, Muslims' attempts to develop a cultural-religious center, or the blocking of Muslims' attempts to regain property ownership of *waqf* properties. Also, many Muslim religious employees, which were formerly and legally paid by the Turkish government, had to leave their jobs because the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria unilaterally cancelled the treaty between Bulgaria and Turkey and did not

51. The Strait Times, "French Police Arrest 10 Far-Right Militants", retrieved March 24, 2018, from <http://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/10-arrested-in-france-over-suspected-plot-to-kill-politicians-probe-source>.

inform the representatives of the Office of the Grand Mufti, which faced a structural crisis after being informed three months later.

On a European level, the European Citizens' Initiative against Extremism (Stop Extremism) was founded and recognized on June 7, 2017 by the European Commission. Among its initiators are Seyran Ates and Efgani Dönmez, who are known for their notorious Islamophobic positions. Supporters include well-known Islamophobes such as Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, Ralph Ghadban, Saida Keller-Messahli, and Necla Kelek. The initiative, which came under criticism when leaks by the weekly *Falter* revealed that more than 20,000 Euros, the budget specified by the EU Commission, could potentially be used to restrict Muslims' religious activities. Stop Extremism calls for "the introduction of a joint, EU-wide watch list to which individuals and organizations with an extremist background could be added" as well as for the introduction of an "Extremism-free" certification for organizations and businesses.<sup>52</sup> Initiatives like this seem to target specifically Muslims, not extremists, and to restrain their scope of activities, which ultimately reflects already existing restrictions as discussed above.

## Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations

The picture presented here shows us that there is an urgent need to counter these developments. And there is room for hope. Critical assessment of the current situation regarding Muslims in Europe is growing within parts of civil society. Not only are there more and more institutions that are working to bring attention to the rise in hate crime towards Muslims such as the Spain-based Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios<sup>53</sup> but there are also favorable developments such as in the Norwegian justice system which has developed positive steps regarding monitoring and convicting cases involving hate speech or discrimination against Muslims. Also, the German Federal Police has made a first important institutional step to combatting Islamophobia by documenting it: for the first time, Islamophobia has been included as a category of hate crime.

There are more and more politicians, who dare to openly speak out against the threat of Islamophobia. President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska stood up for Muslims in his New Year's speech. Also, Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen took a stance of solidarity with Muslim women wearing the hijab. Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä called people not to respond to "hate with hate"<sup>54</sup> in the aftermath of the stabbings by a Muslim citizen, which led to increased harassment, violent physical attacks as well as acts of vandalism against Muslim properties van-

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52. Stop Extremism, "Six Actions That We Demand to Secure a Safer Europe", retrieved March 24, 2018, from <https://www.en.stopextremism.eu/about>.

53. Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los medios, <http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/>.

54. Tuulia Thynell, "Pääministeri Sipilä: Teko oli raukkamainen ja tuomittava, mutta vihaan ei pidä vastata vihalla", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9786182>.

dalism towards Muslims.<sup>55</sup> These examples of political courage give hope that there still exist reasonable politicians, who look beyond their ephemeral political careers, keeping the good of the whole of society in mind. With an increase of alternative right-wing media and social media bubbles as well as a general swing to the right, hate speech is becoming more and more normalised. In an especially extreme incident in the Czech Republic, children in a primary school in the city of Teplice were threatened with death in gas chambers; the class was comprised predominantly of children of Arab or Romani origin. Such incidents call for an unambiguous reaction on behalf of politicians and opinion leaders.

The authors of every respective national report have suggested specific recommendations regarding the country they have covered. This will support all those forces within European societies, who work towards a more equal society and fight every form of racism. The editors of the *EIR* support the following recommendations which were made by the OSCE ODIHR office, the FRA, the ENAR, the European Coalition against Islamophobia, and other NGOs:

- In the face of the increased and generalized suspicion and marginalization of Muslims in the post-terrorist attacks and migration contexts and the deep impact the former have had on Muslims' lives, including newly arrived migrants, the recognition of the specific form of racism targeting Muslims (or those perceived as such) is crucial.
- The misconceptions and demonization surrounding the fight against Islamophobia and visible Muslims, in general, need to be challenged; data, facts and concrete solutions need to be visible in order to improve the recognition of Islamophobia and influence policy changes.
- This should lead to informed anti-racism/anti-discrimination policies and support the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation on the national and European levels. EU institutions need to recognize and address Islamophobia politically as a form of racism that can lead to human rights violations.
- While the issue of Islamophobia has gained more visibility in recent years at the EU level, there is a clear need for stronger actions that will materialize recognition into concrete political actions.
- Considering their competence on the issue of anti-racism and non-discrimination, EU institutions have the possibility to support progress and change in this area. The appointment of the European Commission's coordinator on combatting anti-Muslim hatred following the European Commission's 2015 colloquium on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred has created a momentum for the EU to act.

55. Marjaana Varmavuori/Maija Aalto, "16-vuotias somalialainen pahoitettiin kotirapussa, parturi uhattiin tappaa – maahanmuuttajat kertovat, että täysin sivullisia uhkailaan nyt väkivallalla Turun tapahtumien vuoksi", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005336689.html>.

- The legal and political recognition of Islamophobia is of utmost importance. Therefore, a European-level conference on Islamophobia should be organized with the support of at least one EU Member State or the European Parliament.
- In this context, the European Parliament should adopt a resolution on combating Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward - as it did to combat anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsism.
- The adoption of EU standards for National Action Plans against Racism that take into account specific forms of racism, and include specific measures on Islamophobia with objectives and targets is necessary.
- EU member states should adopt national action plans against racism addressing Islamophobia as a specific form of racism.
- The European Commission should develop a roadmap detailing main policy instruments, issues and examples of good practice by Member States. This would function as a standard document that would be the basis for concrete operational objectives and action plans for the EU coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred.
- The European Commission's coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred should develop a clear action plan for combatting Islamophobia.
- A high-level roundtable should be organized with the European Commission's coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred and NGOs on the issue of Islamophobia.
- Europe needs courageous leaders and activists who can confront the Islamophobic discourses and narratives in the age of rising far-right parties.
- A Guidance handbook should be developed on the collection methodology of hate crime data for EU Member States in order to ensure that Islamophobia is duly recorded according to the victims' and witnesses' perceptions and lived experiences; other bias indicators should be included in the data collection as well.
- The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes as a separate category of hate crime by the police is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.
- Muslim women's access to employment should be improved since they are the most discriminated group among Muslims. Gender equality departments and the corresponding committees of EU institutions should give specific attention to situations of discrimination affecting Muslim women by documenting the issue and pushing for specific programs and measures to combat it.
- While protecting free speech, developing good guidelines to tackle online hate speech and considering primary legislation to deal with social media offences and online hate speech are also vital since the Internet plays an important role in the spread of Islamophobic discourses and also in the radicalization of far-right terrorists.

- Discrimination in the workplace should be tackled to address the low level of economic activity among Muslims through targeted interventions at the stages of recruitment, job retention, and promotion.
- Preserving the Human Rights Act and the protection of minority rights including religious slaughter, circumcision and the wearing of religious attire or symbols are imperative for a multicultural Europe.
- Counter-terrorism policies should work with Muslim communities, not against them, in the so-called “de-radicalization” programs. These programs should also incorporate the fight against far-right and far-left terrorist groups and should not only target Muslims.

# ISLAMOPHOBIA IN NUMBERS

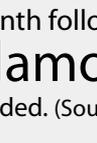
- The overwhelming majority of European states do not record Islamophobic incidents as a separate category of hate crime. The recording of anti-Muslim/Islamophobic crimes by the police as a separate category of hate crime is essential to uncover the real extent of this problem and to develop counter-strategies to combat it.
- In the EU, only 12% of Muslims who have been discriminated against report their cases to the authorities. (Source: FRA) The non-exhaustive list that follows hints at the extent of underreporting of anti-Muslim hate crimes in Europe by states and NGOs, which has serious implications regarding the awareness of Muslims and the bureaucracy to tackle these issues.



## DENMARK

In 2016, **56** Islamophobic incidents were reported. 20% of the all hate crime committed in 2016 targeted Muslims, while the group make up 5% of the general population, making Muslims the most targeted minority.

(Source: National Police)



## BELGIUM

In the month following the terror attacks in Brussels, **36** Islamophobic incidents were recorded. (Source: CCIB).



## AUSTRIA

**256** Islamophobic incidents were documented.

(Source: EIR Report, Antidiscrimination Office Styria, ZARA, and Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education [IDB]).

## FRANCE

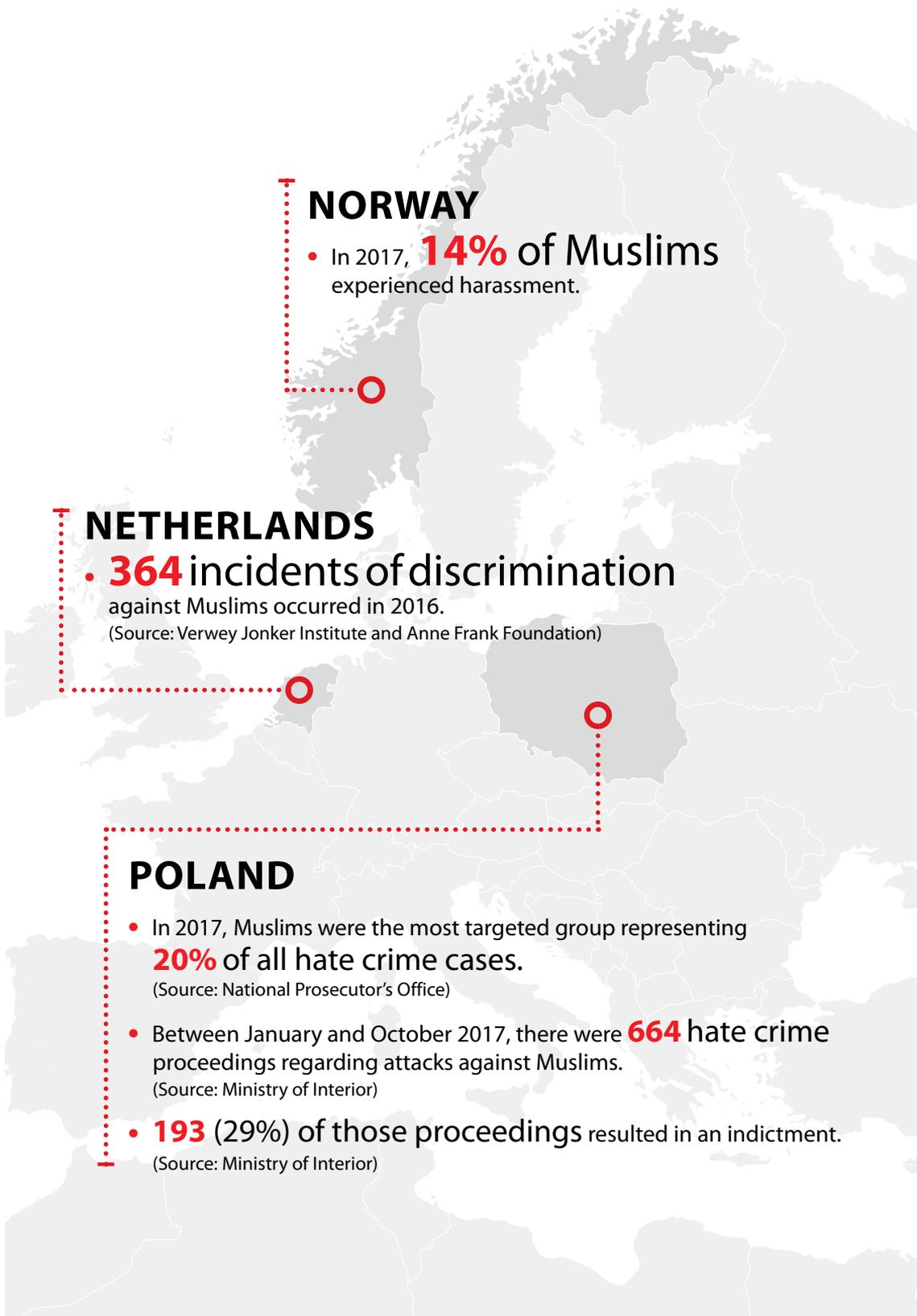
- **121** Islamophobic incidents were reported.  
(Source: Observatory of Islamophobia)
- **19** Muslim places of worship were closed by the government; **749** individuals were placed under house arrest; over **4,500** police raids were conducted; and the list of individuals under government surveillance has reached **25,000**.
- **17,393** individuals were enrolled in the Terrorism Prevention Database (FSPRT).

## GERMANY

- **100** attacks occurred on mosques.  
(Source: DITIB and German State)
- **908** attacks took place targeting German Muslims.
- **60%** of all Muslim teaching staff felt discriminated.  
(Source: Karim Fereidooni)
- There were **1,906** criminal attacks on refugees  
(5.2 attacks per day).
- There were **286** attacks against refugee shelters  
(0.8 attacks per day).
- **132** criminal acts and physical attacks against  
(refugee) aid workers occurred (0.4 attacks per day).  
(Source: German state)

## MALTA

- **7%** of Muslims have experienced physical violence.
- **25%** of Muslims have experienced harassment.



## NORWAY

- In 2017, **14%** of Muslims experienced harassment.

## NETHERLANDS

- **364** incidents of discrimination against Muslims occurred in 2016.  
(Source: Verwey Jonker Institute and Anne Frank Foundation)

## POLAND

- In 2017, Muslims were the most targeted group representing **20%** of all hate crime cases.  
(Source: National Prosecutor's Office)
- Between January and October 2017, there were **664** hate crime proceedings regarding attacks against Muslims.  
(Source: Ministry of Interior)
- **193** (29%) of those proceedings resulted in an indictment.  
(Source: Ministry of Interior)

## SWEDEN

- In 2016, **439** hate crimes with Islamophobic motives were recorded. (Source: Swedish Crime Survey-NTU)

## UNITED KINGDOM

- The terrorist attack in Manchester in May resulted in a **fivefold increase** in Islamophobic hate crime in the Greater Manchester region. (Source: Greater Manchester Police)
- Hate crime cases targeting Muslims in Greater London for the entire year of 2017 increased to **1,204** from **1,678** in the previous year, which is equal to a 40% rise. (Source: Scotland Yard)
- Between March and July 2017, the number of **attacks on mosques** climbed to **110** from **47** in the previous year. (Source: Tell MAMA UK)
- In 2016, **1,223** cases of Islamophobic attacks were reported to Tell MAMA. Twenty percent of these incidents involve physical attacks; **56%** of the victims were women, while two-thirds of the perpetrators were men.

## SPAIN

- In 2017, **546** attacks took place against Muslims. (Source: Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia)



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**ALBANIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

This report notes an increase of the Islamophobic rhetoric in Albania in 2017. As noted in previous reports, Islamophobia in Albania is primarily linked to identity politics that reflect attempts to shape the collective identity of the nation by rejecting Islam and embracing Europe, where Europe and Islam are seen as mutually exclusive entities.

The Eid prayer in the main square of the capital in 2017 was followed by intense Islamophobic rhetoric. In December, a mob attacked the Turkish flag next to a power plant administered by a Turkish company. The Turkish flag was equated to the Ottoman flag, and as media commentators pointed out, while the event was presented as motivated by nationalism, it had a clear anti-Muslim dimension.

Mainstream media promotes hate speech and calls for violence against Muslims, calls that pass without reactions or retractions, contributing to the normalization of Islamophobia in the public sphere. Instances of hate speech including calls for the assassination of Turkish President Erdogan during an upcoming visit when he is scheduled to inaugurate the new mosque in the capital. Normalized anti-Muslim bigotry is seen as one of the main reasons that despite low reported numbers of discrimination in employment, Muslims – especially Muslim women – do not report discriminatory treatment, or have internalized notions of Islamophobia that prevents them from even applying for employment.

Political tensions in Albania in 2017 were injected with the rhetoric of ‘clash of civilizations’ that sought to demonize political opponents by comparing them to ‘Ottomans,’ in a recycled discourse that conflates the Ottoman Empire, Islam, and the contemporary Republic of Turkey. Right-wing politicians from other European nations have contributed to this rhetoric in Albania.

This report notes the persistent bias in school textbooks towards Islam, while pointing out that a government proposal of adding the instruction on religion to the public school curriculum is presented to the public as driven by the fear of Islamic extremism.

Despite no terrorist attack having been reported in Albania, the fear of terrorism is used to justify controversial judicial policies, including the temporary closing of a mosque, and what can amount to extra-judicial arrests, lacking transparency in terms of the legal proceedings followed by the authorities.

## Përmbledhje Ekzekutive

Ky raport vëren rritjen e retorikës islamofobe në Shqipëri në 2017. Sic është vënë në raporte të mëpërparshme, Islamofobia në Shqipëri është në mënyrë primare e lidhur me politikat identitare që reflektojnë përpjekje për të formësuar identitetin kolektiv të kombit duke refuzuar Islamin e duke përqafuar Europën, ku Europa dhe Islami shihen si entitete që përjashtojnë njëra tjetrën.

Falja e Kurban Bajramit në sheshin kryesor të kryeqytetit në 2017 u pasua nga retorikë intensive islamofobe. Në Dhjetor një turmë sulmoi flamurin turk pranë një hidrocentrali të administruar nga një kompani turke. Flamuri turk u krahasua me flamurin Osman dhe sic u vu në dukje nga komentues mediatike, teksa sulmi u paraqit si i nxitur prej ndjenjash nacionaliste, ai kishte një dimension të qartë anti-Musliman.

Mediat kanë promovuar gjuhën e urrejtjes, thirrjet për dhunë kundra muslimanëve, thirrje që kalojnë pa reagime e pa u tërhequr mbrapsht, duke kontribuar kështu në normalizimin e Islamofobisë në sferën publike. Kjo përfshin thirrje për vrasjen e Presidentit turk, Erdogan, gjatë një vizite të ardhshme ku pritet të inagurojë hapjen e xhamisë së re në kryeqytet. Normalizimi i paragjykimeve anti-muslimane është ndër shkaktoret kryesore që, edhe pse ka numëra të ulët të raportimit të diskriminimit në punësim për shkak të Islamofobisë, muslimanët – vecanërisht femrat muslimane – nuk raportojnë trajtimet diskriminuese, apo kanë përbrendësuar nocionet e Islamofobisë e si rjedhojë nuk aplikojnë për punësim.

Tensioneve politike në Shqipëri në 2017 ju shtua retorika e “përplasjes së qytet-rimeve,” që kishte për qëllim sulmin negativ të oponentit politik duke i krahasuar me “osmanë,” duke ricikluar ligjërimin që bashkëvendos Perandorinë Osmane, Islamin, dhe Republikën e Turqisë së sotme. Politikanë të djathtë nga vende europiane, gjithashtu, i kontribuan kësaj retorike.

Ky raport vëren vazhdimësinë e anësisë negative ndaj Islamit në tekstet shkollorë, teksa vëren se një propozim qeveritar për përfshirjen e lëndës fetare në kurikulumin shkollor i prezantohet publikut si i nxitur prej frikës ndaj ekstremizmit islamik.

Pavarësisht se nuk ka patur sulme terroriste të raportuar në Shqipëri, frika ndaj terrorizmit përdoret për justifikuar veprime juridike kontraversiale, përfshi mbylljen e përkohshme të xhamisë qendrore të Tiranës, apo dhe arrestime me ligjshmëri të dyshimtë, në mungesë të plotë të transparencës në lidhje me procedurat ligjore të ndjekura nga autoritetet.

## Introduction

This year's celebration of the *Eid al-Adha* in the main square of the capital was followed by threats and incriminations that while they recycled established clichés of Islamophobia, were unique in their intensity. The organizers put screens in the square so that participants in the back rows would be able to see the speakers in the front, where the statute of Albania's national hero stands. The statue of an Albanian prince, who fought against Ottoman armies in the 15th century, was loaded with the symbolism of the war of a Christian, European prince, against the Islamic, Oriental invaders. The screens were interpreted as an attack against national symbols, a Muslim conspiracy against the hero, and were depicted as *burqas* attempting to cover the hero. The mass of Muslim participants in the prayer was depicted as standing against the symbols, values and historical ideology of the nation. They were depicted as jihadists that need to be exterminated. The entire incident was the outcome of an image that went viral online focusing on massive screens used for public events, taken from a vintage point resembling a covering of the statue. Other images shown later, some of them made public by Muslim representatives, showed that there was ample distance between the two screens, and therefore there had been no covering of the statue. To no avail, organizers of the Eid prayer ensured the public that the way the large screens had been positioned was dictated by technical considerations rather than some ideological drive against the statue.<sup>1</sup>

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

On May 4, 2017, the Head of Commission on Foreign Relations in the Hungarian Parliament Zsolt Nemeth participated in a protest organized by the Albanian opposition. Speaking to the protesters, Nemeth compared the political efforts against the current government of Albania, accused of corruption and links to organized crime, to the war of Albania's national hero against the Ottomans. His support, as a representative of an EU country, was compared to the support of John Hunyadi, a Hungarian warrior who in the 15th century came to assist Albanian troops fighting the Ottomans.<sup>2</sup> It followed the official endorsement of the opposition by Italian Senator, former Minister of Defence, and former Undersecretary of the European Parliament Mario Mauro, known for his promotion of Islamophobia. Albanian media outlets pointed at the negative religious

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1. News 24, "Mbulimi i monumentit të Skenderbeut, Myftiu i Tiranës: Histeri mesazhesh kercenuese", retrieved January 10, 2017, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L03PQ\\_GV2oo&sns=em](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L03PQ_GV2oo&sns=em).

2. Mapo. "Nuk e duam Shqipërinë narko-shtet..." Gazeta Mapo. Accessed on January 10, 2017.

connotations of the support for the opposition from a politician known for the promotion of Islamophobia.<sup>3</sup>

The political crisis, in which these European politicians landed their support to the opposition, was solved after the parties agreed to hold elections. The elections, however, were to be held on the very same day as the Eid prayers, charging an officially recognized holiday with the tensions of political conflict. A mufti, Imam Muhammad Sytari, called it provocation, “an unacceptable [decision against] the sanctity of the day,” demanding the government changes the election date.<sup>4</sup> The imam of the largest mosque in the capital Ahmed Kalaja interpreted it as aimed at provoking a Muslim boycott of the elections.<sup>5</sup>

On September 6, 2017, the head of a small political party that supports the ruling centre-left government, Spartak Ngjela, demanded publicly the arrest of the mufti of the capital city Ylli Gurra calling him “a typical, Ottoman barbarian.” He accused the mufti of having violated the Albanian Penal Code, declaring, “[I will] accomplish my duty to my nation, by denouncing him in a written form addressed to the Office of the General Prosecutor. I call upon all Albanians to denounce this barbarian ugliness in Albania...”<sup>6</sup> Despite the fact that Mr. Ngjela had accused the mufti of statements he had never uttered, Mr. Ngjela never apologized, but retracted his accusations stating that it had been “a misunderstanding.”<sup>7</sup>

Following the controversial Eid festivities and the alleged “covering of the [statue] of Skanderbeg” in the main square of the capital, Mufti Ylli Gurra reported receiving death threats. He felt obliged to ensure “the Catholic and Orthodox [Christian] brothers” that there had been no intention of covering the statue, ensuring the larger public that Albanian Muslims do not reject the national hero.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the attempts of Muslim representatives to clarify their stand, various public figures reacted to the perceived threat against the national hero. A well-known civil society activist, who has also held various public positions, Artan Lame, called for solidarity in defence of the national hero declaring “Je suis Scanderbeg,” echoing the

3. Tema, “Mario Mauro ode cudia e nje islamofobi i djathte qe lufton per demokracine e shtetit laik te Shqiperise me shumice muslimane.” *Gazeta Tema*, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.gazetatema.net/2017/03/10/mario-mauro-ose-cudia-e-nje-islamofobi-i-djathte-italian-qe-lufton-per-demokracine-e-shtetit-laik-te-shqiperise-me-shumice-muslimane/>.

4. Opinion, “Dita e zgjedhjeve ne ditën e Bajramit, irritohet myftiu i Shkodres...”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://opinion.al/dita-e-zgjedhjeve-ne-diten-e-bajramit-irritohet-myftiu-i-shkodres-nuk-ka-ndodhur-as-ne-komunizem/>.

5. Koha Jone, “Imam Ahmed Kalaj, Zgjedhjet me 25 Qershor, talleni ju”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.kohajone.com/2017/05/20/imam-ahmed-kalaja-zgjedhjet-me-25-qershor-talleni-ju/>.

6. City News, Ngjela sulmon Gurren, si qenkemi turq ne more palaco”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.citynews.al/2017/09/ngjela-sulmon-gurren-si-qenkemi-turq-ne-more-palaco/>.

7. 360grade, “Kerkoi arrestimin e tij Ngjela takon myftiun Gurra...”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.360grade.al/politike/item/94987-kerkoi-arrestimin-e-tij-ngjela-takon-myftiun-gurra-ja-efare-biseduam>.

8. *Gazeta Shqiptare*, Myftiu i Tiranës sqarim per vellezerit e krishtere...”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.gsh.al/2017/09/01/ekskluzive-myftiu-i-tiranes-sqarim-per-vellezerit-e-krishtere-pse-u-vu-ekrani-ne-shesh-skanderbeu-heroi-yne-kombetar-me-kerccuan-me-jete/>.

“Je suis Charlie” solidarity campaign following the terrorist attacks in Paris against the magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. He declared his readiness to turn himself from a “common citizen into a hero,” failing to clarify what such transformation would entail.<sup>9</sup>

## Justice System

On September 16, 2017, the closing for security reasons of the Ethem Beu Mosque in the centre of the capital was announced on various sites on social media. The mosque was closed for two days, and congregants were asked to perform their religious duties in other mosques in the city.<sup>10</sup> The reason, according to these accounts, was the proximity of the mosque to the hotel where high military officials of NATO countries were staying during a two-day conference. The imam of the mosque Elton Karaj told the media that the order had been communicated by the state police, and the presence of the NATO military officials was presented as the reason for the closing.<sup>11</sup> No other public institution, or religious edifice of another religion in the area was closed due to the NATO event. The following day, the spokesperson of the Albanian Muslim Community (AMC), Mr. Agron Hoxha, condemned the decision and declared that the AMC had not been notified of this decision. He demanded that the state police be held responsible for the closing.<sup>12</sup> The mufti of the capital Mr. Ylli Gurra also condemned the police’s decision.<sup>13</sup> Despite these condemnations from Muslim representatives, who declared that the action of the state police echoes the closing of the mosques during the communist regime in 1967, no measures have been taken to hold responsible those who ordered the closing of the mosque.

On September 9, 2017, after almost a year of pre-trial imprisonment, four Muslim men, one of them an imam, were confined to house arrest. The four citizens, Ergys Fasllia, Medat Hasani, Bekim Protopapa and Xhevahir Fishti were first arrested prior to a soccer game between the national teams of Albania and Israel, suspected of planning an attack against the Israeli national team. All four have denied the accusation. The court asked for the four Muslim men to be confined to house arrest due to the surpassing of the pre-trial imprisonment period envisioned by the law. They have not been charged, and their lawyers have not been presented the evidence against them.<sup>14</sup> The arrests were based on information coming from Israeli secret services,

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9. Konica, “Mbulohet Monumenti, Lame: Je suis Scanderbeg”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://konica.al/2017/09/mbulohet-monumenti-lame-je-suis-scanderbeg/>.

10. Gazeta Impakt, “Edi Rama mbyll per 2 dite per NATO-n xhamine e Ethem Beut”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://gazetaimpakt.com/edi-rama-mbyll-per-2-dite-per-nato-n-xhamine-e-ethem-beut/>.

11. Konica, “Ja pse u mbyll xhamia e Ethem Beut, sot dhe reagimi i besimtareve”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://konica.al/2017/09/ja-pse-u-mbyll-xhamia-e-ethem-beut-sot-dhe-reagimi-besimtareve/>.

12. Te Sheshi, “KMSH: Mbyllja e Ethem Beut dikush duhet te mbaje pergjegjesi”, from <http://tesheshi.com/njeriukmsh-se-mbyllja-e-ethem-beut-dikush-duhet-te-mbaje-pergjegjesi/>

13. Retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://konica.al/2017/09/mbyllja-e-xhamise-se-ethem-beut-reagon-myftiu-tiranes/>.

14. Mapo, “Sulmi i dyshuar terrorist ne ndeshjen Izrael-Shqiperi, lirohen 3 te dyshuarit”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.mapo.al/2017/11/sulmi-i-dyshuar-terrorist-ne-ndeshjen-izrael-shqiperi-lirohen-3-te-pandehur/1>.

but the evidence has never been made public.<sup>15</sup> Following the alleged information by the Israeli security forces, many more Muslims known to frequent mosques, were arrested and later set free, and no evidence to incriminate them was ever presented.<sup>16</sup> The government has not clarified whether they are still considered a threat to security which begs the questions: If they are considered threats, why are they being sent home? If not, why are they under house arrest? Even the reasons they have not been charged have not been made public.

## Employment

The yearly report for 2017 by the Commissioner for Defence against Discrimination has not been published yet. The reported cases of discrimination in employment due to Islamophobia in 2016 are quite low, especially when juxtaposed with the general trend of increased Islamophobia. The report claims that the reported cases of discrimination due to homophobia are less than what occurs in reality, but it does not draw similar conclusions regarding Islamophobia.<sup>17</sup> Religious discrimination in employment, however, has appeared in popular TV shows like *E Diela Shqiptare*. According to a psychologist working for a local NGO offering counselling to victims of discrimination, there are many cases especially linked to women wearing the hijab. She added that employers are mindful of the anti-discrimination law and would not mention the hijab as the reason for terminating the employment of someone who recently started wearing the hijab, or for not offering employment to a Muslim woman already wearing the hijab. The counsellor wanted to remain anonymous.<sup>18</sup>

## Education

The Prime Minister of Albania Mr. Edi Rama explained the need for religious instruction in public schools based on the need to prevent the radicalization of young Muslims.<sup>19</sup> Prior to the implementation of the proposal, the Minister of Education Ms. Lindita Nikolla declared at the time that the theological views of various religions would not be included in the curriculum.<sup>20</sup> In February 2017, the project was piloted for the first time. Despite the clarifications by the Minister of Education,

15. Panorama, "Informacioni sekret, besimtaret e arrestuar do vendosnin bombe ne ndeshjen me Izraelin", retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.panorama.com.al/informacioni-sekret-besimtaret-e-arrestuar-do-vendosnin-bombe-ne-ndeshjen-me-izraelin/>.

16. Besnik Sinani, (2017) "Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2016", in: Enes Bayraktı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2016, Istanbul, SETA, 2017, 22-3.

17. Komisioni per Mbrojtjen Nga Diskriminimi (2016), Year Report 2016, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://kmd.al/skedaret/1509612773-KMD%202016.pdf>.

18. Interview with Elton Hatibi.

19. Gazeta Shqiptare, April 10, 2016.

20. Opinion, "Feja ne Shkolla, Ministrja e Arsimit, ja lenda e re ne 10 shkolla", retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://opinion.al/feja-ne-shkolla-ministrja-e-arsimit-ja-lenda-e-re-ne-10-shkolla-pilot/>.

the government's proposal faced strong opposition. Arguing for a strict form of secularism, a university professor, Artan Trebicka, argued that this proposal is similar to the educational system in countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, or as a return to medieval Europe.<sup>21</sup> Others followed this rationale in arguing that religious education constitutes a similarity with distant countries in the Middle East.

A well-known promoter of hate speech, bigotry and Islamophobia, Kastriot Myftaraj<sup>22</sup> declared that this government proposal constitutes “a victory for ISIS,” given that the drive behind this proposal, according to him, is “Islamic terrorism.” He added, “This initiative has one cause, one religion, Islam, the holy book of one religion, the Quran, and the Prophet of one religion, Muhammad.”<sup>23</sup> These kinds of reactions caused concerns among parents of the students from the *Dora D'Istria* School, where the project was first piloted. The school administration organized a meeting with parents to ensure them there would be no threat of religious indoctrination.<sup>24</sup>

Knowledge about religion in high school is included as part of history textbooks. In his recent study on history textbooks in the last two decades, Professor Enis Sulstarova has problematized the way Islam is represented in school textbooks.<sup>25</sup> In his conclusions he notes that the positive contributions of Islam are limited to its contribution to the European Renaissance, while it is presented as the drive behind the Arab and later Ottoman invasions of Europe, presenting Islam as a driver of war and invasion.<sup>26</sup>

According to this study, Islam is represented in the historical context of Albania in terms of Otherness and is ascribed a divisive historical role. The author concludes, “The influence of Islam is identified either implicitly or explicitly with those Albanians who in the conflict between Albanians and Turks, sided with the Turks.”<sup>27</sup> In the representation of Islam following independence from the Ottoman Empire, Islam barely receives any attention in these textbooks, and it is commonly discussed in a negative light, being reduced to norms deemed incompatible with modernity and Western civilization, and therefore which have to be abandoned.<sup>28</sup>

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21. Perqasje, Profesor Trebicka thirrje per tju kundervene idese qe feja te mesohet ne shkolla”,<http://perqasje.com/2016/04/profesor-trebicka-thirrje-per-tju-kundervene-idese-qe-feja-te-mesohet-ne-shkolla/>. Accessed on January 10, 2017.

22. Besnik Sinani, “Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2016”, 25.

23. TikTak, “Futja e mesimit ne shkolla eshte fitore e terthorte e ISIS”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <https://tiktak.al/futja-e-mesimit-te-fese-ne-shkoll-e-eshte-fitore-e-terthorte-e-isis/>.

24. Ibid.

25. Enis Sulstarova (2016), *Islamizëm do të thotë Lindje*, (Tiranë: Pika pa sipërfaqje).

26. Ibid., 204.

27. Ibid., 205.

28. Ibid., 206.

## Media

The media remains the main repository of Islamophobic rhetoric in the country.<sup>30</sup> The director of the pro-government newspaper, Mr. Mero Baze, writing after the “covering” of the statue of the national hero during the Eid prayer, spoke of the “aggression of



Figure 1: The picture that was circulated in most newspapers claiming that the statue of Albania's national hero had been covered during year's celebration of the Eid al-Adha in the main square of the capital, Tirana.<sup>29</sup>

Islamic militants” who aim – according to him – to test the determination of society. He called for new security measures in order to confront “Political Islam,” even though he failed to identify a platform, groups or an instance that would indicate the existence of such a threat.<sup>31</sup> He claimed that the aim of “Political Islam” is to replace Albanian national “myths” and turn Islam into the main marker of national identity.<sup>32</sup>

The columnist of the newspaper *Panorama*, and university professor, Mr. Agron Gjekmarkaj, in an article published on September 2, 2017 considered the ‘covering’ of the statue to constitute an “almost terrorist act” against the national hero, and a “threat to the constitutional order.” He called the ‘covering’ a *burqa* thrown upon the national hero. He asked “The AMC and especially its leadership” for a public apology. He added, “Today they have insulted Albania. Today they have compromised the European aspiration, uncovering through this detail something frightening that saddens us in regard to our collective future.”<sup>33</sup>



Figure 2: Picture from the Eid prayer with the screen in front of the statue.<sup>34</sup>

29. Gazeta Shqiptare, September 1, 2017

30. Besnik Sinani (2017), “Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2016”, 19-22.

31. Gazeta Shqiptare, “Debati per Skenderbeun, Mero Baze Shqiperia nen agresionin e nje pakice militantesh islamike”, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.balkanweb.com/site/debati-per-skenderbeun-mero-baze-shqiperia-nen-agresionin-e-nje-pakice-militantesh-islamike/>.

32. Ibid.

33. Agron Gjekmarkaj (2017), “Guzuan te mbulojne Skenderbeun”, *Panorama*, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.panorama.com.al/guxuan-te-mbulojne-skenderbeun-me-perce/>.

34. Insajderi, September 2, 2017

Reacting to the same event, Kastriot Myftaraj called for the “extermination of the jihadists like insects, wherever they are.” He considered every Muslim a jihadist, given that they were present praying in the square during the ‘covering’ of the statue. His article was filled with insults against Muslims and Islam, and he called for the cleansing of the country from the Muslims using genocidal methods.

On January 16, 2018, during a televised debate, Mr. Myftaraj called for the assassination of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Turkey, during an upcoming visit when he is scheduled to inaugurate the new mosque in the capital, Tirana. No charges have been pressed against him.<sup>35</sup>

On September 7, 2017, a well-known columnist, Mustafa Nano,<sup>36</sup> wrote an article titled “Muslims Are Not the Majority in Albania, But Even If They Were...” arguing that Muslims are not a majority, since many of them engage in acts condemned by Islam. He went on to describe those who follow the commands of their faith as those who consider Prophet Muhammad as their hero, rather than the national hero of Albania, arguing for an exclusive form of identity. He described the rest of the Muslims as those who, following the teaching of their religion, are antagonistic to people of other faiths and beat their wives, while the most devoted are the ones who commit acts of terrorism, killing themselves while shouting “Allahu Akbar.” He called for the religious registration of the population where respondents have to be schooled on the meaning of “religious identity,” following the criteria set forth by him. Such a registration, he concluded, would finally determine that Albania is not a Muslim-majority country.<sup>37</sup>

On October 3, 2017, Ira Londo wrote that the Balkans are under a jihadist threat. One of the examples she brought forth in support of her argument was the building of a new mosque in the centre of Albania’s capital, Tirana. Drawing a direct parallel between the jihadist threat and mosques, she problematized the work of TIKA, the Turkish development aid agency, working on the renovation of edifices of Islamic heritage in the Balkans.<sup>38</sup>

Following the temporary closing of the Ethem Beu Mosque, Gani Mehmetaj called for the permanent closing of the mosque, calling it a “barrack of jihadists.” Despite the fact that there has never been a report linking this mosque to any jihadist activity, the author insisted in his article published in *Gazeta 55*, that this mosque with its central location constituted a threat to state institutions and to national secu-

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35. Ora News, “Myftaraj ne 360 grade: Erdoganit do ti ike koka nese vjen ne Tirane,” retrieved January 22, 2018, from <http://www.oranews.tv/article/myftaraj-erdoganit-do-ti-ike-koka-nese-vjen-ne-tirane>.

36. On the contribution of M. Nano to the Islamophobia in the media see Besnik Sinani, “Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2016”, 19-20.

37. Mustafa Nano (2017), “Myslimanet nuk jane shumice por edhe sikur te ishin”, Lexo, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.lexo.al/myslimanet-ne-shqiperi-nuk-jane-shumice-por-edhe-sikur-te-ishin/>.

38. Ira Londo (2017), “Ballkani nen kercenimin xihad”, *Gazeta Shqiptare*, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.balkanweb.com/site/ballkani-nen-kercenimin-xihad/>.

rity. Given its historical significance and the fact that Western tourists randomly visit the mosque, the author stated, “It is even more dangerous when in its space enter tourists and believers. Who would be able to stop some Arab or Asian from shouting the mortal call ‘Allahu Akbar’ while exploding and murdering visitors and locals?”<sup>39</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

The journalist Mentor Kikia called the wearing of the burkini “animalistic.” Present in a public beach where he had witnessed members of a family wearing burkinis, he declared he had witnessed the “slavery” of these women, calling the practice “a harsh form of violence,” appealing to the organizations for the protection of women’s rights to react against these forms of “slavery” and this “violent ritual.” He remained convinced that these women do not wear the burkini by choice.<sup>40</sup>

Responding to his appeal, a writer and feminist activist, Diana Çuli, wrote that these dressing practices are anti-constitutional, “sadistic,” an expression of “physical and psychological violence” with no bases “in philosophy, culture, or religion,” depicting this kind of clothing contradictory to the war on terror, since under the clothing these women can conceal weapons or other dangerous material.<sup>41</sup>

No physical attacks were reported.

### Internet

The majority of Albanian newspapers have online pages, and as reported in the past, despite their stated policy of editing the comments, comment sections of mainstream newspapers remain some of the most active spaces for the promotion of Islamophobia.<sup>42</sup>

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There are no formal organizations known for their focus on the promotion of Islamophobia. The list of columnists mentioned in the Media section were selected from a range of well-known promoters of Islamophobia.

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

A public intellectual, Mr. Fatos Lubonja, who on numerous occasions has spoken against campaigns that represent Muslims as second-class citizens, following the Eid prayer and the alleged hysteria of ‘covering’ the statue, raised the question whether it was indeed mandatory for everyone to honour this particular hero, supporting the

39. Gani Mehmetaj (2017), “Rreziqet qe vijne nga mbajtja hapur per publikun e xhamise se Ethem Beut”, Gazeta 55, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://gazeta55.al/rreziqet-e-sigurise-qe-vijne-nga-mbajtja-hapur-per-publikun-e-xhamise-se-etem-beut/>.

40. Panorama, “Gazetari publikon foton e myslimanese se mbuluar ne plazh, kjo eshte “kafsheri””, Panorama, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.panorama.com.al/gazetari-publikon-foton-myslimanes-se-mbuluar-ne-plazh-kjo-eshte-kafsheri/>.

41. Diana Culi (2017), “Per grate e mbuluara qe kane vape si ne”, Tirana Post, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.tiranapost.al/per-grate-e-mbuluara-qe-kane-vape-si-ne/>.

42. Besnik Sinani, “Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2016”, 20.

idea that every community should follow the truth according to its own worldview. Criticizing those who drove the debate for following a medieval mentality, he called for the preservation of the values of society through the contribution of everyone, regardless of the views and beliefs they follow.<sup>43</sup> In a TV interview on September 5, 2017, on News 24 TV, he called against the ideological marginalization of communities, and for the importance of promoting multicultural values.

Addressing the debate, another well-known public intellectual, Mr. Ardian Vehbiu, considered the reactions “false,” “blown out of proportion,” and “bordering on panic.” He argued that those behind this debate were using the controversy to promote their own cultural identity.<sup>44</sup> On September 5, 2017, he wrote that he considered the debate an expression of “idolatry symptoms as infantile sickness of our collective mentality.” He argued that such debates threaten civic co-existence in the country.<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The Islamophobic rhetoric of politicians and media pundits contributes to the normalization of anti-Muslim bigotry, which results in both policy and media discourse that denies Muslims equal rights, contributing to a sense of marginalization, while portraying them as a threat to collective security and national identity. There is a clear link between extra-judicial arrests, the arbitrary closing of the central mosque of the capital without any reactions from society, and constantly marking Muslims in the media as a threat, who need to be “exterminated,” as one media commentator argued. As noted in the report, there is a clear link between Islamophobia in Albania and anti-Turkish bigotry, the clearest case perhaps being the debate on the inauguration of the new mosque in the capital, which was accompanied by calls for the assassination of Turkish President Erdogan. Following this report, we make the following recommendations:

- The government of Albania should undertake an investigation on the temporary closing of the central mosque of the capital; ensure the Muslim community of the determination of the government to (a) protect their right to free exercise of religion, (b) protect places of worship, and (c) ensure the accessibility to places of worship.
- The government of Albania should review the arrests of Muslim citizens on charges of terrorism when such charges are not substantiated and ensure the Muslim community of the full protection of the law.

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43. Fatos Lubonja (2017), “Skenderbeu dhe kolibri”, Panorama, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <http://www.panorama.com.al/polemika-per-mbulimin-ne-shesh-nga-myslimanet-analiza-e-lubonjes-skenderbeu-dhe-kolibri/>.

44. Ardian Vehbiu (2017), “Me jepni nje shesh te leviz boten”, Peisazhe te Fjales, retrieved January 10, 2017, from <https://peisazhe.com/2017/09/03/me-jepni-nje-shesh-te-leviz-boten/>.

45. Ardian Vehbiu (2017), “Mes idhujtareve dhe ikonathyesve”, Peisazhe te Fjales, retrieved January 10, 2017, from [https://peisazhe.com/2017/09/05/mes\\_idhujtareve\\_dhe\\_ikonathyesve/](https://peisazhe.com/2017/09/05/mes_idhujtareve_dhe_ikonathyesve/).

- The Ministry of Education should review school textbooks and address biased representations of Islam.
- The government should monitor and investigate calls for violence against Muslims, and act according to the provisions of the law.

## Chronology

- **04.05.2017:** Head of Commission on Foreign Relations in the Hungarian Parliament Zsolt Nemeth and Italian politician, Mario Mauro, known for the promotion of Islamophobia, expressed support for the opposition.
- **01.09.2017:** Eid al-Adha prayer (Bajram) takes place in the centre of the capital followed by accusations of Muslims ‘covering’ the statue of the national hero, resulting in various attacks and abuses, hate speech and calls for violence against Muslims in general, and death threats against the mufti of the capital.
- **09.09.2017:** After almost a year of imprisonment, four Muslim men, one of them an imam, were confined to house arrest.
- **16.09.2017:** State Police ordered the temporary closing of the capital’s central mosque.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**AUSTRIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

This report lists 143 Islamophobic cases, most of them in the institutional field (30%), closely followed by classical media (23%) and education (20%). A total of 72 cases of hate crimes with an Islamophobic background were reported to the Antidiscrimination Office Styria. ZARA documented a total of 57 cases of hate crime, with 13 cases specifically targeting Muslims. The Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education (IDB) documented 28 cases of discrimination. This gives a total of 256 cases (with possibility of overlapping). However, it can be assumed that the number of unreported cases, as set out by the European Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) is far higher, as only 12% of Muslims who have been discriminated against report their cases. Some attacks directly targeted left-wing organizations such as the Greens or the Socialist Youth.

In 2017, a coalition consisting of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ) and the Conservative Party (ÖVP) ended. This government had introduced the full-face veil ban. It propelled a discriminatory discourse on the implementation of banning women wearing the hijab from working in certain professions. In certain professions such as police and attorney the year 2017 was also characterized by a national parliamentary election campaign in which the ÖVP co-opted the Islamophobic populism of the FPÖ. Thus, the current Chancellor Sebastian Kurz said that Islamic kindergartens should generally be closed. As a result of these developments, right-wing movements like the Identitarians felt legitimized. Hatred on the Internet has been more effectively sanctioned due to legal improvements to combat it. An equally gratifying development is the increase of critical voices challenging the Islamophobic discourse in classical media. Last but not least, the leaks of the weekly *Falter* regarding the so-called kindergarten study revealed the structural dimension of the Islamophobia to a broader public. The use of academia to legitimize Islamophobic politics has been particularly evident in 2017. However, the government program of the ÖVP and the FPÖ indicates that Austria's Muslims can envisage an even more authoritarian form of political behaviour, as initiated by the 2015 Islamic Act.

## Zusammenfassung

Dieser Bericht listet 143 islamophobe Fälle auf, von denen eine Mehrheit im institutionellen Bereich (30%) identifiziert wurden, dicht gefolgt von klassischen Medien (23%) sowie Bildungsbereich (20%). Bei der Antidiskriminierungsstelle Steiermark wurden insgesamt 72 Fälle von Hasskriminalität mit islamophoben Hintergrund gemeldet. ZARA dokumentierte insgesamt 57 Fälle von Hasskriminalität, wobei lediglich 13 Fälle darunter dezidiert gegen MuslimInnen gerichtet waren. Die Initiative für ein Diskriminierungsfreies Bildungswesen (IDB) dokumentierte 28 Fälle von Diskriminierung. Das ergibt eine Gesamtheit von 241 Fällen (bei Überschneidungsmöglichkeit). Es ist aber davon auszugehen, dass die Dunkelziffer, wie von der europäischen Menschenrechtsagentur FRA dargelegt, weitaus höher liegt, da lediglich an die 12% der diskriminierten Muslime Fälle melden. Einige Übergriffe zielten direkt auf linke Organisationen wie die Grünen oder die Sozialistische Jugend ab.

2017 bedeutete das Ende der SPÖ-ÖVP-Koalition, in welchem ein Gesichtsschleierverbot eingeführt wurde und ein diskriminierender Diskurs rund um die Umsetzung von Berufsverboten für muslimische Frauen mit Haarbedeckung eingesetzt hat. 2017 war ebenso geprägt von einem Nationalratswahlkampf, in dem der islamophobe Populismus der FPÖ von der neu gefärbten ÖVP als Liste Kurz viele der freiheitlichen Forderungen übernahm. So meinte der nunmehrige Bundeskanzler, islamische Kindergärten seien generell zu schließen. Rechte Bewegungen wie die Identitären fühlten sich aufgrund dieser Entwicklungen entsprechend gestärkt in ihren Positionen. Hass im Netz wurde aufgrund der Verbesserung in der Bekämpfung von diesem effektiver geahndet. Eine ebenso erfreuliche Entwicklung ist die Mehrung von kritischen Stimmen gegenüber dem islamophoben Diskurs in klassischen Medien. Nicht zuletzt die Leaks der Wochenzeitschrift Falter rundum die Beeinflussung der sogenannten Kindergartenstudie haben einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit die strukturelle Dimension islamophober Programmatik veranschaulicht. Der Einsatz von Wissenschaft zur Legitimation islamophober Politik hat sich 2017 besonders deutlich gezeigt. Das Regierungsprogramm von ÖVP und FPÖ deutet aber darauf hin, dass Österreichs MuslimInnen mit einer noch autoritäreren Form des politischen Umgangs, wie sie mit dem Islamgesetz aus 2015 eingeläutet wurde, zu rechnen haben.

## Introduction

In Austria we see an increase in hostile attitudes towards Muslims on the part of the population. A study by the FRA shows that the Austrian population has a relatively negative attitude towards Muslims compared to other EU states. As much as 31 percent of the Austrian population say that they would not like it if they had Muslim neighbours. Thus, Austria together with Malta, scores second highest. According to the FRA study, there is only more opposition to Muslims in Cyprus. On the basis of a regular survey by the pollster Peter Hajek on behalf of the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), three quarters of respondents do not agree with the statement that Islam belongs in Austria. Eight out of ten respondents call for stricter controls on mosques to counter so-called potential radicalization tendencies. Eighty-six percent calls for stricter control of possible foreign financing of mosques, while 84 percent also wants stricter control of Islamic kindergartens. Sixty-nine percent is in favour of a headscarf ban for teachers and kindergarten staff. Regarding the subject of education, 72 percent say that kids have to take part in swimming lessons regardless of religious regulations.<sup>1</sup>

As the survey of the FRA shows, the Muslim society feels alienated. Only Italy and the Netherlands have lower scores for Muslims' attachment to their respective country of residence. This trend has increased in Austria, especially among Turkish-born Muslims. The feeling of being at home in Austria declined by almost ten percentage points last year (from 51 to 42 percent).<sup>2</sup>

A survey by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), in which 18 television stations - including the Austrian Broadcast TV ORF - are involved, titled "Generation What?" indicates that 51 percent of respondents in Austria thinks that the sight of veiled women in the streets and in the workplace disturbs them. This is one of the highest results among the 14 participating countries.<sup>3</sup> In a survey of the institute *meinungsraum.at* for the Mauthausen Committee Austria, it was found that 44 percent of respondents is bothered when a shop assistant wears a headscarf (growth of 2% compared to 2015). According to the survey, religious freedom is becoming more threatened. The construction of a mosque in a neighbourhood is no longer rejected by 64 percent (2015), but by 71 percent of respondents (44 percent in the case of a Buddhist centre). According to the survey, 41 percent totally refuse to have a mosque in the immediate vicinity (Buddhist centre: 19%).<sup>4</sup>

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1. Hajek, Peter/Stark, Jennifer (2017), Integrationsbarometer 2/2017. Integrationsbefragung, Herausgeber: ÖIF, 19, 24, 25, 26, 29.

2. Aloß (2017), "Die Vermessung der Migration", *ORF*, 23.08.2017, retrieved December 10, 2017, from <http://orf.at/stories/2404239/2404238/>.

3. APA (2017), "Studie: Junge Österreicher stören sich an verschleierten Frauen", *Der Standard*, 25.04.2017, retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000056501546/Studie-Junge-Oesterreicher-stoeren-sich-an-verschleierten-Frauen>.

4. APA (2017), "Herkunft und Religion: Toleranz der Österreicher nimmt ab", *Die Presse*, 03.05.2017, retrieved December 29, 2017, from [http://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5210974/Herkunft-und-Religion\\_Toleranz-der-Oesterreicher-nimmt-ab](http://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5210974/Herkunft-und-Religion_Toleranz-der-Oesterreicher-nimmt-ab).

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

For the federal elections in January 2017 in Graz, the FPÖ mobilized with a four-page folder titled “Community Housing for Graz People First.” The illustration equated Islam with strangeness, as can be seen in the picture below showing Muslim people entering a space wearing an assortment of ‘strange, foreign’ clothes accompanied by the words “Strange in one’s own house.” (Fig. 1)

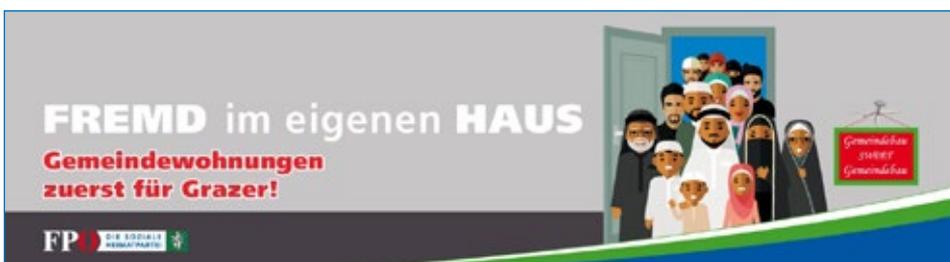


Figure 1: “Strange in one’s own house. Council homes for Graz people only!”<sup>5</sup>  
Photo: Screenshot FPÖ.

The kick-off for a debate on a ban on the hijab was given by then-chairman of the Expert Council for Integration, who was also vice-rector of the University of Vienna. Heinz Faßmann said in an interview that “teachers in public schools should not wear a hijab unless they teach Islamic religious education, since the hijab is not just a piece of textile, but of course a message. And that is not unproblematic in a secular state.”<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, Faßmann and Minister of Education Hammerschmid argued that the cross in public school classes “has grown historically”<sup>7</sup> and is a “symbol of Western history.”<sup>8</sup> The Women’s Commissioner of the IGGiÖ replied sarcastically, “A Muslim wearing a headscarf is obviously only accepted as long as she works as a cleaner.”<sup>9</sup> The position of the minister and Faßmann was criticized also by the initiative Muslims Against anti-Semitism, Jews against Islamophobia and the NGO SOS

5. Website of the FPÖ: retrieved: December 29, 2017, from <http://www.gemeindebauvergabe-neu.at/>.

6. Zimmermann, Maria (2017), “Faßmann im SN-Interview: Integration ohne Kopftuch”, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 05.01.2017. retrieved: December 29, 2017, from <http://www.salzburg.com/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/sn/artikel/fassmann-im-sn-interview-integration-ohne-kopftuch-228832/>.

7. ORF (2017), “Regierungsberater: Kopftuchverbot im Staatsdienst”, *ORF*, 05.01.2017, retrieved December 29, 2017, from: <http://orf.at/stories/2373908/>.

8. Krone (2017), “Das Kreuz der SPÖ mit Staatssekretärin Muna Duzdar”, *Krone*, 02.02.2017, retrieved: December 29, 2017, from <http://www.krone.at/oesterreich/das-kreuz-der-spoe-mit-staatssekretaerin-muna-duzdar-religions-debatte-story-552092>.

9. Ibid.

Mitmenschen.<sup>10</sup> The Roman Catholic Diocese of Graz-Seckau opposed a hijab ban for Muslim women in public service.<sup>11</sup>

After Integration Minister Sebastian Kurz publicly joined Faßmann's proposal,<sup>12</sup> he received support from several party colleagues.<sup>13</sup> Minister of Justice Brandstetter made it clear that the cross was excluded because of its anchoring "in the Christian culture."<sup>14</sup> State Secretary for Integration and Diversity Muna Duzdar (SPÖ) then said that "it was obviously not about a secularism debate [...], but about picking out a particular group and creating a mood against the members of that religion."<sup>15</sup>

Chancellor Christian Kern (SPÖ) commented on the initiative of coalition partner Kurz: "A hijab ban would only be symbolic. I cannot see what should change for the better."<sup>16</sup> This position was supported by the long-time Viennese mayor, Michael Häupl, who replied to the question "Could you imagine a councillor wearing a headscarf on your team?", "Of course, that is no taboo for me as someone, whose mother went shopping while wearing a headscarf in the village."<sup>17</sup>

As part of the FPÖ party convention in Klagenfurt, where Chairman Strache was confirmed with 98.7%, he declared, "No, Islam is not part of Austria," which was received with a great applause by the audience. "How long do you want the voters of red and black watch as these parties exchange the population (with Muslims, FH)?" he asked.<sup>18</sup>

A response from the federal president to a question by a student on March 24 about discrimination against Muslim women caused great excitement in the public: "Every woman can wear a headscarf. And if Islamophobia continues the

10. Ibid.

11. Said-Hödl, Waltraud Hamah (2017), "Gegen Kopftuchverbot für Musliminnen", *Katholische Kirche Graz*, 08.01.2017, retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://www.kath-kirche-graz.at/themenswerpunkte/integration-interreligioeser-dialog?d=gegen-kopftuchverbot-fuer-musliminnen#.WHNUT1wtUiq>.

12. Braune, Michaela (2017), "Kurz für Kopftuchverbot im öffentlichen Dienst", *Kronen Zeitung*, 06.01.2017, retrieved: December 29, 2017, from <http://www.krone.at/oesterreich/kurz-fuer-kopftuchverbot-im-oeffentlichen-dienst-besonders-in-schulen-story-547426>.

13. Krone.at (2017), "Muslime wollen nun mit Kurz "Tacheles reden"", *Kronen Zeitung*, 06.01.2017, retrieved: December 29, 2017, from: <http://www.krone.at/oesterreich/muslime-wollen-nun-mit-kurz-tacheles-reden-streitums-kopftuch-story-547449>.

14. Ibid.

15. Duzdar, Muna (2017), ""Es geht um Stimmungsmache"", *Wiener Zeitung*, 10.01.2017, retrieved: December 10, 2017, from: [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/866894\\_Es-geht-um-Stimmungsmache.html?em\\_cnt\\_page=2](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/866894_Es-geht-um-Stimmungsmache.html?em_cnt_page=2).

16. Kurier (2017), "Kern: Kopftuch-Verbot wäre nur symbolisch", *Kurier*, 15.01.2017, retrieved: December 29, 2017, from <https://m.kurier.at/politik/inland/bundeskanzler-christian-kern-kopftuch-verbot-waere-nur-symbolisch/241.133.271>.

17. Pommer, Michael (2017), "Häupl packt aus: "Stadträtin mit Kopftuch für mich kein Tabu"", *Kronen Zeitung*, 04.02.2017, retrieved: December 29, 2017, from: <http://www.krone.at/wien/stadtraetin-mit-kopftuch-fuer-mich-kein-tabu-haeupl-packt-aus-story-552387>.

18. Krone.at (2017), "FPÖ-Bundesparteitag: Strache: "Nein, Islam ist kein Teil Österreichs"", *Kronen Zeitung*, 04.03.2017, retrieved December 29, 2017, from: <http://www.krone.at/oesterreich/strache-nein-islam-ist-kein-teil-oesterreichs-fpoe-bundesparteitag-story-557250>.

day will come when we must ask all women to wear a headscarf due to the rise of Islamophobia. All, as solidarity with those who do it for religious reasons.”<sup>19</sup> Criticism came from the leader of the Viennese conservatives, Manfred Juraczka,<sup>20</sup> FPÖ’s Herbert Kickl,<sup>21</sup> Heinz-Christian Strache<sup>22</sup> as well as the former managing director of the SPÖ, Josef Kalina.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the president felt obliged to explain his position in more detail: “I am not a big friend of the headscarf. But there is freedom of expression in Austria, there is freedom of expression and a kind of freedom of clothing.”<sup>24</sup>

The famous former Green MP Peter Pilz ran for elections with his own new list. From the very beginning he announced the fight against political Islam as one of his three main foci.<sup>25</sup> The political scientist Benjamin Opratko and Martin Konecny criticized the fact that Pilz’s “candidacy was supported primarily by the tabloid press *Kronen Zeitung*, that he recommends Islamophobic literature and makes the Islamization of Europe the most important issue.”<sup>26</sup>

A turnaround in the debate on Islamic kindergartens was brought about by a leak by the weekly *Falter*. In an investigative article they showed that officials from the Department of Integration and Foreign Affairs (whose then-minister is the new chancellor Sebastian Kurz) substantially changed the content of the Word files, which were written by the academic Ednan Aslan. The weekly *Falter* wrote,

Just one example: In the first version, which Aslan delivered in January 2016 as a Word file, the academic praised the parents who want their children to go to Islamic kindergartens to be educated “independently, respectfully and lovingly.”

19. Böhmer, Christian (2017), “Van der Bellen reagiert: “Bin kein Freund des Kopftuchs”“, *Kurier*, 26.04.2017, retrieved December 29, 2017, from: <https://m.kurier.at/politik/inland/wirbel-um-kopftuch-sager-von-bundespraesident-van-der-bellen/260.526.277>.

20. Red, APA (2017), ““Wir werden alle Frauen bitten müssen, ein Kopftuch zu tragen - aus Solidarität”“, *Die Presse*, 26.04.2017. Retrieved from: <http://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5207179/Wir-werden-alle-Frauen-bitten-muessen-ein-Kopftuch-zu-tragen-aus?xtor=CS1-15-%5BEconomist%5D> [retrieved: December 30, 2017].

21. Red, APA (2017), “Van der Bellen sorgt mit Statement zu Kopftuch für Aufregung”, *Der Standard*, 26.04.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000056579232/Van-der-Bellen-sorgt-mit-Statement-zu-Kopftuch-fuer-Aufregung>.

22. “Van der Bellen sorgt mit Statement zu Kopftuch für Aufregung”, *Der Standard*, 26.04.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from <http://www.msn.com/de-at/nachrichten/politik/strache-fordert-von-van-der-bellen-entschuldigung/ar-BBAAtHk5?li=BBqg9qG&ocid=SK216DHP> 28.04.2017

23. Krone.at (2017), “Kritik an VdB-Sager: Kopftuch für alle Frauen “aus Solidarität”“, *Kronen Zeitung*, 26.04.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://www.krone.at/oesterreich/kopftuch-fuer-alle-frauen-aus-solidaritaet-kritik-an-vdb-sager-story-566406>.

24. Red./APA (2017), “Kopftuch-Sager: Van der Bellen zog auch NS-Vergleich”, *Die Presse*, 26.04.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [http://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5207333/KopftuchSager\\_Van-der-Bellen-zog-auch-NSVergleich?xtor=CS1-15](http://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5207333/KopftuchSager_Van-der-Bellen-zog-auch-NSVergleich?xtor=CS1-15).

25. Red, APA (2017), “Pilz: Entscheidung über eigene Liste „in drei bis vier Wochen”“, *Der Standard*, 29.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://derstandard.at/2000060488486/Pilz-Entscheidung-ueber-eigene-Liste-in-drei-bis-vier-Wochen>.

26. Konecny, Martin; Opratko, Benjamin (2017), “Warum Peter Pilz keine Alternative ist”, *Mosaik*, 04.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://mosaik-blog.at/peter-pilz-keine-alternative/>.

Kurz's officials – as the correction made of the document shows – simply distorted the sentence into its opposite: that parents want to “protect their children from the moral influence of the majority society.”<sup>27</sup>

The *Falter* argued that the officials changed the content of the report substantially in order to make the situation escalate further. Furthermore, 10,000 Euros of the project money was paid to a third party, a management consultant, who carried out the fieldwork, which also led to criticism.<sup>28</sup> His tasks included the “conception for carrying out the study,” the “evaluation of the political and theological affiliation of the associations and operators,” the analysis of homepages and the investigation of the “family backgrounds of the children.”<sup>29</sup> Also, the management consultant argued that in his analysis of 71 kindergartens and 56 children's groups he had “found no problems (FH), as Aslan describes them.”<sup>30</sup>

The Islamic Religious Community has previously commented that the so-called kindergarten study is to be seen primarily as a commissioned study that had to be harnessed to certain political interests of the commissioning Ministry of Integration.<sup>31</sup> Deputy Mayor Vassilakou (Greens) also made clear remarks: “This kind of politics - under quotes - is destroying democracy. It really is poison for Austria.”<sup>32</sup> The political scientist and a former colleague of Aslan Rami Ali said that Aslan has “tried again and again to push his ideas on the employees and tried desperately to move in a certain direction, even if this direction does not correspond to reality.”<sup>33</sup>

The University of Vienna announced that “an examination of the facts would take place in order to determine to what extent the rules of good scientific practice were adhered to.”<sup>34</sup> This task was entrusted to the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity (OeAWI). The report, which has not been published to date but the results of which were disseminated during a press conference, noted that the “scientific goodness” of the study was partly doubted in the individual opinions (on early

27. Klenk, Florian (2017), “Frisiersalon Kurz”, *Falter*, 04.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://cms.falter.at/falter/2017/07/04/frisiersalon-kurz/>

28. Ibid.

29. Ichner, Bernhard (2017), “Neue Aufregung um Aslans Kindergarten-Studie”, *Kurier*, 10.10.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://m.kurier.at/chronik/wien/neue-aufregung-um-aslans-kindergarten-studie/291.263.732>

30. Ibid.

31. ORF (2017), “IGGÖ: Muslime nicht Spielball der Politik”, *ORF*, 05.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://religion.orf.at/stories/2853045/>

32. Kleine Zeitung (2017), “Kern stellt sich hinter Kurz, Häupl fragt sich, was er wusste”, *Kleine Zeitung*, 05.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [http://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5246956/IslamKindergarten\\_Kern-stellt-sich-hinter-Kurz-Haeupl-fragt-sich](http://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5246956/IslamKindergarten_Kern-stellt-sich-hinter-Kurz-Haeupl-fragt-sich)

33. Kaltenbrunner, Stefan (2017), “Schwere Vorwürfe gegen Studienautor Aslan”, *Kurier*, 04.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/studie-zu-islam-kindergaerten-schwere-vorwuerfe-gegen-studienautor-aslan/273.321.865>

34. Universität Wien (2017), “Studie zu Kindergärten: Klärung durch wissenschaftliche Prüfung”, *Universität Wien*, 04.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.univie.ac.at/ueber-uns/weitere-informationen/04072017/>

childhood education, Islamic studies or sociology of science) and that the “influence of the ministry” was present. The important point here, however, is that due to the lack of formal regulation between academia and politics, no scientific misconduct could be detected. However, both sides – the SPÖ Vienna as well as Sebastian Kurz with Ednan Aslan – presented their positions as being confirmed by the report exam. While the University of Vienna agreed to publish the report, if the author of the study agrees, Aslan refused to have the statement published “until further notice.”<sup>35</sup>

In preparation for the state elections in Lower Austria, the leading candidate of the FPÖ, Udo Landbauer, mobilized with the slogan “Stop the forced Islamization of our youngest! Turkish lessons, teachers with headscarves and Islamic festivals have no place in our kindergartens. On January 28, Muslim Mummy Mikl [governess of Lower Austria] and her multicultural madness will be voted out!” Governess Mikl from the conservatives was portrayed in a black cloth. (Fig. 2)



Figure 2: Vote Muslim-Mummy Mikl [governess of Lower Austria] out! Photo: Screenshot RFJ

### National Parliamentary Election Campaign 2017

In the federal election campaign, the SPÖ produced a video spot. There, Chairman Kern speaks with a “concerned citizen”<sup>36</sup> and listens to her concerns regarding fears that her “Christian Austria” is losing its values. Journalist Solmaz Khorsand critically comments, “Kern smiles, nods, agrees and weakens half-heartedly. Finally, he proudly proclaims that the burka ban will soon be ‘executed’,”<sup>37</sup> thus supporting the anti-Muslim fearmongering that is continuously produced by the far right.

Sebastian Kurz was portrayed by the FPÖ with his slogan “Islam belongs in Austria” from 2015, while Strache is depicted in color with the slogan “Stop Islamization.” (Fig. 3)

35. Aslan-Studie: Stellungnahme nicht veröffentlicht’, *ORF Wien*, 23.11.2017, Retrieved November 23, 2017 from [www.wien.orf.at/news/stories/2880099/](http://www.wien.orf.at/news/stories/2880099/)

36. SPÖVideos (2017), “#kernunterwegs am Stammtisch – Folge 1”, YouTube, 01.09.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItMSxLVQM-U>

37. Khorsand, Solmaz (2017), “Stammtischkanzler”, *Wiener Zeitung*, 04.09.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/kommentare/914825\\_Stammtischkanzler.html](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/kommentare/914825_Stammtischkanzler.html) .



Figure 3: "Islam belongs to Austria" says conservative Chairman Kurz, while right-wing Chairman Strache says "Stop Islamization." Photo: Screenshop FPÖ.

After Johannes Hübner from the FPÖ (MP from 2008 to 2017) announced his resignation from politics on July 25, 2017 due to anti-Semitic statements, Strache stated, "Anti-Semitism is really a problem in our society. But they also have to read Ednan Aslan's study, where more than 45% of Muslims in Austria want the destruction of Israel and desire the extermination of Jews. We really have a problem."<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Sebastian Kurz responded to

a question regarding his intentions to fight anti-Semitism in the conservative students' union. He said there would be "no tolerance, not even for the conservative students' union" and claimed that the "anti-Semitic danger stems from Muslims."<sup>39</sup>

The NGO Initiative of Austrian Muslims and the magazine *Kismet Online* questioned the political parties running for elections on their positions towards Islam and Muslims. While Christian Kern (SPÖ), Ulrike Lunacek (Greens) and Matthias Strolz (NEOS) affirmed that Islam belongs in Austria, Strache (FPÖ) said, "Islam as such does not belong in Austria. Neither historically nor culturally, nor is it in any way part of Europe."<sup>40</sup> The most consistent anti-racist position was that of the Communist KPÖ-Plus.<sup>41</sup>

### The New Coalition's Government Program<sup>42</sup>

The government, which was sworn in on December 18, 2017, publicly announced its coalition program two days earlier. Islam appears a total number of 21 times and

38. Kurier (2017), "Sebastian Kurz: Das erste große Interview nach der Wahl", *Kurier*, 17.10.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/wahl/oevp-chef-sebastian-kurz-erstes-tv-interview-nach-der-wahl-auf-kurier-at/292.607.308>

39. Ibid.

40. Ichner, Bernhard (2017), "Spitzenkandidaten beziehen Stellung zum Islam", *Kurier*, 02.10.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/spitzenkandidaten-beziehen-stellung-zum-islam/289.067.501>

41. Kismet Online (2017), "Farid Hafez: Wie islamophob war der Wahlkampf in Österreich? #nrw17", YouTube, 12.10.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fEPCiwDQw&t=35s>

42. Hafez, Farid (2017), "Austria's New Programme for Government. En Route to a Restrictive Policy on Islam?", *Qantara*, 21.12.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://en.qantara.de/content/austrias-new-programme-for-government-en-route-to-a-restrictive-policy-on-islam>

“Sharia” appears once in the text. In contrast, terms such as right-wing extremism and fascism do not appear even once in the coalition program of the Conservative Party and the FPÖ. Human rights are mentioned only five times. In the government program, minority protection is discussed to the same limited extent as Austria’s increasing Islamophobia.

“Political Islam” becomes a focal point of internal security in the new program. Austrian federal authorities such as the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution normally use ‘Islamism’ to refer to extremist versions of Islam. The individual measures dealt with in this subchapter reveal who the two electoral winners subsume under “political Islam”: Muslims. The program is about “ensuring a comprehensive control of the presentation of the Islamic doctrine.” This sounds strange for the first time, as state authorities are not allowed to intervene in the interests of recognized churches and religious communities.

The coalition program also requires that essential sources of faith such as the Koran be submitted in an authorized translation. Beyond that, the program reiterates a “ban on foreign financing,” a “criminal law against political Islam” and demands “value and orientation courses for asylum seekers.”

In conclusion, it can be summarized that Muslims are not understood on the basis of human rights and religious freedom as subjects to be protected and as citizens especially affected by racism, but are explicitly treated as a potential hazard, which must be contained by means of discriminatory, repressive and security policy measures. The Islamic Law from 2015, as well as other security measures, should help in this direction.

## Justice System

Research on the files of a mosque in Graz (see “Islamophobia in Austria: National Report 2016”) led to the discovery of connections between right-wing extremist networks consisting of Identitarians and the Party of the People (PDV) in Styria to the local FPÖ branch.<sup>43</sup>

In March, the Federal Law on the Prohibition of the Concealment of the Face in Public (Anti-Facial Disposal Act - AGesVG) was introduced. The ÖIF praised the law as enabling “the exchange between all people living in the public space,” from which “traditional events such as the Austrian Perchtenläufe”<sup>44</sup> are excluded.<sup>45</sup> The Algerian millionaire Rachid Nekkaz protested against the ban on face veiling and was

43. Schmid, Fabian; Sulzbacher, Markus (2017), “Moscheeschändung: Rechtsextremes Netzwerk mit Kontakt zur FPÖ-Spitze”, *Der Standard*, 04.12.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://derstandard.at/2000068873477/Moscheeschaendung-Rechtsextremes-Netzwerk-mit-Kontakt-zur-FPOe-Spitze>

44. The *Perchten* are traditional pagan masks worn during certain holidays and festivities across Austria.

45. Österreichischer Integrations Fonds (2017), “Anti-Gesichtsverhüllungsgesetz tritt in Kraft”, *Integrationsfonds*, 21.09.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.integrationsfonds.at/news/detail/article/anti-gesichtsverhuellungsgesetz-tritt-in-kraft/>

fined 50 Euros for his protest in front of the Ministry of Integration. Kurz also reiterated that the “total veiling” was “a symbol of antagonism and political Islamism and we resolutely fight it.” He further said, “We stand by our European values, such as equality between men and women. We will continue to defend them unperturbed.”<sup>46</sup>

The Supreme Court (OGH) has ruled in favour of a claim made by the national MP Harald Walser whereby the FPÖ is liable as a host provider for content that has been published by third parties on the Facebook page of Strache. Accordingly, the FPÖ should delete these hate comments,<sup>47</sup> which allow anti-racist activists more room for manoeuvre.

In Carinthia, a man who had targeted a group of Muslim women with a shotgun was sentenced to ten-month imprisonment.<sup>48</sup> He took a picture of himself and then put it on Facebook with the accompanying text “Why play on the computer?” He was also fined 960 Euros despite being unemployed.<sup>49</sup>

The examination of Islamic associations as stipulated in the Islam Act was demanded by Efgani Dönmez in his capacity as candidate for the national parliament. State Secretary Muna Duzdar referred to the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior, which in turn returned to Duzdar.<sup>50</sup> As part of his candidacy Dönmez pleaded for a Ministry of Migration. Sebastian Kurz reiterated his call for an “extension of the cultural office in the chancellery to become a genuine authority on religion.”<sup>51</sup> Duzdar also demanded more competencies for her office including an increase in staff and independent auditors to control suspicions of foreign financing.<sup>52</sup>

The chairman of the FPÖ Mayrhofer was sentenced to unconditional fines for degrading religious teachings because he referred to Islam as “an insane Islamic ideology.”<sup>53</sup>

The Federal Chancellery examined an imam school in Vienna and one in Linz in accordance with the Islam Act of 2015, as there was a call for donations in Germany, which is forbidden according to the Islam Act due to the domestic funding

46. Kurier (2017), ““Burka-Rebell” in Wien abgeführt”, *Kurier*, 09.10.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://m.kurier.at/chronik/wien/burka-rebell-in-wien-abgefuehrt/290.945.740>

47. Walser, Harald (2017), “Endlich gerichtlich geklärt: FPÖ haftet für Hassostings”, *Harald Walser*, 24.02.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://haraldwalser.at/5835-2/#.WLIeohxPF8Y.facebook>

48. Kleine Zeitung (2017), “Villacher zielte mit Schrotflinte auf muslimische Frauen”, *Kleine Zeitung*, 02.03.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [http://www.kleinezeitung.at/kaernten/villach/aktuelles\\_villach/5177348/](http://www.kleinezeitung.at/kaernten/villach/aktuelles_villach/5177348/)

49. Ibid.

50. APA (2017), “Moscheevereine, die Geld aus Ausland bekommen, sollen aufgelöst werden”, *Der Standard*, 15.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://derstandard.at/2000061339278/Sobotka-will-Moscheevereine-aufloesen-wenn-sie-aus-Ausland-Geld-erhalten?ref=artwh>

51. red, ORF.at (2017), “Nachschärfungen beim Islamgesetz geplant”, *ORF*, 22.08.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://orf.at/stories/2404110/>

52. APA (2017), “Moscheevereine: Verdacht der Auslandsfinanzierung bei 60 Imamen”, *Die Presse*, 01.10.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://diepresse.com/home/Innenpolitik/5295073/>.

53. ORF (2017), “FB-Hassposting: Obmann der FPÖ-Mayrhofer verurteilt”, *ORF*, 15.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://tirol.orf.at/news/stories/2855071/>

requirement.<sup>54</sup> According to media reports, the project was banned in Linz because there was no permit.<sup>55</sup> Daily *Kurier* even claimed that the imam school had been “possibly illegally run for three years.”<sup>56</sup> The operators of the school explained that the schools are not part of the framework of the private school law that they are not operated illegally, and are not financed from abroad.<sup>57</sup> The Islamic religious community opposed the closure by saying that it was not a school but an education centre for the training of imams.<sup>58</sup> The Ministry of Education had filed a complaint against the school in Liesing.<sup>59</sup>

In November, a 24-year-old in Klagenfurt State Court was sentenced to 3,000 Euros for an online posting. She said in a posting that “the same ritual” should be performed on the people who slaughter animals in a religiously traditional way as that performed on the animals.<sup>60</sup>

Fouad A., chairman of a large Viennese kindergarten, filed a charge against MP Efgani Dönmez. Currently, a temporary injunction has been issued, according to which Dönmez has to retract the statement that Fouad A.’s kindergarten is “in the sphere of influence of the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood.”<sup>61</sup>

## Employment

The managing director of the Styrian branch of the vocational institution Berufsförderungsinstitut Wilhelm Techt attempted the introduction of a so-called “neutrality requirement,” which was propagated by the government and was harshly criticized by the public. He wanted to prohibit symbols of all religions, from the nun’s habit, the *kippah* to the cross. Techt explained, “We are committed to the welcome culture, but we also want to convey unmistakably to these people our Western culture, our

54. APA (2017), “Bundeskanzleramt prüft Alif und Imam Hatip auf Auslandsfinanzierung”, *Die Presse*, 21.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://diepresse.com/home/Chronik/Wien/5256123/>.

55. Eged, Marie-Theres; Krutzler, David; Günther, Oswald (2017), “Prüfung islamischer Vereine: Koalition will Kontoöffnungen ermöglichen”, *Der Standard*, 21.08.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000062901461/Duzdar-zu-nicht-genehmigter-Islam-Schule-Kultusamt-soll-Konten-oeffnen>

56. Baltaci, Bilal; Gaul, Gernhard (2017), “Erdoğan plante Islam-Schule schon 2013: Sie ist bis heute illegal”, *Kurier*, 22.08.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/erdoan-plant-islam-schule-schon-2013-sie-ist-bis-heute-illegal/281.880.824>

57. APA (2017), “Islamschule: Betreiber sprechen von “innerer Angelegenheit”“, *Der Standard*, 23.08.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://derstandard.at/2000063033101/Islam-Schule-Betreiber-sprechen-von-innerer-Angelegenheit>

58. APA (2017), “Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft gegen Schließung der Islam-Schule”, *Die Presse*, 23.08.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/schule/5273697/IslamSchule\\_Islamische-Glaubensgemeinschaft-gegen-Schliessung?xtor=CS1-15](http://diepresse.com/home/bildung/schule/5273697/IslamSchule_Islamische-Glaubensgemeinschaft-gegen-Schliessung?xtor=CS1-15)

59. Religion.ORF.at (2017), “Geschlossene Islamschule plant Umorganisation”, *ORF*, 30.11.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2881161/>.

60. ORF (2017), “3.000 Euro Strafe wegen Facebook-Postings”, *ORF*, 22.11.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017 from <http://kaernten.orf.at/news/stories/2879707/>.

61. Möchel, Kid (2017), “Kindergarten-Chef klagt “Islamisten-Jäger” Dönmez”, *Kurier*, 11.11.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://m.kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/kindergarten-chefklagt-islamisten-jaeger-doenmez/297.391.003>

values.”<sup>62</sup> Protest came from the women’s department of the Islamic Cultural Centre Graz.<sup>63</sup> After a woman was threatened to be dismissed from her job, she intervened with the support of the workers’ chamber and the dispute was settled. In November, the instruction of the ban was withdrawn.<sup>64</sup>

After the ruling of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), which allows companies in the private sector to prohibit employees wearing religious clothing, the daily *Die Presse* asked private companies about their stance on the ruling. It showed that the largest trading companies reject such a ban: REWE spokesman Paul Pöttschacher, DM director Petra Mathi-Kogelnik, HOFER, SPAR spokeswoman Nicole Berkmann and ISS Facility Services Austria are all committed to “lived diversity.”<sup>65</sup>

## Education

The Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education (IDB), an NGO based in Vienna, has documented a total of 28 cases of Islamophobic discrimination, of which 23 occurred at school and 5 in kindergartens.<sup>66</sup> In February, a debate about wearing the hijab by Muslim girls in elementary school was sparked. While the School Inspectorate of the city of Vienna sees no problem in this, “as long as it is voluntarily worn,” the Salzburg SPÖ councilor Anja Hagenauer was shocked by young Muslim girls wearing the hijab.<sup>67</sup> The feminist Dudu Kücükgöl criticized the tendentious reporting of this issue.<sup>68</sup>

Shortly before the national parliamentary elections, the Austrian Integration Fund, the ÖIF, published a “research report on the role of the mosque in the integration process.”<sup>69</sup> The authors were Heiko Heinisch and Imet Memedi

62. Hecke, Bernd (2017), “Bildungsinstitut BFI verbietet Mitarbeiterinnen Kopftuch”, *Neue*, 15.03.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://www.neue.at/politik/2017/03/14/bildungsinstitut-bfi-verbietet-mitarbeiterinnen-kopftuch.neue>

63. Hecke, Bernd (2017), “Grazer Muslimas wollen sich Identität nicht nehmen lassen”, *Kleine Zeitung*, 10.10.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from [http://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/graz/5185219/Kritik-an-Kopftuchverbot\\_Grazer-Muslimas-wollen-sich-Identitaet?xtor=CS1-15](http://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/graz/5185219/Kritik-an-Kopftuchverbot_Grazer-Muslimas-wollen-sich-Identitaet?xtor=CS1-15).

64. Kleine Zeitung (2017), “Kopftuchverbot beim BFI ist endgültig vom Tisch”, *Kleine Zeitung*, 17.11.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from [http://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/graz/5322373/Streit-beigelegt\\_Kopftuchverbot-beim-BFI-ist-endgueltig-vom-Tisch?xtor=CS1-15](http://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/graz/5322373/Streit-beigelegt_Kopftuchverbot-beim-BFI-ist-endgueltig-vom-Tisch?xtor=CS1-15)

65. Böhm, Wolfgang; Kary, Christine (2017), “Handel lehnt Kopftuchverbot ab: Vielfalt ist ein “Bedürfnis von Kunden”“, *Die Presse*, 14.03.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from [http://diepresse.com/home/ausland/eu/5183560/Migration\\_Handel-lehnt-Kopftuchverbot-ab](http://diepresse.com/home/ausland/eu/5183560/Migration_Handel-lehnt-Kopftuchverbot-ab)

66. Interview with Chairwoman Sonia Zaafrani.

67. ORF (2017), “Diskussion über Kopftuch für Kinder”, *ORF*, 10.10.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2823359/>

68. Kücükgöl, Dudu (2017), “Über kleine „Kopftuchmädchen“ und „Kippabuben”“, *Das Biber*, 06.02.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://www.dasbiber.at/blog/ueber-kleine-kopftuchmaedchen-und-kippabuben>.

69. Heinisch, Heiko; Memedi, Imet; et al. (2017), “Die Rolle der Moschee im Integrationsprozess”, Österreichischer Integrationsfonds, 09/2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017 from [https://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/content/AT/Downloads/Publikationen/Forschungsbericht\\_Heinisch\\_Die\\_Rolle\\_der\\_Moschee\\_web.pdf](https://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/content/AT/Downloads/Publikationen/Forschungsbericht_Heinisch_Die_Rolle_der_Moschee_web.pdf)

as well as a mysterious “et al.,” which normally refers to other authors, who in this case were never mentioned.<sup>70</sup> The research results were summarized with claims of “fundamentalist tendencies in many institutions,” “clear rejection of Austrian values,” “strong separation by ethnic groups” and “German sermons as an exception, [and] usually no room for women.”<sup>71</sup> The report “The Muslim Brotherhood in Austria,” co-financed by the ÖIF, was also published shortly before the elections<sup>72</sup> and used by then-Minister of the Interior Sobotka as an opportunity to examine the establishment of a new domestic intelligence service.<sup>73</sup> In this report, Lorenzo Vidino, who is famous for his attempt to create loose connections between the most vocal Muslim institutions and “ties to the Brotherhood,” targets nearly every vocal Austrian Muslim actor. The Brotherhood, according to Vidino, endangers social cohesion. As examples in Germany show, where very active and dedicated young Muslims have set up a number of creative projects, the more active people are, the more easily they are accused of being associated with the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>74</sup>

## Media

The media landscape gave way to critical tones in connection with Islamophobic debates. In the context of the headscarf ban debate at the beginning of 2017 there were many critical commentaries.<sup>75</sup> Daily *Salzburg Nachrichten* editor Viktor Hermann warned that the ÖVP could not overtake the FPÖ with this right-wing course.<sup>76</sup> Clear words like those of Barbara Coudenhove-Kalergi were also heard,

But no headscarves? No visible mosques? No adequate representation in society?  
If we want the religious minority of Muslims to feel at home in the country and identify with Austria, then the majority society would have to accommodate it a bit

70. Ibid.

71. Österreichischer Integrationsfonds (2017), “Forschungsbericht ‘Rolle der Moschee im Integrationsprozess’“, *Österreichischer Integrationsfonds*, 09/2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <https://www.integrationsfonds.at/publikationen/forschungsberichte/forschungsbericht-rolle-der-moschee-im-integrationsprozess/>

72. Hafez, Farid, “The Global Muslim Brotherhood Conspiracy Theory“, The Bridge Initiative (Georgetown University), 18 September 2017, retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://bridge.georgetown.edu/global-muslim-brotherhood-conspiracy-theory/>

73. ORF (2017), “Sobotka prüft neuen Inlandsgeheimdienst“, *ORF*, 28.09.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://orf.at/stories/2408931/>

74. Nordbruch, Götz & Gerlach, Julia, Das Misstrauen wächst: Engagierte Muslim\_innen in der Kritik!, 12 April 2017, <http://www.ufuq.de/vom-hinterhof-in-die-mitte-der-gesellschaft-und-wieder-zurueck-engagierte-muslimen-haben-mit-wachsendem-misstrauen-zu-kaempfen/>

75. Hamann, Sibylle (2017), “Womöglich ging es gar nicht um die Burka – sondern um uns“, *Die Presse*, 26.09.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/quergeschrieben/sibyllehamann/5292530/Quergeschrieben\\_Womoeglich-ging-es-gar-nicht-um-die-Burka-sondern](http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/quergeschrieben/sibyllehamann/5292530/Quergeschrieben_Womoeglich-ging-es-gar-nicht-um-die-Burka-sondern)

76. Hermann, Viktor (2017), “ Und wenn ihnen nichts mehr einfällt, verbieten sie das Kopftuch“, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 11.01.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://www.salzburg.com/nachrichten/meinung/kolumne/hevi/sn/artikel/und-wenn-ihnen-nichts-mehr-einfaellt-verbieten-sie-das-kopftuch-229624/>

further than it currently does [...] And is it really justifiable in the long run that Muslim immigrants in the faculty, police, authorities and political parties are virtually unrepresented? There are enough highly qualified, democratic immaculate people.<sup>77</sup>

Columnist Isolde Charim criticized the emotional charge of the migration debate and called for a sober approach: “Real problems can be solved pragmatically. Libidinous fixations cannot.”<sup>78</sup> I also wrote a guest commentary for daily *Der Standard* criticizing the ban on the face veil. Journalist Alexia Weiss asks ironically and critically whether we still want religious freedom in our society.<sup>79</sup>

Ali Cem Deniz critically stated, “The Austrian majority society has a problem with naming anti-Muslim racism. This is not only a danger for Muslims but for the whole society.”<sup>80</sup> Irene Klissenbauer criticized the “burqa ban” as “a restriction of religious freedom – and not worthy of an open society.”<sup>81</sup> John Bunzl wrote an op-ed on the parallels of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.<sup>82</sup>

But there were also contradictory positions. In the weekly *Die Furche* and the daily *Kronen Zeitung*<sup>83</sup> a director was given room to argue for a headscarf ban for schoolgirls.<sup>84</sup> In *Die Presse*, one-sided comments were made criticizing the Islamic religious community, while basically supporting the government’s proclaimed “Islam of European character” without one word of critique towards the government.<sup>85</sup> A correspondent of *Der Standard* was criticized for asking the question of whether Muslims have a general “license to lie.”<sup>86</sup> Like last year (see “Islamophobia in Austria: National Report 2016”), Lisa Nimmervoll invited Islamophobic persons like Saïda

77. Coudenhove-Kalergi, Barbara (2017), “Kopftücher: Was auch gesagt werden muss”, *Der Standard*, 03.05.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://derstandard.at/2000056930668/Kopftuecher-Was-auch-gesagt-werden-muss?ref=article>

78. Charim, Isolde (2017), “Aus sicherer Entfernung “Es gibt nur ein Thema: muslimische Zuwanderung”“, *Wiener Zeitung*, 29.09.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/kommentare/920110\\_Es-gibt-nur-ein-Thema-muslimische-Zuwanderung.html](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/kommentare/920110_Es-gibt-nur-ein-Thema-muslimische-Zuwanderung.html).

79. Weiss, Alexia (2017), “Jüdisch leben: Rassistische Debatte”, *Wiener Zeitung*, 07.02.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/blogs/juedisch\\_leben/872566\\_Rassistische-Debatte.html](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/blogs/juedisch_leben/872566_Rassistische-Debatte.html).

80. Deniz, Ali Cem (2017), “Wir müssen über Islamophobie reden”, *FM4*, 27.06.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://fm4.orf.at/stories/2851553/>.

81. Klissenbauer, Irene (2017), “Keine Angst vor Pluralität”, *Der Standard*, 28.09.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017 from [http://derstandard.at/2000064918155/Keine-Angst-vor-Pluralitaet?utm\\_term=Autofeed&utm\\_campaign=Echobox&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook#link\\_time=1506579561](http://derstandard.at/2000064918155/Keine-Angst-vor-Pluralitaet?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#link_time=1506579561)

82. Bunzl, John (2017), “Islamophobie und Antisemitismus: gleiche Leidenschaft?”, *Falter* 49/2017.

83. Gantner, Christoph (2017), “Gesetz ausweiten? Direktorin: “Kopftuchverbot auch in den Schulen”“, *Kronen Zeitung*, 30.01.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://www.krone.at/oesterreich/direktorin-kopftuchverbot-auch-in-den-schulen-gesetz-ausweiten-story-551421>

84. Hasibeder, Maria (2017), “Für ein partielles Kopftuchverbot”, *Furche* Nr. 04/2017, S. 14, 26.01.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017

85. NNEI Sonbatl, Jasmin (2017), “Halal und haram bringen den Islam nicht voran”, *Die Presse*, 14.03.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://diepresse.com/home/meinung/gastkommentar/5183633/Halal-und-haram-bringen-den-Islam-nicht-voran>

86. Deniz, Ali Cem (2017), “Wir müssen über Islamophobie reden”, *FM4*, 27.06.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://fm4.orf.at/stories/2851553/>

Keller-Messahli to propagate and disseminate their views. Keller-Messahli argued in favor of a general suspicion towards all mosques and claimed that mosques generally could not contribute to integration. She propagated a headscarf ban and supported the findings of the ÖIF report on mosques.<sup>87</sup>

The invitation policy of many media outlets can also be seen in a critical light. One example among many is a discussion on ORF regarding “Radicalized youth - what’s wrong with the Islamist threat?” Laila Mirzo, a native Syrian who converted to Christianity ten years ago, said terror was not a perversion of IS but the centrepiece of Islam itself. The native Syrian has “so far been noticed only in appearances in right-wing publications.”<sup>88</sup> On the Internet platform *Wochenblick.at*, whose close relationship to the FPÖ and the far-right scene has been documented by weekly *Profil*, she called the Koran a “manual of terror.” The right-wing blog *unzensuriert.at* features her as an expert on Islam.<sup>89</sup>

The debate about Islamic kindergartens took place especially in the media. The *Kronen Zeitung* relied on the study by Ednan Aslan and argued that 50 percent of Islamic kindergartens should be closed.<sup>90</sup> It published titles such as “Headscarf, Radicalization. Everyday Life in Kindergartens.”<sup>91</sup> Erich Kocina (*Die Presse*) researched and criticized the *Kronen Zeitung* for relying on so-called photographic sources for this article, which were taken from the photo gallery of the Islamic Center in Vienna rather than from kindergartens, while the online editor-in-chief insisted that the photos were real.<sup>92</sup> At the end of November, the Press Council reprimanded the weekly for using these photos. Moreover, the girls without a hijab were digitally removed from the real photographs.<sup>93</sup> The image of the hijab as a reality of Mus-

87. Nimmervoll, Lisa (2017), “Säida Keller-Messahli: “Allmählich etabliert sich eine Parallelgesellschaft””, *Der Standard*, 24.10.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017 from <http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000066523469/Saida-Keller-Messahli-Allmaehlich-etabliert-sich-eine-Parallelgesellschaft>

88. Oberascher, Karl (2017), ““Im Zentrum” zu Radikalisierung: Wer diskutierte da eigentlich?”, *Kurier*, 07.02.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017 from <https://m.kurier.at/kultur/im-zentrum-zu-radikalisierung-wer-diskutierte-da-eigentlich/245.349.810>

89. Unzensuriert (2017), “Islam-Kennerin Laila Mirzo bezeichnet den Koran als ein Handbuch des Terrors und der Intoleranz”, *Unzensuriert*, 27.04.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017 from <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0021871-Islam-Kennerin-Laila-Mirzo-bezeichnet-den-Koran-als-ein-Handbuch-des-Terrors-und-der>

90. Pommer, Michael (2017), “Sind in Wien 75 Islam-Kindergärten zu radikal?”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 23.06.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://www.krone.at/575492>.

91. Schmitt, Richard (2017), “Kopftuch, Radikalisierung Alltag in Kindergärten”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 24.06.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://www.krone.at/wien/kopftuch-radikalisierung-alltag-in-kindergaerten-fotobeweise-aus-wien-story-575570>

92. Kocina, Erich (2017), “Islam-Kindergarten: Falsches Foto in der Kronen Zeitung”, *Die Presse*, 27.06.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/wien/5242121/IslamKindergarten\\_Falsche-Fotos-in-der-Kronen-Zeitung](http://diepresse.com/home/panorama/wien/5242121/IslamKindergarten_Falsche-Fotos-in-der-Kronen-Zeitung)

93. Red, APA (2017), ““Islam-Kindergarten”: Presserat rügt “Krone” für Kopftuchfotos”, *Der Standard*, 22.11.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://derstandard.at/2000068285874/Islam-Kindergarten-Presserat-ruegt-Krone-fuer-Kopftuch-Fotos>

lim schoolgirls was supported by journalist Clemens Neuhold in *Profil*,<sup>94</sup> while Bilal Baltaci wrote in the course of a research for the daily *Kurier* that they did not see a single child with a hijab in any Islamic kindergarten.<sup>95</sup> A more differentiated covering of this issue came from Petra Stüber in the daily *Der Standard*.<sup>96</sup>

The *Kronen Zeitung* titled and illustrated a study on immigration and Muslims on the front page as follows: “Close Borders for Muslims”. (Fig. 4)

Making links between politically hot topics and problematizing Muslims due to their religion is also not rare. Here are two examples, one from the tabloid *Kronen Zeitung* and the other from the state’s *ORF*. The first puts hijab-wearing women under the title “Social Service Office” and the other shows a hijab-wearing young girl and beneath the text “80 million Euros for problem schools.” (Figs. 5, 6)

TV shows such as *Talk im Hangar 7* on Servus TV had various debates, to which they invited leading Islamophobic spokespeople. Hamed Abdel-Samad, Seyran Ates and Gerald Grosz were invited to a discussion titled “Can Islam still be saved?”<sup>98</sup> On

the other hand, Servus TV invited those Muslims who represent extreme margins of the Muslim community from abroad and unnecessarily heat up debates that do not relate to existing problems in Austria.<sup>99</sup> Frauke Petry, former AfD chairman, and the Islamophobe Michael Ley were invited to contribute to the subject of “Anti-Semitic Attacks:



Figure 4: “Close Borders for Muslims” (daily *Kronen Zeitung*, 21 June 2017)<sup>97</sup>

94. Neuhold, Clemens (2017), “Kopftuch für Sechsjährige “ist Schulrealität”“, *Profil*, 03.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/kopftuch-fuer-sechsjaehrige-ist-schulrealitaet-8215316>

95. Baltaci, Bilal (2017), “Es gibt Wichtigeres als Deutsch”, *Zeitung*, 15.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://m.kurier.at/politik/inland/es-gibt-wichtigeres-als-deutsch/275.135.202>

96. Stüber, Petra (2017), “Wahlkampfgetöse um islamische Kindergärten”, *Der Standard*, 24.06.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000059717412/Wahlkampfgetoese-um-islamische-Kindergaerten>

97. <https://twitter.com/Helge/status/877802406796513280>

98. Servus TV (2017), “Ist der Islam noch zu retten”, *OTS*, 19.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20170719\\_OTS0018/ist-der-islam-noch-zu-retten](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20170719_OTS0018/ist-der-islam-noch-zu-retten)

99. Servus TV (2017), “„SERVUS NACHRICHTEN“ exklusiv: Was radikale Muslime in Wiener Moscheen predigen”, *OTS*, 01.12.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20171201\\_OTS0155/servus-nachrichten-exklusiv-was-radikale-muslime-in-wiener-moscheen-predigen](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20171201_OTS0155/servus-nachrichten-exklusiv-was-radikale-muslime-in-wiener-moscheen-predigen)

Where Does the New Anti-Semitism Come from?”<sup>100</sup> FPÖ Chairman Strache and Heiko Heinisch were invited to discuss “Muslims in Austria: What Is the Problem of Living Together?”<sup>101</sup> Sebastian Kurz and Alice Schwarzer were invited to discuss “Burka, Headscarf and Koran: What Is the Problem of Integration?”<sup>102</sup> Efgani Dönmez and Heiko Heinisch also discussed “Islamic Kindergartens: Really Just a Scare?”<sup>103</sup>



Figure 5: “Social Service Office” (Screenshot, daily Österreich)

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

As noted by the FRA, the number of unreported cases is much higher than that of the incidents actually reported. As part of a group interview with two female students (one from Styria and one from Vienna) and one student (Upper Austria), I interviewed people about Islamophobic attacks in their everyday lives. A teacher reports on a mediation talk in which the director said to a concerned student’s mother that her son



Figure 6: “80 million Euros for Problem Schools” (Screenshot, Austrian Broadcast TV ORF)

“has to accept criticism of his inappropriate behaviour and change behaviour, even if it comes from a woman.” A student tells of an incident at Graz Airport. She had to drop her hijab, even though the metal detector had not beeped when she passed through. During a walk in the city centre, a student crossed the street without paying attention to whether a vehicle was coming. A cyclist passing by the student said, “Away, you dirty Muslim!” These few examples reveal the range of harassment in everyday life, ranging from state to private institutions to occurrences on the street.

100. Servus (2017), “Antisemitische Attacken: Woher kommt die neue Judenfeindlichkeit?”, *Servus*, o.J. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.servus.com/at/p/Antisemitische-Attacken%3A-Woher-kommt-die-neue-Judenfeindlichkeit%3F/AA-1TCMYETRHIW12/>.

101. Servus TV (2017), “Talk im Hangar-7 | Muslime in Österreich: Woran scheitert das Miteinander?”, YouTube, 02.06.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzwBsFuXHC4>

102. Servus TV (2017), “Talk im Hangar-7 | Islamische Kindergärten: Wirklich nur Panikmache?”, YouTube, 13.07.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cN3x7devA-4>

103. Servus TV (2017), “Talk im Hangar-7 - Burka, Kopftuch und Koran: Woran scheitert Integration?”, YouTube, 17.02.2017. Retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrMj2oBCC6M>

On March 15, a 50-year-old woman with her hair covered in the open street was told, without context, “Wow, those scraps on the head. Go away cooky and shut up”<sup>104</sup> In Linz, during the same month, a woman with children on the street was asked by a strange man why she wears a headscarf. After that, he went on to say, “This is Sh\*\*.” A man showed moral courage and stood between them.<sup>105</sup>

In April, a 30-year-old, who has had been repeatedly charged with punishments, was charged with an unconditional fine of 7,560 Euros after throwing a bag filled with dog feces on the façade of a mosque in Bludenz, on a night in February. The judgment, which was not final, found the accused guilty of serious damage to property.<sup>106</sup>

After the introduction of the full-face veil ban passersby on the street felt justified in making Muslims with face veils aware of the ban.<sup>107</sup> In total, there were 30 official acts in the first two weeks, only four of which were involved Muslim women wearing a face veil.<sup>108</sup> The most notable symbolic act was directed against the parliamentary mascot that was asked by the police to take off his face coverage.<sup>109</sup>

The inscription “Muslim” with an arrow that showed the dustbin was cleaned by the responsible workers the following day. (Fig. 7) Alexia Weiss asked critically in the daily *Wiener Zeitung*, “Muslims should be stuffed into dustbins? Why? Because they are crap or garbage? Worthless? Because they have to be disposed of? And disposed in stands for what? Are they unwanted? Should they be destroyed? Free association leads in different directions.”<sup>110</sup>



Figure 7: The word “Muslims” written on a dustbin. <sup>111</sup>

104. Aytac, Gülmihri (2017), “Titel des Artikels”, *Zeitung*, 10.10.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from Report by Gülmihri Aytac on her Facebook account.

105. Anonymous report to the reporter via Email.

106. Vorarlberg ORF (2017), “Moschee mit Hundekot beworfen: Geldstrafe”, *ORF*, 24.04.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://vorarlberg.orf.at/news/stories/2839983/>

107. Seiser, Birgit (2017), “Wien: Nikab-Streit auf offener Straße”, *Kurier*, 06.10.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/wien-nikab-streit-auf-offener-strasse/290.364.037>

108. ORF (2017), “Verhüllungsverbot: 30 Amtshandlungen”, *ORF*, 10.10.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://wien.orf.at/m/news/stories/2872439/>.

109. Trescher, Thomas (2017), “Verhüllungsverbot: Darf man sich zu Halloween als Burka-Trägerin verkleiden?”, *Kurier*, 20.10.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/verhuellungsverbot-darf-man-sich-zu-halloween-als-burka-traegerin-verkleiden/293.190.778>

110. Weiss, Alexia (2017), “Menschenmüll”, *Wiener Zeitung*, 12.06.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/blogs/juedisch\\_leben/897787\\_Menschenmuell.html](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/blogs/juedisch_leben/897787_Menschenmuell.html)

111. Ibid.

Graffiti stating “Islam out” was spotted on the walls of a Turkish cultural association in the Schlachthausgasse, Vienna in the 3rd district. (Fig. 8)

A similar inscription with the words “MOSLEMS RAUS” (Muslims leave!) was sighted on November 24; the next day “MOSLEMS” had been replaced with “NAZIS.” (Fig. 9)

At the University of Vienna on September 25, the writing “F\*\*\* Islam” as well as vulgar expressions targeting Muslim women were sighted. (Fig. 10)

Similar acts of vandalism were also seen on buildings of left-ist political parties. Three graffiti (dated 1.6.2017, 8.6.2017, and 28.11.2017) were sighted at the Greens’ offices in Vienna: “Stop Islamization,” “Islam Kills” and “Muslims out.” (Figs. 11, 12, 13)

The Socialist Youth situated on Landstraße reported several hateful graffiti in the spring of 2017. At Baumgasse 12, 1030 Vienna, the office of the Socialist Youth on Landstraße, was smeared several times with slogans like “Islam kills” and “Muslims out.” (Fig. 12 and 13) For a long time afterwards, stickers of the far-right group Identitarian Movement were applied almost daily to the windows. On September 6, 2017, there was also another instance of graffiti: “Muslims out” and “Left fascists” was written. At the begin-



Figure 8: Graffiti “Islam Out” written on a wall.  
Photo: Mehmet Aktas, Kulturvereins Kars Igdir Ardahan.



Figure 9: Graffiti “Moslems Out” (Muslims Leave) written on a wall.  
Photo: Serkan Uzunyurt, 24 November 2017.

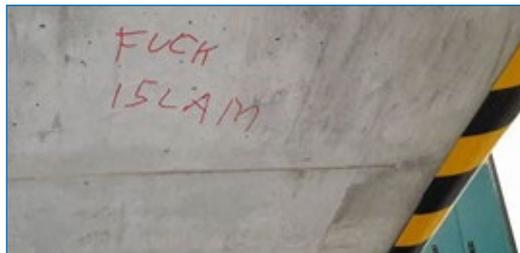


Figure 10: Graffiti “F\*\*\* Islam” written on a wall.  
Photo: Hümeyra Kestane, 25 September 2017.



Figure 11: Graffiti “Stop Islamization” written on a window, 1 June 2017.  
Fotos zugesandt von Gemeinderätin Faika Nagashi.

ning of April 2017, graffiti stating “Stop Islam” and “Islam kills” was sprayed on the wall.<sup>112</sup>

Benjamin Kranzl, the local chairman of the far-right FPÖ youth wing, the RFJ, presented photos of a barbecue and a suckling pig, wrapped in aluminium foil, under the title “Ramadan with the RFJ Schwaz” on Facebook. When the police reported the following day that “unknown perpetrators threw the head of a grilled suckling pig on the property of a Turkish cultural association” on May 28 on a mosque facility, attention was directed to the RFJ.<sup>113</sup>

The debate on kindergartens (see section Politics and Media in this report) had implications for the safety of childcare facilities run by Muslims. For example, a leader of an association for the preservation of a private school says that many people are afraid to work in Islamic kindergartens. She speaks of racist attacks and tells about a girl who was slapped in the street by a passer-by. She mentioned beer cans being thrown at her, a physical education teacher being pulled out of the subway, and other incidents.<sup>114</sup>



Figure 12: Graffiti “Islam kills” written on a wall, 8 June 2017.

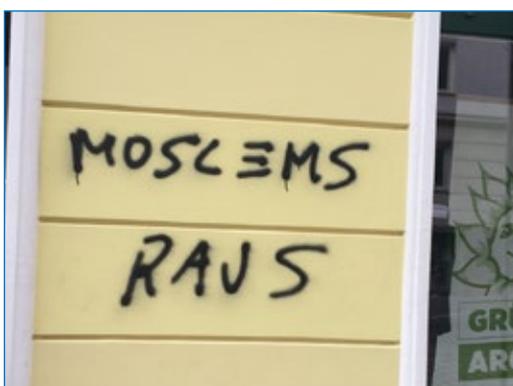


Figure 13: Graffiti “Muslims Out” written on a wall, 28 November 2017.



Figure 14: Graffiti “Muslims Out” written on a wall, 6 September 2017.

112. Information and photos sent by the chairwoman of the Socialist Youth Vienna, Fiona Herzog.

113. Kurier (2017), “Polizei ermittelt nach “Ramadan-Feier” von FPÖ-Jugend”, *Kurier*, 23.06.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/tirol-verfassungsschutz-ermittelt-nach-ramadan-feier-der-fpoe-jugend/271.389.257>

114. Wilflingseder, Karin (2017), “Geohrfeigt und mit Bierdosen beworfen: Muslimische Kinder im Visier”, *Zeitung*, 16.07.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://linkswende.org/geohrfeigt-und-mit-bierdosen-beworfen-muslimische-kinder-im-visier/>

The Identitarian movement put banners saying “Stop Islamization. Close Islam schools!”<sup>115</sup> on a school in Vienna, which was part of a media debate (see section Politics). (Fig. 15)

Stickers imitating the one with “Refugees Not Welcome” were titled “Islamists Not Welcome” and distributed by the Identitarians. (Fig. 16)

The Identitarian movement also distributed brochures against “Islamization” and the call for “re-migration” in households. (Fig. 17)

As part of the election campaign, election posters were vandalized as shown here with a poster of the leader of the Social Democrats with a sticker with two Muslims and the words “We Must Stay Outside” placed on it. (Fig. 18)

## Internet

The Internet is often used for more direct statements due to the lower inhibition threshold. For example, a former local politician from Lower Austria, who ran for the FPÖ in Leobendorf in 2015, said: “DEAR DUZDAR, GO HOME TO TURKEY, PUT ON A HIJAB AND PUSH THE KORAN IN YOUR A\*\*!”<sup>116</sup>



Figure 15: Banners saying “Stop Islamization. Close Islam schools!” by the Identitarian Movement.  
Photo: Farid Hafez

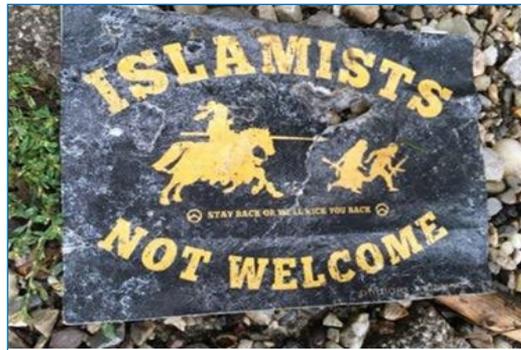


Figure 16: Sticker “Islamists Not Welcome” by the Identitarian Movement.  
Photo: Farid Hafez



Figure 17: Leaflet “Stop Islamization” by the Identitarian Movement.  
Photo: Scan of a pamphlet of the Identitarians.

115. APA (2017), “Islamschule: Betreiber sprechen von “innerer Angelegenheit”“, *Der Standard*, 23.08.2017. Retrieved December 29, 2017, from <http://derstandard.at/2000063033101/Islam-Schule-Betreiber-sprechen-von-innerer-Angelegenheit>

116. Oe24 (2017), “FPÖler: Duzdar, schieb dir den Koran in deinen türkischen A...!”, *oe24*, 02.022017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://m.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/FPoeler-Duzdar-schieb-dir-den-Koran-in-deinen-tuerkischen-A/267694397>

Openly Islamophobic statements were widespread such as the FPÖ-linked website *unzensuriert.at* that argued that governess Mikl-Leitner had opened an exhibition on Islam with Muslim Brotherhood sympathizers.<sup>117</sup>

Then ÖVP Chairman Sebastian Kurz used his Facebook account to legitimize Islamophobic politics with headlines from tabloid media. (Fig. 19)

The FPÖ Vienna party Chairman Johann Gudenus posted on his Facebook page derogatory contents about Muslims and triggered corresponding debates. While *Time* magazine chose a Viennese student with a hijab as one of the world's most influential teenagers, he called this "Insanity." What followed were other postings with anti-Muslim, racist statements such as "Send her back, this Veil!" "Has she no brain under her headscarf?" and "Away with this filth."

The Carinthian FPÖ Provincial Council Gernot Darmann in a Facebook post publicized the following false message: "Islam lessons for Carinthian children" and writes "Scandal. Islam classes for Christians??? THANKS, NO!!!"<sup>119</sup> (Fig. 20)



Figure 18: Sticker "We Must Stay Outside" on an election campaign poster of the Social Democrats. Photo by the author.



Figure 19: Facebook posting by Sebastian Kurz saying "The Muslim study confirms my position. We urgently need a reduction of migration and must prevent parallel structures like Islamic kindergartens from emerging."<sup>118</sup>

117. Unzensuriert (2017), "Mikl-Leitner eröffnete Islam-Ausstellung mit Muslimbruderschaft-Sympathisanten", *Unzensuriert*, 18.04.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0023765-Mikl-Leitner-eroeffnete-Islam-Ausstellung-mit-Muslimbruderschaft-Sympathisanten>

118. Kurz, Sebastian (2017), Official Facebook-page, 10.08.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://www.facebook.com/sebastiankurz.at/photos/a.112364565521892.21944.105151752909840/1440936235998045/?type=3&theater>

119. oe24 (2017), "Islamunterricht für Christen: FPÖ-Landesrat empört mit FB-Posting", *oe24*, 26.09.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Islamunterricht-fuer-Christen-FPOe-Landesrat-empuert-mit-FB-Posting/301227541>

The FPÖ youth wing published another picture entitled “Immigrating to our Welfare State is Fun,” which depicts a man dressed in traditional Muslim clothes. (Fig. 21)

After the drugstore chain BIPA launched a campaign, in which a hijab-wearing woman was shown, an online avalanche of hatred was launched. Statements such as “prostration before Islam” and “creeping Islamization” were used.<sup>122</sup> Postings full of hate were especially widespread on Facebook. This is also true on the Facebook sites of well-known MPs such as the one of Efgani Dönmez.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobic Network

Amer Albayati, president of the Initiative for Liberal Muslims Austria (ILMÖ), who repeatedly claims to be a critic of Islam and a terrorism expert, tried on many occasions to influence public opinion with his conspiracy theories. He criticized the federal president for his symbolic solidarity with hijab-wearing women and for

using the term Islamophobia, which for him is a “combat term of political Islam, which solely and exclusively (serves, FH) to stifle any critical discussion on Islam



Figure 20: “Social Democratic Scandal in Education Policy: Islam Lessons for Carinthian children”.<sup>120</sup>



Figure 21: “SPÖ/ÖVP/Greens tell the world: Immigrating to our Welfare State is Fun”.<sup>121</sup>

120. Ibid.

121. Ibid.

122. FSC (2017), “Werbung mit kopftuchtragender Frau: Rechter Shitstorm gegen Bipa“, *Der Standard*, 19.10.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000066308348/Werbung-mit-kopftuchtragender-Frau-Rechter-Shitstorm-gegen-Bipa>.

in Germany.”<sup>123</sup> The “Islamophobia Mace” or “Islamophobia Lie” was a “vile work invented by radical Islamists.”<sup>124</sup>

Islamophobic spokespersons like Hamed Abdel-Samad supported the demand of the German conservatives, CDU politicians Jens Spahn and Julia Klöckner, to introduce an Austria-like Islam Act in Germany. This demand was also supported by Mouhanad Khorchide.<sup>125</sup> Abdel-Samad demanded that the state grants licenses for religious communities and mosques and said, “The mosques must take the imams that the state appoints and must not be financed from abroad.”<sup>126</sup>

CDU member and former FEMEN activist Zana Ramadani was given a space in media such as *Die Presse*<sup>127</sup> or *Kronen Zeitung*.<sup>128</sup> *Der Standard* interviewed her twice in 2017. Ramadani presented with Sebastian Kurz the second part of the election program (“Order and Security”) for the national elections in 2017.<sup>129</sup> On September 27, with the help of the ÖIF, she gave a presentation on “Muslim women between tradition and modernity.”<sup>130</sup>

The ÖIF stands out with its one-sided invitation policy. The fourteenth meeting of the Integration Advisory Council, chaired by Franz Wolf, invited Seyran Ateş, who made a plea for “promoting liberal Islam” and presented her “Liberal Mosque in Berlin.” It also warned against “leaving refugees to the influence of radical mosque associations,”<sup>131</sup> as stated in the ÖIF report. Brochures to address the issue of face

123. ILMÖ (2017), “„Herr Bundespräsident Van der Bellen, lassen Sie sich nicht von Vertretern des politischen Islam wegen Kopftuch in die Irre führen““, *OTS*, 09.05.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20170509\\_OTS0089/herr-bundespraesident-van-der-bellen-lassen-sie-sich-nicht-von-vertretern-des-politischen-islam-wegen-kopftuch-in-die-irre-fuehren](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20170509_OTS0089/herr-bundespraesident-van-der-bellen-lassen-sie-sich-nicht-von-vertretern-des-politischen-islam-wegen-kopftuch-in-die-irre-fuehren)

124. Krone (2017), “Islamisten haben Begriff „Islamophobie“ erfunden”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 27.04.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://www.krone.at/oesterreich/islamisten-haben-begriff-islamophobie-erfunden-offener-brief-an-vdb-story-566686>

125. religion.ÖRF.at/KAP/KANN (2017), “D: Muslimische Wissenschaftler wollen Islamgesetz”, *ÖRF*, 24.04.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from <http://religion.orf.at/m/stories/2838836/>

126. Ebd.

127. Baltaci, Köksal (2017), “Muslimische Männer werden zu Prinzen erzogen”, *Die Presse*, 13.04.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://diepresse.com/home/panorama/oesterreich/5200799/Muslimische-Maenner-werden-zu-Prinzen-erzogen?from=suche.intern.portal>

128. Krone (2017), “Muslimische Mütter erziehen Söhne zu Versagern”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 10.04.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://www.krone.at/563975>

129. Vosatka, Michael (2017), “Autorin Ramadani: Kopftuch und Feminismus passen nicht zusammen”, *Der Standard*, 26.12.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000067912571/Feministin-Ramadani-Jemand-der-pro-Kopftuch-ist-kann-kein-Feminist?utm\\_term=Autofeed&utm\\_campaign=EchoBox&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_source=Facebook#link\\_time=1514287961](http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000067912571/Feministin-Ramadani-Jemand-der-pro-Kopftuch-ist-kann-kein-Feminist?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_campaign=EchoBox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#link_time=1514287961); Bichler, Josef and Rössler, Wolfgang (2017), “Zana Ramadani: “Männer sind nicht das alleinige Übel”“, *Der Standard*, 30.4.2017, retrieved: December 31, 2017, from <http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000056748901/Zana-Ramadani-Maenner-sind-nicht-das-alleinige-Uebel>; APA Red (2017), “Wahlkampffinale: ÖVP setzt auf „Ordnung und Sicherheit”“, *NÖN*, 22.09.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://www.noen.at/in-ausland/nationalratswahl-wahlkampffinale-oevp-setzt-auf-ordnung-und-sicherheit/62.050.375>

130. Österreichischer Integrations Fonds (2017), “Integration und Islam Musliminnen zwischen Tradition und Moderne”, *Integrationsfonds*, 27.09.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://integrationsfonds.eyepinnews.com/eventview/?p=z44a860e40c4530d2103f64cd4460dcc73b14aba00ed2317b175787265d21587c>

131. Österreichischer Integrations Fonds (2017), “Integrationsbeirat diskutiert die Stärkung von Frauen mit Migrationshintergrund”, *OTS*, 27.04.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20170427\\_OTS0189/integrationsbeirat-diskutiert-die-staerkung-von-frauen-mit-migrationshintergrund](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20170427_OTS0189/integrationsbeirat-diskutiert-die-staerkung-von-frauen-mit-migrationshintergrund)

covering in Islam were published before the introduction of the face veil ban. Some of the authors such as Saïda Keller-Messahli and Ahmad Mansour<sup>132</sup> are among the most vocal public Islamophobic speakers. The use of Muslim witnesses, ‘native informals,’ is a central aspect of the discourse of the ÖIF, the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs, and the Conservative Party.

In particular, some journalists support these voices, which they promote in the sense of the white saviour complex. As the editor in chief of the *Kurier* argues, “Turks suffer from political Islam.”<sup>133</sup> In this sense, Aslan also argues that “clubs and associations, who want to isolate the Muslims living here from everything European and want to focus theologically entirely on Islamic states, are to be pushed back. This control of Austrian or German Islam from abroad is fatal.”<sup>134</sup> This does not mean primarily independence and empowerment of Muslims, but a dissolution of transnational networks. It works according to the government’s slogan of creating an “Islam of European Imprint.” Secretary General of the Jewish community Raimund Fastenbauer claimed in contrast to the “Islam of European imprint”, that Austria had a problem with “political Islam,” because an Islam of “Middle Eastern Imprint” was “through and through anti-Semitic [...] and intolerant of people of other faiths, including Christianity.” Several media republished the statements published by Fastenbauer in the journal of the leading Austrian student fraternity, the Cartellverband. Amongst others, this was well received by right-wing media such as *unzensuriert.at*<sup>135</sup> and *info-direkt.eu*.<sup>136</sup>

The European Citizens’ Initiative against Extremism<sup>137</sup> was founded on December 29, 2016 and recognized on June 7, 2017 by the European Commission. It was financed by Seyran Ates and Efgani Dönmez with 10,000 Euros each. Amongst the founders were also the Austrian lawyer Sebastian Reimer.<sup>138</sup> The

132. Österreichischer Integrations Fonds (2017), “Perspektiven Integration: Verschleierung im Islam”, *Integrationsfonds* 01/2017, Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [https://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/content/AT/Fotos/Publikationen/OEIF\\_Perspektiven\\_Verschleierung\\_200x260\\_A4.pdf](https://www.integrationsfonds.at/fileadmin/content/AT/Fotos/Publikationen/OEIF_Perspektiven_Verschleierung_200x260_A4.pdf)

133. Brandstätter, Helmut (2017), “Türken leiden unter dem politischen Islam”, *Kurier*, 17.07.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://m.kurier.at/meinung/kommentare/innenpolitik/tuerken-leiden-unter-dem-politischen-islam/275.525.273>

134. Kamann, Matthias (2017), “Die Steuerung des Islams aus dem Ausland ist fatal”, *Die Welt*, 07.08.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://hd.welt.de/politik-edition/article167430465/Die-Steuerung-des-Islams-aus-dem-Ausland-ist-fatal.html>

135. Unzensuriert (2017), “Generalsekretär der Israelitischen Kultusgemeinde hat Problem mit „antisemitischem, nahöstlichem Islam““, *Unzensuriert*, 26.02.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0023300-Generalsekretaer-der-Isrealitischen-Kultusgemeinde-hat-Problem-mit-antisemitischem>

136. Info Direkt (2017), “Israelitische Kultusgemeinde warnt vor muslimischer Einwanderung”, *Info Direkt*, 24.02.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from: <http://info-direkt.eu/2017/02/24/israelische-kultusgemeinde-warnt-vor-muslimischer-einwanderung/>

137. Abele, Katrin (2017), “Kommission registriert europäische Bürgerinitiative „Stop Extremism““, *Europäische Kommission*, 07.06.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://ec.europa.eu/germany/news/kommission-registriert-europ%C3%A4ische-b%C3%BCrgerinitiative-%E2%80%99Estop-extremism%E2%80%9Cde>

138. Stop Extremism (2017), “Europäische Bürgerinitiative „Stop Extremism“ gestartet”, *OTS*, 03.07.2017. Retrieved : December 31, 2017, from [https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20170703\\_OTS0122/europaeische-buergerinitiative-stop-extremism-gestartet](https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20170703_OTS0122/europaeische-buergerinitiative-stop-extremism-gestartet)

organ representatives of the association, Walter Schnauder and Peter Weinzierl, are based in Linz.<sup>139</sup> Schnauder is a former political official of the ÖVP and since 2003 the political coach of the ÖVP Oberösterreich.<sup>140</sup> Supporters include well-known Islamophobes such as Abdel-Hakim Ourghi, Ralph Ghadban, Saïda Keller-Messahli,<sup>141</sup> Necla Kelek,<sup>142</sup> as well as a Mouhanad Khorchide.<sup>143</sup> In the course of the election campaign, Dönmez came under criticism when leaks by the weekly *Falter* revealed that much more money than 20,000 Euros, the budget specified by the EU Commission, could potentially be in circulation.<sup>144</sup> For Peter Puller, previously press spokesman of the ÖVP, first in Styria and then for the Ministry of Justice and Science, a contract was signed between the Society for Policy Analysis and Puller's PR Agency on July 17 for more than 180,000 Euros, but ultimately did not substantiate.<sup>145</sup> The contract states that Puller should coordinate a campaign against political Islam.<sup>146</sup> The monthly fee of about 15,000 Euros was not paid out and according to Puller eight weeks of work have not yet been rewarded.<sup>147</sup> The daily *Die Presse* then published chat minutes, according to which Dönmez supports the concerns of the Saudis. Allegedly Dönmez promised several times to make Turkey and Qatar look bad in interviews. At one point the leaked WhatsApp protocol is summarized as such: "Turkey = Bad, Qatar = Bad, Saudis = Good". "A joke," Dönmez argues.<sup>148</sup> Dönmez claims that not a single cent was sent by the Saudis and the chat protocols were jokes and stressed that he was a critic of Saudi Arabia.<sup>149</sup>

139. Vereinsregisterauszug zum Stichtag 13.12.2017, ZVR-Zahl 735542616, Accessed: December 10, 2017.

140. Schnauder, Walter (2017), "Curriculum Vitae – Walter Schnauder", *Marketing Solutions*, 03.12.2003. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [http://www.marketingsolutions.at/downloads/cvWS\\_72dpi.pdf](http://www.marketingsolutions.at/downloads/cvWS_72dpi.pdf)

141. Stop Extremism (2017), Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://www.stopextremism.eu/people>

142. Stop Extremism (2017), "Statement by Necla Kelek for the European Citizen's Initiative Stop Extremism", YouTube, 02.10.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nc\\_Q2sOpCfc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nc_Q2sOpCfc)

143. Stop Extremism (2017), Supporters. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [https://web.archive.org/web/20170824134012/http://www.stopextremism.eu/people\\_supporters](https://web.archive.org/web/20170824134012/http://www.stopextremism.eu/people_supporters)

144. Europäische Kommission (2017), "Europäische Bürgerinitiative", *Europäische Kommission*, 15.12.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/initiatives/ongoing/details/2017/000007?lg=de>

145. Völker, Michael (2017), "Efgani Dönmez Pakt mit dem Hintermann unsauberer Kampagnen", *Der Standard*, 03.10.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://mobil.derstandard.at/2000065263914/Efgani-Doenmez-Pakt-mit-dem-Hintermann-unsauberer-Kampagnen>

146. Red (2017), "Ein Mann mit vielen Kontakten", *Der Standard*, 01.10.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://derstandard.at/2000065131757/Ein-Mann-mit-vielen-Kontakten>

147. Oswald, Günther (2017), "Silberstein-Mitarbeiter Puller will 100.000-Euro-Angebot der ÖVP vor Gericht beweisen", *Der Standard*, 06.10.2017. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from <https://derstandard.at/2000065475443/Silberstein-Mitarbeiter-Puller-will-100-000-Euro-Angebot-der-OeVP>

148. Thalhammer, Anna (2017), "Machte Dönmez Stimmung im Sinne der Saudis?", *Die Presse*, 09.10.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/nationalratswahl/5299757/Machte-Doenmez-Stimmung-im-Sinne-der-Saudis>

149. Thalhammer, Anna (2017), "Dönmez: „Kein Cent von Saudis“", *Die Presse*, 10.10.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [https://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5300333/Doenmez\\_Kein-Cent-von-Saudis](https://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5300333/Doenmez_Kein-Cent-von-Saudis)

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Besides an increase of hostile language and more restrictive politics towards Muslims from governing centrist parties, we can also observe a stronger reaction on behalf of individuals, who speak out against Islamophobia, especially in the media. Beyond these critical voices that are essential for keeping up the struggle against Islamophobia and creating a consciousness towards this form of racism, there are several initiatives that can be mentioned here:

- In September 2017, a counselling centre against hatred on the Internet was established. There, affected users can seek professional help. The body is run by the anti-racist institution ZARA and can be found on the website *beratungsstelle.counteract.or.at*
- A rally called “MuslimBanAustria – my body, my right to self-determination” against the headscarf ban was organized by the Dokustelle für Muslime, the Youth Council of the Islamic Religious Community and the Muslim Civil Society Network (NMZ).<sup>150</sup>
- Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen spoke clearly and concisely during a memorial event of Nazi atrocities in Baden: “We must make sure that this does not happen again – of course under a different name. It will have other contents; it will have different expressions. It will be more modern, in quotation marks. But we have to recognize the signs of the beginning.”<sup>151</sup>
- An exhibition on Islam has opened in Schallaburg, Lower Austria.<sup>152</sup>
- The Islamic Federation has run a campaign presenting Muslims in everyday life.<sup>153</sup>
- The NMZ created a music track that challenged Sebastian Kurz’s changing positions on Islam and his swing to the right.<sup>154</sup>
- The newly established IDB (Initiative for Discrimination-Free Education) first presented its report on Discrimination of Pupils in 2016. Forty-seven incidents have been included, with Islamophobia being the most common reason.<sup>155</sup>

150. Ichner, Bernhard (2017), “Muslime demonstrieren gegen Kopftuchverbot”, *Kurier*, 02.02.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://m.kurier.at/chronik/wien/muslime-demonstrieren-gegen-kopftuchverbot/244.439.536>.

151. ORF (2017), “NS-Mahnmal: „Zeichen des Anfangs erkennen”, *ORF*, 23.04.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://noe.orf.at/news/stories/2838779/>

152. Pfoster, Paula (2017), “Jenseits von Populismus und Polarisierung”, *ORF*, 17.03.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://orf.at/stories/2383478/2383477/>

153. Ichner, Bernhard; Seiser, Birgit (2017), “Muslime verteilten Schnitten statt Korane”, *Kurier*, 10.10.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <https://m.kurier.at/chronik/wien/muslime-verteilt-schnitten-statt-korane/261.155.567>

154. Oe24 (2017), “Muslime veräppeln Kurz mit Kopftuch-Song”, *oe24*, 19.01.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://m.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/Muslime-veraepeln-Kurz-mit-Kopftuch-Song/266057047>

155. ORF (2017), “Bericht: Islamophobie an Schulen nimmt zu”, *ORF*, 30.06.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from <http://oesterreich.orf.at/stories/2852186/>

- State Secretary for Integration Muna Duzdar presented a digital monitor and set up the counselling centre #GegenHassImNetz (#AgainstOnlineHate), which is operated by ZARA.<sup>156</sup>
- The Initiative of Muslim Austrians and *Kismet Online* have sent a list of questions to the constituency for election to the National Council.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2017 was a significant year in terms of a stronger institutionalization of Islamophobia (the ban of the full-face veil as well as the indirect hijab ban for certain professions). It was also significant that the Conservative Party with its new face under the leadership of Sebastian Kurz arrived at a level of Islamophobia that can only be interpreted as a full embrace of the right-wing FPÖ's positions. Kurz demanded the closure of Islamic kindergartens and moved way from much of his former rhetoric that signalled a more open position towards Muslims. With the new governing coalition of the conservative ÖVP and the right-wing FPÖ, the future of Islamophobia appears to be firmly secured. Many recommendations can be made to work towards a more equal society in Austria such as:

- 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.
- Austria should fulfil its promise in 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 fulfil 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.

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156. Bundeskanzleramt (2017), "Staatssekretärin Duzdar: Hasspostings und Cybermobbing auch in Österreich stark verbreitet", *OTS*, 30.08.2017. Retrieved December 31, 2017, from [https://www.otass.at/presseaussendung/OTS\\_20170830\\_OTS0136/staatssekretaerin-duzdar-hasspostings-und-cybermobbing-auch-in-oesterreich-stark-verbreitet](https://www.otass.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20170830_OTS0136/staatssekretaerin-duzdar-hasspostings-und-cybermobbing-auch-in-oesterreich-stark-verbreitet)

- The amended Equal Treatment Act (August 2013) has to fulfil the long-demanded extension of protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, age, belief and religion to areas outside employment.
- The Islam Act 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.

## Chronology

- **05.01.2017:** For the federal elections in Graz, the FPÖ mobilized with a four-page folder containing Islamophobic figures and statements.
- **05.01.2017:** Kickoff debate on headscarf ban for teachers in public schools and schoolgirls.
- **10.01.2017:** One-sided discussion on secularism within the political parties: the cross should stay in the classroom and the headscarf should be banned.
- **30.01.2017:** In the daily *Kronen Zeitung* a school director was given room to argue in favor of a headscarf ban for schoolgirls.
- **07.02.2017:** Discussion about “radicalized youth” on state broadcaster ORF with people supporting an Islamophobic agenda.
- **17.02.2017:** Leading Islamophobic spokespeople are invited on private broadcasting channel Servus TV.
- **March 2017:** Introduction of Federal Law on the Prohibition of the Concealment of the Face in Public (Anti-Facial Disposal Act – AgesVG). In Carinthia, a man targeted a group of Muslim women with a shotgun and was given a ten-month imprisonment sentence.
- **04.03.2017:** Chairman Strache declared “No, Islam is not part of Austria” during a FPÖ party convention in Klagenfurt.
- **15.03.2017:** The managing director of the Styrian branch of the vocational institution Berufsförderungsinstitut attempted a headscarf ban for employees because of a so-called “neutrality requirement.”  
Verbal attack on 50-year-old woman with her hair covered on a street.
- **24.02.2017:** Criticism of the federal president of the Republic of Austria for his statement on Islamophobia and solidarity with Muslim women.
- **April 2017:** Act of vandalism to the office of the Socialist Youth with the Islamophobic slogans “Stop Islam” and “Islam kills.”
- **24.04.2017:** A 30-year-old man was charged after throwing a bag filled with dog feces on the façade of a mosque in Bludenz.
- **01.06.2017:** Act of vandalism to buildings housing the offices of the Greens in Vienna – graffiti “Stop Islamization” appears on wall.
- **08.06.2017:** Act of vandalism to buildings housing the offices of the Greens in Vienna - the graffiti “Islam Kills” appears on wall.

- **12.06.2017:** Act of vandalism: the inscription “Muslim” with an arrow in the direction of a dustbin.
- **21.06.2017:** The daily *Kronen Zeitung* entitled and illustrated accordingly a study on immigration and Muslims on the front page as follows: “Close Borders for Muslims.”
- **23.06.2017:** Local chairman of the far-right FPÖ youth wing, the RFJ, presented photos of a barbecue and a suckling pig, wrapped in aluminum foil, under the title “Ramadan with the RFJ Schwaz” on Facebook.
- **24.06.2017:** The daily *Kronen Zeitung* published an article with the title “Headscarf, Radicalization. Everyday Life in Kindergartens” and used false photographic material.
- **30.06.2017:** The Initiative for a Discrimination-Free Education (IDB) documented a total of 28 cases of Islamophobic discrimination, of which 23 occurred at schools and 5 in kindergartens.
- **04.07.2017:** Weekly *Falter* leaked information about the so-called ‘Islamic kindergarten study’: they revealed that officials from the Department of Integration and Foreign Affairs substantially changed the content of the Word files, which were written by Professor of Islamic Education Ednan Aslan. The former Green MP Peter Pilz ran for elections and one of his three main foci was the fight against political Islam.
- **15.07.2017:** Chairman of the FPÖ Mayrhofen referred to Islam as “an insane Islamic ideology” and was sentenced to unconditional fines for degrading religious teachings.
- **16.07.2017:** Racist attacks against a kindergarten girl who was slapped in the street by a passerby.
- **10.08.2017:** Then ÖVP Chairman Sebastian Kurz used his Facebook account to legitimize Islamophobic politics with headlines from tabloid media.
- **23.08.2017:** The Identitarian movement placed banners saying “Stop Islamization. Close Islam schools!” on the building of a Vienna school.
- **01.09.2017:** National Parliamentary Election Campaign: Islamophobic statements, slogans, videos are present throughout the country.
- **06.09.2017:** Act of vandalism to the office of the Socialist Youth with the Islamophobic slogans “Muslim out” written on the wall.
- **25.09.2017:** Vandalism occurs at the University of Vienna with vulgar expressions targeting Muslim women written on Walls.
- **26.09.2017:** The Carinthian FPÖ Provincial Council in a Facebook post publicized a false message about lessons on Islam.
- **06.10.2017:** Law enforcement of full face veil ban: passersby on the street feel the need to make Muslims with face veils aware of the ban.
- **17.10.2017:** ÖVP Chairman Sebastian Kurz claimed in an interview that the “anti-Semitic danger stems from Muslims.”

- **19.10.2017:** An online avalanche of hatred was launched following a campaign of the drugstore chain BIP, which featured a hijab-wearing woman.
- **25.10.2017:** The daily *Der Standard* published interviews of Islamophobic individuals like Säida Keller-Messahli, propagating and disseminating her views.
- **21.11.2017:** The leading candidate of the FPÖ in Lower Austria, Udo Landbauer, called ÖVP candidate Mikl-Leitner “Muslim Mummy Mikl.”
- **22.11.2017:** A 24-year-old in Klagenfurt State Court was sentenced to 3,000 Euros for a brutal Islamophobic online posting.
- **23.11.2017:** Examination of the Islamic kindergarten study by the University of Vienna and the Austrian Agency for Scientific Integrity (OeAWI).
- **24.11.2017:** Vandals write Islamophobic graffiti on the walls of a cultural association.
- **28.11.2017:** Act of vandalism to buildings that house the offices of the Greens in Vienna; the graffiti states “Muslims out.”
- **16.12.2017:** New Coalition’s Government Program: “Political Islam” becomes a focal point of internal security measures, and – while not defined – potentially threatens all organized Muslims.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**BELGIUM**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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AMINA EASAT-DAAS



## The Author

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## Executive Summary

During 2017, Islamophobia in Belgium has continued to grow at a steady rate. The most notable difference between the state of Islamophobia in the country and that documented in the *European Islamophobia Report* in previous years can be located in the lack of marked peaks or sizeable clusters in violent attacks against Muslims, Islamic sites or those presumed to be Muslim. However, this does not indicate an absence of Islamophobia rather it indicates a continuation of low level violent Islamophobic attacks, a growth in Islamophobic hate speech and most notably numerous state-level Islamophobic policies, legislative measures and proposals throughout 2017.

As in previous years, Islamophobia in Belgium has continued to have a distinctly gendered nature, with Belgian Muslim women bearing the brunt of Islamophobia in the nation. The most pertinent example of this gendered Islamophobia includes the European Court of Justice preliminary judgements regarding the permissibility of dismissing women who wear the headscarf from employment issued in March 2017 - incidentally this decision was based, in part, on a case that had emerged from the Belgian context.

Beyond the continued gendered Islamophobia seen in Belgium during 2017, the year was interspersed with significant state-led policies, bills and legislative measures which sought to regulate the practice of Islam in Belgium, namely the limitations on ritual slaughter (including *halal* slaughter) voted on in May 2017 and July 2017, and the proposed state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium.

The bases of Islamophobic narratives remain much the same as in previous years: Islam is framed as constituting demographic, cultural and violent threat and thus it is alleged that Islam and Muslims must be regulated by the state, law and, in some cases, even the lay public. However, as we see from rulings such as that of the European Court of Justice, Belgian Islamophobia has the potential to influence and be influenced by the broader European Islamophobia, and this therefore has the potential to shape the ways in which the phenomenon may be effectively tackled.

## Synthèse

La Belgique a vu une croissance stable de l'islamophobie pendant l'année 2017. La différence la plus remarquable entre l'état de l'islamophobie dans le pays et ce qui est détaillée dans le Rapport Européen de l'islamophobie dans les années précédentes peut-être localisé dans la manque des montées exceptionnels, ou les groupements des attaques violents envers les Musulmans non-négligeable, les endroits Islamiques ou ceux qui sont présumés d'être Musulmans. Néanmoins, cette différence ne signale pas une absence d'islamophobie, plutôt 2017 a vu une continuation faible des attaques islamophobiques et violents, une croissance des discours de haine et notamment des projets politiques et des projets de loi, détaillé en plus dans cette partie du rapport.

Comme des années précédentes, l'islamophobie en Belgique a continué d'avoir une façon genrée distincte, des Musulmanes sont les premières touchées par l'islamophobie dans la nation. L'exemple le plus pertinent de cette islamophobie genré inclut les jugements préliminaires de la Cour de la Justice de l'Union Européenne concernant la possibilité de licencier des femmes qui portent le foulard issu en mars 2017 (d'ailleurs cette décision suit un cas qui sort de la contexte Belge).

Au-delà de la continuation genrée de l'islamophobie en Belgique vu en 2017, l'année était marquée par des projets de loi et des mesures législatives qui a voulu contrôler le pratique d'Islam en Belgique, (y compris l'abattage halal) qui était voté en mai 2017 et juillet 2017 et le projet de reprendre contrôle de la Grande Mosquée de Belgique mené par l'état.

Les fondations des discours islamophobiques restent similaires comme vue dans les années précédentes. L'Islam est construit comme une menace démographique, culturelle et comme porteur de menace violente, et par conséquence c'est présumé que l'Islam et les Musulmans doit être réglés par l'état, la loi, et dans quelques instances par le grand public. Cependant, des décisions juridiques comme celle de la Cour Européenne de la Justice révèle que l'islamophobie en Belgique peut influencer (potentiellement) et être influencé par l'islamophobie en Europe plus généralement, et comme résultat ces faits peuvent façonner les manières de combattre effectivement le phénomène.

## Samengevat

Tijdens 2017 is Islamofobie in België gelijdelijk gegroeid. Het grootste verschil tussen Islamofobie in het land en het gedocumenteerde Islamofobie in de “European Islamophobia Report” in de afgelopen jaren is voornamelijk vanwege het gebrek aan pieken of clusters in gewelddadige aanvallen jegens moslims of Islamitische gebouwen. Dit wijst echter niet op een gebrek aan Islamofobie in het land. Gedurende het jaar 2017 is er sprake van een continuïteit van licht gewelddadige Islamofobische aanvallen, een groei in Islamofobische haatdragende taal, verschillend politiek beleid dat uiterst Islamofobisch is, alsmede wetgevingen en moties, wat uitgebreider verteld wordt in deze sectie van het rapport.

Net als in de vorige jaren is Islamofobie in België nog steeds van een uiterst seksegerichte natuur. Belgische moslim vrouwen lijden het meest aan het wijdverspreide Islamofobie in het land. Het belangrijkste voorbeeld van de seksegerichte Islamofobie is het oordeel van de Europese Hof van Justitie in maart 2017 in verband met het toestaan van het weigeren van werknemers die hoofddoeken dragen op de arbeidsmarkt (dit oordeel was gebaseerd op een rechtszaak in België).

Naast het seksegerichte Islamofobie in België gedurende het jaar 2017 was er sprake van een variatie van politiek beleid, voornamelijk wetgeving en ingediende moties, die gericht waren op het reguleren van Islam in de praktijk. Een voorbeeld hiervan was de voorgestelde restricties op het religieus slachten (inclusief het halal slachten) waar in mei 2017 en juli 2017 op werd gestemd en het voorgestelde overname van de Grote Moskee door de Belgische staat.

De basis van Islamofobische uitingen blijven hetzelfde als in de vorige jaren. Islam wordt gezien en geframed als een demografische, culturele en gewelddadige gevaar waardoor Islam en moslims gereguleerd moeten worden door de staat en rechtsgeving. Overigens zien we dat oordelen zoals dat van het Europese Hof voor Justitie invloed heeft op de Belgische maatschappij en Islamofobie in België, waarvan tevens het omgekeerde ook een werkelijkheid is.

## Introduction

Islamophobia in Belgium has continued to increase at a steady pace throughout 2017. Most significantly, 2017 saw a continuation of low level violent Islamophobic attacks, a growth in Islamophobic hate speech and actions, and, most notably, increased spotlight on numerous state-level Islamophobic policies, legislative measures and proposals.

In a country where Muslims constitute only six per cent of the wider population<sup>1</sup> and Islam is afforded official national recognition and support, Belgium has continued to devote intense and arguably disproportionate media, political and legal attention to this seemingly small part of society.

This section of the *European Islamophobia Report* details general instances of Islamophobia and pays special attention to the political and legal forms of Islamophobia that have been apparent over the course of 2017 in Belgium. The report includes an overview of the European Court of Justice preliminary judgements on the permissibility of dismissing women who wear the headscarf in employment, the ban on ritual slaughter in Wallonia and Flanders, and the discussions regarding the state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Brussels.

The report discusses some of the counter-Islamophobia initiatives taking place in Belgium, and the increased need for collaborative work and the sharing of best practices in the wider struggle against Islamophobia in Belgium and Europe. The report concludes with a series of recommendations in this regard before presenting a chronological overview of some of the most pertinent instances of Islamophobia in Belgium during 2017.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Over the course of the year the most significant incidents and developments in the field of Islamophobia in the country pertain to political and legal discourses, debates and decisions. These include the European Court of Justice preliminary judgements regarding the legitimacy of dismissing Muslim women who wear the *hijab* from their employment, which in itself demonstrates a continuation of gendered Islamophobia in Belgium and also signals the potential for further Islamophobia against Muslim women in the Belgian workforce. Additionally, 2017 saw a unanimous vote to ban *halal* and *kosher* slaughter in Wallonia and Flanders, signalling the direct targeting of Islamic practices in the nation. These two principal incidents are against a backdrop of steadily growing Islamophobia throughout the nation. These events are detailed further in the next section of the report.

1. Pew Forum, "Religious Composition by Country 2010-2050," Pew Forum, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projection-table/2010/percent/all/>.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

When compared with previous years, Muslim political figures have faced fewer reported direct attacks both on a personal level and in terms of their political standing. In place of the numerous direct verbal and physical attacks seen in previous years, 2017 has witnessed an increase in its generalised Islamophobic discourse in the Belgian political sphere. This Islamophobic political discourse has led to a wide variety of political actions, both enacted and envisaged. Such political actions include the controversies surrounding the permissibility of the headscarf in the workplace; the prohibition of ritual slaughter; debate concerning state involvement in the leadership of the nation's largest mosque; political officials calling for the legal prohibition of faith symbols in Belgian public spaces; far-right desire to organise an 'Islam Safari' in the capital; left-wing political representatives alleging that the capital's mosques are in the hands of Salafists; and calls for the 'cleansing' of Belgian public spaces of refugees. Furthermore, Islamophobic narratives articulated at the political level send a clear signal regarding the 'Otherness' of Belgian Muslims and the alleged need to regulate these populations.

Two pertinent examples that emerged from the political sphere in 2017 include the proposed ban on ritual slaughter and also the proposed state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium. In May 2017, the francophone Walloon Parliamentary Environment Committee unanimously voted in favour of prohibiting ritual slaughter in Wallonia.<sup>2</sup> If left unchallenged, the ban will mean that both Islamic *halal* slaughter and Jewish *kosher* slaughter will no longer be permitted in the largest Belgian region as of September 2019. Flanders also quickly followed suit with a bill along similar lines filed to cover the Belgian Flemish region in July 2017.<sup>3</sup> Previous years have seen calls for a limitation on *halal* slaughter proposed, particularly around the time of *Eid al Adha*,<sup>4</sup> on the grounds of animal rights and protection. This type of Islamophobic narrative is not unique to francophone Belgium, rather it is seen across European Islamophobia (and paradoxically proponents are often meat eaters themselves). The narrative is built upon Orientalist stereotypes of Muslim barbarity and violence, which then feeds into contemporary Islamophobic constructions of Muslims in Belgium (and beyond) as violent and is subsequently evoked to legitimise their targeting.

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2. Samuel Osborne, "Belgium Votes to Ban Kosher and Halal Slaughter in Its Biggest Territory," *The Independent*, May 08, 2017.

3. "Belgian Muslims, Jews Challenge Slaughter Ban," *About Islam*, January 18, 2018.

4. The Islamic festival of *Eid al Adha* follows the *Hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca and involves ritual slaughter in recognition and homage to Prophet Abraham, and has been marked by controversy in Belgium in previous years, see Amina Easat-Daas, ed. *Islamophobia in Belgium 2015: National Report* European Islamophobia Report 2015 (Istanbul: SETA).

The proposed measures sparked strong condemnation from the European Jewish Congress, whose president Moshe Kantor stated, “It attacks the very core of our culture and religious practice and our status as equal citizens with equal rights in a democratic society. It gives succour to anti-Semites and to those intolerant of other communities and faiths.”<sup>5</sup> I would argue that the measures represent an opportunity for Jewish and Muslim religious communities to come together and form an effective coalition in countering anti-religious and discriminatory narratives, practices and legal measures and to send out a clear message that ritual slaughter bans do not protect animals (especially as the meat industry continues to grow), instead these prohibitions target minority faith groups and must not be tolerated. Collaborative Muslim-Jewish legal strategies were coordinated and jointly launched between November 2017 and January 2018<sup>6</sup> and are likely to continue well beyond the scope of this report. Furthermore, the combined lawsuit draws on existing precedents within the legal arena, namely comments by the European Court of Human Rights that has stated that ritual slaughter is “an essential aspect of the practice of the Jewish faith” and therefore potentially indicating that given precedents the lawsuit may be ruled in favour of religious minorities in Belgium rather than seeing legal projects succumbing to the growing tide of Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, during late 2017, increasing political discourse and media coverage emerged in Belgium suggesting that the Belgian state would take over the country’s largest Islamic site of worship, the Grand Mosque of Belgium. In 1969, the then head of the Belgian state King Baudouin signed a 99-year rent-free lease of the mosque to Saudi Arabia, meaning that the mosque is now run by the Saudi-based World Muslim League who allegedly espouse more conservative interpretations of Islam. Against a backdrop of the so-called Islamic terror attacks that took place in France and Belgium during 2015 and 2016, it is suggested that the mosque is a ‘hotbed for extremism’<sup>8</sup> and therefore the Belgian state seeks to replace the leadership of the Grand Mosque of Belgium with those who are in favour of an interpretation of Islam that is more European in nature. As Farid Hafez, editor of the *European Islamophobia Report*, clearly elucidates there is no established link between terror attacks and conservative interpretations of Islam.<sup>9</sup> Also, and perhaps more pertinent, Hafez also raises the question, “If the Belgian state intervenes here, then where will the limit be set?”

5. Ibid.

6. AboutIslam, “Belgian Muslims, Jews Challenge Slaughter Ban.”; AgenceBelga, “Abattage Sans Étourdissement: Les Organisations Musulmanes Aussi Devant La Cour Constitutionnelle,” <https://eurojewcong.org/news/communities-news/belgium/belgian-muslims-join-jews-appeal-ban-religious-slaughter/>.

7. Ibid.

8. Michael Birnbaum, “The Mosque Is Belgium’s Biggest: Officials Say It’s a Hotbed for Extremism,” *The Washington Post*, November 11, 2017.

9. Farid hafez, “Why Secularism Secures Islam’s Independence in Europe,” *Daily Sabah*, December 16, 2017.

## Justice System

Arguably, the most influential and significant judicial decision related to Islamophobia in Belgium during 2017 is apparent in the European Court of Justice's decision regarding the permissibility of dismissing Muslim women who wear the headscarf from their employment. The case taken to the European Court of Justice, in part, stems from a Belgian appeal and therefore the ruling potentially carries greater significance to the Belgian nation. However, given its overlap with the field of employment, I have opted to cover the supranational level case in the next subsection of the report, namely Employment.

Notwithstanding, the European Court of Justice case does not represent an isolated example of Muslim-related cases being taken to the Belgian courts. For example, in Belgium during June 2017, the Brabant-Walloon correctional court heard the case of a visibly Muslim woman who, while pregnant, was attacked in the streets of Ottignies in September 2015.<sup>10</sup> The defendant pleaded psychological impairment and expressed regret. However, this case and many others like it, demonstrate the intersectional discrimination faced by Muslim women in Belgium. Also, as detailed in the report's Internet section, the Belgian judicial system has been influential in sentencing online Islamophobia.

## Employment

On 14th March 2017 the European Court of Justice (*La Cour de Justice de l'Union Européenne*, ECJ) delivered its preliminary judgements regarding the permissibility of dismissing employees on the grounds of the Islamic headscarf, with specific focus on the extent to which the examples presented before the court constituted direct or indirect discrimination, or indeed any discrimination at all.

The preliminary judgements issued by the ECJ are based on two specific cases heard together in March 2017: the case of Samira Achbita in Belgium and Asma Bougnaoui in France. Achbita had previously been employed as a receptionist at G4S. Three years into her employment, Achbita adopted the headscarf in the workplace and was told that due to an 'unwritten rule' regarding 'neutrality', employees could not manifest faith, political or philosophical symbols in the workplace. Achbita refused to remove her headscarf and was subsequently dismissed by G4S. The case was initially heard in Antwerp's lower and higher labour courts and was rejected before being referred to the Belgian Court of Cassation, which then referred the case to the ECJ.

As a design engineer for Micropole in France, Bougnaoui was required to visit clients on location. Following complaints regarding her headscarf from a client, Bougnaoui was requested to remove her headscarf on visits to clients' sites. As Bougnaoui refused to comply, she was dismissed from her post at Micropole. Her case was first heard and rejected by the Parisian Labour Tribunal before being referred to the ECJ by the French Court of Cassation.

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10. "Une Femme Voilée Enceinte Agressée Dans Une Rue D'ottignies," *SudInfo*, June 13, 2017.

The Achbita and Bougnaoui cases were the first cases related to faith and discrimination heard by the European Court of Justice; however, in the past, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has heard cases based on religious symbols.<sup>11</sup> In these two cases, General Advocate Sharpston suggested that the Belgian example (Achbita) constituted indirect discrimination rather than direct discrimination. Sharpston concluded the contrary in the French Bougnaoui case: her dismissal was seen to constitute direct discrimination. The preliminary judgements on these two cases sparked condemnation and split opinion across the European (and Belgian) counter-Islamophobia and counter-discrimination scene and among academics.<sup>12</sup>

Most notably, Brems<sup>13</sup> underlines the paradoxical nature of the judgement stating that no reference was made to the European climate of Islamophobia and hostility towards Muslim women on the continent. However, much of the media picked up on the gendered Islamophobic nature of the ECJ's judgements. Most importantly, the message that the ECJ decision would send to future employers of visibly Muslim women was questioned.

In a statement issued on 15th March 2017 Carlos Crespo, president of the Belgian organisation Movement Against Racism, Antisemitism and Xenophobia (*Mouvement contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et la Xénophobie – MRAX*), stated, "The decision will result in the facilitation of the already significant ostracization of European citizens who are Muslim and who want to participate in the labour market without necessarily having to denounce (or remove) their headscarf."<sup>14</sup>

Whilst at the supranational legal level experts may become fixated on technical legal notions such as that concerning interpretation or 'margins of appreciation' as previously applied by the ECHR to account for context-specific elements, the media and the general public tend to take away the base level message from the legal cases and I would argue that in this instance it is one that potentially legitimises a gendered form of Islamophobia in the workplace in Belgium and in wider Europe. Furthermore, in Belgium it is likely that the ECJ judgement coupled with growing gendered Islamophobia and the invocation of 'neutrality' / *laïcité* we may anticipate more employment-based headscarf affairs emerging in coming years.

## Education

With regards to discrimination of Muslims and their rights to access education, comparatively fewer major scandals emerged over the course of 2017. For example, 2015 saw the Belgian 'long skirt affair' surface which was ultimately reduced to nothing,<sup>15</sup>

11. Erica Howard, "Islamic Headscarves and the CJEU: Achbita and Bougnaoui," *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law* 24, no. 3.

12. Ibid.

13. Eva Brems to IACL - AIDC, 25.03.17, <https://iacl-aidc-blog.org/2017/03/25/analysis-european-court-of-justice-allows-bans-on-religious-dress-in-the-workplace/>.

14. Carlos Crespo, March 15, 2017, <http://mrax.be/wp/la-cour-de-justice-de-lunion-europeenne-legitime-linterdiction-du-foulard/>.

15. Easat-Daas, *Islamophobia in Belgium 2015: National Report*

whilst August 2016 saw the toing and froing regarding the right of Muslim women to sit access course exams.<sup>16</sup> In their annual report published in June 2017, the Belgian Counter Islamophobia Collective (CCIB) describe the small victories made in terms of the rights of Muslim women to education in Belgium. Nonetheless, they state that these are only first steps.<sup>17</sup> Bans such as the prohibition of ‘ostentatious faith symbols’ (or more typically headscarves) in the francophone region of Verviers<sup>18</sup> will continue to be in place until 2019.

The Belgian League of Human Rights published their analysis of the legal validity and permissibility of headscarves bans in the field of education, employment and social/cultural development in Belgium in August 2017. The report adopts a legal analytical framework to assess the limitations imposed on Muslim women’s appearance in Belgium. Via the consideration of rights to religious freedom and non-discrimination, the report asserts that more often than not the bans are not valid. The paper also problematizes the arguments often evoked in support of controlling Muslim women’s dress in the country, including the notion of state neutrality (sometimes referred to as *laïcité* in Belgian debates) by raising the question regarding the need for neutrality of acts or appearances. The report concludes that based on the legal analysis presented “[t]he prohibition of the headscarf has not been revealed to be compatible with the respect of fundamental rights, except in very limited and specific situations”.<sup>19</sup>

This type of structured legal analysis by experts regarding the paradoxes and irrationality of headscarf bans in the country should be welcomed as this type of legal-based analysis has the potential to offer effective counter tools that may support those, including women in the Belgian education system, who chose to take their discrimination cases to the courts.

## Media

As with previous years, in Belgium the media has been, in part, complicit with the reproduction of Islamophobic tropes. This is say that rather than being the source of Islamophobia in Belgium, the Belgian media rearticulates and exacerbates Islamophobic narratives that stem from both the national context and also those coming from global sources.

Specific examples of Islamophobia in Belgian media in 2017 can be seen, among others, in *Le Soir* publications that have repeatedly exaggerated Islamophobic headlines in 2017. Examples of this include the following headlines: “*L’Islam en Belgique divise Musulmans et politiques*”<sup>20</sup> (Islam in Belgium Divides Muslims and Politicians – see Fig-

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16. “*Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2016*, European Islamophobia Report 2016 (Istanbul SETA).

17. CCIB, “Rapport D’activités 2016,” (Brussels, Belgium: CCIB).

18. Verviers Conseil Communal, “Déclaration Politique Générale - Mandature Communale 2013-2018”, ed. Verviers Conseil Communal.

19. Julie Ringelheim, “Les Interdictions De Port Du Foulard Visant Les Femmes Adultes: Analyse De La Ligue De Droits De L’homme,” (Belgium: La Ligue de Droits de l’Homme).

20. Elodie Blogie, “L’Islam De Belgique Divise Politiques Et Musulmans,” *Le Soir*, April 27, 2017.

ure 1); “*Plus de 2.000 Musulmans radicalisés en Belgique*”<sup>21</sup> (More than 2000 Radicalised Muslims in Belgium – see Figure 2); “*50% de Belges sont pour une politiques très restrictives envers les Musulmans*”<sup>22</sup> (50% of Belgians Favour Very Restrictive Policies Towards Muslims); and “*Entre 11 et 18% de Musulmans en Belgique d’ici 2050*”<sup>23</sup> (Between 11 and 18% Muslim Population in Belgium by 2050 – see Figure 3). While these headlines are provocative and therefore may prompt increased circulation, the publication is contributing to the Islamophobic idea of alleged Muslim violence via the radicalisation headline, the Islamophobic trope of a demographic threat via the statistical projection headline, while the trope of opposition to normative Belgian values is invoked by the political division headline. Such headlines lead to the formation of narratives related to the need to control Muslim populations apparent in the headline denoting that half of Belgians favour the strict control of Muslims within their respective countries.



Figure 1: *Le Soir* headline: “Islam in Belgium Divides Politicians and Muslims”



Figure 2: *Le Soir* headline “More than 2000 Radicalised Muslims in Belgium”

During 2017, CCIB increasingly challenged examples of Islamophobia in the Belgian media, examples of which are detailed in the Chronology section of this report. The action recalls the work of the British counter-Islamophobic organisation MEND

21. LeSoir, “Plus De 2000 Musulmans Radicalisés En Belgique” *Le Soir*, September 02, 2017.

22. Jacques Crémers, “50% Des Belges Sont Pour Une Politique Très Restrictive Envers Les Musulmans,” *Le Soir*, November 25, 2017.

23. Ludivine Ponciau, “Entre 11-18% Des Musulmans En Belgique D’ici 2050,” *ibid.*, December 01, 2017.



Figure 3: *Le Soir* headline “50% of Belgians are in favour of very restrictive immigration policies towards Muslims”

(Muslim Engagement and Development) that regularly challenges Islamophobic media and also encourages their followers to do the same. On occasion, in the UK, this has led to official retractions of Islamophobic news.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the approach also indicates the need for increased collaborative work and the sharing of best practices among European counter-Islamophobia organisations in Belgium and beyond.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

When juxtaposed with previous years’ analyses in the respective *European Islamophobia Reports*, Belgium witnessed comparatively fewer clusters of reported Islamophobic verbal and physical attacks. In previous years, the highest peaks in Islamophobic attacks (often on visibly Muslim women) could be seen in the days and weeks following terrorist attacks perpetrated by alleged Muslims.<sup>25</sup> For example, in the one-month period following the terror attacks in Brussels, the CCIB recorded 36 reported Islamophobic incidents, which translates to over one recorded incident per day.<sup>26</sup>

Previous editions of the Belgian component of the *European Islamophobia Report* have asserted that ‘Islamist’ terror attacks tend to lead to a backlash for Belgian Muslims in which they experience peaks in Islamophobia.<sup>27</sup> The realities of these claims have been borne out during 2017, whereby Belgium and its immediate geographical neighbours did not experience ‘Islamist terror attacks’ and, as a result, clusters of Islamophobia did not appear to have emerged in the same way as in previous years.

Instead, and as speculated in previous reports, the rate of Islamophobic incidences in Belgium saw a steady incline in 2017. Examples of attacks include attacks on individuals and sites, and are discussed in the Chronology section of this report, including the stabbing of a worshipper at a mosque in Liège and the attempted arson of a mosque in Herstal.

24. MEND, “The Sun Correction,” MEND, <https://mend.org.uk/news/the-sun-correction/>.

25. Easat-Daas, *Islamophobia in Belgium 2015: National Report ; Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2016*.

26. CCIB, “Rapport D’activités 2016.”

27. Easat-Daas, *Islamophobia in Belgium 2015: National Report ; Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2016*.

## Internet

As with the media, the Internet serves as a medium for the reproduction and articulation of Islamophobic tropes, rather than being at the source of these narratives. The anonymity afforded to Islamophobes online potentially serves to exacerbate and intensify the nature of Islamophobia asserted on the Internet. These virtual spaces, and especially social media, become echo-chambers for those who hold such views, and in turn potentially legitimise such narratives amongst certain individuals. This legitimisation may subsequently lead to individuals being compelled to act on their Islamophobic beliefs in the real world. This emphasises the very real need to counter Islamophobia online.

Rather than being limited to specific perpetrators, online spaces for Islamophobia are utilised by a plethora of individuals and groups, including far-right groups, such as *Vlaams Belang*. For example, the *Parti Populaire Verviers* published a cartoon on its social media page in November which portrayed Tintin, the famous Belgian comic book protagonist, with text superimposed on the speech bubble to read “*tu es certain qu'on est à Verviers???*” (are you sure we are in Verviers???), while the background image includes seemingly non-ethnic Belgians who may be presumed to be Muslims (see Figure 4). This imagery feeds into Islamophobic narratives of an alleged Muslim demographic takeover of the nation.

The report published in 2017 by the International Network against Cyber Hate (INACH) highlighted specific instances of online Islamophobia, including detailing the case of the Flemish Defence League Facebook page. The page had over 6500 followers and now, in part due to pressure from UNIA, the page has been removed. The page included images of Belgian Muslims with commentaries from users stating that those featured in the images should be shot or gassed. The administrator of the page was sentenced to ten months imprisonment on the grounds of inciting racial hatred on 4th July 2017;<sup>28</sup> the clear intersection of racial and Islamophobic hate speech, and problems of strict categorisation of an event as either racist or Islamophobic may restrict depth of comprehension of such events. Notwithstanding, pages like these surface and are removed and subsequently



Figure 4: Still from Parti Populaire Verviers social media.

28. Maren Hamelmann, Camille Lhopitault, and Andreas Schadauen, “Reports on Antisemitic, Antiziganistic, Homophobic and Anti-Muslim Hate Speech,” (Amsterdam, Holland: International Network Against Hate Speech (INACH)).

replaced frequently in the Belgian online Islamophobia platform and thus precise quantification remains problematic.

In their annual report published in June 2017, UNIA note that in terms of the discrimination cases received by the organisation, Internet-based discrimination (including online Islamophobia) is at the fore. In their annual report, the organisation highlights that not only are reported incidents of Islamophobia increasing in Belgium, Internet-based discrimination has increased almost five fold since UNIA's first reporting in 2005.<sup>29</sup> These findings are echoed by the European Commission that reported in 2017 that Islamophobia (along with xenophobia) constituted the most commonly cited source of online hate speech.<sup>30</sup> However, given the expansive nature of the Internet, such quantifications represent only reported instances of Islamophobia and, therefore, only the tip of the iceberg.

Notwithstanding this bleak and deteriorating situation, the Internet can also serve as a potential platform for the spread of effective counter-narratives to Islamophobia. In this regard, it is reassuring to see that the majority of Belgian counter-discrimination and counter-Islamophobia groups have a strong online presence which can be utilised to promote their work and key messages.

### **Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network**

In 2017, the nature of central actors in the Belgian Islamophobia network is not dissimilar to that observed in previous years; namely the far-right, the Internet and the media continue to be at the centre of reproduction, and arguably normalisation of Islamophobic tropes in the nation.

However, rather than being limited to sole actors, 2017 has seen the extent to which political and legal discourses have dominated the nature of the most prevalent Islamophobic narratives in Belgium. Key examples of these types of tropes have been detailed above and in the Chronology section of the report, but they include the European Court of Justice judgements on the permissibility of dismissing employees on the grounds of the headscarf in March 2017, the ban on ritual (including *halal* slaughter) in Wallonia unanimously voted in May 2017, and also the proposed state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium discussed in late 2017.

These decisions, whilst perhaps not as remarkable on first sight as the clusters of violent Islamophobic attacks seen in previous years, are in fact equally sinister since they are frequently transmitted via the Internet and media and subsequently inform public opinion and hostility towards Muslim. The perception of a state-sanctioned model of Islamophobia has the potential to translate into real attacks against Muslims across the country.

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29. UNIA, "Rapporttr Annuel 2016 - Por Une Société Inclusive: Par OÙ (Re)Commencer?," ed. Patrick Chalier (Brussels, Belgium: UNIA).

30. Vera Jourová, "Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online," (Brussels, Belgium: European Commission - Directorate General of Justice and Consumers).

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

At the political level, various political and official figures spoke out against intolerance in 2017. For example, in his address to the nation on 21st July 2017 as part of the National Festival celebrations, Belgian King Philippe issued a message to promote intercultural and intercommunity support, and tolerance. Similarly Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel addressed the United Nations in September 2017 and used the opportunity to speak out against online hatred.

Given its diverse nature, Belgium is home to numerous effective counter-racism groups and organisations that seek to counter Islamophobia in the country, such as UNIA, the European Network against Racism, and MRAX, among many others. The CCIB continues to be a key figure in the counter-Islamophobia network in Belgium. During 2017, CCIB continued many of the projects detailed in previous editions in the *European Islamophobia Report* such as the ‘Open School for Women’ project or the ‘Open Jobs Testing’ initiatives. In their annual report published in 2017, the organisation also details a new pedagogical initiative entitled ICE – *Islamophobie, Citoyenneté, Education* (Islamophobia, Citizenship, and Education). The 2017 project sought to train one hundred individuals in francophone Wallonia using a practical, education-based toolkit to counter-Islamophobia via dispelling prejudices regarding Muslims in the country.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps most remarkably, CCIB cites collaboration with twenty-two different international, European, national and local organisations committed in the fight against Islamophobia in various ways.<sup>32</sup> I would argue, that in this regard CCIB constitutes an example of best practice as it seeks to share its messages and tools with others in the field. The increasingly fluid and non-geographically bound nature of Islamophobia indicates that it is precisely this type of collaborative work that is required in the struggle against it.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In conclusion, Islamophobia in Belgium in 2017 was marked by a steady and continued growth in media and Internet-based Islamophobia, Islamophobic hate speech and violent Islamophobic attacks. This is contrary to the significant clusters of Islamophobic acts and coverage in Belgium in the previous two years, namely 2015 and 2016.<sup>33</sup>

Instead, 2017 was marked by significant political and legal instances of Islamophobia. These political and legal discourses typically concerned Muslims women’s headscarves in Belgian employment, *halal* meat slaughter and the running of mosques in the country. Thus, as with previous years, there is a continued

31. CCIB, “Rapport D’activités 2016.”

32. Ibid.

33. Easat-Daas, *Islamophobia in Belgium 2015: National Report ; Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2016*.

gendered manifestation of Islamophobia in Belgium, but also a growing scrutiny on more generalised Islamic sites and practices. The nature of state-level Islamophobia witnessed in Belgium in 2017 is as concerning as the clusters of violent attacks witnessed in previous years since it sends out clear messages concerning the legitimacy and acceptability of Islamophobic discrimination in the country. In the report, I also hypothesise that these narratives and politico-legal actions could signal further general increases in Islamophobia more generally across Belgium in coming months and years.

Furthermore, the report demonstrates the increasingly Europeanisation/globalisation of Islamophobic tropes and actions. Therefore, with regards to policy recommendations, given the non-geographically bound nature of Islamophobic discourses it has become increasingly apparent that there is a growing need for cross counter-Islamophobia groups to work together in an effort to share best practices. The report also observes that, in part, CCIB (among other European actors) is already working in this collaborative way. This *modus operandi* needs to be celebrated and promoted and also financially supported (where required) to facilitate this much needed objective in the long-term.

On a more direct and short-term level in Belgium the following actions are necessary:

- Increased and continued monitoring, documenting and supporting Muslim women who face Islamophobia in education and/or employment in Belgium, particularly given the European Court of Justice's judgement passed in March 2017.
- Robust legal strategies for countering gendered Islamophobia in these fields, and beyond, must be developed and supported through collaborative working between those facing Islamophobia, civil society initiatives and experts/academics.
- Collaborative work must be developed and maintained between the Belgian Jewish and Belgian Muslim community to counter the ban on ritual slaughter prior to its 2019 implementation.
- Strategies related to combatting state-sanctioned limitations on the practice of faith in Belgium, such as a strengthened and united response to the proposed state takeover of the Grand Mosque of Belgium, must emerge.

## Chronology

- **15.01.2017:** The CCIB challenges press Islamophobia in a publication which had previously appeared in the Belgian publication *L'Avenir*.
- **21.01.2017:** UNIA begins to present their initial statistics detailing various types of discrimination that had taken place in Belgium in the previous year. Figures reveal an overall twenty percent increase in discrimination, hate speech and hate

crime cases (including Islamophobia) referred to the organisation in cases concerning employment.<sup>34</sup>

- **23.01.2017:** A Muslim man worshipping at El Hijra Mosque in the francophone town of Ougrée, Liège is stabbed in the abdomen by a local resident. The attack leaves the mosque and its congregation vulnerable and in fear of reprisals.<sup>35</sup>
- **19.02.2017:** Attempted arson of Al Ihsan Islamic Cultural Centre in Herstal in the Greater Liège region. (Fig. 5)
- **14.03.2017:** The ECJ issues its preliminary judgements regarding the legitimacy of dismissing Muslim women employees on the grounds of their headscarf and provokes condemnation across Belgium and the continent.
- **22.03.2017:** Brussels alderman of the *Parti Socialiste* (Socialist Party) publicly comments that mosques in the city of Brussels are ‘in the hands of Salafists.’ His Islamophobic comments provoked condemnation among his colleagues in the Socialist Party and the CCIB.<sup>36</sup> Incidentally, Mayeur was forced to resign from his role due to an unrelated controversy related to taking funds for participation in meetings related to a charity intended to help the homeless.<sup>37</sup>
- **03.04.2017:** Flemish Belgian Rachida Lamrabet is dismissed from her post as a lawyer at UNIA on the grounds of her comments regarding the *burqa*.<sup>38</sup> Her support for the right of Muslim women to wear the face veil was deemed controversial since the use of face coverings has been banned in Belgium since 1st June 2011.<sup>39</sup>
- **19.04.2017:** After an advert is placed by an individual seeking a roommate in Brussels, a young Muslim male responds to the advert and is met with messages stating ‘no Arabs’.<sup>40</sup> The event highlights the intersection between racial and religious prejudice in Belgium, and also the presumed acceptability of these racist tendencies. (Fig. 6)



Figure 5: Al-Ihsan Cultural Centre

34. UNIA, “Les Premiers Chiffres D’unia Pour 2016 Montrent Une Hausse Sensible Des Discriminations Présumées Dans L’emploi Et L’enseignement,” UNA, <https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/les-premiers-chiffres-dunia-pour-2016-montrent-une-hausse-sensible-des-discriminations-presumees-dans-lemploi-et-lenseignement>.

35. Maxime Debra, “Seraingl on a Frôlé De Drame À La Mosquée D’ougrée,” *La Meuse*, January 26, 2017.

36. Martin Bruxant, “Mayeur Met Le Foe Au Ps Bruxellois Avec Ses Propos Sur Les Mosquées,” *L’Echo*, March 23, 2017.

37. FlandersNews, “Mayor of Brussels Resigns in Disgrace,” *Flanders News*, June 08, 2017.

38. Belga, “Unia Licence Rachida Lamrabet Suite À Ses Propos Sure Le Burqa,” *Le Soir*, April 03, 2017.

39. Marie Haspelagh, “The Belgian Burqa Ban - Unveiled from a Human Rights Perspective” (Masters, University of Ghent).

40. LaCapitale, “Il Cherche Un Coloc: On Lui Répond ‘Pas D’arabe,’” *La Capitale*, April 14, 2017.

- **21.04.2017:** A report emerges stating that Belgian Muslims of Turkish origin are leaving the country at unprecedented rates. In 2015, 1351 Belgians of Turkish heritage left Belgium - this is twice as high compared to rates witnessed fifteen years prior. CCIB are quick to point out that these



Figure 6: Screenshot from Facebook containing racist remarks.

- statistics are likely to be linked to growing rates of Islamophobia in Belgium.<sup>41</sup>
- **08.05.2017:** A vote to ban ritual slaughter as of September 2019 in Wallonia is passed with unanimous support by the Wallonia environmental committee.
- **18.05.2017:** A member of the police force from the francophone Belgian region of Couvin-Viroinval is found wearing an Islamophobic crusader symbol of his official uniform, highlighting the historical nature of Islamophobic imagery and narratives. The Belgian police force were quick to issue their condemnation of the behaviour of the police officer in question.<sup>42</sup>

- **10.06.2017:** News coverage of Muslims and non-Muslims sharing their *iftar* (breaking of the fast at sunset).<sup>43</sup> This example is not dissimilar to other cases in Europe and represents an effective means of inter-community relationship-building and countering Islamophobic prejudices. (Fig. 7)



Figure 7: Still image from news footage of interfaith iftar.

- **13.06.2017:** The case of a woman who wore the headscarf and suffered an attack in September 2015 whilst pregnant is heard by the francophone Brabant-Wallon correctional court.<sup>44</sup>
- **10.07.2017:** Belgian Muslims hold the March against Terrorism and issue statements condemning hatred in the name of and against Islam.<sup>45</sup> (Fig. 8)

41. Belga, "Les Turcs Tourment Le Dos À La Belgique," *La Libre*, April 21, 2017.

42. RTL, "Un Policier De Couvin Arbore L'ecussun Templier Sur Son Uniforme: "Une Faute Déontologique Qui Sera Sactionnée"," *RTL Info*, May 18, 2017.

43. RTBF AUVIO, "Ramadan: Dialogue Autout D'un Repas," RTBF, [https://www.rtbf.be/auvio/detail\\_partage-rupture-du-jeune-entre-musulmans-et-non-musulmans?id=2221947](https://www.rtbf.be/auvio/detail_partage-rupture-du-jeune-entre-musulmans-et-non-musulmans?id=2221947).

44. Sudinfo.be, "Une Femme Voilée Enceinte Agressée Dans Une Rue D'ottignies."

45. AUVIO, "Ramadan: Dialogue Autout D'un Repas".

- **13.07.2017:** UNIA speaks out on the potentially discriminatory nature of the *burkini* ban.<sup>46</sup>
- **18.07.2017:** CCIB publishes its annual report for the preceding year, detailing significant Islamophobic incidents that took place in Belgium during 2016.<sup>47</sup> In particular, the report details the position of Muslim women and access to education in the country.



Figure 8: Still image taken from TV news footage of the March against Terrorism.

- **01.08.2017:** The Belgian League of Human Rights publishes its analysis of the headscarf bans which have impacted adult Muslim women in the country.<sup>48</sup>
- **14.09.2017:** Theo Francken of the *Nieuw Vlaamse Alliantie* (New Flemish Alliance) makes remarks on Twitter about ‘cleaning’ the Brussels Parc Maximilien of refugees.<sup>49</sup> The racist remarks provoke condemnation and also nurture an atmosphere of hatred towards all that is ‘Other’, including Muslims, in Belgium.
- **16.09.2017:** *Christen, Democratisch in Vlaamse* (Christian Democratic and Flemish) party leader Wouter Beke expresses his condemnation of Theo Francken’s nationalist comments two days earlier.<sup>50</sup>
- **21.09.2017:** European Day against Islamophobia promotes counter-Islamophobia initiatives in Belgium and beyond.
- **21.09.2017:** The No Hate Speech Movement publishes statistics on social media regarding the overestimation of the Muslim population size in Belgium. The data indicates that among Francophone Belgians the national Muslim population is estimated on average to be 29%, whereas in reality the population is closer to 6%.<sup>51</sup>
- **21.09.2017:** The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) publishes its report which reveals the negative experiences of European Muslims in terms of seeking employment and also highlights that contrary to Islamophobic popular opinion European Muslims are in fact well-integrated members of European society.<sup>52</sup> These

46. Saeed Khan, “L’interdiction Du Burkini Dans Les Piscines Publiques Peut-Être Discriminante,” *RTBF*, July 13, 2017.

47. CCIB, “Rapport D’activités 2016.”

48. Ringelheim, “Les Interdictions De Port Du Foulard Visant Les Femmes Adultes: Analyse De La Ligue De Droits De L’homme.”

49. Jean-Francois Herbecq, “Emoi Sur Facebook: Theo Francken Parle De ‘Nettoyer’ Le Parc Maximilien,” *RTBF*, September 14, 2017.

50. Johanna Geron, “Wouter Beke Critique Sévèrement Le Langage De Theo Francken ‘Repris Au Belang,’” *ibid.*, September 16, 2017.

51. Pew Forum, “Religious Composition by Country 2010-2050”.

52. FRA, “Muslims in the Eu: High Levels of Trust Despite Pervasive Discrimination,” news release, September 21, 2017.

types of messages counter Islamophobic narratives which assert that Muslims are living ghettoised and isolated lives in Europe.

- **22.09.2017:** The *Centre Public d'Aide Sociale* (Public Social Assistance Centre, CPAS) of Louvain puts in place measures to allow for its employees and representatives to wear the headscarf at the CPAS without restriction.<sup>53</sup> This measure represents a refreshing alternative to the earlier preliminary judgements issued by the ECJ in March 2017.
- **23.09.2017:** Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel addresses the United Nations and speaks out against hate speech and hate crimes.
- **03.10.2017:** The CCIB attends the European Union Commission event on combatting 'anti-Muslim hatred'.
- **04.10.2017:** Belgian Newspaper *L'Echo* publishes a comment piece which is Islamophobic in nature as it accuses Islam of being a 'conquering faith'. In response, CCIB takes to its social media platforms to criticise the newspaper for publishing the Islamophobic opinion piece.
- **03.11.2017:** Brussels alderman Philippe Close prohibits the planned '*Safari de l'Islam*' (Islam Safari) organised by the Flemish and Dutch political far-right, whereby far-right politicians Filip Dewinter and Geert Wilders intended to tour the mosques and Islamic sites of the city. Whilst banning the so-called 'safari', Close also used the opportunity to condemn incitement of Islamophobia in Brussels.<sup>54</sup> The message shared by Close goes towards countering the narrative which frames Brussels as a city taken over by Muslims, particularly in regions such as Molenbeek.<sup>55</sup>
- **13.11.2017:** The University of Liège shares work by its scholars related to immigration in Belgium.<sup>56</sup> Given the largely ethnic minority composition of the Belgian Muslim population, are most likely to face Islamophobia in Belgium, the report's findings are influential in countering narratives of 'Othering' which contribute to the legitimisation of Islamophobia in the country. The report's authors also explicitly indicate the exacerbation of experiencing racial discrimination if an individual is perceived to be Muslim.<sup>57</sup>
- **30.11.2017:** News reports detailing the possible takeover of the Belgian Grand Mosque in Brussels by the state circulate.<sup>58</sup>

53. Belga, "Le Cpas De Louvain Autorise Le Port Du Voile Sans Limite," *Le Soir*, September 22, 2017.

54. "'Safari De L'Islam': Philippe Close Interdit Tout Rassemblement Sur Le Territoir De Bruxelles," *BXI*, November 02, 2017.

55. Easat-Daas, *Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2016*.

56. Jean-Michel Lafleur and Abdeslam Marfouk, *Pourquoi L'immigration? Questions Que Se Posent Les Belges Sur Les Migrations Internationales Au Xxie Siècle*(Louvain-la-Nueve: Academia-l'Harmattan).

57. Ibid.

58. Birnbaum, "The Mosque Is Belgium's Biggest: Officials Say It's a Hotbed for Extremism."

- **30.11.2017:** Reports of combined Muslim and Jewish planned legal action against proposed ritual slaughter bans emerge.<sup>59</sup>
- **01.12.2017:** News coverage emerges across Belgium related to the Pew Centre report on the projected growth of Muslim populations in Europe by 2050. News coverage details estimated statistics of the Belgian Muslim community thirty-two years from now and postulates that this will increase to between eleven and eighteen per cent.<sup>60</sup> (see figure below) This type of media coverage relies on sensationalist Islamophobia for its own gains and adds to the narrative of a Muslim demographic takeover, which in turn legitimises Islamophobic normative discourses, practices and even attacks on Islam and Muslims in the country.



Figure 9: *Le Soir* headline postulating dramatic demographic increase in Muslim population sizes in Belgium in forthcoming years.

- **01.12.2017:** The proposed construction of a mosque in Retinne, Fléron provokes Islamophobic protests and hate speech. This case is reminiscent of examples documented in previous editions of the *European Islamophobia Report*<sup>61</sup> and highlights the ongoing targeting of not only Muslims but also religious sites frequented by Muslims.
- **06.12.2017:** Reports emerge stating that one-fifth of Belgians of either Turkish or Moroccan ethnic heritage suffers discrimination in their search for employment.<sup>62</sup> This report highlights the intersectional discrimination faced by Belgian Muslims and also corroborates statements made by CCIB regarding the increasing rates of Belgian Muslims of Turkish background who are choosing to return to Turkey.

59. AgenceBelga, "Abattage Sans Étourdissement: Les Organisations Musulmanes Aussi Devant La Cour Constitutionnelle".

60. Ponciau, "Entre 11-18% Des Musulmans En Belgique D'ici 2050."

61. Easat-Daas, *Islamophobia in Belgium 2015: National Report*; *Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2016*.

62. Belga, "Une Personne D'origine Maghrébine Ou Turquie Sur Cinq Discriminée Sur Le Marché D'emploi En Belgique," *RTBF*, December 06, 2017.

- **07.12.2017:** As is often seen in Belgium and other neighbouring Western European countries, stories begin to circulate in popular culture and especially on social media stating that Belgian Muslims wish to ‘ban Christmas’ in the country. In this vein and in response to these false claims, Belgian media outlet RTL Info runs a story declaring that ‘Muslims have never wanted to change the Christmas holidays to winter holidays.’<sup>63</sup> Stories such as this, published by seemingly external sources, contribute to challenging Islamophobic narratives in Belgium.
- **18.12.2017:** Hendrik Bogaert of the Flemish political party *Christen, Democratisch in Vlaamse* (Christian, Democratic and Flemish) calls for a general prohibition of ‘visible faith symbols’ throughout Belgian public spaces.<sup>64</sup> These calls are reminiscent of French *laïque* bans on visible Muslim dress, and therefore demonstrate the fluidity of Islamophobic tropes across Europe.

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63. RTL, “Les Musulmans N’one Jamais Voulu Que Les Vaccances De Noël Deviennent Les Congés D’hiver: Le Vrai/Faux Sur L’appellation Des Congés,” *RTL*, December 07, 2017.

64. Belga, “Un Député Souhaite Interdire Les Signes Religieux,” *7sur7*, December 18, 2017.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
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## Executive Summary

In 2017, anti-Muslim bigotry and negative trends towards Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina were evident mainly in the educational, political and media sectors. The main generators of Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim bigotry are the Bosnian Serb political, media, religious and academic policymakers. The year 2017 saw a rise in anti-Bosnian and anti-Muslim bigotry by the Croatian political establishment and also by regional political actors. Islamophobia was used by local and regional political subjects with the aim of achieving their political goals. These actors present Bosnia and Herzegovina as a failed state which is harbouring extremists and which needs to be territorially divided in order to secure peace and security. Regional political subjects in Austria and the Czech Republic used the alleged violent extremism in B&H as a platform for their political campaigns.

This year also saw the continuation of the denial of the 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. Two verdicts handed down by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia affected the rise in Islamophobic rhetoric. The Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladić was found guilty of genocide while six high-ranking Bosnian Croat political and military leaders were found guilty of joint criminal enterprise with the aim of persecuting Bosniaks in Croat-majority areas in 1993-94. As a result, *Republika Srpska* is pushing for succession from B&H while Croatia and the Bosnian Croat political establishment are pushing for a third Croat entity in B&H.

Lastly, this year saw a continuation of physical and verbal attacks on mosques and imams, mostly in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian entity *Republika Srpska* but also in Croat-majority areas. A total of 11 incidents are recorded in this report. The Inter-Religious Council of B&H has three registered attacks on the property of the Islamic Community of B&H. Additional anti-Muslim hatred was present at football matches and in graffiti in Serb-dominated towns.

## Sažetak

Cjelokupni negativni i diskriminatorni trendovi prema muslimanima u Bosni i Hercegovini se uglavnom očituje u obrazovnom, političkom i medijskom sistemu. Glavni generator islamofobije i anti-muslimanske netrpeljivosti su čelnici bosanskih Srba - politički, medijski i akademski nosioci politike. U 2017. godini došlo je do porasta anti-bosanske i anti-muslimanske retorike od strane Hrvatskog političkog rukovodstva i od strane regionalnih aktera. Ovi akteri prikazuju Bosnu i Hercegovinu kao propalu državu koja je sjedište ekstremista i koja treba biti teritorijalno podijeljena kako bi se očuvao mirisigurnost. Regionalni politički subjekti u Austriji i Češkoj republici koristili su navodnu prijetnju nasilnog ekstremizma kao platform za svoju političku kampanju.

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. Dvije presude koje su donijete od strane Međunarodnog krivičnog tribunala za bivšu Jugoslaviju (MKSJ) uticale se na porast islamofobične retorike. General Ratko Mladić osuđen je za genocid a šest bosanskih Hrvata, politički i vojni vođa osuđeni su za udruženi zločinački poduhvat s ciljem progona Bošnjaka u većinskim hrvatskim mjestima.

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. Ukupno 11 napada je zabilježeno u ovom Izvještaju. Međureligijsko vijeće BiH je u svom radu tokom 2017. zabilježio 3 napada na imovinu Islamske zajednice BiH. Dodatna anti-muslimanska mržnja bila je vidljiva na fudbalskim utakmicama i na grafitima u srpskim-dominantnim gradovima.

## Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country that faces a specific case of Islamophobia. Anti-Muslim bigotry has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a long time. This Islamophobia reached its highest peaks in the execution of mass atrocities including genocide during the Second World War and during the Bosnian War (1992-1995). Although anti-Muslim bigotry has deep roots, the first contemporary Islamophobic statements appeared in the late 1980s and were made by scholars, Orientalists and self-proclaimed Islam experts at the University of Belgrade: Slavic Muslims were represented as traitors of Orthodox Christianity, people with weak genes who converted to Islam. This is an interesting case of Islamophobia where hatred is aimed mainly at Slavic Muslims.

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 resulted in the deaths of at least 100,000 people, 30,000 enforced disappearances and the rape of 30,000 women and girls.<sup>1</sup> 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.

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. 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.<sup>2</sup>

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

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

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

be Bosniaks (out of a total of 3,531,159).<sup>3</sup> A slightly larger percentage (50.70%) stated that their religion is Islam. Since, in the case of all three constituent ethnic 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.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Two main events sparked Islamophobic rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2017. First, was a campaign aimed against the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina pursued by both Croatia and Serbia. This consisted of anti-Bosnian rhetoric from Croatia and Serbia in which Bosnia and Herzegovina is portrayed as a failed state that is a safe haven



Figure 1: A billboard expressing support for the convicted war criminal Ratko Mladić in Nevesinje a few days after his verdict was handed down.

for terrorists. B&H entity *Republika Srpska*, continued its separatist policy in 2017. Their policy of undermining the Bosnian state was visible through their anti-NATO activities which were highlighted by a resolution by the *Republika Srpska* Assembly on military neutrality in October 2017.<sup>4</sup>

The second event was the two major verdicts in the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. These two cases were: (1) Ratko Mladić, Commander of the *Republika Srpska* Army, who was found guilty of genocide in Srebrenica; (2) and Prlić et al - six Bosnian Croat political and military officials from the former para-state Herceg-Bosna. (Fig. 1) This case was especially important for Croatia since the court found that the then-Croatian state was in a Joint Criminal Enterprise with Herceg-Bosna to cleanse the territories of Bosniaks. These territories were intended for the new Greater Croatian state.

In relation to physical attacks, 2017 was a year in which attacks were lower in number than in previous years. The month of Ramadan in 2017 was the first post-war Ramadan in which not a single attack was registered. There were, however, a number of attacks later in the year.

3. Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina - 2013 Final Results, <http://www.popis2013.ba/popis2013/doc/Popis2013prvoIzdanje.pdf>

4. "Republika Srpska Resolution on Military Neutrality to Undermine NATO Integration of BiH?", European Western Balkans, October 10, 2017, retrieved December 2, 2017, from <https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/10/26/republika-srpska-resolution-military-neutrality-undermine-nato-integration-bih/>.

The following incidents were collected through media reportage, direct reporting to the Commission and personal contacts.<sup>5</sup> The Interreligious Council of B&H also published a report on the monitoring and the responses to attacks on religious buildings and other holy sites in B&H. For the period of November 1, 2015 – October 31, 2016, a total of nine attacks on the Islamic Community in B&H were registered.<sup>6</sup> When this report was being written, the data for 2017 had not yet been published, but information gathered indicates that three attacks were registered.<sup>7</sup>

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

Political tensions in B&H rose to a new level in 2017. Activities and comments undermining B&H came from two geopolitical areas: from certain Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat separatist political subjects within B&H, and from other politicians in the region. In December 2016, Croatia's President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović stated that there were several thousand fighters who returned from the Syrian and Iraqi battlegrounds to Bosnia.<sup>8</sup>

This statement was denied by the B&H Minister of Security Dragan Mektić who stated that 46 former fighters returned, 40 of whom were being prosecuted for their activities.<sup>9</sup> These statements were made a few weeks before the European Parliament (EP) passed a resolution which called for “federalism, decentralisation and legitimate representation of the country's constituent peoples” which was initiated by the Croatian members in the EP.<sup>10</sup> Thus, in this manner, B&H was portrayed – explicitly or implicitly – as a safe haven for radical Jihadists in order for local separatist political subjects to attain their political goals.

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5. I would like to thank Nihad Mehmedović, legal adviser in Riyasat of the Islamic community, and Elvedin Subašić, journalist from Preporod newspaper for their valuable information and insight.

6. Međureligijsko vijeće BiH, “Monitoring napada na vjerske objekte i druga mjesta od značaja za crkve i vjerske zajednice u BiH – zaštita svetih mjesta šesti godišnji izvještaj (izvještajni period od 1. novembra/studenog 2015. do 31. oktobra/listopada 2016.), Sarajevo, maj/svibanj 2017

7. I would like to thank Igor Kožemjakin from the Interreligious Council for providing valuable information about registered attacks on people and property of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

8. “Grabar Kitarović: Iz tzv. Islamske države u BiH se vraća hiljade boraca”, RSE, December 6, 2016, retrieved June 5, 2017 from <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/28159764.html>.

9. Aida Đugum, ‘Ustašama’ na ‘islamiste’, RSE, December 7, 2017, retrieved December 15, 2017 from <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bih-hrvatska-optuzbe/28162033.html>.

10. “EP Adopts Resolution on Bosnia's Progress Which Calls for Federalism”, EBL News, February 15, 2017, retrieved August 20, 2017 from <https://eblnews.com/news/balkan/ep-adopts-resolution-bosnias-progress-which-calls-federalism-56302>. This is a continuation of last year's Croatian policy: “Plenkovic: Position of Bosnian Croats, European Bosnia in Croatia's Strategic”, EBL News, August 27, 2017, retrieved August 29, 2017 from [interesthttps://eblnews.com/news/balkan/plenkovic-position-bosnian-croats-european-bosnia-croatias-strategic-interest-34758](https://eblnews.com/news/balkan/plenkovic-position-bosnian-croats-european-bosnia-croatias-strategic-interest-34758).

The B&H entity *Republika Srpska* continued to undermine and disrespect state institutions. In July, the Constitutional Court of B&H issued a decision related to a military base located in *Republika Srpska* registering it as state property –this was one of the final steps in order to join NATO.<sup>11</sup> A month earlier, the court ruled on two state holidays which *Republika Srpska* does not recognize.<sup>12</sup>

On a regional level, 2017 saw a rise in statements which portrayed B&H as a safe haven for radicals. Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz stated that women in B&H are paid to wear veils: “In Sarajevo and Pristina, for example, women are paid to wear the full veil in public.” He added, “We cannot look on and do nothing.”<sup>13</sup> Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, during an official state visit to Sarajevo in October 2017, stated that “radical Islam is a problem”.<sup>14</sup> At a meeting of the Visegrad countries, Czech President Miloš Zeman stated that “radical Islam, which is funded by Saudi Arabia, is spreading throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina” and that “ISIS black flags are already flying in several towns”.<sup>15</sup>



Figure 2: Serbian tabloid *Kurir* on 15 October published a report on Czech President Miloš Zeman’s statement “Radical Islam is spreading in B&H.”

11. This caused a lot of reaction from Republika Srpska, Serbian and Russian media. See, for example: “NATO’s Balkan Dream: ‘Gaining Access to Key Strategic Facilities’”, Sputnik News, August 20, 2017, retrieved November 4, 2017 from <https://sputniknews.com/europe/201708201056618421-bosnia-military-facilities/>.

12. “ZAHUKTAVANJE POLITIČKE KRIZE U BiH Revolt predstavnika RS: Odluka Ustavnog suda ne doprinosi pomirenju”, Blic, July 6, 2017, retrieved September 16, 2017 from <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/zahuktavanje-politicke-krize-u-bih-revolt-predstavnika-rs-odluka-ustavnog-suda-ne/j78dnw2>.

13. André Ballin –Ozan Demircan, “EU, Russia and Turkey Struggle for Balkan Influence”, Handelsblatt, August 21, 2017, retrieved October 18, 2017 from <https://global.handelsblatt.com/politics/eu-russia-and-turkey-struggle-for-balkan-influence-815423>.

14. “Leave the Past Behind, Bulgarian PM Tells Balkan Leaders”, Reuters, October 27, 2017, retrieved November 23, 2017 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-balkans-eu-bulgaria/leave-the-past-behind-bulgarian-pm-tells-balkan-leaders-idUSKBN1CW1VE>.

15. “VIŠEGRADSKA GRUPA O ZAPADNOM BALKANU Zeman: Radikalni islam se širi po BiH”, *Kurir*, October 15, 2017, retrieved November 8, 2017 from <http://www.kurir.rs/planeta/2924553/visegradska-grupa-o-zapadnom-balkanu-zeman-radikalni-islam-se-siri-po-bih>. Daria Sito-Sucic, “Islamic State Flags Not Flying in Bosnia: PM”, Reuters, September 12, 2017, retrieved November 17, 2017 from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-bosnia/islamic-state-flags-not-flying-in-bosnia-pm-idUSKCN1BN239>.

## Justice System

The current legislation in B&H contains certain articles that limit religious freedom. The Law on Courts in the Federation of B&H states that judges and employees cannot show manifestation of religious belief (*Zakon o sudovima u Federaciji Bosne i Hercegovine*, Article 13). A similar article can be found in the *Republika Srpska's* Law on Courts (*Zakon o sudovima Republike Srpske*, Article 14). These norms can also be found in Ethical Codes and Internal Rulebooks such as the Judicial Ethical Code (*Kodeks sudijske etike*, Article 4.1).

Two important cases marked 2017. First, in December, the European Court for Human Rights ruled that the court in B&H violated Article 9 (freedom of religion) of the European Convention on Human Rights in the case of Husmet Hamidović. The press release stated that Hamidović “a witness in a criminal trial, was expelled from the courtroom, convicted of contempt of court and fined for refusing to remove his religious skullcap.”<sup>16</sup>

In January, the B&H Border Police introduced an internal document banning beards for its members. Soon thereafter, several employees filed a formal appeal with the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina and on November 30, 2017, the Constitutional Court ruled that the rulebook “violated the right to private life and the right to freedom of religion”.<sup>17</sup>

Justified concerns were raised regarding the fact that former fighters are taking part in battles and returning back to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the region. The most publicised stories were about fighters participating in the efforts of DAESH and other militant terrorist groups in Syria and Iraq. While a large focus is on these fighters, who are often used to incite Islamophobia, a virtually ignored and unpublicized fact is that a significant number of fighters from Serbia and Croatia took part and are taking part in the war in Ukraine. Most of these fighters have links or affiliations with radical extremist groups and pose a threat to the region's security. The Ukrainian Security Service in October 2017 published the names and photos of Serbs from Serbia and *Republika Srpska* who are members of the infamous Wagner Group fighting in Ukraine and Syria.<sup>18</sup>

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16. “Convicting a Witness of Contempt of Court for Refusing to Remove His Skullcap Was Not Justified”, ECHR, Press Release, December 5, 2017, retrieved December 25, 2017 from <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/.../pdf/?...ECHR...Judgment%20Hamidovic%20v...>

17. “Bosnia and Herzegovina: Beards and Police Officers”, Law & Religion UK, December 6, 2017, retrieved December 14, 2017 from <http://www.lawandreligionuk.com/2017/12/06/bosnia-and-herzegovina-beards-and-police-officers/>. See also: Ustavni sud BiH: Graničnim policajcima mora biti dozvoljeno nošenje brade, Faktor.ba, November 30, 2017, retrieved December 5, 2017 from <https://faktor.ba/vijest/ustavni-sud-bih-granicnim-policajcima-mora-biti-dozvoljeno-nosenje-brade-274692>.

18. “SBU Keeps on to Release Data of PMC ‘Wagner’ Members”, Security Service of Ukraine, October 11, 2017, retrieved November 9, 2017 from <https://ssu.gov.ua/en/news/10/category/21/view/4010#.pizNrN2C.dpbs>.

## Employment

In 2017, there were two registered cases of Islamophobic incidents related to employment. The B&H state Border Police (*Granična policija*) circulated an internal document/rulebook on wearing uniforms, which banned beards for its police officers in January 2017. A complaint was filed with the IC Commission and an anonymous complaint was published on certain websites.<sup>19</sup> Another registered case filed to the IC Commission related to an employee at a “Brojler” shop in Sarajevo whose contract was allegedly terminated because she was wearing a headscarf.<sup>20</sup>

On another note, it is a worrying fact that the number of Bosniaks living and working in *Republika Srpska* is decreasing. For example, out of a total of 5,066 employees in *Republika Srpska* institutions, only 43 are Bosniaks.<sup>21</sup> This trend of Bosniaks leaving *Republika Srpska* is a result of the permanent atmosphere of unease and discrimination.

## Education

The year 2017 saw continuity in denying Bosniak returnees the right to learn Bosnian language in *Republika Srpska*. This is a serious violation of Bosniak children’s constitutional right to be taught as a “national group” in schools in the Serb-majority entity. In June, the *Republika Srpska* Minister of Education and Culture Dane Malešević stated that all history textbooks from FBiH which teach about the Siege of Sarajevo or the Genocide in Srebrenica will be banned.<sup>22</sup> Hence, the anti-Muslim genocide will be erased from textbooks in *Republika Srpska* state textbooks.

In November, the Basic Court in Srebrenica ruled in favor of parents and children in Konjević-polje regarding their right to be taught in the Bosnian language.<sup>23</sup> This was the first legal victory in relation to the institutional discrimination experienced by Bosniak children in terms of learning their language in *Republika Srpska* schools.

## Media

This year, a few dozen media reports containing anti-Muslim rhetoric were recorded. The anti-Bosnian sentiment in the media was usually followed by Islamophobic rhetoric. These reports were mainly connected to the issue of terrorism and violent extremism. The statements made in the media were usually connecting

19. “Nakon šesnaest godina uvede na zabrana nošenja brade u Graničnoj policiji BiH?”, SAFF, February 4, 2017, retrieved July 15, 2017 from <http://saff.ba/nakon-sesnaest-godina-uedena-zabrana-nosenja-brade-u-granicnoj-policiji-bih/>.

20. This was reported to the IC Commission for Freedom of Religion.

21. “Diskriminacija Bošnjaka i Srba u RS i FBiH”, TV1, August 11, 2017, retrieved November 23, 2017 from <http://tv1.ba/vijesti/diskriminacija-bosnjaka-i-srba-u-rs-i-fbih/>.

22. “Nakon bosanskog jezika upitna i historija: Bošnjačkoj djeci u RS-u prijete nova diskriminacija”, Klix.ba, June 5, 2017, retrieved September 17, 2017 from <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/nakon-bosanskog-jezika-upitna-i-historija-bosnjackoj-djeci-u-rs-u-prijeti-nova-diskriminacija/170605067>.

23. “The Court Approved the Request of Bosniak Children to Call their Language Bosnian”, The Sarajevo Times, November 17, 2017, retrieved December 11, 2017 from <https://www.sarajevotimes.com/court-approved-request-bosniak-children-call-language-bosnian/>.

B&H, Bosniak politicians or former army officers with radical extremism. These pseudo *analytical* statements were made by a group of already well-known self-proclaimed experts. The most common are Darko Trifunović and Dževad Galijašević. For the sake of simplicity, only a few examples will be presented below.



Figure 3: The headline of the Serbian tabloid *Alo* on September 11, 2017 reads, “Darko Trifunović: Honestly Bakir Is Preparing a New September 11!”



Figure 4: *Republika Srpska* television station used a selfie by a bearded Bosniak Border Police member as the cover image of a “Wahhabi”.

Serbian self-proclaimed expert and genocide denier Darko Trifunović was a favourite source of *exclusive* information and analysis in the Serbian and Bosnian Serb media. A Serbian Tabloid *Alo* on September 11, 2017, published the headline “DARKO TRIFUNOVIĆ OTVORENO: Bakir sprema novi 11. Septembar!” (“Darko Trifunović: Honestly: Bakir Is Preparing a New 11 September!”) in which Bakir Izetbegović, the Bosniak member of the B&H Presidency, is accused of planning a 9/11 style terrorist attack.<sup>24</sup> (Fig. 3)

In January 2017, the B&H Border Police published a decision to ban beards for its members. Bosnian Serb and Croat media outlets published this news portraying Bosniak policemen as sympathisers of extremism: “In the B&H Border Police, for years there was a growing problem of a large number of followers and sympathisers of the Wahabbi movement who are employed at the border

24. Veza “El mudžahid”-“Islamska država”, TVBN, March 25, 2017, retrieved September 13, 2017 from <https://www.rtvbn.com/3858085/vezaelmudzahid-islamska-drzava-> and “Bezbednosna situacija kompleksna”, TVBN, 3.2.2017, <https://www.rtvbn.com/3851587/bezbjednosna-situacija-kompleksna>.

crossings.”<sup>25</sup> The policemen were not members of the Wahhabi movement but rather ordinary Muslim men, who later took this matter to the B&H Constitutional Court and won their case. The court decision was highly criticised by Bosnian Serb media including the *Republika Srpska Television* (RTRS).<sup>26</sup> (Fig. 4)

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

On February 27, the glass door of the mosque in Kozluk was broken.<sup>27</sup> On June 26, the Rijeka mosque (*Rječanska džamija*) in Zvornik was vandalised. Thanks to a quick reaction from the local police, the culprit was apprehended.<sup>28</sup>

The most severe attack occurred on August 5, when Jasminka K. was brutally beaten by Milenko Golub in Kiseljak. The victim, who at the time of the incident was accompanied by her daughter, was insulted and attacked because she was wearing a headscarf. The perpetrator shouted insults at them before attacking the victim. She suffered from serious bodily harm to the left eye. (Fig. 5) The perpetrator was arrested by local police soon thereafter and will be sued by the victim’s lawyer.<sup>29</sup>

On November 10, in Rogatica, three cows of Bosniak returnee Nedžad Hercegija were poisoned allegedly by his Serb neighbours. Half of the cattle he owned were found dead. The local police started



Figure 5: Jasminka K. was brutally beaten by Milenko Golub in Kiseljak in a religiously motivated hate crime on August 5. Source: INS

25. Boris Knežević, “OTKRIVAMO Direktor BRIJE VEHABIJE u graničnim uniformama”, Blic, February 15, 2017, retrieved July 18, 2017 from <http://www.blic.rs/vesti/republika-srpska/otkrivamo-direktor-brije-vehabije-u-granicnim-uniformama/x0554lt>.

26. “Vehabije u GP BiH dobile pravnu bitku – Poništena zabrana nošenja brade”, Radio Televizija Republika Srpska, December 1, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=12&v=dhu12Ug3PnI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=12&v=dhu12Ug3PnI).

27. “Razbijeno staklo na vratima džamije u Kozluku”, Zvornicki.ba, February 27, 2017, retrieved June 15, 2017 from <http://zvornicki.ba/2017/02/27/razbijeno-staklo-na-vratima-dzamiye-u-kozluku/>.

28. “Vandalizam u Zvorniku – napad na Rječansku džamiju”, Zvornicki.ba, June 26, 2017, retrieved August 17, 2017 from <http://zvornicki.ba/2017/06/26/vandalizam-u-zvorniku-napad-na-rijecansku-dzamiyu-foto/>.

29. B.P., “Napao majku i kćerku jer nose maramu: Podignuta optužnica protiv nasilnika iz Kiseljaka”, Faktor.ba, September 26, 2017, retrieved November 11, 2017 from <https://faktor.ba/vijest/napao-majku-i-kcerku-je-nose-maramu-podignuta-optuznica-protiv-nasilnika-iz-kiseljaka-266158>.



Figure 6: Window of Osman Pasha Mosque shattered in Trebinje on December 14.

an investigation and arrested his neighbor Ana Abazović for destruction of property. The Hercegljija family is the only Bosniak Muslim family in the village and on occasion they have experienced hostility.<sup>30</sup>

On June 20, the local imam of the Islamic Community Majlis in Bileća, Saadet ef. Bilalić, was verbally attacked. On September 22, the car of the imam of the Islamic Community Majlis in Kiseljak, Mustafa ef. Pašić, was set ablaze. On September 24, the shrine (*turbe*) in Vranduk was vandalised and set on fire. On October 19, the Islamic Community board in Varošnice - Jajce was vandalised. On December 14, the window of Osman Pasha Mosque in Trebinje was shattered.<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 6) On December 19, an arson attack was committed against Imam Sefik Čavčić's car in Mostar.<sup>32</sup>



Figure 7: Daniel Sudar and Dejan Ljubičić throwing beer bottles at the City Mosque in Kiseljak on December 28.

On December 28, two perpetrators threw beer bottles at the City Mosque (*Gradska džamija*) in Kiseljak. (Fig. 7) Local police apprehended them and they were identified as the Austrian citizens (football players of the famous Vienna-based SK Rapid) of Bosnian-Croat origin Daniel Sudar and Dejan Ljubičić.<sup>33</sup> Both were apprehended by the police and publicly apologised for the attack.

30. "Povratnička porodica Hercegljija iz Rogatice: Uprkos napadima na imovinu ostajemo ovdje", *Oslobodjenje*, November 14, 2017, retrieved December 10, 2017 from <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/povratnickaporodica-hercegljija-iz-rogatice-uprkos-napadima-na-imovinu-ostajemo-ovdje>.

31. "Vandali oštetili džamiju i unijeli paniku među trebinjske Bošnjake", *Oslobodjenje*, December 15, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017 from <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/vandali-ostetili-dzamiju-i-unijeli-paniku-medu-trebinjskim-bosnjacima>.

32. "U Mostaru izgorio automobil imama Šefika ef. Čavčića", *Klix.ba*, December 20, 2017, retrieved December 23, 2017 from <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/u-mostaru-izgorio-automobil-imama-sefika-ef-cavcica/171220046>.

33. "U vandalskom napadu na džamiju u Kiseljaku učestvovao i nogometaš Rapida iz Beča", *Klix.ba*, December 29, 2017, retrieved December 30, 2017 from <https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/u-vandalskom-napadu-na-dzamiju-u-kiseljaku-ucestvovao-i-nogometaš-rapida-iz-beča/171229099>.

## Internet

Social media remains the main source of anti-Muslim bigotry and Islamophobic rhetoric online. Several Facebook pages, mainly representing nationalistic groups, published articles which spread fear of Bosniaks and included genocide denial.<sup>34</sup> These social media pages remain the same as in previous years.<sup>35</sup>

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The central figures in spreading Islamophobia in B&H can be divided into three categories. First, the academic and semi-academic circles in Serbia and *Republika Srpska*, most notably Serbian ‘experts’ on security, terrorism and Islam (including the infamous Orientalists such as Darko Tanasković and Miroljub Jevtić).<sup>36</sup> Second, several high-ranking officials from the Serb Orthodox Church who have made nationalistic comments. Patriarch Irinej supported convicted Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladić calling his sentencing “the work of the devil”.<sup>37</sup> The third category is politicians and include local Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, as well as Croatian and Serbian politicians. In a majority of cases, these are elected MPs in the parliamentary assemblies. These political subjects give statements which are anti-Muslim and Islamophobic aimed at Bosniak Muslims and their political and religious establishments.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The Commission on Freedom of Religion (*Komisija za slobodu vjere*) is a commission of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is active in helping secure religious freedoms and battling Islamophobia. Members of the commission took active roles in providing legal advice to the appellant from the Border Police regarding the rulebook regulation banning beards (mentioned in detail under Employment).

NGO Nahla held several training sessions for young people on monitoring Islamophobia. In December, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s (OSCE)/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) held a workshop for young professionals from the Balkans on improving identification and reporting of hate crimes against Muslims.<sup>38</sup>

34. See for example “Jadovno 1941” which published an article claiming that the Memorial Center in Srebrenica-Potočari contains bodies of 2,000 soldiers: <http://jadovno.com/u-potocarima-sahranjeno-vise-od-2-000-pripadnika-armije-bih/#.WIZtua6nHIU>

35. See “Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina: National Report 2015” in: Enes Bayraktar & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2015, Istanbul, SETA, 2016. ([http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/reports/2015/en/EIR\\_2015\\_BOSNIA\\_HERZEGOVINA.pdf](http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/reports/2015/en/EIR_2015_BOSNIA_HERZEGOVINA.pdf)) and 2016 (<http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/BOSNIAHERZEGOVINA.pdf>)

36. INTERVJU: Miroljub Jevtić - Muslimani žele da pokoresvet, izgubićemo bitku sa njima! (“Muslims Want to Defeat Subjugate the World, We Will Lose the Battle with Them!”) (October 18, 2017), Balkan Info, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tFfpTen91MM>

37. “Patrijarh Irinej: Presuda Mladiću je djelo đavola”, *Oslobodjenje*, November 24, 2017, retrieved December 7, 2017 from <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/region/patrijarh-irinej-presuda-mladicu-je-djelo-davola>.

38. “OSCE/ODIHR Workshop in Belgrade Focuses on Improving Identification and Reporting of Hate Crimes against Muslims”, OSCE, December 18, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017 from <http://www.osce.org/odihr/363181>.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2017, the number of Islamophobic attacks on people and property was lower than in 2016. This year marked the first Ramadan in which there was not a single registered attack or provocation in post-war B&H. However, there was an overall increase in regional political anti-Bosniak and anti-Muslim activities. Bosnia and Herzegovina was presented as an unstable state which harbours extremists. This rhetoric was spearheaded by the Serbian and Croatian political establishments and also by certain regional political figures. It can be expected that in 2018, Islamophobic rhetoric will rise along the lines of rising political tensions and anti-state activities by neighbouring countries and local political and social groups.

Considering the state of Islamophobia in Bosnia and Herzegovina the following policy recommendations can be made to combat Islamophobia effectively:

- 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.
- Awareness of hate speech (online and offline) by media, politicians, etc. should be raised.
- Awareness about Islamic practice (such as prayer, jumu'ah, and Islamic dress) 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

- **27.02.2017:** The glass door of the mosque in Kozluk was broken.
- **05.06.2017:** *Republika Srpska* Minister of Education and Culture threatened to ban history textbooks which contain information about the genocide in Srebrenica and the Siege of Sarajevo.
- **20.06.2017:** Verbal attack on Sadet ef. Bilalić, an imam in the Islamic Community Majlis in Bileća.
- **26.06.2017:** The Rijeka Mosque (*Rječanska džamija*) in Zvornik was vandalised.
- **05.08.2017:** A Bosniak woman, Jaminka K., was beaten by Milenko Golub because she wore a headscarf.
- **21.08.2017:** Austrian Foreign Minister Sebastian Kurz stated that women in Sarajevo are paid to wear the veil.
- **30.08.2017:** Croatian MP Miroslav Tuđman stated, “What is happening now in Europe is what happened in BiH in the 1990s. It was the beginning of today’s Islamic terrorism.”
- **22.09.2017:** Arson attack on the car of Mustafa ef. Pašić, imam in the Islamic Community Majlis in Kiseljak.
- **24.09.2017:** Vandalism and arson attack against the shrine (*turbe*) in Vranduk.
- **19.10.2017:** Destruction and desecration of the Islamic Community board in Varošnice - Jajce.
- **27.10.2017:** During a state visit to Sarajevo, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov stated that “radical Islam is a problem”.
- **06.11.2017:** Blagoje Simić, a convicted war criminal, was appointed director of the Health Center in Bosanski Šamac.
- **10.11.2017:** Cattle belonging to Bosniak returnee Nežad Hercegljija in Rogatica was poisoned allegedly by his Serb neighbours.
- **27.11.2017:** *Republika Srpska* Assembly MP Nenad Stevandić stated that Bosniak President Bakir Izetbegović is training 9,000 fighters.
- **30.11.2017:** The Constitutional Court of B&H ruled that the Border Police violated the right of freedom of religion by banning beards for its members.
- **05.12.2017:** The European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Court of B&H violated Article 9 in the case of Husmet Hamidović.
- **10.12.2017:** Arson attack against Imam Sefik Čavčić’s car in Mostar.
- **14.12.2017:** A window of Osman Pasha Mosque is shattered in Trebinje.
- **28.12.2017:** Beer bottles thrown at the City Mosque (*Gradska džamija*) in Kiseljak by two Austrian citizens of Croat origin.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**BULGARIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

For years, the Islamic religious institution in Bulgaria has been stifled by the strong political grip of various political circles and the complete indifference of governments that remain deaf to the problems of Muslims. The intolerant and discriminatory attitude of public figures and politicians towards Muslims is getting worse. During the election campaign in March 2017, the extreme nationalist coalition parties blockaded the Turkish-Bulgarian borders and prevented thousands of people of Turkish-Muslim origin to enter Bulgaria in order to practice their right to vote. The newly elected parliament, especially the extreme nationalists, proposed discriminative amendments to the Penal Code to criminalize Islam in the country. The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Krasimir Karakachanov submitted an ordinance, according to which imams have to undergo an examination and pass loyalty tests. In addition to these legislative changes, extreme nationalists in parliament are also preparing other proposals for the Law of Religions, such as that the preaching in mosques should be only in the Bulgarian language, and a ban on the financing of religions from abroad. The staff of the Muslim denomination throughout Bulgaria did not receive salaries for a long time when the interim government unilaterally cancelled the treaty signed between the governments of Bulgaria and Turkey in 1998 that stipulated the financial assistance of the latter to the former. Although the Office of the Grand Mufti has always been in favor of the Muslim community being supported by the Bulgarian state, schools for the preparation of clergy continued to suffer from a chronic lack of funding by the state. The donations were cut, neglecting the fact that without offering another alternative this is not a solution to the situation. Several severe cases of hate crime against Muslims and their institutions were officially registered. Media was again a field of hate speech in 2017. The new edition of a history book in which Quranic verses were used out of context arose misunderstanding about Islam in 6th-grade students, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

## Резюме

В продължение на години религиозната институция на мюсюлманите в България е задушавана от силното политическо сепление на различните политически кръгове и пълното безразличие на правителствата, които остават глухи за проблемите на мюсюлманите. Нетърпимата и дискриминационна нагласа на обществените личности и политици срещу мюсюлманите се влошава. По време на предизборната кампания през март 2017 г. екстремните националистически коалиционни партии блокираха турско-българските граници и възпрепятстваха хиляди хора от турско-мюсюлмански произход да дойдат в България да използват правото си на глас. Новоизбраният парламент, особено крайните националисти, предложи дискриминационни изменения в Наказателния кодекс за криминализиране на исляма в страната. Вицепремиерът и министър на отбраната Красимир Каракачанов предложи да бъде представена наредба, според която имамите трябва да минават през тестове за лоялност. В допълнение към тези законодателни промени крайните националисти в парламента подготвят и други предложения за Закона за вероизповеданията: проповедта в джамиите трябва да е само на български език и трябва да бъде забранено финансирането на религиозните дейности от чужбина. Персоналът на мюсюлманското деноминация в България не получи заплати дълго време, когато временното правителство едностранно отмени договора, подписан между правителствата на България и Турция през 1998 г. с цел получаване на финансова помощ. Училищата за подготовката на духовенството продължават да страдат от хронична липса на финансиране от българската държава, опитите да се развие културно-религиозен център или да се възвърне собствеността върху имотите са блокирани. Няколко тежки случая на нападения, основани на омраза и нетърпимост, бяха официално регистрирани. Медиите отново бяха поле на речта на омразата през 2017 година. Новото издание на учебника по история, в който се използват цитати от Корана извън контекста, разбуди негодувание и неразбираемост в учениците от 6-ти клас, както сред мюсюлмани, така и немюсюлмани.

## Introduction

According to Alpha research survey “Attitudes of Muslims in Bulgaria 2011-2016”<sup>1</sup> there is no radical mood among Muslims in Bulgaria. At the same time, there is a simultaneous adherence to modernity and tradition, as well as a clear religious identity with an increasing tendency towards observing certain religious norms.

The results show that Muslims strongly condemn terrorism – this was the same for both 2011 and 2016. Even the degree of non-acceptance of terrorist organizations in 2016 has increased.

With regard to coexistence between representatives of different religious communities in the country, the study shows a sustainable model of cohabitation between Muslims and Christians. In spite of these optimistic results, the growing intolerance and severe attacks against Muslims and holy places throughout 2017 pushed the Grand Mufti Office to ask the government to provide a clear definition of Islamophobia and defend religious freedom.<sup>2</sup>

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

In Bulgaria, political hate speech, intolerance and discrimination towards the “Other” (the Otherized Muslim) has already been institutionalized. Lots of extreme nationalistic organizations such as ATAKA, NFSB (National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria), and IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) that were featured as fascist organizations in a special report on Bulgaria by the Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in 2014, are today officially represented in the government of Bulgaria as coalition partners of the leading party. Furthermore, the leaders of these fascist organizations occupy extremely high key governmental positions. Namely,

- The leader of NFSB Valeri Simeonov is the deputy prime minister of Bulgaria;
- The leader of IMRO Krasimir Karakachanov is the minister of defence of Bulgaria, a state-member of NATO and the EU.

The two ministers recently submitted an ordinance to the Council of Ministers, according to which the imams have to undergo an examination and pass loyalty tests.

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1. Alpha research, ОСНОВНИ РЕЗУЛТАТИ ОТ ПРОЕКТ “НАГЛАСИ НА МЮСЮЛМАНИТЕ В БЪЛГАРИЯ – 2016” (“ Main Results of the project “Attitude of Muslims in Bulgaria-2016” “), April 6, 2017, retrieved February 7, 2018, from [http://alpharesearch.bg/bg/socialni\\_izsledvania/socialni\\_publicacii/osnovni-rezultati-ot-proekt-naglasii-na-myusyulmanite-v-balgariya-2016.876.html](http://alpharesearch.bg/bg/socialni_izsledvania/socialni_publicacii/osnovni-rezultati-ot-proekt-naglasii-na-myusyulmanite-v-balgariya-2016.876.html)

2. News.bg, “Мюфтийството иска определение за ислямофобия и защита”, (The Mufti’s Office Wants a Definition of Islamophobia and Protection), [www.news.bg](http://www.news.bg), November 9, 2017, retrieved February 7, 2018, from <https://news.bg/society/myuftiystvoto-iska-opredelenie-za-islyamofobiya-i-zashtita.html>

Krasimir Karakachanov said, “How will we give an unknown religious preacher who comes from the other part of the world a role to effect Bulgarian citizens without our knowledge of what he preaches?”<sup>3</sup> This notion strips Bulgarian citizens of the fundamental right to decide what to accept and what not to accept as their beliefs. In addition to these legislative changes, extreme nationalists in parliament are also preparing some other changes in the Law of Religions, which stipulate that in temples preaching should be only in the Bulgarian language, and other corrections, such as a ban on the financing of religions from abroad. These amendments, however, only impose restrictions on the freedom of religion and offer no alternatives. The Grand Mufti’s Office voiced resentment against the words of high-ranking politicians in connection with the draft law on amendments to the Law of Religions.<sup>4</sup>

In Bulgaria, a member of the EU, minorities are still subject to discrimination. An example is the blockades at the Bulgarian-Turkish border during the last parliamentary elections on March 24, 2017, illegally organized by Valeri Simeonov and Krasimir Karakachanov. As a result of these blockades, thousands of European citizens were deprived of their constitutional right to vote and their right of free movement was impeded.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Simeonov resorted to violence with an elderly woman to stop her from voting – an act of which he was proud.<sup>6</sup> This action was based on ethnic and religious discrimination and intolerance towards a different (political or otherwise) opinion. The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights stated in its report that on March 21 and 24 United Patriots blocked the main roads on the border to prevent any incoming voters from Turkey.<sup>7</sup>

Many international treaties on human rights have also been gravely violated, including the European Convention on Human Rights, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and many other documents and ministerial deci-

3. Румяна Попова, “Имамите да минават изпит и тест за лоялност” (Imams Have to Undergo an Examination and Pass Loyalty Tests), <http://btvnovinite.bg>, September 27, 2017, retrieved February 1, 2018, from <http://btvnovinite.bg/article/bulgaria/predlozhenie-imamite-da-minavat-izpit-i-test-za-lojalnost.html>

4. Office of the Grand Mufti, “Непремерените думи на високопоставените държавни мъже будят негодувание сред мюсюлманите в страната”, (The Underestimated Words of High-Ranking Politicians Awake Resentment among the Muslims in the Country), [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg), (Not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/pres-saobshteniya/4668-nepremerenite-dumi-na-visokopostavenite-darzhavni-mazhebudyat-negoduvanie-sred-musyulmanite-v-stranata>

5. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, “БХК алармира международни организации за затруднения изборен процес в Турция”, (BHC Alerts International Organizations about the Difficult Electoral Process in Turkey), [www.bghelsinki.org](http://www.bghelsinki.org), April 6, 2017, retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.bghelsinki.org/bg/novini/press/single/pressobshenie-bhk-alarmira-mezhdunarodni-organizacii-za-zatrudneniya-izboren-proces-v-turciya>

6. Faktor Bg, “Валери Симеонов: “Тая баба на границата беше много нагла, знаеше си правата.” (Valeri Simeonov: That Grandmother Was Very Insolent, She Was Conscious of Her Rights), March 30, 2017, [www.faktor.bg](http://www.faktor.bg), retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://www.faktor.bg/bg/articles/novini/balgariya/valeri-simeonov-taya-baba-na-granitsata-beshe-mnogo-nagla-znaeshe-si-pravata>

7. OSCE, “INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION Republic of Bulgaria Early Parliamentary Elections, 26 March 2017”, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/bulgaria/301191> (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.osce.org/office-for-democratic-institutions-and-human-rights/elections/bulgaria/307586?download=true>

sions of the OSCE, as well as many mandatory recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). In spite of Paragraph 32.5 of the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Document which states that people belonging to national minorities (i.e. including Muslim affiliations) have the right “to disseminate, have access to and exchange information in their mother tongue,”<sup>8</sup> it is still banned to use any language other than Bulgarian during pre-election campaigns in Bulgaria. A good example is the administrative penalties (fines) of 2,000 BGN (1,000 euro) constantly imposed on political leaders who use their mother tongue, in this case Turkish.<sup>9</sup>

The Office of the Grand Mufti has repeatedly been blamed by the media and representatives of certain political circles for receiving financial and staff support from the Turkish government’s Directorate of Religious Affairs. Turkey’s financial support is, in fact, a partial sponsorship of the three religious high schools and the Higher Institute of Islamic Studies in Sofia. This is the result of a treaty, which was signed between the governments of Bulgaria and Turkey as early as 1998, regulating financial assistance, the sending of teachers to the spiritual schools, and guest imams and lecturers from the Turkish Religious Affairs Directorate. This treaty was signed because of Bulgaria’s inability to support its religious institutions in the post-totalitarian period. Also an agreement was signed between the Office of the Grand Mufti and the Turkish Religious Affairs Directorate in 2002, which does not include a termination clause. Separately, according to the Law of Religions, denominations have the right to invite religious officials from abroad with the permission of the Directorate for Religious Affairs under the supervision of the Council of Ministers of Bulgaria. At present, there are about 15 imams in Bulgaria on secondment from Turkey and who preach in Bulgarian mosques. This practice exists not only with Muslims. Catholics, Protestants, Jewish and Armenian communities invite priests and religious officials to Bulgaria. Nevertheless, the media and politicians do not comment on why it is necessary for Bulgarian Muslim schools to be funded by another state. The Bulgarian state does not have such a financial possibility. At present, the annual subsidy that the Office of the Grand Mufti receives from the state amounts to 360,000 leva (about 180,000 euro), intended for the renovation of old mosques. When the interim government, which was committed to hold parliamentary elections in the country, cancelled the treaty (the one signed in 1998) unilaterally, it did not inform the representatives of the Office of the Grand Mufti, which learnt the news three months later. Nearly 630 Muslim employees didn’t receive salaries for several months.<sup>10</sup>

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8. OSCE, “EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 26 March 2017 OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report”, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/bulgaria/301191> (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/bulgaria/327171?download=true>

9. Clubz, “Дост пак може да отнесе глоба заради агитация на турски език”, (DOST May Be Fined Again for Turkish Language Agitation), <http://clubz.bg/>, March 18, 2017, retrieved February 7, 2018, from [https://clubz.bg/51702-dost\\_pak\\_moje\\_da\\_otnese\\_globa\\_zaradi\\_agitaciq\\_na\\_turski\\_ezik](https://clubz.bg/51702-dost_pak_moje_da_otnese_globa_zaradi_agitaciq_na_turski_ezik)

10. BTV news, “Имамите останаха без заплати” (Imams Remained Unpaid), July 30, 2017, [www.btvnovinite.bg](http://www.btvnovinite.bg), retrieved February 11, 2018 from <http://m.btvnovinite.bg/article/bulgaria/imamite-ostanaha-bez-zaplati.html>

## Justice System

On May 26, 2017, the newly elected parliament, and in particular the “patriots” and extreme nationalists, proposed discriminatory amendments to the Penal Code<sup>11</sup> to criminalize Islam in the country. Their statement declared that terrorism is due to radical Islam and that “radical Islamic ideology” is preached when it comes to ideas such as “the creation of an Islamic state (caliphate)” and the propaganda of jihad. At the same time, the definition of “Islam” is equated to ideologies such as fascism and anti-democracy. This law allows for the abuse of religious freedoms and opens doors for arbitrariness and human rights violations through casual, illogical and unreasonable interpretations of the term “radical Islam.” There is no clear definition and commonly accepted expert opinion on the definition of “radical Islam,” which is the basis of unique legislative decisions in Europe. Although widely used in the public domain and the media, the term is very controversial. It is hardly subject to scientific definition because of the impossibility to establish where, when and at what doctrinal or conceptual point the “moderate” becomes “radical.” The proposal was accepted at the first reading in the parliament in December 2017. Such bills risk being inconsistent with fundamental principles such as freedom of religion, which is part of the values of European societies. As a result on December 14, 2017, the Supreme Council of the Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria submitted a petition against the legislative amendments restricting the religious freedoms and discriminating against the citizens professing Islam in Bulgaria.<sup>12</sup>

## Education

Seventeen-year-old Emine Shamatareva was removed from school under the pretext that wearing a headscarf contradicts the school’s internal rules. Her last trial was set for November 22, 2017, at the Supreme Administrative Court where her father Rasim Shamatarev lost the case.<sup>13</sup> He says that he will take the case all the way to Strasbourg rather than move his daughter to another school.<sup>14</sup>

Another similar case is that of A.S, a former student in Krumovgrad district high school. She was refused entry to her final exams in May 2016 and May 2017 because of her headscarf. These exams will determine her university education. She was obligated to wear false hair.<sup>15</sup>

11. Proposed amendments, National Assembly, May 26, 2017 - <http://www.parliament.bg/bills/44/754-01-11.pdf> (not dated)

12. Office of the Grand Mufti, “Muslims Submitted Petition against the Law on ‘Radical Islam’”, (not dated), [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.grandmufti.bg/en/za-nas-3/news/5093-myusy-ulmanite-vnesoha-podpiska-protiv-zakona-za-radikalniya-islam-3.html>

13. Антоанета Маскръчка, “Забрадената ученичка загуби дело срещу директора на гимназията” (Student with a Headscarf Lost Lawsuit against the High School Principal), <https://www.24chasa.bg/>, November 22, 2017, retrieved February 7, 2018, from <https://www.24chasa.bg/region/article/6566765>

14. Interview with the author held on December 21, 2017.

15. The respondent did not give her consent for her name to be used in this report. Interview held on December 15, 2017.

A lesson about the emergence and spread of Islam in a sixth-grade history textbook sparked controversy in society. Among the problems is the quotations from the Quran, according to which the woman is below the man and he has the right to beat her, as well as unclear texts about jihad. “Muslim children do not want to enter the lessons of history when these lessons are considered. Then their friends start avoiding them and start making demeaning jokes that they are jihadists and terrorists,” said Deputy Chief Mufti Birali Myumun. According to him, the Grand Mufti Office should be consulted in the preparation of these lessons.<sup>16</sup>

## Media

“There is always a danger of radicalization where Muslim masses live. Islam is a religion of aggression. It has arisen like this. I do not think 10-15 measures will stop radicalization,”<sup>17</sup> stated Father Boyan Sariyev on Nova Television’s regular morning program *Wake Up*.<sup>18</sup>

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.<sup>19</sup>

The National Salvation Committee Vasil Levski and the Military Union Shipka provoke hatred and intolerance through publications on their official websites. Their main purpose as they say is to protect the sovereignty of Bulgaria by the thousands of Islamist immigrants.<sup>20</sup>

The information center of the National Department of Defense website declares that there is a danger of radical Islam in Bulgaria; the examples offered in the statement are neither proven nor documented by any references.<sup>21</sup>

16. Offnews, “Урок за исляма в учебник за 6 клас: Мъжът може да бие жената” (Lesson about Islam in a 6th-grade History Textbook: A Man Can Beat a Woman), [www.offnews.bg](http://www.offnews.bg), November 2 2017, retrieved February 10, 2018, from <https://offnews.bg/obshtestvo/urok-za-islama-v-uchebnik-za-6-klas-mazhat-mozhe-da-bie-zhenata-668538.html>

17. 24rodopi, “Боян Саръев: “Винаги съществува опасност от радикализиране, там където живеят мюсюлмански маси!” (Boyan Saruev: There Is Always a Danger of Radicalization Where Muslim Masses Live), [www.24rodopi.com](http://www.24rodopi.com), November 25, 2017, retrieved February 7, 2018, from [http://rodopi24.blogspot.com.tr/2017/11/blog-post\\_633.html](http://rodopi24.blogspot.com.tr/2017/11/blog-post_633.html)

18. Nova Television, “Отец Боян Саръев: Обществото ни все повече се отдалечава от Бога.” (The Father Boyan Sariyev: Our Society Is Increasingly Moving away from God.), <https://nova.bg/>, November 25, 2017, retrieved February 11, 2018, from <https://nova.bg/news/view/2017/11/25/>.

19. Arda Tuna, “Bulgaristan’daki skat tv, Türklere karşı saldırılarını devam ediyor” (Skat TV in Bulgaria Continues Its Attacks against Turks), [www.arda-tuna.com](http://www.arda-tuna.com), January 29, 2018, retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.arda-tuna.com/2018/01/29/bulgaristandaki-skat-tv-turklere-karsi-saldirilarina-devam-ediyor/>

20. Shipka, “Как да спрем окупацията на България от радикалните ислямисти, след като управниците ни продадоха в робство” (How to Stop the Occupation of Bulgaria by Radical Islamists after the Rulers Sold Us to Slavery), <http://www.bnoshipka.org>, (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <https://www.bnoshipka.org/index.php?special=deinost&cat=1&id=41>

21. Prof. Tatyana Droznina, “Има ли радикализация сред мюсюлманите в България?” (Is There Radicalization among the Muslims in Bulgaria?), [www.armymedia.bg](http://www.armymedia.bg), November 3, 2017, retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://armymedia.bg/archives/102705>

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

The Muslim community in Bulgaria is increasingly concerned about the hate-motivated incidents perpetrated against Muslims and holy sites, while acts of vandalism against mosques and sites of worship have become all too frequent. Although the Bulgarian Minister of Culture Boil Banov confirmed that the mosques in Bulgaria are part of the world cultural heritage,<sup>22</sup> the Office of the Grand Mufti recorded, officially documented and informed the police about several hate crime incidents towards Muslim religious places.

On January 30, 2017, local Muslims noticed an inscription on the wall of the temple. The inscription contains anti-Muslim and racist expressions and symbols. The law enforcement authorities were informed about the case and within two days revealed the identity of the perpetrator. (Fig.1)<sup>23</sup>



Figure 1: Islamophobic graffiti on the wall of Aziziya Mosque in Varna

On the night of February 7, 2017, a vandalism was committed against the mosque in the town of Silistra by an unknown perpetrator. The perpetrators fired a 5.5-millimeter air rifle into the security cameras and lighting fixtures of the mosque. Traces of the bullets are noticeable on the facade of the mosque.<sup>24</sup>

On March 2, 2017, Muslims from the village of Krushovitsa, Pleven, found their mosque damaged from a fire. The available material evidence indicates that the window of the Muslim temple was broken with a large stone, and then a jet-burning bomb was thrown inside. As a consequence, a fire has been kindled and has caused serious damage to the mosque.<sup>25</sup> (Fig.2)

22. L.Chausheva, "Minister of Culture Boil Banov: Mosques in Bulgaria Are World Cultural Heritage", [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg), (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.grandmufti.bg/en/za-nas-3/news/5220-kulturniyat-ministar-boil-banov-dzhamiite-v-balgariya-sa-svetovni-pametnitsi-na-kulturata-2.html>.

23. Office of the Grand Mufti, "Оскверниха варненската „Азизие“ джамия – разкрита е самоличността на извършителя", (The Mosque of Azizia in Varna Has Been Attacked - The Identity of the Perpetrator is Revealed), [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg) (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/3616-oskvernihavarvenskata-azizie-dzhamiya-razkrita-e-samolichnostta-na-izvarshitelya.html>.

24. Office of the Grand Mufti, "Стреляха с въздушна пушка по джамията в Силистра", (The Mosque in Silistra Was Fired At) [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg) (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/3663-strelyaha-s-vazdushna-pushka-po-dzhamiyata-v-silistra.html>.

25. Office of the Grand Mufti, "Вандали подпалиха джамията на плевенското село Крушовица", [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg), ("Vandals Set Fire to the Mosque of the Village of Krushovitsa") (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/3765-vandali-podpaliha-dzhamiyata-na-plevenskoto-selo-krushovitzaa.html>



Figure 2: The attack on the mosque of the village of Krushovitsa in Pleven.

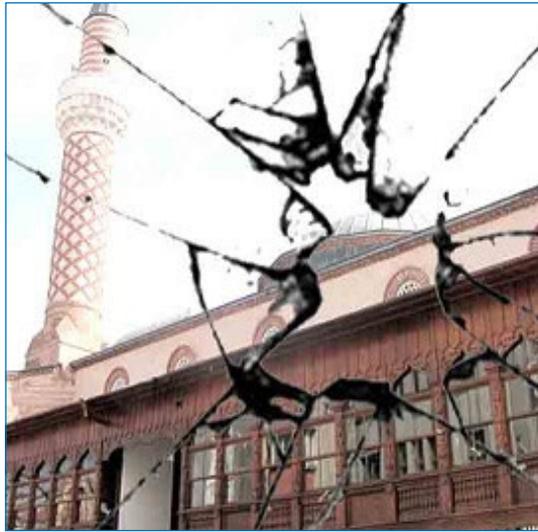


Figure 3: On May 3, 2017, the mosque in Plovdiv was targeted by vandals and its windows were broken.

On May 3, 2017, unidentified perpetrator threw a big, bulky stone towards the Muslim temple. As a result of this was broken a glazing of a window in that part of the mosque currently housing the office of Regional Mufti's Office – Plovdiv.<sup>26</sup> (Fig.3)



Figure 4: The Sofia Mosque was targeted by vandals.

On May 28, 2017, the second day of the Holy month of Ramadan, football fans attacked and vandalized the Sofia Mosque with beer bottles and garbage cans. (Fig. 4) Passing by the mosque, they made crude and insulting comments against Muslims, Turks and the Islamic religion.

The nearby policemen refused to react despite being asked for help.<sup>27</sup>

On June 27 2017, in Sofia, the wife of Deputy Chief Biralı Myumun was physically assaulted because of her headscarf.<sup>28</sup> Desislava Lyubomirova is a one of the few

26. L.Chausheva, "Once Again 'Dzhumaya' Mosque in Plovdiv Was Subject to a Vandal Attack", [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg), (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://www.grandmufti.bg/en/za-nas-3/news/4063-za-poreden-pat-dzhumaya-dzhamiya-v-plovdiv-obekt-na-vandalsko-posegatelstvo-4.html>

27. Office of the Grand Mufti, "Поредно нападение над софийската джамия" (Another Attack on the Sofia Mosque), [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg), (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/4179-poredno-napadenie-nad-sofiiskata-dzhamiya.html>

28. Office of the Grand Mufti, "Проявена агресия срещу жена със забрадка", (Aggression against a Woman with a Headscarf), [www.grandmufti.bg](http://www.grandmufti.bg), (not dated), retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/4299-proyavena-agresiya-sreshtu-zhena-sas-zabradka.html>



Figure 5: Pigs' heads on the construction site of the Sofia Mufti Office residential building.

journalists who wrote a positive reaction in a famous news website about the case, “Girls aged 15 and 16, and attacked the wife and daughters of the deputy chief mufti because they are Muslim women. On this subject Valeriy Simeonov did not speak, did not give a press conference, and did not go looking for the guilty. There was no protest on this subject. Probably because it is easier to illuminate only the cases when we are victims, and when we are aggressors - to remain silent. Violence, especially interethnic, is always dangerous in all directions. The hidden tension that apparently kills is equally risky and condemning.”<sup>29</sup>

On July 28, 2017, when the Sofia Mufti Office started the construction of a residential building for the officials of the office, people tried to stop it, on the pretext that a refuge for radicals would be built. They placed a pig's head on the building's fence and another one was dropped into the property, apparently for intimidation or in effort to desecrate the building. (Fig. 5) Mustafa İzbishtali, the Sofia Mufti stated, “It took us a full 29 months to obtain the building permit from the state. The fact that we are confessing Islam does not mean that we do not have the right to have build homes in the capital of European Bulgaria.”<sup>30</sup>

### **Civil society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

Civil society organizations, such as the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, monitor any kind of Islamophobic actions. Recently the president of the committee Krasimir Kunev said, “It is ... clear that the Bulgarian Presidency does not intend to address any of the main and hard to digest human rights problems in the Union.

29. Desislava Lyubomirova, “Роми, биешти БГ деца А БГ деца, биешти мюсюлмани?” (Romans Beating Bulgarian children, and Bulgarian children Beating Muslims?), [www.actualno.com](http://www.actualno.com), June 20, 2017, retrieved February 11, 2018, from [https://www.actualno.com/actualno/romi-bieshti-bg-deca-a-bg-deca-bieshti-musulmani-news\\_619862.html](https://www.actualno.com/actualno/romi-bieshti-bg-deca-a-bg-deca-bieshti-musulmani-news_619862.html)

30. Interview with author held on December 21, 2017.

One of this is the widespread racial, ethnic and religious discrimination, Islamophobia and hate speech.”<sup>31</sup>

The only Islamic organization, which defends the freedom of the religious life of Muslims and cooperates with the state authorities for the common good of the Bulgarian people is the Institution for Religious Affairs of the Muslim Community in Bulgaria led by the Office of the Grand Mufti.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Unfortunately, the examples of Islamophobic attacks and hostility against Muslims are not few. Only a small number of these incidents are revealed and have resulted in prosecutions. Public understanding and awareness of issues such as social marginalization of minority groups and victims of hate speech and crime remain very limited.

It became increasingly common to openly express hostility against Muslims, to negatively stereotype Muslims and Islam, and to generally use intolerant language against Muslims. The religious and ethnic minorities of Bulgaria have been deeply affected by the absence of an adequate response from international organizations and EU institutions. Following the content discussed in the report, the following recommendations are put forth:

- Due to ongoing violations of freedom of religion and belief guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, the authorities are called upon to respect the constitution and the international standards of tolerance and non-discrimination, as well as to implement effectively the commitments to freedom of religion or belief and anti-discriminatory legislation.
- Effective measures must be taken and laws must be adopted, in conformity with the constitutional systems and their international obligations that provide protection against any acts that constitute incitement to hatred and intolerance and discrimination.
- Islam and other religions should enjoy the necessary financial and material opportunities that are required for fulfilling their basic purpose of preaching religion and spiritual care to their respective communities. Such investment will return in the form of peaceful inter-religious relations and tolerance, both between religions and with the state.
- Launch public awareness activities disassociating terrorism and violent extremism with Muslims and Islam.
- Ensure that public officials at all levels, including ministers, refrain from making statements that incite violence and discrimination.

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31. Красимир Кънев, ”Правата на човека и българското европредседателство?” (Human Rights and the Bulgarian Euro-Presidency?), <http://www.rodopite.net>, January 15, 2018, retrieved February 7, 2018, from <http://rodopite.net/blog/kakvo-da-otchakvamie-za-pravata-na-tchovieka-ot-bl/>

- Develop codes of conduct for political representatives that unequivocally and publicly condemn manifestations of hate in public discourse and acts of violence based on bias, and ensure these persons refrain from making discriminatory statements.
- Engage in partnerships with private media, including Internet providers, in order to prevent the dissemination of prejudice, stereotypes and hatred.
- Develop comprehensive and forward-looking policies to address religious community issues and, in particular, the Muslim minority.
- Support and encourage the adoption of a Code of Ethics with regard to the hate speech of politicians and public figures and encourage the use of the existing Ethical Code for Media, which is currently regularly violated and ignored.
- To avoid the passing of discrimination acts in the National Assembly of Bulgaria, the legislative authorities should work together with the representatives of various ethnic, religious, cultural, language and other minorities and vulnerable groups and their non-governmental organizations by consulting with them and getting their opinions and statements on the bills of the respective acts.
- When solving problems and cases affecting the above groups, including Muslims and their interests, the governmental and state institutions should consult the affected groups and their representatives via civil and non-governmental organizations and should cooperate with them.
- Encourage the observance of human rights by enhancing awareness on the consequences of hate speech towards people and communities and encouraging the acceptance of policies, especially in the sphere of education, media and government and the Internet.
- With regard to the amendments to the Penal Code, the Muslim denomination in Bulgaria is of the opinion that the state, with its legislation, justice and judiciary system, must maintain its neutrality in terms of intrinsic peculiarities and discussions, currents and degrees (“radical” - “moderate”) that follow given religious teachings.

## Chronology

- **30.01.2017:** Islamophobic graffiti written on the wall of the mosque in Varna.
- **07.02.2017:** An attack of vandalism on the mosque in Silistra.
- **02.03.2017:** The mosque of Krushovitsa village near Pleven was set on fire.
- **21-24.03.2017:** United Patriots blocked the main roads on the borders to prevent any incoming voters from Turkey.
- **03.05.2017:** The windows of the mosque in Plovdiv were broken.
- **26.05.2017:** The newly elected parliament, and in particular the “patriots” and extreme nationalists, proposed discriminatory amendments to the Penal Code to criminalize Islam in the country.

- **28.05.2017:** Football fans attacked and vandalized the Sofia Mosque.
- **27.06.2017:** A woman was assaulted because of her headscarf.
- **28.07.2017:** Heads of pigs were thrown on the property which belongs to the Mufti's Office in Sofia.
- **27.09.2017:** Karakachanov proposed an examination and a loyalty test for imams.
- **22.11.2017:** The lawsuit of the veiled Emine Shamatareva was lost.
- **14.12.2017:** The Supreme Muslim Council of the Muslim Denomination submitted a petition against the legislative amendments restricting the religious freedoms and discriminating against Muslim citizens.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**CROATIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

The year 2017 lacked constructive dialogue in the public sphere, was characterized by intolerance of migrants and minorities, civil society organizations were exposed to financial pressures, while independent institutions were exposed to political pressures.

Possible major Islamophobic incidents that stand out in 2017 were the media treatment of a statement regarding the existence of radical Islamic fundamentalists and of a statement regarding 'Islamic terrorism' made by political leaders who are opinion-makers and public influencers; the violent attack on an 18-year-old asylum seeker; and three cases of religion-based discrimination recorded by the Islamic Community in Croatia.

Aware of the growing danger of Islamophobia and the strengthening of radical right ideas and acknowledging that Croatia recognized Islam 100 years ago and made it equal to all other religions, the Islamic Community in Croatia condemned terrorism unequivocally and ensured that its activities promote living together in peace.

Since the issue of religious communities is well regulated in Croatian society, it can be said that Muslims in the Republic of Croatia are an integrated and positive part of society, which is also how members of the majority in Croatia see them. Nevertheless, members of the Islamic Community faced a lack of understanding, knowledge or acceptance on several occasions in 2017.

Across the world, as well as in Croatia, hate speech and hate crimes against Muslims are under-reported. There are a host of challenges associated with reporting these types of hate incidents, including the lack of trust in the authorities due to fears that the claim will not be taken seriously or that the victims will be victimized again by police officers. In some cases, Muslims are portrayed as a monolithic group, whose religion and culture are incompatible with the concepts of human rights and democracy.

A survey that focused on the social perception of attitudes towards those perceived as 'Others' and 'different' showed a growing belief that refugee and migrant movements are driven by 'background plans' of radical Islamic groups.

The year 2017 saw tendentious media reporting and public statements on air as a result of the unfortunate events on the geopolitical scene, especially relating to the so-called migrant/refugee crisis.

## Sažetak

U 2017. godini nedostajalo je konstruktivnijeg dijaloga u javnom prostoru, izražavana je netrpeljivost prema migrantima i manjinama, dok su organizacije civilnog društva izložene financijskom, a neovisne institucije političkom pritisku.

Mogući veći islamofobni incidenti u 2017. godini bili su: medijski tretman izjave o postojanju radikalnih islamskih fundamentalista i izjave o islamskom terorizmu od strane političkih lidera/ki koji imaju utjecaja na širu javnost; nasilni napad na 18.-godišnjeg azilanta Iračanina; tri slučaja diskriminacije temeljem vjeroispovijesti zabilježenih od strane Islamske zajednice u Hrvatskoj. Svjesni sve izraženije opasnosti od islamofobije i jačanja radikalnih desničarskih stremljenja, te odajući priznanje Hrvatskoj, državi koja je svojim priznavanjem islama prije 100 godina učinila tu religiju ravnopravnim sa ostalim, Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj jasno je osudila terorizam i svojim djelovanjem konstantno poziva na zajednički život.

Obzirom na dobro riješeno pitanje vjerskih zajednica u hrvatskom društvu, može se reći da su muslimani/ke u RH integrativna i pozitivna priča hrvatskog društva, a takvima ih doživljavaju i pripadnici većinskog naroda. Ipak, i tijekom 2017. pripadnici islamske vjerske zajednice su u nekoliko situacija doživjeli nerazumijevanje, nepoznavanje ili neprihvatanje.

Općenito pa tako i u Hrvatskoj, govor mržnje i zločini iz mržnje protiv muslimana/ki se ne prijavljuju. Postoji niz izazova povezanih s izvještavanjem ovog tipa incidenata iz mržnje, uključujući manjak povjerenja u nadležne institucije, uslijed straha da prigovor neće biti ozbiljno razmatran ili da će žrtva ponovo biti mučena od strane policijskih službenika/ca. U nekim slučajevima muslimani/ke se prikazuju kao monolitna skupina čija religija i kultura nisu kompatibilni s pojmovima ljudskih prava i demokracije.

Istraživanje s fokusom na društvenu percepciju odnosa prema “drugome” i “drugacijem” pokazalo je kako jača uvjerenje da iza izbjegličkih i migracijskih kretanja stoje “pozadinski planovi” radikalnih islamskih grupacija.

U 2017. godini i dalje je prisutno medijski tendenciozno izvještavanje i nastupi pojedinaca na javnim servisima, sve poradi nesretnih događaja na svjetskoj geopolitičkoj sceni, posebice pod utjecajem migrantske/izbjegličke krize.

## Introduction

Muslim communities are the victims of rhetoric that often associates them with terrorism and extremism, or portrays the presence of Muslim communities as a threat to national identity. This intolerance, left unchecked, can enable a climate that fosters hate crime against Muslims, which is an attempt to isolate them from society.

The Islamic Community in Croatia is one of the few in Europe that has a legally defined relationship to the state. The Islamic Community in Croatia and the government of the Republic of Croatia signed a Common Interest Agreement (*Official Gazette*, 196/03, Correction 86/14, Annex 46/16) which guarantees the rights and defines the obligations of the contracting parties. This is why Croatia had the best regulated position of Muslims in Europe at the time of its accession to the EU. The agreement guarantees the right to religious education in primary and secondary schools; pastoral care for army members, police, prisons and all other segments where spiritual care is necessary; the right to have media outlets; build mosques; the right to halal nutrition; the right to celebrate religious holidays; the right to found institutions engaged in various types of activities; the certification of halal products, schools, *vakufs*, kindergartens, and universities. Religious marriage has the status of civil marriage and imams who work in mosques are paid from the state budget. Croatia is one of the few countries in the world that has a systematically regulated system for halal certification.

According to the census from 2011, there are 62,977 Muslims living in Croatia (1.47% of the total population). Ethnically, the majority of them are Bosniaks (27,959), Croats (9,647), Albanians (9,594), Roma (5,039) and other ethnic groups. 6,703 persons declared their ethnicity as Islam.<sup>1</sup>

A survey focused on social attitudes towards those perceived as ‘Others’ and ‘different’ showed a growing belief that refugee and migrant movements are driven by ‘background plans’ of radical Islamic groups. Preliminary results show that the majority of the refugees and asylum seekers believe that they are discriminated more severely on the grounds of being “migrants,” “refugees” or “asylum seekers” than as foreigners, which is strongly influenced by race and religion.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Popis 2011 jer zemlju čine ljudi: 1469 Popis stanovništva, kućanstava i stanova 2011. Stanovništvo prema državljanstvu, narodnosti, vjeri i materinskom jeziku, *National Statistics Institute of the Republic of Croatia*, 2013, retrieved on January 3, 2018 from [https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv\\_Eng/publication/2012/SI-1469.pdf](https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2012/SI-1469.pdf).

2. Vedrana Baričević, Viktor Koska, Terensko istraživanje: preliminarno izvješće, “Istraživanje o uzrocima ksenofobije, rasizma i diskriminacije na etničkoj osnovi u općoj populaciji Republike Hrvatske”, March 2013, retrieved on January 3, 2018 from [http://ombudsman.hr/izvjesce\\_pucke\\_pravobraniteljice\\_za\\_2016.\\_godinu.pdf](http://ombudsman.hr/izvjesce_pucke_pravobraniteljice_za_2016._godinu.pdf).

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

A ban on discrimination on any grounds, including religion, is stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. By aligning its legislation with EU directives, Croatia outlawed discrimination based on religion.

In 2017, the National Plan for fighting discrimination 2017-2022 was adopted.<sup>3</sup> An Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan for fighting discrimination<sup>4</sup> was also adopted for the 2017-2019 period.

The Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities, as the main body in charge of integration, developed an Action Plan for integration in 2017-2019.<sup>5</sup>

In May 2017, ombudsmen, national institutions for human rights and equality bodies of many European countries including Croatia signed the Zagreb Declaration for the protection of human rights and strengthening democracy in Europe.<sup>6</sup> The declaration expressed their commitment to protecting and promoting human rights and equality, fighting all forms of discrimination, and supporting democratic spaces.

Additionally, at the initiative of the Islamic Community in Croatia, the Zagreb Declaration<sup>7</sup> was drafted, condemning every act of terrorism in the world, criticizing Islamophobia and encouraging a culture of dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect at all levels of European society. The declaration commemorated 100 years from the official recognition of Islam as an equal religion in the Republic of Croatia, and was signed by religious leaders of Islamic communities in Europe, political representatives in Croatia, and religious officials from the Muslim world.

3. Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of Croatia "Nacionalni plan za borbu protiv diskriminacije za razdoblje od 2017. do 2022. godine", December 2017, retrieved on January 4, 2018 from <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Nacionalni%20plan%20za%20borbu%20protiv%20diskriminacije%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202017.%20do%202022..pdf>.

4. Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of Croatia, "Akcijski plan za provedbu Nacionalnog plana za borbu protiv diskriminacije za razdoblje od 2017. do 2019. godine", December 2017, retrieved on January 4, 2018 from <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//Akcijski%20plan%20za%20provedbu%20Nacionalnog%20plana%20za%20borbu%20protiv%20diskriminacije%20za%20razdoblje%20od%202017.%20do%202019.%20godine.pdf>.

5. Office for Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the Government of Croatia, "Akcijski plan za integraciju osoba kojima je odobrena međunarodna zaštita za razdoblje od 2017. do 2019. godine", May 2017, retrieved on January 4, 2018 from <https://ljudskaprava.gov.hr/UserDocsImages//dokumenti//AKCIJSKI%20PLAN%20ZA%20INTEGRACIJU%202017-2019.pdf>.

6. Pučki pravobranitelj RH, "Zagrebačka deklaracija: Zaštita ljudskih prava i jačanje demokracije u Europi", May 2017, retrieved on January 2, 2018 from <http://ombudsman.hr/attachments/article/1093/Zagreba%C4%8Dka%20deklaracija.pdf>.

7. "Zagrebačka deklaracija: Zakonom kazniti islamofobiju", *Aljazeera Balkans*, retrieved on January 4, from <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/zagrebacka-deklaracija-zakonom-kazniti-islamofobiju>.

## Justice System

Hate crimes are specific due to their motive, namely hatred of another individual or group, because they are different, of a different race, skin color, religion, national or ethnic heritage, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Failing to identify such crimes, prosecute, sanction and publicly denounce them causes fear among minorities who are the most frequent victims, and contributes to a general atmosphere of intolerance.

According to the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Croatia, there were 21 court cases regarding hate crimes active in 2016. There was a total of 8 verdicts, 7 of which were convictions. Four cases concerned hate crimes based on nationality, two cases concerned sexual orientation and one concerned religion.<sup>8</sup>

Considering the fact that the Republic of Croatia accepted to take part in the European program for relocating third-country nationals or persons without citizenship and will offer care to 1,618 persons who will be under international protection, there will be an increase in the number of persons with international protection who will need to be integrated into Croatian society. This will require significant effort.

## Employment

The supply of workforce often exceeds demand, which allows for selection from a large number of candidates and leaves room for discrimination on various grounds, including religion. In the field of labor relations, discrimination can occur not only when entering an employer-employee relationship, but also with promotions. There have been cases of non-transparent human resource-related decision-making by employers, which point to possible discrimination.

In 2017, the Croatian Parliament also adopted the Ombudsman's Report for 2016, which stated that during 2016, as in previous years, the highest number of complaints were received with regards to discrimination in the field of labor relations: 30%, with 18.1% relating to discrimination at work, and 11.9% concerning employment discrimination.<sup>9</sup>

When it comes to citizens' complaints about discrimination, continuity from previous years is evident. Eight percent of complaints concern religion: 30.2% of cases concern discrimination based on race, ethnicity, skin color or nationality; 7% concern age; 6.2% political or other belief; and, to a lesser extent, other grounds. Religious discrimination is caused by the poor integration of refugees and immigrants into society, since the basic conditions for their inclusion in society are still not adequately met: learning the language and education.

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8. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, "Report of the Ombudsman for 2016", March 2017, retrieved on January 4, 2018 from [http://ombudsman.hr/izvjesce\\_pucke\\_pravobraniteljice\\_za\\_2016.\\_godinu.pdf](http://ombudsman.hr/izvjesce_pucke_pravobraniteljice_za_2016._godinu.pdf).

9. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, "Report of the Ombudsman for 2016", March 2017, retrieved on January 4, 2018 from [http://ombudsman.hr/izvjesce\\_pucke\\_pravobraniteljice\\_za\\_2016.\\_godinu.pdf](http://ombudsman.hr/izvjesce_pucke_pravobraniteljice_za_2016._godinu.pdf).

During 2016, the Law against Discrimination was invoked in handling 31 complaints of religious discrimination. One of the complaints concerned a child who was discriminated against based on religion.

The Action Plan for the implementation of the National Plan for Fighting Discrimination 2017-2019 includes measures to fight discrimination based on religious discrimination in labor and employment.

Analyses conducted by the Office of the Ombudsman indicate that high unemployment rates, and the generally unwelcoming labor market cause concern for jobs which breed negative attitudes about refugees and immigrants are perceived as people of poor education and low economic status. On the other hand, hiring or inclusion in the education system has an extremely positive effect on their social status, which is indicative of the direction that will aid and promote integration.

One of the cases recorded by the Islamic Community in Croatia concerns discrimination in the workplace in a public company of the city of Zagreb. Namely, a religious person could not exercise their right to a day off during Eid, guaranteed to him under Article 3 of the Law on Holidays, on Remembrances and on Non-Working Days.

Furthermore, the Islamic Community in Croatia recorded two more cases of religious discrimination in the workplace during 2017. One of the reported cases occurred in the police administration and the other in the administration of a football club. The Islamic Community helped the citizens that were discriminated against through institutional channels and forwarded the requests to competent institutions.

## Education

Fifteen cases concerning education were recorded by the Office of the Ombudsman in 2016. Results of a survey on attitudes and opinions of high school students, show that 38% of students are prejudiced against immigrants and national minorities, which is a sufficient critical mass for developing prejudice of a wider scale, and poses a serious hindrance to achieving the social integration of immigrants.<sup>10</sup>

An instance of hate speech was recorded during religious studies class in the elementary school Matija Gubec in Zagreb, by a Catholic Religious Studies teacher who told the children that certain political leaders should be killed – an outburst caused by the sentencing of General Praljak, commanding officer of the Croatian Army (HVO) during the war in BiH. His statement was described by many as political propaganda and an attempt to indoctrinate children and incite hatred towards others who are different than them, as a means of encouraging national and political exclusivity and intolerance, or as a public pulpit for inciting violence and hatred.

10. Branislava Baranović, Jelena Matić, Saša Puzić, Ajana Löw Stanić, Institute for Social Research in Zagreb Center for Education Research and Development, "Predrasude prema imigrantima kod učenika/ca srednjih škola u Gradu Zagrebu i Zagrebačkoj županiji", March 2017, retrieved on January 4, 2018 from [http://ombudsman.hr/izvjesce\\_pucke\\_pravobraniteljice\\_za\\_2016.\\_godinu.pdf](http://ombudsman.hr/izvjesce_pucke_pravobraniteljice_za_2016._godinu.pdf).

Pressure from the public resulted in the teacher being terminated by the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Croatia.

The Action Plan for integration in 2017-2019 includes a set of measures intended to completely and successfully integrate migrants into education in Croatia. Children and young migrants are included in the education system in the Republic of Srpska, in preschools, primary and secondary schools.

## Media

While escaping war, persecution and poverty, many refugees and asylum seekers come to Europe, which presents a challenge in terms of migration policies and maintaining the standard for protecting human rights, while evidently also posing a challenge to the media that have a responsibility not to portray these events through a prism of ethnicity, skin color or religion, and not to label these people as threatening, and by extension undesirable groups.

Although Muslims in Croatia can be said to be well integrated in Croatian society and that the model for integrating Muslims in Croatia is among the best in Europe, there are still instances of tendentious media reports and statements on air regarding migrant movements.

An event that significantly amplified Islamophobia in 2017 was the publishing of the book *The Other Side of Rubikon – Political Strategy of Alija Izetbegović* written by Miroslav Tuđman, member of the HDZ caucus of the Croatian Parliament, politician and university professor, former head of intelligence and son of the first president of the Republic of Croatia. Tuđman alleges that there were around 50 ritual beheadings committed in BiH in the 90s, which marked the beginning of Islamic terrorism. Tuđman describes Izetbegović's policy as advocating the idea that Islam is the most democratic form of government and that Izetbegović was the architect of Islamic terrorism because he encouraged the recruitment of jihadists from the Arab world into the BiH army, and that he consistently opposed the idea of constituent peoples in BiH.<sup>11</sup>

Bakir Izetbegović, a Bosniak member of the Presidency, stated that Tuđman is trying to divert attention from “inconvenient topics,” i.e. the anticipated conviction joint criminal enterprise of six leaders of the so-called ‘Herceg-Bosna’ in the hauge. He stated that the wave of Islamophobia is used by Zagreb for aggressive politics towards BiH.<sup>12</sup>

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11. “Miroslav Tuđman za novi Globus: ‘Islamski terorizam kakav danas znamo začet je još 90-ih u BiH s Izetbegovićevim mudžahedinima!’, *Jutarnji List*, September 2017, retrieved on January 10, 2018 from <https://www.jutarnji.hr/globus/Globus-politika/miroslav-tudman-za-novi-globus-islamski-terorizam-kakav-danas-znamo-zacet-je-jos-90-ih-u-bih-s-izetbegovicevim-mudzahedinima/6500479/>.

12. “Zbog islamofobije Zagreb vodi agresivnu politiku prema BiH”, *NI*, September 2017, retrieved on January 10, 2018 from <http://hr.n1info.com/a245974/Svijet/Regija/Izetbegovic-odgovorio-Tudjmanu-Na-valu-islamofobije-se-dobiva-agresivna-politika-Zagreba-spram-BiH.html>.

The President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović publicly alleged that there are 5,000-10,000 radical Islamic fundamentalists living in BiH. This statement elicited numerous reactions from both the government and non-governmental sector from BiH, as well as by Bosniaks living in the Republic of Croatia. The association Mothers of Srebrenica accused the Croatian President of Islamophobia. The Mothers of Srebrenica told the Croatian president that the attempts to paint Bosniaks, the victims of the greatest suffering in this region, as terrorists, extremists and an Islamic threat to Europe is painfully reminiscent of the period that preceded the aggression against BiH. The Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency Bakir Izetbegović also reacted, stressing that the statement is disrespectful to BiH and warning that Ustasha extremism<sup>13</sup> is becoming rampant in Croatia.

The tension between the two countries was exacerbated by the convictions of six leaders of the so-called “Herceg-Bosna,” who were sentenced to a total of 111 years in prison. The Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, within the appeal verdict, determined that there was an international armed conflict in BiH as well as occupation, and confirmed the existence of a joint criminal enterprise aimed at ethnic cleansing of parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The verdict also mentions killing, eviction and expulsion of Muslims from their homes and their transfer to “third countries” through Croatia in order to create the territory of Herceg-Bosna. One of the prisoners, General Slobodan Praljak, poisoned himself in the courtroom during the reading of the verdict.

One media outlet that often sends messages signaling an Islamophobic approach to Islam and Muslims is *Globus*. *Globus* is a national weekly of *Jutarnji List*, one of the most widely read media outlets in Croatia. It is published online and in print. (Figs. 1-2)



Figure 1: Prof. Dr. Miroslav Tuđman: Islamic terrorism has been conceived at 90s in BiH with the Mujahideen of Alija Izetbegović.<sup>14</sup>

13. Ustasha movement was a fascist and racist movement in independent State of Croatia (1941-1945).

14. *Globus*, “MIROSLAV TUĐMAN ZA NOVI GLOBUS...”, retrieved on January 10, 2018 from <https://www.jutarnji.hr/globus/Globus-politika/miroslav-tudman-za-novi-globus-islamski-terorizam-kakav-danas-znamo-zacet-je-jos-90-ih-u-bih-s-izetbegovicevim-mudzahedinima/6500479/>.



Figure 2: Croatian Intelligence Agency has dramatic data: In BiH lives from 5 to 10 thousand radical Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>15</sup>

1,262 persons requested asylum in Croatia, including those who had been returned to Croatia from other EU member states, according to the rules of the European Union on asylum. Only 76 asylum seekers received some form of protection, and by the end of September, Croatia had taken over 78 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy. The HRW also states that Croatia turned back migrants and asylum seekers who came from Serbia without examining their asylum requests. The report also states that in July 2017, the European Court of Justice (CJEU) ruled that Croatia violated the EU law by allowing migrants and asylum seekers to cross into Slovenia and Austria without first examining their asylum requests. According to the latest official data, by the end of the year, Croatia received 60 persons from Greece, 21 persons from Italy and seven Syrian families from Turkey reaching a total of 48 people. According to the quota system, Croatia agreed to receive 1,583 asylum seekers. The HRW claims that asylum seekers and refugees in Croatia continue to face social isolation and difficulties in accessing language courses, education and employment. They warn that, according to their data, only one child was enrolled in school in the 2017/18 academic year, out of 30 registered unaccompanied mi-

15. *Globus*, "HRVATSKE OBAVJEŠTAJNE SLUŽBE DRŽAVNOM VRHU POSLALE DRAMATIČNO UPOZORENJE...", retrieved on January 10, 2018 from <https://www.jutarnji.hr/globus/Globus-politika/hrvatske-obavjestajne-sluzbe-drzavnom-vrhu-poslale-dramaticno-upozorenje-islamski-radikali-su-na-granicama-hrvatske-u-bih-ih-ima-5-do-10-tisuca/6522508/>.

Figure 1 shows the front page of a national weekly, *Globus*, which contains the statement Miroslav Tuđman, politician of HDZ that is leading political party in Croatian Parliament. The statement promotes phrase Islamic terrorism that creates a distorted and negative image of Islam and accuses the neighbour country for it that is not contributing to friendly relations between these countries.

Figure 2 shows the front page of a national weekly, *Globus*, which promotes the Islam in a negative way connecting it to the radical behaviors and trying to spread the fear among the domestic population.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

The Human Rights Watch states in its report that by August 2017,

nors. When it comes to persons with disabilities, the HRW claims that they continue to be denied the right to work and the ability to make important life decisions, and that there is no support for life in the community.<sup>16</sup>

Jelena Firić, legal adviser at the Refugee Service, recounted an immigrant's testimony in Belgrade stating that he had been illegally deported from Croatia after he announced his intention to seek asylum, which means that Croatia was in violation of international laws by deporting refugees who had applied for asylum in the country. It, therefore, may be concluded that the Republic of Croatia or its operative persons are opposed to the arrival of migrants in the country.<sup>17</sup>

In February 2017, the Police Administration in Karlovac recorded a physical assault on an 18-year-old Iraqi asylum seeker who was staying at the Center for Children and Youth in Banija, Karlovac. The young man had multiple jaw fractures and head injuries requiring surgery, and the attackers – a father and son from Karlovac – later stated that they attacked the young man for no particular reason.<sup>18</sup>

A six-year-old girl from Afghanistan, Madina Hussiny, was killed on the border between Serbia and Croatia. While the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia claim that the Croatian Border Patrol were not responsible for the event in any way, the family and volunteers claim that it was the Border Patrol who endangered the girl's safety. They say that the girl was hit by a train immediately after her mother and six other children were stopped by Croatian police and forced to return to Serbia, guiding them with flashlights, all the way to the train track where the girl was struck. The family was denied the right to prepare and wash the body for burial in accordance with traditional Muslim rituals.<sup>19</sup>

## Internet

Certain media outlets in Croatia have become important channels for disseminating content intended to aid hidden political agendas. Lack of credibility and journalistic competence in reporting results in unfortunate phrasing such as “Islamic terrorism,” “Islamic radicalism,” etc., which created a distorted and negative image of Islam.

16. “Izviješće o stanju ljudskih prava: Hrvatska je do kolovoza 2017. primila 1262 zahtjeva za azilom, evo koliko je ljudi dobilo neki oblik zaštite”, *Jutarnji List*, retrieved on January 10, 2018 from <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/izvjesce-o-stanju-ljudskih-prava-hrvatska-je-do-kolovoza-2017-primila-1262-zahjteva-za-azilom-evo-koliko-je-ljudi-dobilo-neki-oblik-zastite/6947019/>.

17. “Priča izbjeglice koji je navodno ilegalno deportiran iz RH”, *NI*, January 2017, retrieved on January 10, 2018 from <http://hr.n1info.com/a171698/Vijesti/Pravnica-prepricala-svjedocanstvo-izbjeglice-koji-je-navodno-ilegalno-deportiran-iz-Hrvatske.html>.

18. “Ovo su tata i sin koji su pretukli mladog Iračanina (18) u Karlovcu: Bez ikakvog povoda udarali su ga bokserima po glavi”, *NET.hr*, February 2017, retrieved on January 11, 2018 from <https://net.hr/danas/crna-kronika/ovo-su-tata-i-sin-koji-su-pretukli-mladog-iracanina-18-bez-ikakvog-povoda-tukli-su-ga-bokserima-po-glavi/>.

19. “Druga strana priče o smrti na hrvatskoj granici: ‘Tretirali su je kao psa, a ne kao ljudsko biće’, kaže obitelj poginule djevojčice”, *100posto.hr*, December 2017, retrieved on January 11, 2018 from <https://100posto.hr/news/tretirali-su-je-kaop-sa-a-ne-kaoljudsko-bice-obiljel-poginule-djevojcice>.



Figure 3: Worrying situation Dramatic warning of intelligence services: Islamic radicals are at the borders of Croatia, in BiH they are between 5 and 10 thousand.<sup>21</sup>

Figure 3 shows the news published on one local informative internet portal in Croatia. The post is talking about Islamic radicals and their presence at the Croatia border and they present it as a warning to all citizens. Photo that follows the news is showing women with burka that Muslim women in some cultures wear. News is putting the Islam and radicalism in the same context as well as radicalism with the woman's way of dressing.

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In 2017, the Islamic Community in Croatia started implementing Islamic religious education in the city kindergartens. This program contributes to developing positive traits, and moral and ethical principles in children, which strengthens inter-religious and intercultural dialogue.<sup>22</sup>

Another initiative that helped fight prejudice against Islam was the 24th International Symposium: Science and Religion – 2000 Years of Cooperation and Controversy, organized by the Meshihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia, the European Academy of Science and Arts, the Catholic Faculty of Theology, the In-

One media outlet that often sends messages signaling an Islamophobic approach to Islam and Muslims is *Globus*. Their news pieces talk about the existence of an evident trend of Islamization in BiH, which is worrying to leaders of countries in the region, and asks for U.S. President Trump and his administration to launch initiatives intended to defuse the situation and help BiH fight radicalization.<sup>20</sup> There was also other online media that transmitted announcements containing Islamophobic news. (Fig. 3)

20. "Hrvatske obavještajne službe državnom vrhu poslale dramatično upozorenje Islamski radikali su na granicama Hrvatske, u BiH ih ima 5 do 10 tisuća", *Jutarnji List*, September 2017, retrieved on January 11, 2018 from <https://www.jutarnji.hr/globus/Globus-politika/hrvatske-obavjestajne-sluzbe-drzavnom-vrhu-poslale-dramaticno-upozorenje-islamski-radikali-su-na-granicama-hrvatske-u-bih-ih-ima-5-do-10-tisuca/6522508/>.

21. Šibenski.hr, "Dramatično upozorenje obavještajnih službi", retrieved on January 11, 2018 from <https://sibenski.slobodnadalmacija.hr/vijesti/hrvatska-i-svijet/clanak/id/505418/dramaticno-upozorenje-obavjestajnih-sluzbi-islamski-radikali-su-na-granicama-hrvatske-u-bih-ih-ima-5-do-10-tisuca>.

22. "Islamski vjerski odgoj u vrtiću Jasmin", *Islamic Community in Croatia*, September 2017, retrieved on January 12, 2018 from <https://islamska-zajednica.hr/vijesti/islamski-vjerski-odgoj-u-vrticu-jasmin>.

ternational Academy of Perinatal Medicine, the International Academy of Humane Reproduction, and the Ibn Sina Institute.<sup>23</sup>

A celebration was held in Sisak, the first of its kind in Croatia, in the center of the city, where citizens celebrated the second day of Eid. The multicultural and multi-confessional program called 'Eid on the Sisak Walkway' marked the beginning of construction of the new Islamic Cultural Center Sisak.<sup>24</sup>

The Office for Human Rights and the Rights of Minorities of the Republic of Croatia conducted activities intended to support the implementation of policies for integrating migrants such as education and training for pedagogues, psychologists, principals, and teachers who work with migrants in the education system.

In order to foster a positive environment for migrants and refugees in Croatia, and to embrace religious, cultural, national, social and any other differences, the teaching staff from Karlovac launched an initiative that included children in creating a welcoming atmosphere for refugee children who came to live in the country.

The radio show *Gladne uši* (Hungry Ears) is an example of a media outlet actively participating in promoting democratic values, tolerance and respect for differences, aired by the Croatian Radiotelevision.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Intolerance towards Muslims, left unchecked, can enable a climate that fosters hate crimes against Muslims, which is an attempt to isolate them from society. Only a strong response from all actors in society including government, non-governmental and international organizations as well as religious institutions, can effectively challenge discrimination, intolerance, and hate crimes against Muslims.

The activities of the Islamic Community in Croatia have been recognized as preventive, integrative and stable, and contribute to the progress of the Croatian society.

The Republic of Croatia and important agents in society, in general, should support and implement, among others, activities related to education, prevention, raising public consciousness, political participation, and inclusion of religious communities in order to build and strengthen a democratic, multicultural, multi-religious, open and welcoming society.

Governments together with other stakeholders should improve and facilitate access to information on existing cases of Islamophobia. Government officers should promote tolerance, non-discrimination, understanding and respect in Croatian society, and the media should create an atmosphere conducive to intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

23. "Simpozij Znanost i religija okupio eminentne znanstvenike Hrvatske i svijeta u Zagrebu", *Islamic Community in Croatia*, April 2017, retrieved on January 12, 2018 from <https://islamska-zajednica.hr/vijesti/simpozij-znanost-i-religija-okupio-eminentne-znanstvenike-hrvatske-i-svijeta-u-zagrebu>.

24. "Lijepo je danas biti Musliman u Sisku i Hrvatskoj", *Večernji list*, June 2017, retrieved on January 12, 2018 from <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/sisak-muslimani-ramazanski-bajram-islam-aziz-hasanovic-1178933>.

In the field of education, inclusive educational programs should be developed, including vocational training focused on engaging marginalized and high-risk groups in economic and society participation. Youth workers and civil society leaders should be trained on preventing and countering Islamophobia in order to promote youth mainstreaming and to contribute to the effective implementation of anti-Islamophobia programs. Inclusion, tolerance and pluralism in formal and informal education should be promoted from the earliest stages of education.

Awareness of Islamophobia among the general public should be raised through a comprehensive communication campaign tailored to the local contexts. Media representatives and journalists should be engaged to agree on professional and ethical reporting. Guidelines on professional media reporting of cases of Islamophobia should also be developed.

## Chronology

- **09.02.2017:** An 18-year-old asylum seeker with approved stay at the Center for Children and Youth in Karlovac was assaulted and beaten by Croatian nationals.
- **01.09.2017:** Electronic and print media published a statement by Miroslav Tudman, member of the HDZ caucus of the Croatian Parliament, politician and university professor, former head of intelligence and son of the first president of the Republic of Croatia, alleging that Islamic terrorism started in the 90s in BiH.
- **05.09.2017:** Electronic and print media published a statement by the President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović alleging that Islamic radicals are at the Croatian borders, and that there is between 5,000 and 10,000 of them in BiH.
- **2017:** The Islamic Community in Croatia recorded three cases of discrimination based on religion in the workplace (one in a public company in Zagreb, one in the police administration, and one in the administration of a football club), as well as permanent discrimination of migrants based on differences in culture and religion.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**CZECH  
REPUBLIC**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

The most important development in 2017 is the firm establishment of parties espousing Islamophobic and xenophobic views in the Czech parliament following the October general elections. Out of the first six parties that gained most votes only one could be considered neutral to favourable when it comes to issues such as refugee quotas and generally a more tolerant approach to diversity in society. The winning party ANO, led by a tycoon turned politician, which is difficult to classify as either left or right, is known for supporting and promoting the views of Czech President Miloš Zeman, who is notorious for his Islamophobic views, which have been documented in the previous reports. The fourth ranked party, Freedom and Direct Democracy, led by Tomio Okamura, a Japanese - Czech politician, has an exclusive agenda of xenophobia and Islamophobia illustrated by the party election slogan, “No to Islam, No to Terrorism,” and campaigns continuously for the legal ban of Islam. The party recycles the Islamophobic view that Islam is not a religion and therefore doesn’t deserve constitutional protection under the freedom of denomination. Okamura’s party wasn’t only successful in the elections but he became vice-chair of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic. His approach continues the process of endangering freedoms currently guaranteed by the Czech Constitution. A citizen filed a complaint with the Highest Administrative Court alleging, among others, that slogans such as “No to Islam” and “Stop Islam” are “unrealistic and breach constitutional principles.” Her complaint was rejected with the explanation that the logic of political marketing allows for a hyperbolic approach during the election campaign.<sup>1</sup> The Constitutional Court is yet to decide on her complaint. Thus, we might conclude that Islamophobia has gone mainstream and is a part of the official policy of the Czech political establishment. Particularly extreme forms of Islamophobia are still found online and there’s an ongoing discussion on how to deal with hate speech. It is necessary to engage with civil society, which seems to be the only line of defence against all forms of racism including Islamophobia, and insist on more diversity in the media, plus support those relatively rare politicians and public figures who speak against Islamophobia.

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1. Eurozpravy.cz, “ÚS dostal stížnost: Žena kritizuje kampaň některých stran a hesla SPD o islámu”, Eurozpravy.cz, retrieved December 20, 2017 from <http://domaci.eurozpravy.cz/verejna-sprava/208341-us-dostal-stiznost-zena-kritizuje-kampan-nekterych-stran-a-hesla-spd-o-islam/>.

## Shrnutí

Nejdůležitější aspekt vývoje pokud jde o islamofobii v roce 2017 představuje upevnění politických stran s xenofobními a islamofobními názory v Poslanecké sněmovně České republiky, které je důsledkem všeobecných voleb z října 2017. Z prvních šesti stran, které získaly nejvíc hlasů lze pouze jednu považovat za neutrální až příznivou v otázkách jako jsou uprchlické kvóty a všeobecně více tolerantní postoj k různorodosti ve společnosti. Vítěz voleb, strana ANO, vedena magnátem, ze kterého se stal politik, a kterou je obtížné klasifikovat jako levicovou či pravicovou, je známa svoji podporou prezidenta Miloše Zemana, který je zase proslulý svými islamofobními názory, doloženými v předchozích zprávách o islamofobii v ČR. Strana, která se umístila jako čtvrtá, Svoboda a přímá demokracie, vedená Tomiem Okamourou, který je japonsko-českého původu, má ve své agendě výlučně xenofobii a islamofobii, což lze doložit volebním heslem strany: Ne islámu, ne terorizmu. Strana se dlouhodobě zasazuje o právní zákaz islámu a též recykluje islamofobní názor, že islám není náboženstvím a tudíž si nezaslouží ústavní ochranu vyplývající z práva na svobodu svědomí. Nejenže se strana vedena Okamourou stala úspěšnou ve volbách, ale Okamura se stál místopředsedou Poslanecké sněmovny. Jeho přístup v politice i nadále ohrožuje svobody v současné době zaručené Ústavou ČR. Občanka podala stížnost Nejvyššímu správnímu soudu s, mimo jiné, námitkou, že slogany typu Ne islámu nebo Stop islámu jsou „nerealistické, a navíc v rozporu s ústavními principy.“ Její stížnost byla odmítnuta s odůvodněním, že v politickém marketingu je přípustné používat hyperbolizaci a to zejména v období volební kampaně.<sup>2</sup> Ústavní soud se nyní bude zabývat její stížností. Z výše uvedeného vyplývá, že se islamofobie stala součástí běžného politického diskurzu a tak i oficiální politiky českého politického establishmentu. Obzvláště extrémní formy islamofobie pořád najdeme online, zároveň pokračuje diskuze o tom, jak zacházet s hovorem z nenávisti. Je nutné zapojit občanskou společnost, která se jeví jako poslední linie obrany proti všem formám rasizmu včetně islamofobie a trvat na větší různorodosti v médiích. Je nutné též podpořit relativně vzácné politiky a političky a veřejné osobnosti, kteří se staví proti islamofobii.

2. Eurozpravy.cz, “ÚS dostal stížnost: Žena kritizuje kampaň některých stran a hesla SPD o islámu”, Eurozpravy.cz, retrieved December 20, 2017 from <http://domaci.eurozpravy.cz/verejna-sprava/208341-us-dostal-stiznost-zena-kritizuje-kampan-nekterych-stran-a-hesla-spd-o-islam/>

## Introduction

There are three important developments that influenced relation to Muslims in 2017. First, the October national elections brought into parliament the whole range of Islamophobic parties, most notably the party of Freedom and Direct Democracy, which campaigns almost exclusively on portraying Islam as a threat, a non-religion and a violent group. It should be stressed that these are the first elections during which attitudes towards Muslims became a central issue. Islamophobia in the Czech Republic should be seen in a complex interplay with other forms of intolerance, most notably with anti-Gypsism, which has always been strong, but also xenophobia in general, the rejection of refugees, and threats and hate towards anyone who dares to protest against forms of intolerance. The interplay is complex because sometimes all forms of intolerance come together and other times they “compete” with each other, tolerating some migrants (e.g. migrant workers necessary for economic growth but not other migrants, not refugees, or not migrants from “culturally distant” countries). Anti-Semitism and misogyny are also never too far from other forms of hate and calls for violence, although they are rarely the sole focus of intolerance. Second, the presidential elections held in January 2018 saw the newly elected president campaigning in the second round under the slogan “Stop Immigration Stop Drahoš, This Country Belongs to us” (his opponent). Third, the ongoing issue of refugee quotas and the role of the European Union attract a lot of attention and also affect how Islam is perceived. Frequently, in public discourse, persons who seek international protection are described as Muslims even though many asylum applications come from citizens of Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova and other non-Muslim countries.<sup>3</sup> The issue of relocation quotas, e.g. the EU rules on how to distribute refugees throughout the EU, is connected to resentment towards the imposition of “foreigners” by the EU. The Czech Republic has accepted 12 such persons from slightly over 2,000 it was supposed to accept. Currently, the Czech Republic has been sued by the European Commission in the European Court of Justice but new Prime minister Andrej Babiš has been adamant that the Czech Republic would rather pay a multimillion fine than accept any refugees.<sup>4</sup>

## Significant Incidents and Developments

In addition to the mainstreaming of Islamophobia, the political scene has also seen the internationalization of Czech Islamophobic parties. The rabidly Islamophobic party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), thus, organized a meeting of repre-

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3. Český statistický úřad, “Počet žádostí o mezinárodní ochranu podle státní příslušnosti a roků zahájení řízení (1. 1. 1998 - 31. 12. 2015)”, retrieved December 18, 2017 from <https://www.czso.cz/csu/cizinci/data-mezinarodni-ochrana#cr>.

4. Echo 24, “Uprchlíci? Nepřijmeme ani jednoho, prohlásil Babiš”, retrieved December 16, 2017 from: <https://echo24.cz/a/wuph8/uprchlici-neprijmeme-ani-jednoho-prohlasil-babis>.

sentatives of other EU Islamophobic parties on December 2017 in Prague, such as Geert Wilders (Dutch Freedom Party) and Marine Le Pen (Front National). The meeting focused on anti-EU discourse and anti-Islam scaremongering. The *Agence France-Presse* (AFP), the *Associated Press* (AP), the *Deutsche Presse-Agentur* (DPA) and the French daily *Le Monde* have all reported that the choice of Prague as the location for the conference of parties with seats in the European Parliament that are anti-immigration, hateful and xenophobic was no accident. According to these media, the ultra-right parties want to draw new energy from the recent electoral success of their Czech host, the Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD) movement of Czech MP Tomio Okamura.<sup>5</sup> The phenomenon has been described by the Czech expert on extremism Jan Charvát at Charles University as “solidarity through hate.” He has stated, “Racism in the Czech Republic is apparently not any more frequent now than it has been, but the perspective on what one is allowed to say in public has been altered...Czech society, according to him, is undergoing a “reformatting” of what we consider normal and what not, and this flows from disappointment over developments post-1989.”<sup>6</sup> The biggest danger of mainstreaming and legitimizing Islamophobic and other hateful speech is the threat to the democratic values of Czech society.

The limits of hate speech, particularly online, have been constantly shifting to more and more extreme positions. Thus, in an especially extreme incident, children from primary school in the city of Teplice were threatened with death in gas chambers. The class was comprised predominantly of children who are of Arab or Romani origin and users of online social networks commented as follows: “Equal (image of a pistol)” ; “classroom full of terrorists” ; “Plynárenská [Gasworks] Primary School. The solution offers itself immediately.” ; or “A grenade would fit there like a little bottom on the bench!”<sup>7</sup>

Another important specific feature of Czech Islamophobia is that, due to lack of actual Muslims in the country, hate is directed towards whoever protests the blanket rejection of refugees and migrants or spreads any good or positive news about Muslims. Such people, who are often left wing, are targeted with death threats, verbal attacks and harassment – in the same manner as Muslims or migrants. They stand between an increasingly intolerant society, fully supported in its hatred by

5. ČTK, “International Media: Anti-immigration, Hateful, Xenophobic Parties from Around Europe Want to Exploit Czech SPD’s Success”, retrieved December 15, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/world/international-media-anti-immigration-hateful-xenophobic-parties-from-around-europe-want-to-exploit-czech-spd-s-success>.

6. Romea.cz, “Czech Expert on Extremism Says Solidarity through Hate Is Very Strong Now”, retrieved December 18, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-expert-on-extremism-says-solidarity-through-hate-is-very-strong-now>.

7. Kateřina Gamal Richterová, Hate Free Culture, “Czech Racists Threaten Online to Kill Children Because They Are of Romani and Arab Origin”, retrieved December 30, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-racists-threaten-online-to-kill-children-because-they-are-of-arab-and-romani-origin>.

established parties and politicians, and the actual targets such as Muslims, Roma, Africans, etc. At the start of 2017, historian Matěj Spurný came under a great deal of online abuse – and even death threats – after an interview to a magazine headlined “This Country Is Not Just for Czechs.”<sup>8</sup>

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

In addition to Islamophobia becoming mainstream through elections and constant fear-mongering promoted by the Czech president, we see further polarization of Czech society on this matter. The Catholic Church in this deeply secular country with the majority declaring no denomination has been sending mixed signals. The head of the Catholic Church in the Czech Republic Cardinal Dominik Duka congratulated the chair of the Freedom and Direct Democracy movement (SPD), Tomio Okamura, on his party’s electoral results. “Permit me to congratulate you on the outcome of the elections to the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of the Czech Republic,” Duka wrote in a letter. “I am convinced that we are connected by the care for and safety of people in this country and by many other subjects,” he wrote. “I hope that you and your MPs in the newly established lower house manage to thoroughly advocate for justice and the law.” On the other hand, one of the world’s most-renowned Catholic intellectuals Tomáš Halík criticized the cardinal for lining up with regressive tabloids and public personalities, reminding him of their common dissident past during the era of the rule of the Communist Party.<sup>9</sup> To illustrate what kind of people Cardinal Duka is supporting, we can point at an example of SPD Secretary Jaroslav Staník’s words that “Jews, homosexuals and Gypsies should be gassed” for which he has been reported to the criminal justice authorities.

Considering the firm establishment of Islamophobic discourse both among the parliamentary parties and personalities within individual parties, the non-parliamentary extreme right parties and movements are gaining more confidence in shifting the limits of what is allowed even further. The originally banned but then resurrected extreme right-wing party Workers Social Justice Party organized a public assembly to mark the Velvet Revolution anniversary in Prague attended by some 100 people and with the guest presence of the American neo-Nazi Matthew-John Heimbach. They attacked a Roma reporter and shouted “Fuck Allah, burn down

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8. Ian Willoughby, “Historian Matěj Spurný: Anti-humanist Atmosphere Is Spreading – and We Must Fight Back”, retrieved December 15, 2017 from: <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/one-on-one/historian-matej-spurny-anti-humanist-atmosphere-is-spreading-and-we-must-fight-back>.

9. Romea.cz, “Czech Cardinal Congratulates Hate-Mongering Party on Their Electoral Results”, retrieved December 20, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-cardinal-congratulates-hate-mongering-party-on-their-electoral-results>.

the mosques” and the obligatory “Bohemia for the Czechs.” One woman shouted “You black Arab swine!” at a photographer.<sup>10</sup>

### Justice System

In the justice system two important court proceedings are continuing. One is against the former chair of the Muslim Community of Prague, Vladimír Sáňka, whose case has been described in the previous report. The District Court for Prague 1 acquitted him of charges for the publication in a Czech translation of a book by Bilal Philips entitled *The Fundamentals of TAWHEED* (Islamic Monotheism). However, the Prague Municipal Court, meeting in a closed session, overturned the verdict and returned the case to the District Court for Prague 1 to be reopened.<sup>11</sup>

The second case is the proceedings of a former student from Somalia. She accused the High School for Nurses of discrimination based on religion for denying her the right to wear a hijab during lectures (she agreed not to wear it during practical exercise). Her complaint was dismissed and on appeal reached the Prague Municipal Court where it was rejected again. In its verdict the court noted that a public school has the right to determine its dress code and that denying exception to that code does not constitute discrimination based on religion. It stated that the opposite of discrimination is the equal treatment of everyone and that the student demanded protection of her positive discrimination. Further the court explained that because of the low number of Muslims in the Czech Republic there is a lack of judicial decisions concerning the limits of religious tolerance. According to the verdict, nobody has the right to practice their religion everywhere: the lectures could be otherwise interrupted by the Lord’s Prayer (Christian prayer). Covering one’s hair is, according to the court, also uncivil. The Somali student’s lawyer, Radka Korbelová, together with Czech Ombudswoman Anna Šabatová questioned whether a minor school act, such as the particular school’s dress code, can override constitutional freedom to wear religious symbols as an expression of religious freedom. Korbelová has decided to appeal this second negative decision to the Highest Court.<sup>12</sup>

### Media

Most media currently are followed online so it’s impossible to separate what is printed and what is published in digital space. Mainstream media mostly - but not

10. Czech News Agency, “Ultra-right Marks Velvet Revolution by Racially Abusing Czech TV Reporters, Arabs and Muslims”, retrieved December 14, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/ultra-right-marks-velvet-revolution-by-racially-abusing-czech-tv-reporters-arabs-and-muslims>.

11. Czech News Agency, “Czech Court Overturns Acquittal in Radical Islamic Book Distribution Case”, retrieved December 12, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-court-overturns-acquittal-in-radical-islamic-book-distribution-case>.

12. Jakub Kotalík, “Odvolací soud se ve sporu o hidžáb postavil za školu, žalobu zamítl”, retrieved December 18, 2017 from: [https://zpravy.idnes.cz/soud-odvolani-spor-o-hidzab-stredni-skola-somalka-f79-/krimi.aspx?c=A170918\\_132859\\_krimi\\_jkk](https://zpravy.idnes.cz/soud-odvolani-spor-o-hidzab-stredni-skola-somalka-f79-/krimi.aspx?c=A170918_132859_krimi_jkk).

always - continues to present stereotypes about Muslims and particularly worrisome are online comment sections despite the fact that most online media demand prior identification. The fact that people post hateful and sometimes criminal threats under their own names points to a lack of concern for the responsibility of such verbal attacks. It is, thus, up to civil society to continue monitoring and complaining about such acts. Sometimes, however, the official Czech Council on Radio and Television Broadcasting does react such as in the case of Muslim women at the Prague swimming pool who were wearing burkinis. The Czech Council on Radio and Television Broadcasting (RRTV) has launched an administrative proceeding with the commercial TV Prima station over its reportage entitled “Clothed Muslim Women Swim in Pool.” The station broadcast the report during its evening news program on July 10 and informed the public that Muslim women at Prague’s Aquapalace Čestlice had gone swimming while dressed, i.e. in clothing that broke hygiene regulations, allegedly endangering other swimmers’ health. “The reportage at issue failed to meet its duty to report on the news in a balanced, objective way when it gave viewers a specifically predefined opinion of the event by telling them that the women involved had gone swimming in everyday clothing, not in the so-called ‘burkinis’,” the RRTV said.<sup>13</sup>

One of the worst offenders is the Czech online tabloid *Parlamentní listy* (Parliamentary Journal). To test if they have any editorial policy, two journalists submitted commentaries heavily relying on absurd conspiracy theories such as the one explaining why terrorists are now committing murders with the aid of automobiles in big European cities but avoiding Prague so far. The reason, according to the commentary, is allegedly somewhat complicated and involves a conspiracy by American secret services and Islamist terrorists which is actually being directed by bicycle enthusiasts from Prague. The cyclists were said to be seeking a ban on all automobiles in Europe in order to force people to ride bicycles. Both commentaries were published.<sup>14</sup>

### **Physical and Verbal Attacks**

Most verbal attacks happen online. An example of such an attack can be seen in a video that has gone viral on the Facebook social networking site and shows a man who is the father of a young girl whom he is encouraging to bash a pillow with a baseball bat and imagine it is a “Gypsy or a Muslim.” The man is not seen in the

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13. Romea.cz, “Czech Broadcast Authority: TV News Misidentifying Burkinis as Regular Clothes Failed Basic Duty to Viewers”, retrieved December 20, 2017 from : <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-broadcast-authority-tv-news-misidentifying-burkinis-as-regular-clothes-failed-basic-duty-to-viewers>.

14. Romea.cz, “Czech Tabloid Falls for Journalists’ Trap, Publishes Absurd Conspiracies and Fake News Without Fact-Checking”, retrieved December 10, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-tabloid-falls-for-journalists-trap-publishes-absurd-conspiracies-and-fake-news-without-fact-checking>.

video but his voice can be heard encouraging the child to use other vulgar terms such as “fuckers.”<sup>15</sup> The man has received a suspended sentence.

The Ministry of Education has allocated financial means for courses on Czech for foreigners within its integration program to an agency led by a man who thinks that Islam is a tyrannical ideology.<sup>16</sup>

An aggressive woman assaulted two Muslim women accompanying 13 children to the Divoka Šárka aqua park in Prague on Wednesday, July 19. The aggressor began the conflict by photographing the Muslim women and the children. One of the Muslim women asked her to stop taking photographs of them. The photographer then attacked her both physically and verbally. The case is being investigated by police and reported in detail through the Facebook page of the platform “Against Hate Speech” (Proti projevům nenávisťi). The Muslim women were wearing hijabs at the time. “Some woman began photographing us. After she was politely asked in Czech to stop doing that because we did not want her to photograph either us or the children, she began to abuse us vulgarly,” one of the Muslim women was quoted as saying by the Against Hate Speech report. “She said we were wogs and that we should f\*\*k off and that we shouldn’t dare go swimming. After that she kicked and punched my friend,” the Muslim woman said. Czech Police classified the incident as a misdemeanour.<sup>17</sup>

## Internet

The Czech Internet space is a paradise for all kinds of hate speech including Islamophobia. The hate speech consists either of direct attacks, insults or calls to violence or of spreading hoaxes, fake news and lies, which is equally dangerous. Considering the vast amount of both types of hate speech we can, in the scope of this report, select just a few.

First, it is necessary to say that the ROMEA organization filed more than 10 reports of suspected crimes at the beginning of this year against persons who used online social networks to post racist verbal attacks against Roma people and members of other minorities, including threatening them with physical destruction. State Prosecutor Zdeňka Galková has notified ROMEA that such comments are a form of such people “relieving themselves in public without the writers actually meaning what they say seriously or intending to take such action, and they are not capable of committing such behaviour anywhere outside of the ‘protective bubble’ of an Inter-

15. Adéla Gálová, “Czech Video Goes Viral of Man Telling Girl to Beat Pillow with Baseball Bat and Imagine It’s a ‘Gypsy or a Muslim’”, retrieved January 1, 2018 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-video-goes-viral-of-man-telling-girl-to-beat-pillow-with-baseball-bat-and-imagine-it-s-a-gypsy-or-a-muslim>.

16. Zdeňka Trachtová, “Výuka češtiny pro azylanty drhne. Vede ji agentura odpůrce islámu”, retrieved December 25, 2017 from: [https://zpravy.idnes.cz/vyuka-azylantu-cestina-problemy-usvit-islam-fnz-/domaci.aspx?c=A170117\\_113545\\_domaci\\_zt](https://zpravy.idnes.cz/vyuka-azylantu-cestina-problemy-usvit-islam-fnz-/domaci.aspx?c=A170117_113545_domaci_zt).

17. ROMEA.cz, “Czech Police Say Assault on Muslim Women in Prague by Aggressive Woman Was a Misdemeanor”, retrieved December 15, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-police-say-assault-on-muslim-women-in-prague-by-aggressive-woman-was-a-misdemeanor>.

net discussion.” The reported online comments included: “Those whores, I’d shoot it, first that cunt Merkel who brought it here, and then the rest of those fuckers, they just get to cross our borders whenever, I will be glad to shoot those fuckers”; “The shitty optimists led by Merkel are protecting them, those repulsive Muslim monkeys. I would shoot them just like Mladič. He partially exterminated them but it didn’t help. UNFORTUNATELY.”<sup>18</sup>

### **Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network**

It is not possible to talk about a fully developed Islamophobia network in the Czech Republic. It is rather that Islamophobia has become mainstream and that it is scattered throughout public space, including political parties. In addition to Czech President Miloš Zeman and MP Tomio Okamura, current winner of the elections and most probable candidate for Prime Minister, Andrej Babiš from Action of Dissatisfied Citizens Party (ANO) is among the most influential figures with Islamophobic views. In the case of Babiš, unlike Okamura who is obsessively focused on the “threat from Islam,” the central issue in his rhetoric is the refugee quota demanded by the European Union. Thus, he stated, “We have to fight for what our ancestors built here. If there will be more Muslims than Belgians in Brussels, that’s their problem. I don’t want that here. They won’t be telling us who should live here.”<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, some of the figures who initiated and publicized Islamophobia have become largely irrelevant or less visible, most notably Martin Konvička who initiated the online movement *We Don’t Want Islam* in the Czech Republic and Petr Hampl, who established *Alternative for the Czech Republic* (following the German example). It seems, however, that their ideas and values, in somewhat diluted form, became mainstream now while their own importance decreased.

### **Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

Civil society organizations have been largely isolated in their combat against Islamophobia, which is to be expected in a country where 84% of the respondents in a recent survey said they were “strongly against or rather against” accepting any refugees from the Middle East or North Africa.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps this is reason to appreciate even more the initiatives by civil society and certain politicians.

The ROMEA organization and others, as well as many public figures, have decided to respond to the current wave of hate and racism that is spreading through the Czech

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18. Jitka Votavová, “Czech Prosecutor Says Death Threats and Racist Abuse Committed through Facebook Not Necessarily Crimes”, retrieved December 16, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-prosecutor-says-death-threats-and-racist-abuse-committed-through-facebook-not-necessarily-crimes>.

19. Philip Heijmans, “Czech Republic’s Tiny Muslim Community Subject to Hate”, retrieved January 2, 2018 from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/czech-republic-tiny-muslim-community-subject-hate-171112063523840.html>.

20. Public Opinion Research Center, “Postoj české veřejnosti k přijímání uprchlíků a kvotám na jejich přerozdělování – říjen 2017”, retrieved January 2, 2018 from: <https://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/cz/tiskove-zpravy/politicke/mezinarodni-vztahy/4472-postoj-ceske-verejnosti-k-prijimani-uprchliku-a-kvotam-na-jejich-prerozdelovani-rijen-2017>.

Republic. The initiative is called “They Want to Gas Them, We Want to Send Them to School,” referring to the children from the elementary school mentioned above.<sup>21</sup>

On September 1, in Liberec, Czech Republic, the signatories of a statement against disseminating fear of difference and against xenophobia held a press conference to publicize their call to action. The statement criticizes Czech President Zeman and political parties traditionally considered democratic. The text was signed by 15 figures from various professions and walks of life, according to the Deputy Mayor of Liberec Ivan Langr, who is responsible for social affairs. The signatories warn that the dissemination of hostility, especially against members of minorities who are visually different, is gradually becoming one of the important topics of the political competition for votes in the run-up to the October elections.<sup>22</sup>

An iconic photograph of a young Girl Scout who decided to protest on May 1, 2017 against a neo-Nazi assembly in Brno, Czech Republic has circulated the Internet, and not just the “Czech” one. The photo has received more than 60,000 “likes” and almost 6,000 comments on the Reddit social networking site. The Girl Scout in question, Lucie Myslíková, said, “Because I believe it is worth to fight with what you disagree. I feel obligated to protest fascist ideologies and opinions, which are here in this society and are an actual threat. I think my friends feel the same way. I do not identify with this dissemination of hatred. I have attended similar actions before.”<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report documented some of the Islamophobia-related policies, processes and incidents. The overall conclusion is that through the October general elections Islamophobia has entered the Czech Parliament and forces working to present all Muslims as a threat received a boost. Islamophobia is not only entrenched in certain Islam-obsessed parties, such as the SPD or individual politicians such as the Czech president or prime minister, but runs through various parties that have never before campaigned on the issue. Furthermore, the issue of the relocation quota of refugees in the European Union has strengthened negative attitudes towards refugees in general and Muslim refugees in particular. There have also been successful attempts to internationalize the Czech Islamophobia scene. On the other hand, those opposing hatred and advocating reasonable and compassionate immigration policies under-

21. Monika Mihaličková, “Czech Film Director Supports Fundraising Drive “THEY WANT TO GAS THEM, WE WANT TO SEND THEM TO SCHOOL!””, retrieved December 10, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/czech-film-director-supports-fundraising-drive-they-want-to-gas-them-we-want-to-send-them-to-school>.

22. Adéla Gálová, “Declaration against Xenophobia Signed by 15 Prominent Figures in Czech Town of Liberec”, retrieved December 15, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/declaration-against-xenophobia-signed-by-15-prominent-figures-in-czech-town-of-liberec>.

23. Romea.cz, “Girl Scout from Iconic Photo in Brno, Czech Republic Tells Romea.cz She Feels Obligated to Protest Fascist Ideologies and Opinions”, retrieved December 15, 2017 from: <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/girl-scout-from-iconic-photo-in-brno-czech-republic-tells-romea-cz-she-feels-obligated-to-protest-fascist-ideologies-and>

stand they need to create their own networks and remind the Czech society of its history and constitution.

The policy recommendations remain largely the same as in previous years with the following being particularly important:

- A monitoring system of hate online should be established. Currently only a few non-governmental organizations monitor hate speech. Only by establishing a system is it possible to push for measures to tackle online hate speech.
- Online hate speech should be sanctioned according to relevant laws. Legal professionals need more knowledge about the impact in real life of advocating violence online.
- There should be more focus on working with young people to prevent support for extremist ideologies.
- Politicians who oppose collective guilt and punishment of Muslims should be better promoted and more visible in media.
- The media should diversify the image of Muslims, be held accountable for spreading dangerous fake news, and more Czech Muslims' voices should be heard in public space.
- More resources should be allocated to non-governmental organizations to create umbrella organizations to tackle both Islamophobic hate speech and ideology.

## Chronology

- **10.08.2017:** A local councillor in Hodonín, Roman Sedlačík, a member of the conservative nationalist movement “Order of the Nation” (Řád národa), harassed and called the police when he encountered a black couple he assumed were Muslims. The man was a U.S. Army soldier who was on a personal visit with his wife.
- **21.10.2017:** Several dozen people protested in front of the Prague campaign office of the “Freedom and Direct Democracy” party (SPD), led by Tomio Okamura, against the fact that the hate group was elected to the Chamber of Deputies. “Welcome refugees, Nazis go home!” demonstrators chanted beneath the windows of Hotel Čechie.
- **15.12.2017:** Several hundred demonstrators whistled loudly and shouted “Shame!” and “Down with Fascists!” at Prague’s TOP Hotel, where a meeting of representatives of anti-immigration parties from around Europe was being held.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**DENMARK**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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MUJAHED SEBASTIAN ABASSI



## The Author

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## Executive summary

The notion of Islam and Muslims being fundamentally in contradiction with Danish values has been reflected in several policies and laws. Among them is the statement by the leader of the Social Democrats Mette Frederiksen, that Muslim free schools are generally not a good idea due to their ill alignment with the majority culture. A campaign by the far-right Danes party encouraged Muslims to leave Denmark. A National Sanctions list of a dozen persona non-grata was introduced, 10 out of 11 being famous Muslim preachers. Several public campaigns have taken place to counter *negative social control*, all of them pointing it out as a Muslim phenomenon. According to the National Police about 20% of hate crime committed in 2016 targeted Muslims, while the group make up 5% of the general population, making Muslims the most targeted minority. A total of 39 physical attacks against Muslims were reported in 2016 and 2017. Moreover, Muslims receive the most hateful comments after politicians on social media. ReportHate (AnmeldHad.dk) registered 1100 online incidents during 2016 and 2017 out of which 98% targeted Muslims. About a third of the incidents have been categorized as hate crimes. Several media reports showcase the problem of established media not involving Muslims, seldom using them as sources. The harmful effects of the majority attitude towards Muslims has this year been highlighted in both a Phd dissertation from Aarhus University and in a UN report on Freedom of Religion and Belief. Civil society's response to Islamophobia increased this year, mainly through the Centre for Danish Muslim Relations that published the first Danish Islamophobia report and launched a campaign tackling Islamophobia in politics reaching out to about 350.000 people. To end the inflammatory rhetoric in the public discourse Muslims must both be recognized as a heterogeneous group and as targets of Islamophobia.

## Sammendrag

Opfattelsen af at Islam og muslimer ikke er foreneligt med danske værdier, har præget adskillige lovforslag og tiltag. Iblant dem er en udmelding fra Socialdemokratiets forkvinde Mette Frederiksen der omtalte muslimske friskoler som værende et generelt problem pga. manglende ligheder med majoritets-kulturen. En kampagne af det populistiske "Danskernes parti" opfordrede muslimer til at forlade Danmark. 10 muslimske prædikanter er blevet erklæret persona non-grata i en National sanktionsliste med i alt 11 predikanter. Flere offentlige kampagner med fokus på *negativ social kontrol*, har haft det til fælles at de alle udpeger det som hyppigst blandt muslimer.

Ifølge politiet var muslimer offer for ca 20% af hadforbrydelser begået i 2016, gruppen udgør kun 5% af befolkningen, hvilket betyder at muslimer er den mest udsatte minoritet i Danmark. Det blev registreret 39 fysiske overgreb mod muslimer i 2016 og 2017. På de sociale medier udgør hadefulde kommentarer og livstruende bemærkninger imod muslimer en meget stor del af online hadet. Muslimer er, efter politikere, den gruppe der modtager flest hadefulde kommentarer. Anmeld-Had.dk registrerede 1100 online incidenter, ud af disse var 98% rettede mod muslimer og en trediedel blev rubricerede som hadforbrydelser. Adskillige medierapporter illustrerer det problematiske ved at medierne ikke involverer muslimer og sjældent bruger dem som kilde.

De negative effekter af majoritetens holdninger til muslimer er blevet beskrevet i både en PhD afhandling og i en FN rapport om religionsfrihed i Danmark. Civil samfundets modsvar er stadig stigende på trods af det voksende had mod muslimer. Center for Dansk-Muslimske Relationer publicerede både en rapport om Islamofobi og lancerede en større kampagne, som modsvar til hadefulde politiske og islamofobiske ytringer. Videoen nåede ud til over 350.000 seere. For at den inflammatoriske retorik i den offentlige diskurs skal ændres skal muslimer både anerkendes som en heterogen gruppe, og som mål for Islamofobi.

## Introduction

Denmark hosts a Muslim population of approximately 5%; this is estimated to rise to around 10% in 2050.<sup>1</sup> Religious organizations have been divided by country of origin with Urdu, Arabic or Turkish as their main language. However, they are becoming increasingly Danish, which is demonstrated by the fact that a third of all mosques now conduct their sermons in Danish, a decade ago only one out of ten did.<sup>2</sup> Muslims are slowly becoming a part of society in other ways too; a Muslim graveyard has been established, Muslim chaplains are working in both prisons and hospitals and Muslims are becoming part of the mainstream with Muslim veil wearing women being employed as models and starring for big Danish brands.<sup>3</sup> Yet as is the case in many Western countries, the bias against Muslims has increased dramatically in Denmark after 9/11. For example, a survey in 2016 showed a third of Danes considering Denmark to be at war with Islam.<sup>4</sup> Among minorities, Muslims are the most targeted by hate crime.<sup>5</sup>

And while integration has been shown to be easier in countries in which obtainable criteria of belonging are emphasized like Sweden, France and the Netherlands it is harder in countries like Denmark where the non-obtainable conditions, such as religious and ethnic background, are emphasized. Research further shows that Muslims in Denmark are significantly more affected by political rhetoric than non-religious and non-Muslim immigrants. This in turn directly affects Muslims' trust in democracy and feeling of belonging.<sup>6</sup>

A Voxmeter poll showed 75% of Danes considering it possible to be Danish even though a person's parents are born in a non-western country.<sup>7</sup>

In his report on freedom of religion and belief published in February 2017, UN special rapporteur, Heiner Beilefeldt, noted that Muslims feel threatened by the

1. Conrad Hackett et al, "Europe's Growing Muslim Population", Pew Research Center, November 29, 2017, p 30. <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>

2. Lene Kuhle et al, "Moskeer i Danmark II – en ny kortlægning af danske moskeer og muslimske bedesteder, Aarhus University, December 21, 2017, <http://samtidreligion.au.dk/moskeer-i-danmark-ii/>

3. Cecilie Vittrup Flensburg, "Natasha bærer tørklæde og er model for Noa Noa" DR.dk, August 10, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.dr.dk/levnu/psykologi/natasha-baerer-toerklæde-og-er-model-noa-noa> and Trine Munk-Petersen, "Danmarks første tørklædemodel - positiv mangfoldighed eller accept af ulighed?" Berlingske – b.dk, (Sept 21, 2017), retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/kultur/toerklædemodel-positiv-mangfoldighed-eller-accept-af-ulighed>

4. Keld Vrå Andersen, "Hver tredje dansker mener, at Danmark er i krig med Islam", TV2.dk, (Jul 26, 2016), retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2016-07-26-hver-tredje-dansker-mener-at-danmark-er-i-krig-med-islam>

5. Nationalt Forebyggelsescenter (NFC), "Hadforbrydelser i 2016", Rigspolitiet, September 2017, p 13. <https://www.politi.dk/NR/rdonlyres/F49B206B-3638-4E5B-B3D3-C173BCDAE3FA/0/Hadforbrydelser2016september2017.pdf>

6. Kristina Bakkær Simonsen, "Do They Belong?", Politico, August 2017, p 46-47. <http://politica.dk/politicas-phd-serie/phd-afhandling-er-fra-institut-for-statskundskab-aarhus-universitet/kristina-bakkaer-simonsen/>

7. Ritzau, "OVERBLIK: Dansker-debatten blusser op igen," Kristeligt-Dagblad, (May 5, 2017), retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/overblik-dansker-debatten-blusser-op-igen>

public debate about “Danishness” and “Danish values” and that it is a problem for the cohesion of society.<sup>8</sup>

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Islamophobia is not accepted as a valid term in the public debate but small steps to change the status quo were taken in 2017. The first Islamophobia report was published in April, leading to the term becoming more widespread, for example through a Wikipedia article on Islamophobia.<sup>9</sup> And the first online campaign #SlukforHadet (Eng.: #TurnoftheHate) challenging the Islamophobic rhetoric of especially the Danish People’s Party was launched in October 2017, the subsequent election results were the Danish Peoples party’s worst ever.<sup>10</sup>

However, the year began with the far-right Danish People’s Party, currently in government, trying to ban prayer rooms in public institutions making it harder for especially Muslim students to pray. In February, a bill was put forward in parliament, again spearheaded by the Danish Peoples Party; the V38 bill defined non-Western immigrants and their offspring as non-Danish, and asked the government to drastically reduce the amount of asylum seekers coming to Denmark.<sup>11</sup> The bill does not strip citizens of their citizenship, and are merely symbolical. An online campaign #JegErDansk (Eng.: #IAmDanish) designed to challenge the bill managed to put enough pressure on politicians to result in a re-vote; the new bill was not accepted by parliament.<sup>12</sup>

In May, a National Sanctions list – also known as the “Hate Preacher List” – was put into practice banning several Muslim preachers from entering Denmark. In

8. United Nations, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion and belief on his mission to Denmark,” A/HRC/34/50/Add.1 (December 28, 2016), retrieved February 13, 2018, from [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/34/50/Add.1](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/HRC/34/50/Add.1)

9. Center for Dansk-Muslimske Relationer, “Islamofobiske trends 2016,” retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.cedar.nu/islamofobiske-trends-2016/> and Wikipedia, “Islamofobi,” retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamofobi>

10. Nicolaisen, Peter Ali & Abbasi, Mujahed Sebastian, “Integration, Media, Politics and Discrimination Related to Danish Muslims,” Center for Danish Muslim Relations, Center base report 1 (2017), retrieved february 13, 2018, from: [https://www.sameksistens.dk/fileadmin/user/files/pdf/religion/2017/CEDAR\\_Islamofobirapport\\_2017.pdf](https://www.sameksistens.dk/fileadmin/user/files/pdf/religion/2017/CEDAR_Islamofobirapport_2017.pdf) and Louise Uberg, “DF afviser, at valget er et nederlag - men det er det i den grad, fastslår politisk redaktør,” TV2, November 22, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2017-11-22-df-afviser-at-valget-er-et-nederlag-men-det-er-det-i-den-grad-fastslaar-politisk> and Peter Burhøi, “Muslimer til valgurnerne: Vi er I 2017, vi kan ikke bare sidde ovre i hjørnet og være klassens sure dreng,” Berlingske, October 11, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/nationalt/muslimer-til-valgurnerne-vi-er-i-2017-vi-kan-ikke-bare-sidde-ovre-i-hjoernet-og>

11. Folketinget, V38 om antal beboere i Brøndby Strand med indvandrerbaggrund, February 7, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/vedtagelse/V38/index.htm>

12. Folketinget, F43 Om, hvorvidt det er uforeneligt med at være “dansker” at være indvandrer eller efterkommer af indvandrere fra et ikkevestligt land, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/foresporgsel/F43/BEH1-94/forhandling.htm>, In an interview with the author Alex Sabour from Gorilla Media claim their video reached 90% of the adult population within a few days. And an anonymous lobbyist confirmed to the author that it was the driving force behind a re-vote. Both interviews conducted in May 2017.

September, a renowned Professor Emeritus, Uffe Østergaard, stated he had changed his mind on foreigners, particularly Muslims. He used to welcome the influx of migrants, he now concluded: “Muslims must become Lutherans, or else we are screwed”.<sup>13</sup> It paved the way for a political paradigm shift by raising the “issue of Muslims” and just a few days later the former Minister of Foods, Dan Jørgensen, declared that the Social Democratic Party, the largest party in Denmark, had been wrong all along. He now claimed that foreigners and especially Muslims were a bigger problem than anticipated.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, bias against Muslims intensified with the Social Democratic Party shifting to a populist rhetoric joining the Danish Peoples party in their anti-Muslim efforts, while civil society presented new and innovative ways to counter the hate.



Figure 1: the Danes party distributed the fake tickets above in majority Muslim neighbourhoods, the tickets read; “Have a good journey home”; “From: Copenhagen, To:Far-away-stan”<sup>15</sup>

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

In February 2017, a bill defining non-Western immigrants and their offspring as non-Danish was accepted by parliament with 55 against 54 votes.<sup>16</sup> During the parliamentary debate, Martin Henriksen, the Danish People’s Party, said that especially Muslim immigrants are a problem.<sup>17</sup>

And in an interview about the proposed bill he added: “The more [people] in Denmark with Muslim background, the greater the threat to Danish identity”.<sup>18</sup> Shortly after the introduction of the new bill,

13. Jeppe Elkjær Andersen, “Kendt dansk historiker vender på en tallerken: Muslimer må blive kristne, eller er vi på den,” BT, September 13, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.bt.dk/danmark/kendt-dansk-historiker-vender-paa-en-tallerken-muslimer-maa-blive-kristne-ellers>

14. James Kristoffer Miles, “Dan J.: Vi tog fejl om udlændinge,” Ekstra Bladet, September 16, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.pressreader.com/denmark/ekstra-bladet/20170916/281646780309461>

15. Source: “Danskernes parti uddelte billetter hjem til ‘Longbortistan’, Feb 19 2017, retrieved March 5 2018, from: <https://www.bt.dk/danmark/danskernes-parti-uddelte-billetter-hjem-til-langbortistan-svarene-er-helt-geniale>

16. Folketinget, V 38 Om antal beboere i Brøndby Strand med indvandrerbaggrund, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/vedtagelse/V38/index.htm>

17. Folketinget TV, accessed June 20, 2017, from: <http://www.ft.dk/webtv/video/20161/salen/93.aspx punkt nr 5>

18. Cathrine Bloch, “Jo flere der er i Danmark med muslimsk baggrund, jo større er truslen mod den danske identitet,” Berlingske (February 10, 2017), retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/politiko/jo-flere-der-er-i-danmark-med-muslimsk-baggrund-jo-stoerre-er-truslen-mod-den>

the Danes Party (a small and extreme right-wing political party) ran a campaign in neighbourhoods with a large Muslim population, where they distributed fake tickets to “Far-away-stan” promising to send immigrants “home”.<sup>19</sup> (Fig. 1) In June 2017, just a few months following the campaign the party shut down due to the party leader leaving the party.<sup>20</sup>

A political paradigm shift occurred in September, just two months preceding the local elections, when former Minister of Foods Dan Jørgensen, claimed the Social Democratic Party had been wrong all along; saying that foreigners and especially Muslims were a bigger problem than anticipated.<sup>21</sup> It might be explained by the steady stream of voters leaving the party for the Danish Peoples party.<sup>22</sup> *Den Korte Avis* (Eng.: *The Short Newspaper*), a populist online medium, covered the news by declaring that the Danish People’s Party was spearheading a revolution by pushing the Social Democratic Party into a direction that had been unheard of in the rest of Europe. The news outlet declared that Denmark had become a pioneering anti-foreign country.<sup>23</sup>

In the run-up to the local elections Kim Hammer from the Danish People’s Party was reported to the police for saying that “Muslims destroy the Western world” at a school debate causing some of the attending schoolchildren to leave in tears.<sup>24</sup> The party achieved its worst results since 2001, losing most of its mayoral posts across the country.<sup>25</sup> (Fig. 2) A new populist party called *Nye Borgerlige* (Eng.: *New Middle Class*) claim the Danish People’s Party is too lenient toward Muslims and asks for harsher measures.<sup>26</sup> Just like the Danish People’s party, *Nye Borgerlige* had a poor outcome during the local elections.<sup>27</sup>

19. Flemming Christiansen, “I postkassen I Brøndby Strand: Så rejs dog hjem, fremmede,” *Politiken*, February 17, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art5833445/Så-rejs-dog-hjem-fremmedes>

20. <https://www.ritzau.dk/nyhed/nyheder/vis/fbc0c373-176b-4ef1-8850-009deefb4687>

21. James Kristoffer Miles, “Dan J.: Vi tog fejl om udlændinge,” *Ekstra Bladet*, September 16, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.pressreader.com/denmark/ekstra-bladet/20170916/281646780309461>

22. Morthen Øyen, “DF henter vælgere tilbage fra Socialdemokratiet,” *Altinget*, August 14, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.alinget.dk/artikel/158773-dansk-folkeparti-traekker-vaelgere-tilbage-fra-socialdemokratiet>

23. Karen Jespersen & Ralf Pittelkow, “Kristian Thulesen Dahl er ved at skabe en politisk ‘revolution’, som man ikke kan se i noget andet europæisk land,” *Den Korte Avis*, (September 16, 2017), retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://denkorteavis.dk/2017/thulesen-dahl-er-ved-at-skabe-en-politisk-revolution-som-man-ikke-ser-i-noget-andet-europaeisk-land/>

24. James Kristoffer Miles, “DF’er chokerede små skolebørn med udtalelse om muslimer,” – *Ekstra Bladet*, October 10, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/danskpolitik/df-er-chokerede-smaa-skoleboern-med-udtalelse-om-muslimer/6862966>, the incident was reported to the Police by the ReportHate.dk portal.

25. Louise Uberg, “DF afviser, at valget er et nederlag - men det er den i den grad, fastslår politisk redaktør,” *TV2*, November 22, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2017-11-22-df-afviser-at-valget-er-et-nederlag-men-det-er-det-i-den-grad-fastslaar-politisk>

26. Mathias Mosskov, “Ny partiformand snart klar til valg: I værste fald kan det ende i borgerkrig,” *TV2*, August 2, 2016, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2016-08-02-ny-partiformand-snart-klar-til-valg-i-vaerste-fald-kan-det-ende-i-en-borgerkrig>

27. *Politikken*, retrieved 13 February 2017, from: [http://politiken.dk/indland/politik/kommunalvalg\\_2017/](http://politiken.dk/indland/politik/kommunalvalg_2017/)



Figure 2: The president of the far-right Danish Peoples party claimed that the local elections had not been a catastrophe, fellow party members and most experts disagreed and called it the party's worst election til date.<sup>28</sup>

Danish People's Party called her "Fucking Muslim" during debates and asked her to remove her veil.<sup>29</sup>

## Public Campaigns

The issue of negative social control has been the subject of quite a few public campaigns in 2017 in which Muslim parents are singled out as the issue.<sup>30</sup> The municipality of Copenhagen launched a campaign about negative social control – "Love is a right" – as well as a 12-step approach to combat negative social control.<sup>31</sup> As a lead up to the municipality's campaign, a report was published in which young Muslim women were described as in need of help to stand up to their families.<sup>32</sup> On their campaign site, the municipality states that "Many young people with a different ethnic background than Danish cannot choose their partners". Under a picture of a young girl in a hijab, it is further stated: "If you know someone targeted by social

28. Source: "Tulles nedtur total", Nov 22 2017, retrieved March 5 2018, from <https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/danskpoltik/tulles-nedtur-total/6926662>

29. Interview with Noura Bendali by the author, 26th Nov 2017

30. Regeringen, "Forebyggelse af æresrelaterede konflikter og negativ social kontrol - national handlingsplan," October, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from <http://uim.dk/file/integration/national-handlingsplan-forebyggelse-af-aeresrelaterede-konflikter-og-negativ-social-kontrol.pdf>

31. Ekspertgruppen til forebyggelse af social kontrol, Anbefalinger fra ekspertgruppen til forebyggelse af social kontrol (Copenhagen, TrykKeriet), Københavns Kommune Beskæftigelses- og Integrationsforvaltningen, May, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: [https://www.kk.dk/sites/default/files/uploaded-files/rapport\\_om\\_anbefalinger\\_fra\\_ekspertgruppe\\_til\\_forebyggelse\\_af\\_social\\_kontrol.pdf](https://www.kk.dk/sites/default/files/uploaded-files/rapport_om_anbefalinger_fra_ekspertgruppe_til_forebyggelse_af_social_kontrol.pdf) and Navigent, Beskæftigelses- og Integrationsforvaltningen i Københavns Kommune, Veje til et godt ungdomsliv (2013) retrieved from February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.kk.dk/sites/default/files/uploaded-files/Inspirationskatalog%20om%20veje%20til%20et%20godt%20ungdomsliv.pdf>

32. Ekspertgruppen til forebyggelse af social kontrol, Anbefalinger fra ekspertgruppen til forebyggelse af social kontrol (Copenhagen, TrykKeriet), Københavns Kommune Beskæftigelses- og Integrationsforvaltningen (May, 2017) retrieved February 13, 2018, from: [https://www.kk.dk/sites/default/files/uploaded-files/rapport\\_om\\_anbefalinger\\_fra\\_ekspertgruppe\\_til\\_forebyggelse\\_af\\_social\\_kontrol.pdf](https://www.kk.dk/sites/default/files/uploaded-files/rapport_om_anbefalinger_fra_ekspertgruppe_til_forebyggelse_af_social_kontrol.pdf)



Figure 3: The “social control” campaign site by the Copenhagen Municipality, on which a supposed Muslim woman kisses a supposed non-Muslim man.<sup>34</sup>

control, share your concerns with us”. Stories with titles such as “Meet Jasmine who cut ties with her parents” are also to be found on the website.<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 3)

In October 2017, the Institute for Human Rights published a report about negative social control, where they recommended those under social control to avoid speaking with their parents.<sup>35</sup> Finally, the Ministry of Immigration and Integration conducted a campaign about negative social control called “With honor and respect”.<sup>36</sup> Common for all campaigns is that they all paint a picture of negative social control as common among minority Danes, particularly Muslims, presupposing negative social control being a Muslim issue that the state should solve *for*, not *with* the Muslims.

## Justice System

The National Sanction List, also known as the “Hate Preacher List”, is a list of religious preachers who are banned from entering Denmark for two years. First passed in December 2016, the National Sanction List was put into practice in May 2017, and further expanded in December 2017. According to the Danish Immigration Service, “the law is a result of a political agreement about initiatives relating to religious preachers, who seek to undermine Danish laws and values, and support a par-

33. Københavns Kommune, Kærlighed er en ret retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.kk.dk/socialkontrol>

34. Source: “Kærlighed er en ret”, Unable to find publ. date, retrieved March 5 2018, from: <https://www.kk.dk/socialkontrol>

35. Institut for Menneskerettigheder: “Ekstrem social kontrol,” (København, KLS Pureprint, 2017), retrieved February 13, 2018, from: [https://menneskeret.dk/sites/menneskeret.dk/files/media/dokumenter/udgivelser/ligebehandling\\_2017/social\\_kontrol\\_2017.pdf](https://menneskeret.dk/sites/menneskeret.dk/files/media/dokumenter/udgivelser/ligebehandling_2017/social_kontrol_2017.pdf) and Politiken, “Ny rapport: Vent med at kontakte forældre I sager om ekstrem social kontrol,” November 13, 2018, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://politiken.dk/indland/art6204589/Vent-med-at-kontakte-for%C3%A6ldre-i-sager-om-ekstrem-social-kontrol>

36. Med al Ære og Respekt, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://medalrespekt.dk/om-kampagnen/>

allel concept of the law”.<sup>37</sup> The list includes: Mohamad bin Abd al Rahman bin Milhi bin Mohamad al Arefe, Kamal El-Mekki, Bilal Philips, Terry Dale Jones, Salman Bin Fahad Alodah, Mohamad Rateb Abdalah Al-Nabulsi, Khalid Yasin, Muhammad Raza, Alparslan Kuytul, Ismail al-Wahwah and Abdullah bin Radi Almoaede Alshammary. It has so far not been possible to gain access to documents explaining why the individuals on the National Sanction List have been banned from entering Denmark. The Danish Immigration Service, which is responsible for executing the list, states: “We cannot comment on specific persons. In general, we can state that we do thorough research through open sources - such as homepages, news sites and social media – on whether there are any religious preachers who fulfil the conditions set forth in the law on being registered on the National Sanction List.”<sup>38</sup>

After the European Court of Human Rights upheld Belgium’s ban on burqas and full-face Islamic veils, a so-called mask ban (popularly referred to as the niqab ban) was proposed by the Danish People’s Party in October 2017.<sup>39</sup> Among the politicians supportive of the ban are left-wing parties, the Social Democrats and the Danish Social Liberal Party, explaining their support by stating that they are against the oppression of Muslim women.<sup>40</sup> The ban comes in response to a very low number of niqab-observers in Denmark. A report from 2010 states that 200 women wear the face covering in Denmark, while Dr. Kumm Mirza who focused her research from 2017 on “honor-related” legislation in Denmark estimated only 35 women wearing either the burka or niqab in Denmark.<sup>41</sup>

Danish law already contains two paragraphs regarding face coverings and masking. Article 134b states that it is punishable by jail (up to 6 months) or a fine if anyone covers their face during meetings, assemblies, processions, or other

37. New to Denmark, The Danish Immigration Service, National Sanction List, last updated December 12, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.nyidanmark.dk/en-GB/Words-and-concepts/US/Religious-workers/National-sanction-list>

38. E-mail from head of office, Pernielle Piel-Steenberg to Danmarks Radio, own translation, from Maria Sæhl, “Religiøs forkynder fra Saudi Arabien må ikke rejse ind i landet,” Danmarks Radio, December 12, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/religioes-forkynder-fra-saudi-arabien-maa-ikke-rejse-ind-i-landet>

39. Lizzie Dearden, “European Court of Human Rights upholds Belgium’s ban on Burqas and full-face Islamic veils,” Independent, July 11, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/belgium-burqa-ban-upheld-european-court-of-human-rights-dakir-v-full-face-islamic-veils-headscarf-a7835156.html> and Folketinget, B 1 Forslag til folketingsbeslutning om forbud mod maskering og heldækkende beklædning I det offentlige rum, October 4, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/beslutningsforslag/b1/index.htm>

40. Issa Jeppesen, “S skifter holdning til maskeringsforbud: Det handler om hvilket land vi ønsker,” Danmarks Radio, October 6, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/s-skifter-holdning-til-maskeringsforbud-det-handler-om-hvilket-land-vi-oensker> and Ritzau, “Radikale skifter spor og vil forbyde burka,” Berlingske, July 12, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/politiko/radikale-skifter-spor-og-vil-forbyde-burka>

41. Morthen Skjoldager, Jurist Sabba Mirza: Lov mod muslimske klædedragter gør ingen forskel, Politiken, October 15, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art6159877/Lov-mod-muslimske-kl%C3%A6dedragter-g%C3%B8r-ingen-forskel>

events in public space that hinder the identification and not for a praiseworthy cause, i.e. to protect oneself from cold weather.<sup>42</sup> It is also punishable by a fine or jail, up to 4 years, if someone illegally forces anyone to wear a face covering that hides their face.<sup>43</sup> Mirza states that there is no evidence that women who cover their faces are forced to it, and that the law thus will mainly effect women who wear the face veil voluntarily.<sup>44</sup> Martin Henriksen a Danish politician and MP from the Danish People's Party stated that the niqab ban is the first step towards a ban of the hijab in public institutions.<sup>45</sup>

## Employment

A poll from the market research institute, Megafon, demonstrates that eight out of ten Danish Muslims note that attitudes towards Islam have worsened over the past 10 years. 37% share feelings of being looked down upon because of their Muslim background, another 33% feel that their Muslim background has made it more difficult for them to get a job and 32% state that marked physical appearance has been negatively reprimanded.

According to sociologist Brian Arly Jacobsen, discriminatory treatment can lead to social marginalization and isolation, which is already seen in parts of the Danish Muslim population. According to Jacobsen, non-Muslim Danes will begin to copy the way the public debate speaks about Muslims, and thereby legitimize reprimands on Muslims' clothes and religiosity.<sup>46</sup>

There is no data on discrimination of Muslims in the Danish employment sector. It is illegal to collect official data categorized by religious belonging and since civil society have not collected such data there is none. Although according to Amal Hassani, the author of a report on discrimination in Denmark, there are quite a few cases of discrimination against especially Muslim women, most have just not been recorded.<sup>47</sup>

## Education

The Board of Equal Treatment rejected a complaint in April 2017 from a group of students who were banned from praying on school property. The board stated

42. Danske Love, Straffeloven §134 b, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://danskelove.dk/straffeloven/134b>

43. Danske Love, Straffeloven §260, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://danskelove.dk/straffeloven/260>

44. Morthen Skjoldager, Jurist Sabba Mirza: Lov mod muslimske klædedragter gør ingen forskel, Politiken, October 15, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://politiken.dk/indland/art6159877/Lov-mod-muslimske-kl%C3%A6dedragter-g%C3%B8r-ingen-forskel>

45. Ritau, "DF: Tørklædeforbud kan være næste skridt", Jyllands-Posten, October 6, 2017, retrieved February 13 2018, from: <https://jyllands-posten.dk/politik/ECE9930334/df-toerklædeforbud-kan-vaere-naeste-skridt/>

46. Jonas H.R. Moestrup and Peter Vesterlund, "Ny undersøgelse blandt danske muslimer: En tredjedel føler sig set ned på" TV2, March 6, 2018, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2017-03-06-ny-undersogelse-blandt-danske-muslimere-en-tredjedel-foeler-sig-set-ned-paa>

47. E-mail correspondence between the author and Amal Hassani, March 2 2018.

that praying on campus caused worry, conflict, and great unease for other students and employees.<sup>48</sup> In May, members of the Danish People's Party petitioned for a resolution to ban prayer rooms in all public educational institutions.<sup>49</sup> The aim of the motion was to assure that public educational institutions would not support an Islamization of the Danish Society. As a result, the Ministry of Education conducted a survey of 1775 schools discovering that out of the 1261 participating institutions, only 27 had prayer rooms (or similar spaces) on campus.<sup>50</sup> Out of these, 15 were mainly used by Christian student organizations.<sup>51</sup> When confronted with the questionnaire's results, Marie Krarup from the Danish Peoples Party, who proposed the motion, replied: "There is something wrong with the facts, there's nothing wrong with our motion for resolution."<sup>52</sup>

Muslim free schools are also under heavy surveillance following an episode, where suspicious material was found during a federal inspection at one of the schools.<sup>53</sup> After the episode the Danish People's Party, along with the Social Democratic Party first demanded for a more intense supervision of all Muslim free schools and later for a shutdown of all schools with 50% or more of the students being of "foreign background".<sup>54</sup> Mette Frederiksen, leader of the Social Democratic Party, added that: "I must be honest and say that it is fundamentally not a good idea with Muslim free schools (...) a Muslim free school with a foundation in Islam is not part of the majority culture in Denmark".<sup>55</sup>

In September the Ministry of Education issued a heavily criticized survey blamed for smearing Muslims and being tendentious. In the survey students were

48. Ligebehandlingsnævnet, "En erhvervsskole har indført ordensregler, der indeholder et forbud mod udøvelse af religiøse ritualer på skolen", May 5, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from: <https://ast.dk/naevn/ligebehandling-snaevnet/nyheder-fra-ligebehandlingsnaevnet/lbn/nyheder-2017/en-erhvervsskole-har-indfort-ordensregler-der-indeholder-et-forbud-mod-udovelse-af-religiose-ritualer-pa-skolen>

49. The motion for resolution was proposed for the first time on January 18th, but was then revoked and proposed again on May 16th, retrieved February 13 2018, from: <http://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/ beslutningsforslag/b54/index.htm> and <http://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/ beslutningsforslag/b152/index.htm>

50. Folketinget, "Opgørelse over udbredelse af bederum og lignende faciliteter på de videregående uddannelser", July 18, 2017, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <http://www.ft.dk/samling/20161/ almdel/ unu/ bilag/133/index.htm>

51. Christian Birk, "Bederum er sjældne på offentlige skoler", Kristeligt Dagblad.dk, July 11, 2107, retrieved February 14, 2018 from: <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kirke-tro/bederum-er-sjaeldne-paa-offentlige-skoler>

52. Anna Sol Jørgensen, "DF om bederum på skoler: Der er noget galt med fakta - ikke med vores beslutningsforslag" DR.dk, July 12, 2017, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/df-om-bederum-paa-skoler-der-er-noget-galt-med-fakta-ikke-med-vores> (own translation)

53. Jens Anton Bjørnager and Henrik Jensen, "Lærebøger om jihad fundet i kopirum på muslimsk friskole" Berlingske – b.dk, July 14, 2017, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/nationalt/laereboeger-om-jihad-fundet-i-kopirum-paa-muslimsk-friskole>

54. Morten Bjerregaard, "S og R er uenige om fremtiden for muslimske friskoler" DR.dk, September 28, 2017, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/s-og-r-er-uenige-om-fremtiden-muslimske-friskoler>

55. Andreas Karker and Jacob Friberg, "Mette Frederiksen i brutalt opgør: »Luk alle muslimske friskoler«", Berlingske – b.dk, August 11, 2017, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <https://www.b.dk/politiko/mette-frederiksen-i-brutalt-opgoer-luk-alle-muslimske-friskoler>

asked amongst other things whether they had experienced Muslim students being victims of social control if they did not follow Islamic rules.<sup>56</sup>

The book *På Ulige Fod* (Eng.: On Unequal Grounds) showcases the correlation between bad test results by minority Danish students and the discriminatory treatment of them in school curricula.<sup>57</sup> When minority Danes are visible it is often only under special circumstances and the ethnic Dane thereby constitutes the standard that frames the general learning situation, leaving the ethnic and religious minority students on unequal grounds.

## Media

A study called *Dem vi taler om* (Eng.: The ones we talk about) by *Ansvarlig Presse* (Eng.: Responsible Media) was published in February and demonstrates an underrepresentation of ethnic and religious minorities in the media.<sup>58</sup> When minority Danes are used as experts, it is mostly in stories about immigrants and Islam. Furthermore, the study shows that media can play an active role in portraying a negative image of minorities. Certain media stories problematize whether minorities' religion, family patterns and traditions are compatible with Danish law, traditions and norms. A yet unpublished media analysis on Muslims and Islam in Danish media by journalist Bent Dahl Jensen points to politicians setting the tone in the debate about Muslims.<sup>59</sup> For example, in relation to the debate on a "Niqab ban" the majority of sources heard were politicians promoting a ban.

Preben Brock Jacobsen, author to the newly published book, *Islam i Medierne* (Eng.: Islam in the Media), argues that a critique of Islam is much more apparent than a defense of it, as he found 256 critical articles compared to 88 non-critical articles in his analysis.<sup>60</sup> The subjects range from Islam being the root cause of terror, Islam as anti-democratic to Muslim oppression of women. 47% of the articles point out religion as the main cause of failed integration or to terror, and only 14% of the articles have a socio-economic explanation. Jacobsen argues the consequence of a one-sided negative representation of Islam and Muslims is that the mainstream population begin to construct a stereotype of Islam and Muslims.<sup>61</sup>

56. Melene Romme-Mølby, "Hård kritik af ministeriets undersøgelse: Muslimhætzende og tendentiøs", September 14, 2017, retrieved February 14, 2018: <https://gymnasieskolen.dk/haard-kritik-af-ministeriets-undersogelse-muslimhætzende-og-tendentioes>

57. Christian Horst, "På Ulige Fod - Etniske minoritetsbørn som et skoleeksempel", Aarhus Universitetsforlag 2017, the text is a summary of the book.

58. Hanne Jørndrup, "Dem vi taler om", February 2017, retrieved February 14, 2018, p 3, from: [http://ansvarlig-presse.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/AP\\_Dem-vi-taler-om\\_2017.pdf](http://ansvarlig-presse.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/AP_Dem-vi-taler-om_2017.pdf)

59. Bent Dahl Jensen, "Hvem tegner medie billedet af muslimer i danske medier", December 2017, yet unpublished. The study is based on the seven major newspapers (Online version).

60. Jesper Petersen and Preben Brock Jacobsen, "Islam i medierne", Systime, June 2017, the text is a summary of the book and Jacobsens study is based on 2850 articles, the articles are from major newspapers: Ekstra Bladet, Jyllands-Posten, Kristeligt Dagblad and Politiken.

61. Preben Brock Jacobsen, "Danske medier skævvrider billedet af islam", June 1, 2017, retrieved February 14, 2018, from: <https://hsfo.dk/Danmark-Debat/Danske-medier-skaevvrider-billedet-af-islam/artikel/112065>

A study of the media coverage on negative social control was made in December. The analysis was conducted on *Danmarks Radio's (DR)* online platform during 2017. Out of the 50 times “social control” was used on the platform, 47 was tied to Muslims and Islam.<sup>62</sup>

In general the state-funded tv station DR is one of the more balanced in its reporting about Islam and Muslims. TV2, the largest tv-channel however, is sometimes accused of being biased toward Muslims. An example that spurred a lot of such critic was in relation to a tv-series in 2016. The National Sanctions list was a direct result of that heavily criticized tv-series called “Mosques unveiled” that TV2 aired in the spring of 2016. After massive critic and through lobbying by the Center for Danish Muslim Relations, the channel have tried to balance its content; amongst other things with an anti-racist campaign that went viral in the beginning of 2017.

Among newspapers Ekstrabladet and Jyllands-Posten have been notorious for its anti-Muslim bias. The Cartoon crisis began because of a few satirical cartoons being published in Jyllands-Posten in 2005, since then many of the people behind those cartoons have stopped working for the paper and its since become a bit more nuanced.

Radio24syv is a large radiostation with radiohosts of diverging political opinions but one of them have been called a far-right populist and his name is Mikael Jalving. He claims Muslims will be the end of Europe if Europeans don't stop them from entering the continent.<sup>63</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

According to the National Police report on hate crime committed in 2016, 274 violations were registered, 88 were religiously motivated and 56 cases targeted Muslims. Thus, Muslims that only represents 5% of the population represents 20% of registered hate crime. That is an increase from 2015 by 15 cases making Muslims the most targeted group in Denmark.<sup>64</sup> The National Police suggests that Muslims being the largest and most visible minority explains the high numbers of violations directed towards the group. According to the report most hate crimes against Muslims take place on the internet while other religious and racially motivated violations often involve other forms of crime, i.e. violence, threats, malicious damage/graffiti etc.<sup>65</sup> However, Muslim women in Denmark are heavily targeted

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62. Tahir Khiljee, “Social kontrol på DR”, Center for Dansk-Muslimske Relationer, 16th Dec 2017.

63. Otto Lerche Kristiansen, “Et højrepopulistisk propagandaprogram forklædt som et almindeligt debatprogram om islam?”, 18 aug 2016, accessed March 1, 2018 from: <https://www.information.dk/kultur/2016/08/hojrepopulistisk-propagandaprogram-forklaedt-almindeligt-debatprogram-islam>

64. Mikkel Abildgaard og Julia Friis Jørgensen, “Flere muslimer udsættes for hadforbrydelser i Danmark”, friisjulia.wixsite.com, No date, 2017, retrieved Feb 13, 2018, from: [https://friisjulia.wixsite.com/hadforbrydelser/baggrunden?lipi=urn%3Ali%3Apage%3Ad\\_flagship3\\_messaging%3B8L8Yv17hQ3yRmdp6m5qKYA%3D%3D](https://friisjulia.wixsite.com/hadforbrydelser/baggrunden?lipi=urn%3Ali%3Apage%3Ad_flagship3_messaging%3B8L8Yv17hQ3yRmdp6m5qKYA%3D%3D)

65. Nationalt Forebyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser i 2016”, Rigspolitiet, September 2017, p 13. <https://www.politi.dk/NR/rdonlyres/F49B206B-3638-4E5B-B3D3-C173BCDAE3FA/0/Hadforbrydelser2016september2017.pdf>

by physical hate crime and discrimination according to NGOs.<sup>66</sup> From the portal AnmeldHad.dk (Eng.: ReportHate), a total of 39 physical attacks against Muslims were reported in 2016 and 2017.<sup>67</sup>

In February 2017, a 16-year old boy named Ali was attacked by four of his majority Danish classmates, who threw a Molotov-cocktail on him.<sup>68</sup> According to Ali's older brother, Muhammed, they had been making racist comments and other minor incidents had been going on for years. They had told Ali to go back to his own country and called him degrading names related to Muslims and immigrants.<sup>69</sup> The attack did not lead to much debate and was moderately covered in media. The silence surrounding the case did in itself result in some debate about political and media bias.<sup>70</sup>

Just after Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, 16-year old Tarek and his friends participated in a demonstration at the US embassy in December 2017. Tarek and his friends shouted "Fuck Trump" after which they were allegedly attacked by 7 policemen. The policemen ran towards them and kicked Tarek to the ground. (Fig. 4) As they pushed him down, he claim they hit him with their fists and shouted "Muslim pig" and "Stupid Muslim".<sup>72</sup>

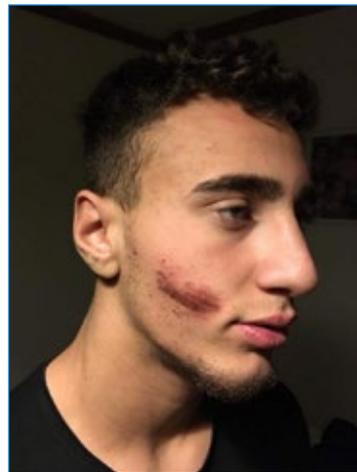


Figure 4: Private photo taken by the mother of Tarek, here seen with lesions allegedly caused by police violence.<sup>71</sup>

When Tarek's mother, Iman, and his 11-year old sister went to the station to pick him up, the police detained the mother. At the police station she claims a strip search in front of male officers was conducted, when protesting they asserted her that they would not look at her body.<sup>73</sup> The family have contacted a psychologist after the trauma and have

66. Nina Manojlovic-Karlshøj, "Forgotten women: the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women in Denmark", May 2016, retrieved 14 February 2018, from: [http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/factsheet\\_denmark\\_-\\_en\\_final.pdf](http://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/factsheet_denmark_-_en_final.pdf)

67. E-mail correspondance between author and CFE, 7th Nov 2017

68. Mads Otte, "Folkeskole i Ry er i chok: Vi er chokerede og rystede," TV2 ØSTJYLLAND, Feb 07, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.tv2ostjylland.dk/artikel/folkeskole-i-ry-er-i-chok-vi-er-chokerede-og-rystede>.

69. Simon Boas, "Drenge ville angiveligt brænde Ali levende: 'Han er blevet truet i årevis'," www.bt.dk, February 08, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.bt.dk/krimi/drenge-ville-angiveligt-braende-ali-levende-han-er-blevet-truet-i-aarevis>.

70. Paula Larrain, "Paula Larrain: Nå, det var bare fire danske drenge?" Altinget.dk, February 08, 2017, accessed Feb 13, 2018, <http://www.alinget.dk/artikel/paula-larrain-naa-det-var-bare-danske-drenge>.

71. Source: The mothers facebook wall, Dec 11 2017, retrieved March 5 2018.

72. "Politivold mod mor og søn," Arbejderen, December 14, 2017, accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.arbejderen.dk/indland/politivold-mod-mor-og-s%C3%B8n>.

73. James Kristoffer Miles, "DF'er chokerede små skolebørn med udtalelse om muslimer," – Ekstra Bladet, October 10, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/danskpoltik/dfer-chokerede-smaa-skoleboern-med-udtalelse-om-muslimer/6862966>.

talked to media, NGOs and to the Independent Police Appeals Authority (DUP).<sup>74</sup> The Vice Police Chief Jesper Lauenborg Bangsgaard at the Copenhagen Police believe the mother and son might be lying about the incident; nonetheless, he stated the incident would be investigated.<sup>75</sup>

## Internet

The institute for Human Rights published a report about online hate showing one out of seven online comments on Facebook were hateful. Hateful comments were defined as threats or discrimination in regards to one of eight areas including age, political orientation and religious affiliation.<sup>76</sup> The report showed that most hateful comments were about religion (40%) and foreigners (34%). Politicians are the most targeted group on social media, followed by Muslims and non-western foreigners. Among the hateful comments targeting religion 86% was directed towards Islam. The ReportHate portal registered almost 1100 online incidents during 2016 and 2017 of which 98% targeted Muslims. About a third of the incidents have been categorized as hate crimes.<sup>77</sup>

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

“For Frihed” (Eng.: For Freedom) and their political wing “Stram Kurs” (Eng.: Tough Line), formerly known as “PEGIDA” are led by lawyer Rasmus Paludan, who claims to be the most radical in his views on foreigners.<sup>78</sup> Paludan issued a controversial list of 20 people in relation to the local elections. The list consisted of nineteen Muslims and one Non-Muslim activist the party said would be expelled from Denmark if they won. (Fig. 5) None of the nine “Stram Kurs” candidates were voted into office in the 2017 local elections.<sup>79</sup>

The Foreign- and Integration Minister Inger Støjberg (from Venstre, *The Liberal Party of Denmark*), celebrated her 50th restriction against non-Western foreigners with a celebratory cake in March 2017.<sup>80</sup> This was criticized by fellow politicians and experts,

74. AnmeldHad.dk (Eng.: ReportHate.dk) have registered the event.

75. Alexander Jonassen, “Mor og søn anklager politiet for vold og racisme: De slog og sagde ‘perker’,” Formatformat.dk, December 21, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <https://formatformat.dk/artikel/17984/betjentene-slog-ham-stav-gav-ham-flere-knytnaevneslag/>.

76. “Hadefulde ytringer på Facebook,” Institut for Menneskerettigheder, December 12, 2017, p. 1, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/udgivelser/hadefulde-ytringer-paa-facebook>.

77. E-mail correspondence between author and CFE, 7th Nov 2017

78. Stefan Christensen, “Nyt indvandrerkritisk parti stiller op i Albertslund,” TV 2 Lorry, October 25, 2017, , retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.tv2lorry.dk/artikel/nyt-indvandrerkritisk-parti-stiller-op-i-albertslund>.

79. Julia Friis Jørgensen and Mikkel Sølberg Abildgaard, “Hadforbrydelser mod muslimer i danmark,” Friisjulia.wixsite.com, retrieved February 13, 2018, [https://friisjulia.wixsite.com/hadforbrydelser?lipi=urn%253Ali%253Apage%253Ad\\_flagship3\\_messaging%253B8L8Yv17hQ3yRmdp6m5qKYA%253D%253D](https://friisjulia.wixsite.com/hadforbrydelser?lipi=urn%253Ali%253Apage%253Ad_flagship3_messaging%253B8L8Yv17hQ3yRmdp6m5qKYA%253D%253D).

80. Simon Fancony, “Støjberg forarger: Fejrer udlændingestramning nr. 50 med lagkage,” Politikendk, March 14, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <https://politiken.dk/inland/art5870543/St%C3%B8jberg-forarger-Fejrer-udl%C3%A6ndingestramning-nr.-50-med-lagkage>.

who argued the publicity stunt was only to gain votes from far-right sympathizers.<sup>81</sup>

She also made headlines both for lying about her education, about statistics in relation to welfare and about a kindergarten she claimed did not allow pork to be served because of Muslims dietary preferences.<sup>83</sup> She used the satirical cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed from 2005 as a wallpaper on her phone and published it on social media.<sup>84</sup> It caused the former chief of security services (PET) to call her both childish and a security threat.<sup>85</sup> She also made headlines for the



Figure 5: List of 20 public figures Rasmus Paludan promises to expel if he wins the local elections.<sup>82</sup>

81. Jakob Stig Jørgensen, Thomas Søgegaard Rohde, and Cathrine Bloesch, "Pind blander sig i kage-debat: »Jeg gider ikke at tale dårligt om Inger. Jeg kan godt lide hende. Men altså; jeg havde ikke gjort det.«" Www.b.dk, March 20, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <https://www.b.dk/politisk-morgenpost/pind-blander-sig-i-kage-debat-jeg-gider-ikke-at-tale-daarligt-om-inger> and Katrine Frederikke Wandrup, "Politisk ekspert: Derfor delte Inger Støjberg kage-billedet," Www.bt.dk, March 15, 2017, retrieved March 13, 2018, <https://www.bt.dk/politik/politisk-ekspert-derfor-delte-inger-stoeborg-kage-billedet>.

82. Source: the "Stram Kurs" webpage Unable to find publ date, retrieved March 5 2018, from <https://stramkurs.dk/vores-politik/top-20-de-skal-ud/>, Sober minoritetsforskning, "Fejlinformation af befolkning og politikere", soberminoritetsforskning.wordpress.com, November 27, 2017, retrieved March 22, 2018, from <https://soberminoritetsforskning.wordpress.com/>.

83. Lars Vogt, "Minister forskønnede sin uddannelse," Www.bt.dk, December 09, 2009, accessed February 13, 2018, <https://www.bt.dk/politik/minister-forskoennede-sin-uddannelse> and Marie Rask Glerup, "Faktatjek: Venstre bruger misvisende tal i kontanthjælpsdebat," DR.dk, March 5, 2015, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/faktatjek-venstre-bruger-misvisende-tal-i-kontanthjælpsdebat> and LIne Tolstrup Holm, "Støjberg beklager usand anekdote om hamburgerryg," Www.b.dk, January 11, 2016, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.b.dk/nationalt/stoeborg-beklager-usand-anekdote-om-hamburgerryg>.

84. Ritzau, "Støjberg har Muhammedtegning som baggrundsskærm på sin iPad," Information, September 26, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <https://www.information.dk/telegram/2017/09/stoeborg-muhammedtegning-baggrundsskaerm-paa-ipad>.

85. Daniel Bue Lauritzen, "Tidligere PET-chef revser Støjbergs opslag: Hun sætter sikkerheden på spil," Altinget.dk, September 27, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.alinget.dk/artikel/tidligere-pet-chef-revser-stoeborgs-opslag-hun-saetter-sikkerheden-paa-spil>.

various restrictions to immigrants and asylum seekers that she pushed through; drastically decreasing the number of approved asylum seekers and proposed to send rejected asylum seekers behind bars or to a deserted island.<sup>86</sup>

Intact Denmark is linked and modeled on Intact America, campaigning against the widespread practice of male circumcision in the US. Intact America aims to transfer its ideology, slogans and propaganda to Denmark. American Intactivists refer to Denmark as a “Ground Zero” regarding the circumcision debate, hoping a legal ban in Denmark can be used to further their agenda in the US. A leading figure in the Danish circumcision debate providing Intact with arguments and often poorly conducted research to prove his point is Morten Frisch, professor at the *State Serum Institute*. On social media, where Dr. Frisch posts stories about male circumcision on an almost daily basis, he routinely describes Jews and Muslims in a scornful and demeaning manner, and frequently allows others to post outright anti-Semitic and Islamophobic comments.<sup>87</sup>

In June 2017, Dr. Frisch posted the article “Violence is more often part of child-rearing in non-western families”, comparing male circumcision to child abuse, arguing that there is no difference between hitting your child in the face with your fist and circumcising him.<sup>88</sup>

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

### Politics

The first larger initiative to specifically tackle Islamophobia in politics was funded and executed by the Center for Danish Muslim Relations in the run-up to the 2017 local elections.<sup>89</sup> The #SlukforHadet (#TurnoftheHate) campaign reached more than 350.000 viewers even though Facebook removed it for a week without an explanation.<sup>90</sup> Several voices were also specifically raised against Foreign- and

86. Rick Noack, “Denmark wants to seize jewellery and cash from refugees,” *The Washington Post*, December 18, 2015, retrieved February 13, 2018, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/12/17/denmark-wants-to-seize-jewelry-from-refugees/?utm\\_term=.43c9834be30b](http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/12/17/denmark-wants-to-seize-jewelry-from-refugees/?utm_term=.43c9834be30b) and Bent Dahl Jensen, “Færre asylansøgere får ophold i Danmark,” *Sameksistens.dk*, November 25, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.sameksistens.dk/nyhed/article/faerre-asylansoegere-faar-ophold-i-danmark/> and “Dansk Folkeparti vil spærre udviste børn inde,” *Nyheder.tv2.dk*, November 29, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2017-11-30-dansk-folkeparti-vil-spaerre-udviste-boern-inde> and Ole Damkjær, “Støjberg åben over for øde ø til afviste asylansøgere,” *Www.b.dk*, December 06, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.b.dk/nationalt/stoeborg-aaben-over-for-oede-oe-til-afviste-asylansoegere>.

87. “Intactivism feeds anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Denmark,” *Medium.com*, March 10, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <https://medium.com/@circuminfo.dk/intactivism-feeds-anti-semitism-and-islamophobia-in-denmark-2452840510d0>.

88. Screenshot from Morten Frisch Facebook wall on the 9th of June 2017.

89. Peter Burhøi, “Muslimer til valgurnerne: »Vi er i 2017, vi kan ikke bare sidde ovre i hjørnet og være klassens sure dreng«,” *Www.b.dk*, October 11, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from <http://www.b.dk/nationalt/muslimer-til-valgurnerne-vi-er-i-2017-vi-kan-ikke-bare-sidde-ovre-i-hjoernet-og>.

90. Bent Dahl Jensen, “Facebook fjerner muslimsk kampagnevideo,” *Sameksistens.dk*, October 26, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, from <http://www.sameksistens.dk/nyhed/article/facebook-fjerner-muslimsk-kampagnevideo/>.

Integration Minister, Inger Støjberg. Amongst them the former PET chief, the former Integration minister and fellow party member Birte Hornbech. Hornbech was highly critical over the “us” and “them” mentality of Støjberg.<sup>91</sup>

## Media

Denmark’s Radio aired a radio program called Koranskolen (The Quran school). The program gave imams a platform to explain Islam without the critical approach common elsewhere. The host motivated it by saying; “We hear less of the imams because many of them don’t feel comfortable talking to the press. It is telling that they constantly feel accused and therefore have reservations regarding the press. It’s an important thing to fix...”.<sup>92</sup>

Another program also by Denmark’s Radio that aired on TV in the beginning of 2017 focused on the challenges of a few women converting to Islam. The show was named Når naboens datter bliver Muslim (Eng.: When the neighbor’s daughter turns Muslim).<sup>93</sup>

As a counterpart to mainstream media, Muslims and other minority Danes have launched their own media channels. Radio WAIH established by a group of Muslims with the aim of nuancing the current media landscape has launched several online campaigns, amongst them a campaign on islamophobia, the Niqab-ban and Muslim free schools.<sup>94</sup>

## Internet

The social media campaign #JegerDansk (#IamDanish) by Gorilla Media was designed to challenge the V38 bill on the Danishness of non-western minorities. It managed to put pressure on Danish politicians so that just three months later the bill was almost overturned.<sup>95</sup>

## Civil Society

The first Islamophobia report was published by the Center for Danish Muslim Relations, leading to the term becoming more widespread, for example through inspiring the first Danish Wikipedia article on Islamophobia to be written.<sup>96</sup> Criminal acts

91. Line Ernlund, “Birthe Rønn Hornbech i angreb på eget parti: ‘Jeg melder mig ud, hvis Støjberg bliver formand,’” from [www.bt.dk](http://www.bt.dk), February 13, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.bt.dk/politik/birthe-ronn-hornbech-i-angreb-pa-eget-parti-jeg-melder-mig-ud-hvis-stojberg-bliver> and Thomas Søggaard Rohde and Cathrine Bloch, “Birthe Rønn med direkte opfordring til Løkke: Du må stoppe Støjberg,” from [www.b.dk](http://www.b.dk), October 05, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.b.dk/politiko/birthe-roenn-med-direkte-opfordring-til-loekke-du-maa-stoppe-stoejberg>.

92. Jens From Lyng, “Radiovært: Teologien i islam-debatten er forsømt,” *Kristeligt Dagblad*, July 04, 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <http://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kirke-tro/teologien-i-islam-debatten-er-forsoemt>.

93. “Når naboens datter bliver muslim,” episode 1 & 2, DR, January 10, 2017 & January 21, 2017.

94. Radio WAIH, retrieved February 13, 2018, from <http://waih.dk/>.

95. See footnote 12, p. 6.

96. “Islamofobiske trends 2016 – Center for dansk-muslimske relationer,” Cedar.nu, accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.cedar.nu/islamofobiske-trends-2016/> and “Islamofobi,” Wikipedia, Oct. & nov. 2017, retrieved February 13, 2018, <https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamofobi>.

by Muslims are often used in an Islamophobic context. This year the Police failed in ending a bloody gang war between mainly young Muslims. The engagement by Muslim communities helped in ending the bloody conflict and was an effective way to tackle Islamophobic tendencies.<sup>97</sup> And the Danish Women's society launched a campaign called "Whore" portraying a woman in hijab as a victim of hate crime, with the intent of tackling hate crime towards Muslim women.<sup>98</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

According to official statistics on hate crime by the National Police, Muslims are the most targeted minority in Denmark, especially online. Islamophobia in Denmark is spurred by certain politicians, traditionally by those from the Danish People's Party, recently also by the leadership of the Social Democrats. Muslims should therefore organize themselves politically to end the hateful rhetoric and the Danish politicians that do not concur with the Islamodiversion should aid them in this effort. Muslims are seldom used as sources by established media, instead critical voices often make up the majority of sources. Muslims must therefore participate in media to a greater extent, a responsibility that lies with both the media outlets and the Muslim representatives. A few laws are under way, both a Niqab ban and a ban on male circumcision. This underlines the necessity of education and awareness among the public and among professionals. Certain institutions try to solve social issues by meddling in the personal lives of Muslim families. Instead they should consult academics and civil society in the pursuit of the best possible solutions. The following recommendations are therefore set forth:

- Muslims must be recognized as a heterogeneous group and equally accepted as Danes compared to any other group of society.
- Instead of downplaying hate crime towards Muslims, explaining it by Muslims being visible and a large minority, the National Police need to take Islamophobic hate crime more seriously. The National Police report on hate crime is mentioned on p. 17.
- Resources need to be allocated into initiatives that can change the inflammatory public discourse regarding minorities in both media and politics.
- Research must be conducted to identify the challenges associated with Islamophobia, which fuels a negative spiral of extremism through increased ant-Muslim hatred and responsive hatred by Muslims.
- Neutral meeting grounds between Muslims and non-Muslim Danes need to be prioritized since the contact hypothesis naturally dissolves stereotyping and racism.

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97. Tom Carstensen and Emil Søndergård Ingvorsen, "Moské hos Islamisk Trossamfund har lagt rum til bande-aftale," DR.dk, November 13, 2017, accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/moske-hos-islamisk-trossamfund-har-lagt-rum-til-bande-aftale>.

98. Posted on the Danish Women's societies Facebook page on 30 May 2017, accessed March 2, 2018, from: [https://www.facebook.com/danskkvindesamfund/?hc\\_ref=ARSLIKR8IT1UUq1JIo88E7ySEXfISJ91WadBEQdFgsYvWC CuXbk4aFRJzJnTKFe6X11&fref=nf](https://www.facebook.com/danskkvindesamfund/?hc_ref=ARSLIKR8IT1UUq1JIo88E7ySEXfISJ91WadBEQdFgsYvWC CuXbk4aFRJzJnTKFe6X11&fref=nf)

- Media must involve Muslims more often when covering Islam as well as other subjects instead of prioritizing voices critical of Islam and Muslims, as it creates a skewed image of reality.
- Awareness and education of professionals in the educational sector, health care system, law enforcement and the justice system.

## Chronology

- **11.01.2017:** Public debate on the ban on prayer rooms in public institutions intensifies due to a proposal in parliament.
- **07.02.2017:** Non-westerners and their children are declared non-Danish by parliament and Ali is assaulted by a Molotov-cocktail.
- **14.03.2017:** Inger Støjberg celebrates her 50th restriction against foreigners with a cake.
- **20.04.2017:** The first Islamophobia report is published.
- **27.04.2017:** The Board of Equal Treatment rejected a complaint from a group of students banned from praying in school.
- **02.05.2017:** The National Sanctions list, also known as “Hate Preacher List”, was put into practice.
- **24.06.2017:** The extreme far-right party the Danes party dismantles.
- **16.09.2017:** The Social Democrats shift their political paradigm closer towards the political right, stating that Muslims are a problem.
- **04.10.2017:** The so-called mask ban, also known as the “niqab ban”, are proposed by the Danish People’s Party.
- **09.10.2017:** The #SlukforHadet campaign was launched.
- **21.11.2017:** Local elections with bad results for the two right wing parties, the Danish People’s Party and Nye Borgerlige.
- **08.12.2017:** Tarek is allegedly attacked by Police at an anti-Trump demonstration.
- **12.12.2017:** “The Hate Preacher list” is being extended.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**FINLAND**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

In 2017, Islamophobic discourse and incidents in Finland were marked by the tragic events of a knife attack by a young Muslim asylum seeker and its political and social consequences. Even though the Finnish Parliament's official stance was to condemn any hate towards any group, comments by individual politicians motivated further confrontation and dichotomies in the population. The incident also sparked tensions among the public which resulted in experiences of increased harassment and attacks against Muslim citizens. The Young Muslims NGO monitored the attacks and recorded 10 reports of Muslim individuals being either physically attacked or verbally harassed. Nationalist groupings continue to spread their anti-Islamic ideology on the grassroots level. The Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL) dressed statues of female figures in a burqa and the "Finland First" movement organized a demonstration against "Islamization" by a school in Helsinki. To the latter the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman reacted with an investigation request relating to possible incitement to hatred during the demonstration. Polls suggest that antipathy towards the visible practice of the Islamic faith in the workplace prevails. Surveys and studies by academicians, however, show alarming results of discrimination against Muslims in different fields of life. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman gathered eight complaints of a suspected anti-Islamic discrimination. The hate crime report by the Police University again showed that Islam is the most frequent motivator in suspected hate crimes motivated by religion. Initiatives to advocate for a "burqa ban" after the example of France have not however been successful and most political actors do not consider such laws necessary in Finland. In 2017, the mainstream print media has developed positively so that uncritical journalistic practice has decreased from previous years and fewer news articles and media events have focused on Muslims in an Islamophobic way. Also, journalists themselves have started to advocate for more responsible reporting when writing about Muslims and other minorities.

## Tiivistelmä

Vuoden 2017 elokuussa nuori turvapaikanhakija puukotti siviilejä Turun kauppatorilla. Tämä traaginen tapahtuma vaikeutti osaltaan muslimien ja ei-muslimien kanssaeloa, kun yhteiskunnallinen ilmapiiri kiristyi hyökkäyksen seurauksena. Vaikka Suomen eduskunnan virallinen kanta oli tuomita kaikki vihamielisyydet, yksittäisten poliitikkojen kommentit tähtäsivät vastakkainasetteluun. Nuoret Muslimit Ry sai Turun tragedian jälkeen 10 yhteydenottoa liittyen muslimeihin kohdistettuihin fyysisiin hyökkäyksiin ja vihapuheeseen. Nationalistiset liikkeet jatkavat edelleen islamofobisen ideologiansa levittämistä ruohonjuuritasolla. PVL puki naishahmojen patsaita burqaan, ja Suomi Ensin -liike järjesti lähellä helsinkiläistä koulua mielenosoituksen ”islamisaatiota” vastaan. Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutetun toimisto reagoi jalkimmäiseen esittämällä valtakunnansyyttäjälle tutkintapyyntöä mahdollisesta kiihottamisesta kansanryhmää vastaan mielenosoituksen aikana. Median uutisoimat gallupit osoittavat, että islamilaisen uskon harjoittamiseen työpaikalla suhtaudutaan negatiivisesti. Myös erinäiset tutkimukset osoittavat hälyttäviä tuloksia muslimien syrjinnästä eri elämänalueilla kuten vuokra-asuntomarkkinoilla. Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu keräsi kahdeksan valitusta liittyen epäiltyihin syrjintätapauksiin, joissa motiivina oli uhrin muslimi-identiteetti. Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun viharikosraportti taasen osoitti, että uhrin uskonnolliseen identiteetin pohjautuvissa viharikosepäilyissä islam on yleisin teon laukaisija. Ranskan esimerkkiä seuraavat, niin sanottua burqa-kieltoa ajavat kansalaisaloitteet eivät ole kuitenkaan olleet onnistuneita, eivätkä useimmat poliittiset toimijat pidä tällaisia lakeja tarpeellisina Suomessa. Vuonna 2017 islamiin liittyvien aiheiden käsittely valtamediassa on kehittynyt myönteisesti, joten kirjoittelu, jossa muslimeihin tai islamiin oltaisiin keskitytty joko islamofobisesti tai ennakkoluuloja levittäen on laskenut edellisiltä vuosilta. Myös toimittajat itse ovat alkaneet puhua vastuullisemman journalismin puolesta muslimeista ja muista vähemmistöistä kirjoittaessa.

## Introduction

In 2017, much of the public discussion centred on the topic of Finland's 100th anniversary as an independent country. Within this frame questions were raised on minorities' – such as the Tatars' – heroic contributions during the wars in the first half of the 20th century and their role as representatives of the Islamic faith as part of the Finnish national identity today.<sup>1</sup> However, the discussion whether Islam can be part of the Finnish religious landscape and if yes, in which form, still suffers from the contrasting juxtaposition of the Tatar community, on one side, and all other Muslim identities, on the other. Hereby the first is “the best practice example of integration” and the latter are those who mostly receive antipathies due to their difference - be it skin colour, dress or adherence to certain practices and demands for the right to do so.<sup>2</sup> However, since the peak of the arrival of asylum seekers in 2015, Finnish society has witnessed a new era of social activism. Throughout the year, several civil society organizations, universities and other institutions organized informative events that promoted the dismantling of prejudices and fostered dialogue. For instance, included in the official “Finland 100” program was an art exhibition titled “Islam and I” (*Islam ja minä*) whose topic were young Muslims' views of their life in contemporary Finland. It was organized by the University of Helsinki as part of a bigger research project on young Muslims and resilience.<sup>3</sup> Despite such positive developments, Islamophobic discourse still prevails in Finnish society.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

A knife attack by a young Moroccan asylum seeker against passers-by on a market square in the city of Turku triggered a new wave of antipathy towards Muslims and Islam as well as discussions on the consequences of the “relaxed” immigration policies of the Finnish government. Although the official stance of Finnish politicians was to condemn hate speech<sup>4</sup> and the Prime Minister Juha Sipilä himself called people not to respond to “hate with hate,”<sup>5</sup> in the aftermath of the stabbings, Muslim citizens experienced increased harassment, violent physical attacks, as well as vandalism.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Tuula Sakaranaho, “Tataarit islaminuskoina suomalaisina”, teologia.fi, (January 01, 2017), retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.teologia.fi/artikkelit/1408-tataarit-islaminuskoina-suomalaisina>

2. Podcast Mahadura & Özberkan, “Tataarit ovat Suomen sopeutunein vähemmistö ja vieläpä muslimeja. Miten he tekivät sen?”, areena.yle.fi, (May 04, 2017), retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://areena.yle.fi/1-4118533>

3. Official website of Suomi Finland 100, “Numur – Islam ja minä -näyttely”, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <http://suomifinland100.fi/project/numur-islam-ja-mina-nayttely/>

4. Cf. Politics section.

5. Tuulia Thynell, “Pääministeri Sipilä: Teko oli raukkamainen ja tuomittava, mutta vihaan ei pidä vastata vihalla”, (August 19, 2017), yle.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9786182>

6. Marjaana Varmavuori/Maija Aalto, “16-vuotias somalityttö pahoinpideltiin kotirapussa, parturi uhattiin tappaa - maahanmuuttajat kertovat, että täysin sivullisia uhkaillaan nyt väkivallalla Turun tapahtumien vuoksi”, (August 23, 2017), hs.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005336689.html> See also section on “Physical and Verbal Attacks”.

The tragic incident also raised questions similar to those in other European countries as well as in the USA, regarding why media and political discourse define only Muslim actors as terrorists whereas, for example, Finnish white men who commit school shootings are “individual actors” despite the fact that such actors often call their acts political terrorism in their manifestos.<sup>7</sup>

Several studies published in 2017 show alarming statistics on the antipathy, violence and discrimination faced by Muslims in Finland. The yearly report on hate crimes in Finland published by the Police University College in 2017, shows that regarding the year 2016 the amount of all suspected hate crimes decreased by 14% when compared to statistics from year 2015.<sup>8</sup> However, the amount of reported suspected crimes with motivation based on the religious affiliation of the victim increased by 12%. Here the victims’ Muslim background composed 40% out of all 149 reports, Islam being the most frequent motivator in the suspected hate crimes motivated by religion. Another study on discrimination of Muslims in the European Union found that Muslims in Finland face discrimination more often than the EU median would suggest. However, the study also found that Muslims in Finland have the greatest sense of belonging to their country of residence in comparison with Muslim populations in other EU countries.<sup>9</sup> Milla Aaltonen from the Finnish League of Human Rights commented on the survey in an interview with YLE News and said that structural discrimination is difficult to dismantle in Finland. As she analysed the report’s results, she noted that even though Finnish Muslims appear to have a good level of trust in institutions, most of the survey respondents had not reported on their last experience of discrimination.<sup>10</sup> This would indicate that the range of experiences goes beyond factually reported discrimination cases.

Moreover, an academic study<sup>11</sup> on discrimination in Finnish private rental housing markets showed that especially male applicants with Arabic sounding names are

7. “Jokelan kouluampuja ei kelvannut terroristiksi — suomalaisten väkivaltaa selitetään helposti yksilön ongelmillä”, (September 24, 2017), *mtv.fi*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from [https://www.mtv.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/artikkeli/jokelan-kouluampuja-ei-kelvannut-terroristiksi-suomalaisten-vakivaltaa-selitetaan-helposti-yksilon-ongelmilla/6586812#gs.\\_S5y0RE](https://www.mtv.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/artikkeli/jokelan-kouluampuja-ei-kelvannut-terroristiksi-suomalaisten-vakivaltaa-selitetaan-helposti-yksilon-ongelmilla/6586812#gs._S5y0RE)

8. The report can be considered for this study retrospectively; at the end of each calendar year, a report regarding suspected hate crimes for the previous calendar year is published. Thus, the target year of the report relevant to the current EIR National Report on Finland is 2016.

See: Jenita Rauta, “Poliisin tietoon tullut viharikollisuus Suomessa 2016”, Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun katsauksia 12/2017, Tampere (October, 2016), retrieved January 31, 2018, from [http://www.polamk.fi/tietoa\\_polamkista/materiaalipankki/julkaisut/polamkin\\_julkaisut](http://www.polamk.fi/tietoa_polamkista/materiaalipankki/julkaisut/polamkin_julkaisut)

9. See: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017, “Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Muslims – Selected findings”, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-muslims-selected-findings>

10. Iida Tikka, “Suomessa asuvat muslimit kokevat häirintää EU-keskiarvoa useammin, kertoo EU-tutkimus”, (September 22, 2017), *yle.fi*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9847011>

11. Öblom Anna & Antfolk, “Ethnic and Gender Discrimination in the Private Rental Housing Market in Finland: A Field Experiment”, *PLoS ONE*, 12(8), (2017), retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0183344>

most discriminated against. This highlights the intersectionality of race and religion in Islamophobia. The study's focus was especially on gender and ethnicity as motivations of discrimination.<sup>12</sup> The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman again reported<sup>13</sup> that in 2017 they were contacted about eight cases of a suspected discrimination case due to religious affiliation in which the victim/complainant was a Muslim individual. These cases concerned the use of the scarf at the workplace (2), the mistreatment of Muslims by the authorities (2), the opportunity to pray during the workday, the use of the headscarf in the army, anti-Muslim hate speech on the Internet, and allowing a specific medication to be administered to a child based on religious beliefs. There were also two cases in which a Muslim individual's background was recorded as a possible secondary discrimination criterion. These were cases of bullying in the workplace and the mistreatment of a person at a reception centre.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

Generally speaking, in party politics antipathy towards Islam and Muslims is common for members of the right-wing Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*), whereas other parties such as the the Green League (*Vihreät*) or the Left Alliance (*Vasemmisto*) rather speak against racism and discrimination. However, the vice-chairman of the National Coalition Party (*Kokoomus*) commented on the now cancelled construction plan of the central mosque of Helsinki stating that the mosque project was not about freedom of religion but purely about the pursuit of power by Islam and political Islamization.<sup>14</sup>

Sebastian Tynkkynen, former chairman of the Finns Party youth branch, complained to the Finnish Supreme Court about the conviction he received due to incitement to hatred in January 2017.<sup>15</sup> He had published a text in his Facebook profile stating, "The fewer Muslims there are in Finland, the safer Finland will be." The Supreme Court dismissed Tynkkynen's application for an appeal.<sup>16</sup>

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12. YLE News, "Study: Men with Arabic-Sounding Names Have Much Harder Time Renting Flats in Finland", Yle.fi, (August 31, 2017), retrieved January 31, 2018, from [https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/study\\_men\\_with\\_arabic-sounding\\_names\\_have\\_much\\_harder\\_time\\_renting\\_flats\\_in\\_finland/9808112](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/study_men_with_arabic-sounding_names_have_much_harder_time_renting_flats_in_finland/9808112)

13. A report by Senior Officer Aija Salo received by the author through email on January 26, 2018. Numbers based on statistics retrieved from the database until December 31, 2017.

14. Kokoomuksen ex-varapuheenjohtaja: "Islam on alistumista mutta islamisaatio on alistamista", (April 5, 2017), [demokraati.fi](https://demokraati.fi), retrieved February 10, 2018, from <https://demokraati.fi/kokoomuksen-ex-varapuheenjohtaja-islam-on-alistumista-mutta-islamisaatio-on-alistamista/>

15. For a detailed description on Sebastian Tynkkynen's case please see "Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016" in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017.

16. STT, "KKO hylkäsi islam-kirjoituksista tuomitun Sebastian Tynkkysen valituksen", (December 14, 2017), [lapinkansa.fi](https://www.lapinkansa.fi), retrieved January 31, 2018, from [https://www.lapinkansa.fi/kotimaa/kko-hylkasi-islam-kirjoituksista-tuomitun-sebastian-tynkkyksen-valituksen-200604527?utm\\_source=leiki&utm\\_medium=iltalehti&utm\\_campaign=personoitu](https://www.lapinkansa.fi/kotimaa/kko-hylkasi-islam-kirjoituksista-tuomitun-sebastian-tynkkyksen-valituksen-200604527?utm_source=leiki&utm_medium=iltalehti&utm_campaign=personoitu)

The chairmen of the Finnish Parliament parties signed a public appeal against hate speech by stating that “no form of terrorism is acceptable, and neither is any form of hate speech.”<sup>17</sup> This was after the Turku stabbings. Only a day after this appeal was published, the vice chairman of the Finns Party and then presidential candidate Laura Huhtasaari, who as a representative of her party co-signed the appeal in question, commented in her speech during a parliamentary question hour that Finland was being Islamized due to the large number of immigrants from Muslim countries. She argued that because Islam was incompatible with Western societal norms, Muslim immigration would lead to the segregation of Muslims in society and their ghettoization into areas governed by Islamic values. She was confronted by representatives of other parties who were shocked by her statements since she had also attended the meeting where the appeal against hate speech had been signed.<sup>18</sup> However, Huhtasaari stated in an interview that the appeal against hate speech should be understood only in terms of “hate speech against the West” as that is how she understands the meaning of the concept of “hate speech.”<sup>19</sup>

## Justice System

Following the news about the face veil ban that came into force in Austria in October, the news website MTV.fi reported<sup>20</sup> that most members of the Finnish Parliament who had answered to a survey conducted by the STT/Suomen Tietotoimisto did not advocate a legal ban on face veils in Finland, rather, some of them would agree in favour of the model used in Germany and Holland where the face veil is prohibited only in certain public spaces and professions in which visibility of the face is necessary. Simon Elo, a member of the Blue Reform party, would for instance accept a ban for professions in education and military forces. Only the representatives of the Finns Party parliamentary group were ready to advocate a total ban. Leena Meri, a member of the group said, “Discussions with representatives have clearly highlighted the need to deny covering the face in public spaces as a main rule, with the exception of costume parties or as protection against cold air and so on.”<sup>21</sup> The chairmen of the parliamentary groups of the National Coalition Party and the Left Alliance comment-

17. Maria Stenroos/Jyrki Hara/Olli Lindqvist, “Puoluejohtajilta yhteisvetoomus - tavoitteena estää yhteiskunnallista keskustelua kärjistymästä Turun terroriteon jälkeen”, (September 9, 2017), yle.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9819353>

18. Minna Karkkola, “Laura Huhtasaari hyökkäsi muslimimaahanmuuttoa vastaan - pääministeri ojensi heti: ‘Olimme samassa palaverissa’”, Uusi Suomi, <https://www.uusisuomi.fi/kotimaa/229548-laura-huhtasaari-hyokkasi-muslimieja-vastaan-eduskunnassa-paaministeri-napaytti-olimme>

19. Maria Stenroos/Matti Koivisto, “Kiistaa puoluejohtajien vetoomuksesta - perussuomalaiset eivät halunneet tuomita rasismia, nyt myös vihapuheen tulkinnasta erimielisyyksiä”, (September 7, 2017), yle.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9821602>

20. MTV Uutiset, “Suomessa ei ole halua kieltää kasvojen peittäminen lailla – perussuomalaiset voisivat kieltää paitsi naamiaisissa ja pakkasella”, (October 12, 2017), mtv.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from [https://www.mtv.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/artikkeli/suomessa-ei-ole-halua-kieltaa-kasvojen-peittaminen-lailla-perussuomalaiset-voisivat-kieltaa-paitsi-naamiaisissa-ja-pakkasella/6614466?\\_ga=2.98320607.1368685819.1509092212-816985803.1509092212#gs.lmPOhGM](https://www.mtv.fi/uutiset/kotimaa/artikkeli/suomessa-ei-ole-halua-kieltaa-kasvojen-peittaminen-lailla-perussuomalaiset-voisivat-kieltaa-paitsi-naamiaisissa-ja-pakkasella/6614466?_ga=2.98320607.1368685819.1509092212-816985803.1509092212#gs.lmPOhGM)

21. Translated quote from the news article mentioned in Footnote 20.

ed that they did not see such a ban necessary for Finnish society in which religious face veils have not become a problem. Also, Antti Kaikkonen, the chairman of the Centre Party parliamentary group, commented that in education professions such bans could be needed but he recognized that the wearing of face veils is connected to basic rights and religious identity, if it is worn voluntarily. Krista Mikkonen (Green League) commented that in Finland everyone should be able to dress as they wish, but in some professions within public authorities the face should be visible.

On November 5, 2017, a citizens' initiative<sup>22</sup> to advocate for a law amendment in favour of a "burkha ban" in Finland was originated by a group of private persons, among them Terhi Kiemunki,<sup>23</sup> a former member of the Finns Party with a conviction for incitement to hatred due to her blog texts defaming Muslims.<sup>24</sup> One of the named responsible spokesmen of the initiative was Jukka Ketonen, the current chairman of the Finnish Defence League (FDL), an organization very similar to the EDL. One of the FDL's agendas is to "[...] oppos[e] the concession policy towards the Sharia law in all its forms. The generalization of Halal food, the appreciation of Islamic courts and the full respect of Islam are part of the Sharia law and are intended to undermine other forms of law, as well as the traditional way of life on the road to total Sharia law."<sup>25</sup> The citizen initiative's proposition reads,

We propose that Article 17a (Illegal Disguise) of the Criminal Code be amended to read: "Anyone who is in general or in a public place unrecognizable shall be sentenced for unlawful disguise to a fine or imprisonment of up to three months."<sup>26</sup>

The initiative's description reasoned for the amendment by referring to past events in which masked groups of people had violently disturbed the Finnish Independence Day festivities organized by the Finnish president. However, the second part of the description argued explicitly against the face veil, niqab, worn by Muslim women,

According to our presentation, disguise as an unidentified person based on religious, ethnic and cultural dress would be illegal. It would therefore also prohibit the use of veils used by Muslim women in a public place. (...) As is the case in France, in Finland one would also receive a more severe punishment for forcing a person to use the face veil than for its actual use. In Europe, the general use of the face veil is

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22. "Initiative submitted by at least 50,000 Finnish citizens eligible to vote and containing a proposal that an Act be enacted" as defined in "MOT Eduskuntasanasto", a multilingual parliamentary glossary, prepared jointly by parliament and the Government Terminology Service of the Prime Minister's Office, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/eduskuntasanasto/netmot?UI=fied&height=147>

23. Cf. "Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016."

24. For a detailed description of Terhi Kiemunki's court case, see "Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016."

25. Homepage of the Finnish Defense League, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <http://www.fdl.fi/agenda/>

26. Citizen's initiative titled "Julkisella paikalla naamioituminen laittomaksi", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/2664>

not interpreted as a matter of religious freedom, since the use of burqa or niqab is not specifically provided in the scriptures of Islam. The ban does not thus violate the freedom of thought, religion and conscience guaranteed by Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights or Article 11 of the Finnish Constitution.

By the time of the submission of this report, the citizens' initiative had reached 4,086 support votes. The necessary 50,000 votes (cf. Footnote 20) should be collected by May 5, 2018.<sup>27</sup> Another citizens' initiative in favour of criminalizing the practice of the niqab/burkha was also originated by a private citizen in October 2017 with similar demands with the one endorsed by the FDL. By the submission of this report, the initiative had gathered 5,041 support votes.<sup>28</sup>

In June 2017, the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* reported<sup>29</sup> that the Deputy Ombudsman Jussi Pajujoja had given an official statement<sup>30</sup> about a controversial practice conducted by the Finnish Police towards several female asylum seekers who had experienced the practice as humiliating. The statement was about asylum application processes from 2015, when police officials had required Muslim female asylum seekers to remove their headscarves for photographs during the registration process. From a functional point of view the ID photos of asylum seekers serve a purpose different than a passport photo, i.e. even significant bodily markings such as tattoos can be photographed as indicated in the Aliens Act – hence the need to possibly undress certain areas of the body. Since the Aliens Act does not further specify which areas of the body can be required to be undressed and for which exact identifying purposes, photographing asylum seekers is thus a question of an unregulated borderline area of the Aliens Act. Therefore, the Deputy Ombudsman was not convinced that the actions taken in the reception centre of Tornio in 2015 were justified and necessary.

## Employment

The issue of allowing employees to pray during working hours has sporadically received the media's attention in Finland. While in 2011, an official statement by the then Non-Discrimination Ombudsman stated that an employer could forbid praying in the facilities of the workplace if it disturbed other employees<sup>31</sup> in 2017 a rejected request by

27. For a discussion about how the initiative was advertised on right-wing and racist Internet platforms, see Internet section.

28. Citizen's initiative titled "Huntukielto Suomeen", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.kansalaisaloite.fi/fi/aloite/2641>

29. Susanna Reinboth/Jukka Vuorio, "Oikeusasiamies ihmettelee: Miksi poliisi pakottaa musliminaiset riisumaan huivin valokuvassa?", (June 21, 2017), *hs.fi*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000005263408.html>

30. The official decision statement with the case file number *eoak 5352/2015* can be downloaded as a PDF from the official website of the Parliamentary Ombudsman; <http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/ear3000.sh?HAKUSANA=eoak+5352%2F2015>.

31. Kristiina Markkanen, "Työmaarukoilu ei saa haitata toisia töissä", (September 24, 2017), *hs.fi*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000004831093.html>

an employer to use his lunch break for Friday prayers was ruled as discriminatory.<sup>32</sup> An engineer's work contract with an office affiliated with the City of Helsinki was terminated. When signing the contract, he had informed the employer about his wish to leave the workplace for the Friday prayers, however, a few weeks after the contract had been signed, the employer told him they could not hire him as such arrangements were not possible. The Regional State Administrative Agencies officials ruled that the employer had discriminated against the man since other employees had been granted the possibility of flexible working hours and could run private errands during lunch breaks.

Whereas in the previous years, discussions on problems arising from female Muslim employees' rights to wear the headscarf at work have been infrequent, the ruling given by the European Court of Justice in March 2017 was discussed in several media outlets. Professor of Labour Law Seppo Koskinen commented in an interview for the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* that in Finland, decisions for or against headscarves at the workplace are influenced by the Non-Discrimination Act and an employer should therefore justify the ban of headscarves by factual reasons, such as pertaining to hygiene or safety, for it to be lawful. Koskinen, however, admits that introducing a ruling on "dress neutrality" for all employees of a company could prove to be a difficult procedure if the company has not had a similar ruling before, and equal treatment of all employees in this regard would have to be proven factually.<sup>33</sup>

Unfavourable opinions by the public towards Islamic practices at the workplace were reported by the newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. The newspaper reported a survey on Finnish people's attitudes on immigrants' integration into the society. Among the issues were questions on whether the headscarf should be allowed to be worn by employees and whether praying should be allowed during worktime. The survey's questions on the headscarf addressed however only four professions which have already been discussed in media: police officers, teachers, salespeople, and bus drivers. For the first two, which were considered as "public office" positions, the respondents were less understanding than for the latter two professions. In the case of prayer, the attitudes were even less accepting than in the case of the headscarf.<sup>34</sup>

## Education

Before the start of the summer holidays, a demonstration against "Islamization" in Finland was organized in front of a Helsinki school.<sup>35</sup> The demonstration was initiated by

32. Kaisu Moilanen, "Pyyntö rukoushetkestä vei insinööriin työpaikan - Helsinki syrji työntekijää uskonnon vuoksi", (June 20, 2017), *hs.fi*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005261564.html>

33. Anu-Elina Ervasti, "EU-tuomioistuin antoi varovaisen hyväksynnän työpaikkojen huivikielloille - syy ei silti voi olla mikä tahansa, sanoo suomalaisprofessori", (March 14, 2017), *hs.fi*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000005127283.html>

34. Oona Lohilahti, "HS-gallup selvitti, mihin maahanmuuttajan tulisi sopeutua Suomessa: Kaikkia pitää voida kätellä, mutta hiihtää ei tarvitse osata", (July 7, 2017), *hs.fi*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000005281997.html?share=60f0bbb57ba2c69e9c9db4a98e658231>

35. Cf. Also Network section.

the Finland First movement, who were disapproving of the school having replayed a passage of the Chapter al-Baqarah from the Qur'an through the central radio of the school. As the school director explained in an interview,<sup>36</sup> it had been part of a multicultural morning opening program that the school's pupils had organized on their own. However, actors who are generally known to spread Islamophobic attitudes and discourses such as the fake news website *MV-lehti*, wrongly accused the school of having played the Islamic call to prayer.<sup>37</sup> The video recording<sup>38</sup> of the replay, that has been used to refer to the event, shows that only the verses 185 and 186 of Chapter al-Baqarah, i.e. those that describe the month of Ramadan, were included. Nevertheless, Former MP Reijo Tossavainen claimed in his blog,<sup>39</sup> that the replay included further verses of the same chapter which describe the rules of war against disbelievers in a historical context. Robin Harms, an expert with the Finnish Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, commented in an interview that his office had submitted a request of investigation to the Prosecutor General about the demonstration with the intent to find out whether participants in the demonstrations perpetrated incitement to hatred or slander with their comments.<sup>40</sup>

## Media

In "Islamophobia in Finland: National Report 2016," the authors reported on biased journalist representations of Muslims and lack of counter narratives, relating to main stream media reports. *Suomen Tietotoimisto*, the Finnish News Agency, published an article in the beginning of 2017 addressing the issue of representation of minorities and advocated for a more balanced reporting. It is to be emphasized that especially the issue of using certain descriptive words such as "normal" is among aspects of journalism that may contribute to the formation of generalizing stereotypes or confrontative dichotomies, which again produce Islamophobic images of Muslims. The article also mentioned using "anonymous" pictures of veiled women when speaking of issues relating to immigration, pointing to the dehumanizing effect it has on members of minorities.<sup>41</sup>

36. Minna Karkkola, "Aikuiset tuppautuivat koululle islam-protestiin - yllätynyt rehtori ilmoitti poliisille", (May 31, 2017), Uusi Suomi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.uusisuomi.fi/kotimaa/222094-aikuiset-tuppautuivat-koululle-islam-protestiin-yllattynyt-rehtori-ilmoitti>

37. "Kontulan koulussa muslimien rukouskutsu - koululaiset pyysivät mielenosoitusta", (May 27, 2017), MVLehti.net, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <http://mvlehti.net/2017/05/27/kontulan-koulussa-muslimien-rukouskutsu-koululaiset-pyysivat-mielenosoitusta/>

38. "Kontula Vesalan koulu kevään rukouskutsu", (May 26, 2017), retrieved January 31, 2018, from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=47&v=FcNgu6cyeQA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=47&v=FcNgu6cyeQA)

39. Reijo Tossavainen, "Murhatkaa islamista luopuneet, taistelkaa Allahin puolesta", (June 2, 2017), imatralainen.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.imatralainen.fi/blogi/526397-murhatkaa-islamista-luopuneet-taistelkaa-allahin-puolesta>

40. Katriina Kettunen, "Yhdenvertaisuusvaltuutettu teki Suomi ensin -mielenosoituksen kommentteista tutkintapyyntöä valtakunnansyyttäjälle", (June 8, 2017), yle.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9657379>

41. Maija Lappalainen, "Uhri, sankari tai pahis - miten vähemmistöjä käsitellään mediassa?", (November 16, 2017), stt.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://stt.fi/vahemmistot-mediassa/>

Another positive contribution in dismantling Islamophobia within media was an opinion piece published in June in the journal affiliated with the Union of journalists in Finland that criticized newspapers' uncritical use of vocabulary such as "Islamization." The author, pointed to the danger of news journalists adopting such words from the Islamophobic discourse without questioning their assumptive meanings and failing to raise questions such as whether there is a factual "Islamization" in Finland and who benefits from such discourse.<sup>42</sup>

The publishing house Kiuas announced that on October 25 they were to distribute copies of the Finnish translation of *Islam: 11. vitsaus*, (Islam, The 11th Plague) to Finnish members of parliament and Finnish members of the European Parliament.<sup>43</sup> The book is written by the Norwegian activist Hege Storhaug – a prominent figure of the Islamophobia Network in Norway – who has previously, for instance, compared Muslims to Nazis.<sup>44</sup> According to the description on the publisher's website the book is about the question whether the Nordic secular welfare state shapes Islam to comply with itself or whether "Islam will integrate as a fixed part of that state arranged marriages, honour killings, religious courts and terror."<sup>45</sup>

Kiuas also published a book written by the Finns Party politician Olli Immonen, whose Islamophobic statements are known from previous years' EIR reports. The website of the magazine *Sarastus*, affiliated with Kiuas publishing house, advertises Immonen's book titled *Kansallinen kipinä* (The National Spark) with an excerpt. Immonen links Muslims to the "European demographic crisis" and the overgrowth of populations on earth.<sup>46</sup> The magazine *Sarastus*, which is extremely critical of immigration, has frequently also published other texts with quite strong Islamophobic discourses. For instance, an article from 2016, offered the threatening image of an Islamization of Europe and proposed the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from European lands as an inevitable preventive measurement for the protection of the "European population."<sup>47</sup>

After the Turku stabbings, scapegoating and pointing fingers at certain mosques commenced. *Iltalehti* news magazine named one of the local mosques as a "radical

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42. Vesa Heikkinen "Itsestään selvä islamisaatio?", (June 16, 2017), *Journalisti*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.journalisti.fi/artikkelit/2017/8/itsestn-selv-islamisaatio/>

43. Petri Saarela, "Kiuas Kustannus jakaa Islam-tietoutta kansanedustajille", (October 24, 2017, *Kansalainen*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.kansalainen.fi/kiuas-kustannus-jakaa-islam-tietoutta-kansanedustajille/>

44. Sindre Bangstad, "Fighting Words That Are Not Fought", retrieved January 31, 2018, from <http://www.sindre-bangstad.com/essays/>

45. Homepage of Kiuas publishing house, retrieved January 31, 2018, <http://kiuaskustannus.com/esittely-2/julkaisut/>

46. Olli Immonen, "Euroopan väestökatastrofi", *Sarastus*, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://sarastuslehti.com/2017/09/26/euroopan-vaestokatastrofi/>

47. Ilkka Aura/Hannes Possander, "Miten etninen puhdistus toteutetaan?", *Sarastus*, retrieved January 31, 2018, <https://sarastuslehti.com/2016/07/30/miten-etninen-puhdistus-toteutetaan/>

mosque”. However, the elder of the mosque commented in an interview, that such accusations were false and that their mosque would not tolerate or even discuss politics. The mosque representatives said that they were afraid of confrontations and violent revenge attacks against their mosque because of the *Italehti* article and its polarizing message.<sup>48</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

In the aftermath of the Turku stabbings, Nuoret Muslimit ry (Young Muslims NGO) collected information about physical and verbal attacks against Muslim individuals. In addition to two reports about assaults, they received eight reports about threatening situations where Muslims were subjected to hate speech in, for example, public transport or other public spaces such as shops - some of the cases included death threats. The Turku Emergency Response Centre also received calls in which the caller threatened to harm foreigners with violence. In Helsinki, someone spray-painted the words “Kill Muslims” on asphalt.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, media reported about a case of a young man who had been attacked with a knife by a stranger. The attacker asked his victim before stabbing him, whether he was a Muslim. Fortunately, the attack did not result in a death of a person.<sup>50</sup>

### Internet

The citizen’s initiative on a so-called “burqa ban” was advertised on the websites of *Suomi Turvalliseksi.fi* (Safe Finland)<sup>51</sup> and on the “alternative news” platform *Oikea Media*<sup>52</sup> (“True Media”). In the former, the article was accompanied by several pictures, for instance of extreme leftist groups in demonstrations. They also used a picture of Muslim women wearing the face veil<sup>53</sup> and next to it a picture of the empty seats of a bus. The same picture had gone viral on social media earlier in 2017 due to its distribution by a Norwegian racist group who juxtaposed blue-colored bus seats and *burkha*-covered Muslim women<sup>54</sup> (Fig. 1). On the *Oikea Media* website, however, the article describing the

48. Eero Mäntymaa, “Radikaalimoskeijaksi leimattu Varissuon rukoushuone pelkää kosta - “suomalaiset tietävät sen mitä media meistä näyttää””, (August 27, 2017), yle.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9799957>

49. Report by Nuoret Muslimit ry spokesperson Ali Assefa, received by the author through email September 24, 2018.

50. Lari Malmberg, “Poliisi tutkii Vantaalla ilmoitettua maahanmuuttajataustaisen miehen puukotusta - Uhrin mukaan epäilty puukottaja kysyi, onko uhri muslimi”, (August 22, 2017), hs.fi, retrieved January 31, 2018, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005335481.html>

51. Suomi Turvalliseksi campaign homepage, retrieved January 31, 2018, <http://www.suomiturvalliseksi.fi/2017/10/27/kansalaisaloite-julkisella-paikalla-naamioituminen-on-saadettava-laittomaksi/>

52. “Kansalaisaloite: Julkisella paikalla naamioituminen on säädettävä laittomaksi”, retrieved January 31, 2018, <https://beta.oikeamedia.com/o1-45922>

53. The photo stems from a Guardian collage about elections in Afghanistan and shows a group of women showing their identity cards. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2009/aug/20/afghanistan-election>

54. John Hendley, “Bus Seats Mistaken for Burqas by Members of Anti-immigrant Group”, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/aug/02/bus-seats-mistaken-burqas-anti-immigrant-group-norwegian>.



Figure 1: Picture used by the right-wing nationalist movement *Suomi turvallisiksi*. On the left is a photograph of Afghan women while attending elections and on the right “Muslim women in burqas” on a bus. In reality, the picture is of empty seats.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 2: Picture of the Finnish writer Minna Canth’s statue dressed in a burqa by a member of the Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL). The caption is a screenshot from PVL’s website, retrieved December 17, 2017.<sup>56</sup>

citizens’ initiative was accompanied merely by a photo of a woman wearing a face veil. Although the citizens’ initiative largely justifies its proposition based on a need for security in demonstrations, adding pictures of veiled women – especially in the campaign by “Safe Finland” in which the images are effectively out of the context of Finnish society –, nonetheless, indicates how both platforms attempt

to steer impressions on the reasons behind the law amendment in the direction of fighting against Islamic religious practices.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement (Pohjoismainen vastarintaliike PVL) had several campaigns against the so-called “Islamization” of Europe. In March 2017, the movement dressed statues depicting female figures in different cities with a black headscarf or face veil to “remind Finnish people of the ongoing demographic change in Europe.”<sup>57</sup> (Fig. 2) One of the statues was that of the famous Finnish novelist and social activist Minna Canth.<sup>58</sup> A personality of Finnish cultural history, Canth is important for her activities as a pioneer of public discussions on women’s rights. In November 2017, the veulings were ordered to be declared illegal by the District Court of Pirkanmaa based on a complaint filed by the National Police Board.<sup>59</sup>

55. A screenshot from the website [suomiturvallisiksi.fi](http://suomiturvallisiksi.fi), retrieved on December 15, 2017.

56. The picture of the statue is a screenshot from the Nordic Resistance Movement’s website, retrieved December 17, 2017 from <http://www.vastarinta.com/aktivismia-kansanmurhaa-vastaan-8>.

57. March 23, 2017, Vastarinta, retrieved January 31, 2017, from “<http://www.vastarinta.com/aktivismia-kansanmurhaa-vastaan-8>”.

58. <http://www.vastarinta.com/aktivismia-kansanmurhaa-vastaan-8>.

59. Marjatta Rautio, “Käräjäoikeus kieltää uusnatsijärjestön toiminnan - Pohjoismainen Vastarintaliike lakkautetaan”, (November 30, 2017), [yle.fi](http://yle.fi), retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9953919>

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The initiative “Open doors to intercultural and interfaith dialogue” (*Avoimet ovet kulttuuri- ja uskontodialogiin*) managed by different congregations of the Helsinki Evangelic Lutheran Church organized an event in support of Helsinki’s Shia community when their mosque was vandalized with an Islamophobic graffiti (“Fuck Islam”) on its façade. The event gathered around fifty individuals from different religious affiliations but also individuals with no faith affiliations to help in cleaning the mosque façade.<sup>60</sup>

In August 2017, the Shia congregation *Resalat* and its youth branch *Mahdin Nuoret* co-organized an event at a market square in Helsinki, inviting passerbys to discuss Islam and its relation to terrorism, thus contributing positively to the dismantling of wrong assumptions and raising awareness about the diverse interpretations of Islam.<sup>61</sup>

As a response to increased tensions and feelings of fear and uncertainty due to the Turku stabbings, *Nuoret Muslimit ry* (Young Muslims NGO) published a video titled “Do not give space to hatred” (*Älä anna vihalle sijaa*). The video contained messages to the public by the NGO members addressing some incidents that had already demonstrated the negative consequences of the tragedy against the Muslim population and called for Muslims to be proud of their identities and for non-Muslims not to let hatred get out of hand but to reach towards dialogue.<sup>62</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Considering that Finnish civil society has been doing a lot of work lately in countering Islamophobia and fostering dialogue as well as understanding, the author recommends that policy-makers work closely with these civil society actors to gather first-hand experience. Financial aid should be strengthened for projects in which especially the Muslim community is involved. Monitoring media and political speech as well as the reporting of hateful speech and harassment is still lacking for the Muslim community in Finland and should be established and financially supported by public funds. As Islamophobic discourse – especially when it receives space in media and public discussion – is for the large part initiated by far-right politicians and nationalist groupings, public opinion against hate speech should be strengthened. Projects and training that raise awareness about hate speech and how it differs from

60. Samuli Suonpää, “Eri uskontokuntiin kuuluvat pesivät yhdessä vihatöhyrt moskeijan seinästä Mellunmäessä”, (June 26, 2017), Kirkko & Kaupunki, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.kirkkojakaupunki.fi/-/eri-uskontokuntiin-kuuluvat-pesivat-yhdessa-vihatohryrt-moskeijan-seinasta-mellunmaessa>

61. Samuli Suonpää, “Musliminuoret taistelivat Narinkkatorilla terrorismia vastaan”, Kirkko & Kaupunki, retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.kirkkojakaupunki.fi/-/musliminuoret-taistelivat-narinkkatorilla-terrorismissa-vastaan>

62. Video “Älä anna vihalle sijaa - Nuoret Muslimit ry”, (September 24, 2017), retrieved January 31, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6dx7iqMizU>

cultivated discussion and criticism should be made more accessible. As the European Court of Justice's ruling on headscarves at workplaces has not yet sparked larger scale negative consequences for the role of Muslim women in the labour market, actors such as the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman should work together with the Labour Ministry and inform employers about the ruling's contents. Campaigns for inclusivity and diversity at the workplace should support this action.

## Chronology

- **22.03.2017:** The Finnish branch of the Nordic Resistance Movement dressed several statues depicting female figures in different cities with a black headscarf or face veil to “remind Finnish people of the ongoing demographic change in Europe.”
- **31.05.2017:** A demonstration against “Islamization” in Finland was organized in front of a Helsinki school by the nationalist group Finland First. The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman filed a request for investigation to the Prosecutor General.
- **16.06.2017:** A rejected request by an employer to use his lunch break for Friday prayers was ruled discriminatory by the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southern Finland.
- **24.06.2017:** The mosque façade of Helsinki's Shia community was vandalized with an Islamophobic graffiti (“Fuck Islam”).
- **18.08.2017:** A knife attack against civilians by a Moroccan asylum seeker sparks increased tensions in society.
- **07.09.2017:** Laura Huhtasaari (Finns Party) commented in a speech in parliament that Finland was being Islamized due to the enormous number of immigrants from Muslim countries.
- **04.10.2017:** A citizens' initiative in favour of a “burqa ban” in Finland was originated by a group of private persons.
- **24.10.2017:** The publishing house Kiuas announced that they were to distribute copies of the book *Islam, The 11th Plague* to Finnish members of parliament and Finnish members of the European Parliament.
- **05.11.2017:** A second citizens' initiative in favour of a “burkha ban” in Finland was originated by a group of private persons, including politicians and Finnish Defence League actors.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**FRANCE**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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YASSER LOUATI



## The Author

**Yasser Louati** is a French-based human rights and civil liberties activist. His work focuses on racism and state repression. Having been active for over 20 years within grassroots movements both within and outside of Western Muslim communities, he now heads the Justice & Liberties For All Committee based in Paris, France. He is part of the European coalition that currently works with the European Commission's Coordinator against anti-Muslim hatred and has launched the transatlantic coordination against racism and repression. He is a regular contributor to various international news outlets including Al Jazeera, France 24 and CNN, on questions of racism, French politics, privacy, and militarism. His writings are published by *Al Jazeera*, *Alternet*, *Middle East Eye*, *Libération* and the University of Berkeley's *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, among others. He was educated at the University of Paris in English Literature and Civilisation.

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## Executive Summary

The report includes the major events that have structured and expressed Islamophobia in France. As the country is still not over with two major identity and security crises, the successive governments have failed to address both issues without worsening the situation and further ripping apart national cohesion. Organisations dealing with anti-Muslim racism agree on the decrease of Islamophobic attacks. For instance, the Observatory of Islamophobia has reported 121 anti-Muslim attacks which represent a decrease of 34.6%. The observatory has further reported a decrease in attacks against places of worship (-12.8%) but has highlighted the increase in threats and traumatic experiences (+7.5%). But such numbers are limited by their non-inclusion of Islamophobic attacks committed by the French state and its agencies which, therefore, excludes the repression that has been targeting Muslim individuals and institutions.

The year 2017 saw two major elections and irrational and public debates led by normalised far-right ideology. Anti-Muslim racism was a central component of the debates that preceded the presidential and legislative elections. Candidates, although seeking election from citizens that have been expressing growing defiance towards the country's political elite, have failed to truly address their socio-economic expectations or to give reasons for hope. Far from it. Identity politics and security have further polarised French society and Muslims continue to be scapegoated for the successive governments' failures.

Security-wise, the permanent terrorist threat continues to be dealt with through the lens of repression alone. Despite a two-decade-long anti-terror legislative struggle, there is an incapacity or a lack of willingness to assess the long-term weakening of the French justice system, widespread violations of civil liberties and whatever is left of the rule of law. The state of emergency which lasted for two years has become permanent through the passing of the October 2017 anti-terrorism bill, despite its well-documented ineffectiveness and extensive use against Muslim citizens specifically.

Security one-upmanship and lack of political courage have allowed the emergence of a police state in France. The state has evolved to become out of control: laws are being passed in complete violation of the founding principles of the republic; citizens are under permanent surveillance; the justice system is subservient to the executive branch of power; state representatives can arbitrarily decide whose property is to be raided or who is to be put under house arrest; advocates of new ideas and ideas opposed to the ruling elites are censored; reactionary pressure groups routinely intimidate state agents; freedom of speech, of conscience or of religion have been severely curtailed; and the media in its overwhelming majority no longer keep the powerful in check but rather act as propaganda outlets for the ruling elite. Only a handful of independent media

outlets remain but they have to deal with constant demonisation and administrative pressure (the FISC among others).

That represents challenges for the immediate future of the French population as a whole and French Muslims more specifically. The latter have been reduced to playing the role of the “enemy within” in order to justify authoritarianism and the return of fascist ideas from the early twentieth century. Left- and right-wing governments have for three decades adopted the far-right lexicon and its logic in order to pass racist measures such as the 2004 ban on headscarves in public schools, the 2009 ban on the full face veil, the Chatel Ministerial Circular of 2010 banning Muslim mothers from attending school trips should they wear a headscarf, or the latest Cassation Court on religious signs in the public space, which all enjoy a general consensus among policymakers. This report also highlights the challenges faced by those fighting anti-Muslim bigotry whether they are public servants or members of civil society.

## Résumé

Ce rapport couvre l'année 2017 et comprend les principaux événements qui ont structuré et exprimé l'islamophobie en France. Alors que le pays n'en a toujours pas fini avec deux crises identitaire et sécuritaire, les gouvernements successifs n'ont eux pas voulu s'attaquer aux deux problèmes sans aggraver la situation et démolir davantage la cohésion nationale.

Deux ans après les sanglants attentats de Janvier et Novembre 2015, 2017 a été l'année de deux élections majeures, de débats publics irrationnels menés par une idéologie d'extrême droite normalisée et des institutions fébriles. Le racisme anti-musulman a encore une fois été un élément central des débats qui ont précédé les élections présidentielles et législatives. Les candidats, bien que recherchant les voix de citoyens en pleine défiance envers les élites politique du pays, n'ont pas vraiment répondu à leurs attentes socio-économiques ni donné des raisons d'espérer. Loin de là. La politique identitaire et la surenchère sécuritaire ont polarisé davantage la société française et les musulmans continuent d'être les boucs émissaires des échecs des gouvernements successifs.

Du point de vue de la sécurité, la menace terroriste permanente continue d'être traitée uniquement sous l'angle de la répression sans jamais s'adresser aux racines du problème ni en tentant de répondre à la question du "pourquoi?". Malgré deux décennies de législation antiterroriste, il y a une incapacité flagrante ou un manque de volonté d'évaluer l'incapacité d'agir en amont de la menace terroriste, l'affaiblissement à long terme de la justice française, les violations généralisées des libertés publiques et une atteinte à ce qui reste de "l'état de droit". L'état d'urgence qui a duré deux ans est devenu permanent à la suite de l'adoption du projet de loi antiterroriste d'octobre 2017 malgré son inefficacité déjà documentée et son utilisation discriminatoire contre les citoyens de confession musulmane en particulier.

La surenchère sécuritaire et le manque de courage politique ont permis l'émergence d'un état policier en France. L'État est devenu incontrôlable, des lois sont passées en violation des principes fondateurs de la république, les citoyens sont sous surveillance permanente, la justice est inféodée au pouvoir, les représentants de l'État peuvent arbitrairement décider qui peut être perquisitionné ou assigné à résidence, les porteurs d'idées nouvelles ou opposées aux élites dirigeantes sont censurés, les groupes de pression réactionnaires ont durablement intimidé les agents de l'État, les libertés d'expression, de conscience de culte et d'opinion ont été sévèrement restreintes et la presse dans sa quasi totalité ne joue plus son rôle de contre-pouvoir mais celui d'organe de propagande des élites. Seuls quelques médias indépendants subsistent mais doivent faire à la diabolisation permanente et la pression de l'administration (fiscale entre autres).

Tout cela représente une source de défis pour l'avenir immédiat de la population française et des musulmans français en particulier qui sont réduits au rôle d'"ennemi intérieur" afin de justifier l'autoritarisme et le retour des idées fascistes du début du

vingtième siècle. Les gouvernements de gauche comme de droite ont depuis trente ans emprunté le lexique et l'argumentaire de l'extrême droite pour passer une série de mesures exceptionnelles telles la loi d'interdiction du foulard dans les écoles 2004, la loi d'interdiction du voile intégral de 2009, la circulaire Chatel interdisant les sorties scolaires aux mamans voilées 2010 ou la récente décision de la cour de cassation sur les signes religieux entreprise qui font toutes consensus.

Ce rapport met en lumière l'évolution annuelle de l'islamophobie en tant que problème structurel. Des débats publics à la rétractation du droit en passant par le matraquage médiatique, la France de 2017 n'a envoyé aucun signal d'apaisement malgré l'élection d'un jeune président promettant un renouveau. Ce rapport souligne également les défis auxquels sont confrontés ceux qui sont impliqués dans la lutte contre la haine anti-musulmans qu'ils soient fonctionnaires ou acteurs de la société civile. Les recommandations ont été choisies en fonction des échanges de l'auteur avec les organisations terrain, des fonctionnaires et des universitaires.

## Introduction

Censorship and political repression are two of the axes through which Islamophobia has best expressed itself in 2017 France. The year has been marked by the toxicity of public debates and the violence with which opponents to the dominant discourse have been targeted. The damages to French society in the aftermath of the 2015 and 2016 attacks and the subsequent backlash against local Muslims by the state (the state of emergency, house raids, house arrests, shutting down of Muslim places of worship, surveillance, criminalisation of activists, attacks against civil liberties...) have only contributed to further polarise French society. The election of Emanuel Macron did not bring with it a wind of change or appeasement to say the least. Rather, and despite having decried anti-Muslim hatred during his campaign, his coming into office was marked by an obvious lack of political courage against racism. Furthermore, his passing of the state of emergency into the common law - hence rendering permanent its exceptional powers - has been called out by many like the head of the Judicial Union<sup>1</sup> or leading human rights lawyers like Emmanuel Daoud<sup>2</sup> as a contribution to turning France into a police state.

Although physical assaults against Muslim individuals and property have significantly decreased, French laws are becoming ever more repressive and tackling basic civil liberties. The pretext of fighting “radical Islam” - with no definition of it in sight - is driving many policymakers to find new ways to neutralise public visibility of the Muslim faith. An unofficial two-tiered citizenship has been developed and violations of *laïcité* at the expense of Muslims are not perceived as grave violations of constitutional principles or of human rights but justifiable. All forms of religious or political affiliation are to be tolerated but those emanating from individuals perceived as Muslims.

The temptation to turn repression up another notch is palpable and given the very low level of public debates and lack of credible experts on Islam and representatives of Muslim communities, 2018 will not be any easier for Muslims as Islamophobia is not being taken seriously by policymakers, the media and even many public self-appointed Muslim representatives.

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1. Clarisse Taron, présidente du Syndicat de la magistrature: “La France prend le chemin d’un Etat policier” *France Bleue* (July 20, 2017), retrieved February 11, 2018 from <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/faits-divers-justice/la-france-prend-le-chemin-d-un-etat-policier-1500459343>.

2. Emmanuel Daoud, “La France «En Marche» vers un État policier...”, *Le Club Médiapart* (June 17, 2017), retrieved February 11, 2018 from <https://blogs.mediapart.fr/emmanuel-daoud/blog/120617/la-france-en-marche-vers-un-etat-policier>

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

*Islam will be a central theme in the 2017 presidential election.*  
Manuel Vall at the “The Republic and Islam, let’s face the challenge” forum

The 2017 presidential election marks the enshrinement of far-right ideology and the Lepenisation of the minds. Having begun with the violent burkini controversy in 2016, the presidential election centred around identity and security. In contrast with the ongoing defiance between voters and the country’s elites for better socio-economic policies, institutional reform and transparency, Muslims and terrorism by far outweighed central issues for the French population. The year 2017 began with candidates engaged in a constant escalation in regards to protecting French identity from Islam and the French population from Muslims.

On January 25, pressure was added on candidates in regards to counter-terrorism. The daily newspaper *Le Parisien* published an article titled “Terrorism: The Secret Map of Radicalised Individuals in the Grand Paris Area (Ile de France)”.<sup>3</sup> Using government data, the article alleged that the secret document had “between 15,000 to 16,000 radicalised individuals including 4,000 in the Grand Paris Area” and that three business sectors were “particularly at risk”: transportation, security and administration.

‘Interestingly’ enough, the government failed to disclose the criteria it used to put a person’s name on such a list while recognising that a sizeable portion of those names landed there because of anonymous denunciation by phone.

The very same day, the National Front immediately reacted by publishing a press release titled “In the Grand



Figure 1: François Fillon’s Overcoming Islamic Totalitarianism is the book he wrote to present his presidential programme centred on the “identity and security threat” posed by what he vaguely calls “political Islam”.

3. Stéphanie Sellami, “Terrorisme : la carte secrète des radicalisés en Ile-de-France”, *Le Parisien* (January 25, 2017), retrieved January 22, 2018 from <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/cartographie-secrete-des-radicalises-25-01-2017-6614952.php>.

Paris Area Islamists Drive Our Buses and Maintain Our Security” which further added to the escalation between the party’s candidate Marine Le Pen and her conservative “rival” François Fillon.

From the far-left to the far-right, Islam and Muslims were indeed central issues. Marine Le Pen found staunch competitors in terms of Islamophobia. Before throwing in the towel for misusing public funds, Les Republicain’s candidate François Fillon, who launched his campaign with a book title *Overcoming Islamic Totalitarianism*, went from one promise to another against what he called the “only problematic community in France”,<sup>4</sup> shattered the separation between far-right and “republican” right-wing politics and dragged the campaign down to pure identity politics. (Fig. 1) Among his promises were the “strict control of the Muslim faith”<sup>5</sup> which he made during the opening speech of his campaign:

Radical islam has infiltrated our fellow Muslim countrymen and holds them hostages. Fanatics hate what we are, I shall fight them tirelessly and ruthlessly. I want a strict administrative control over the Muslim faith as long as its rooting in the Republic is not achieved. I want the dissolution of all organisations that adhere to Salafism or to the Muslim Brotherhood. I want clarification of our relationships with countries that harbour ideologues of radical Islam and burkini merchants. I do designate the problems that we have to radical Islam. Catholicism, Protestantism, or Judaism do not reject the Republic’s values despite a number of (past) clashes. All these religions live in peace with the Republic and with *laïcité* which is our common protection. But I hear some calling for a more restrictive *laïcité*. Why then affect people’s religious freedoms when only the onset of fundamentalism that is setting the Muslim world in flames is a threat to our society? (...) My vision of things is that the Muslim religion must accept, unconditionally what other religions have accepted in the past.<sup>6</sup>

But Francois Fillon’s adherence to *laïcité* changes according to whom he is targeting. Despite a long French tradition of excluding religious affiliation while running for office, precisely out of adherence to *laïcité*, the candidate did not hesitate to refer to himself as a “follower of Charles De Gaulle... and a Christian”, a declaration that raised eyebrows even across the Atlantic and challenged up front the secular

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4. Arnaud de La Grange, Jean-Marc Leclerc, Marion Mourgue, “François Fillon : «En France, il y a un problème lié à l’islam»”, *Le Figaro* (October 13, 2016), retrieved October 3, 2017 from <http://www.lefigaro.fr/elections/presidentielles/primaires-droite/2016/09/29/35004-20160929ARTFIG00329-francois-fillon-en-france-il-y-a-un-probleme-lie-a-l-islam.php>.

5. BFM TV, “Fillon: “Je veux un strict contrôle administratif du culte musulman” (January 2017), retrieved October 3, 2018 from <http://www.bfmtv.com/mediaplayer/video/fillon-je-veux-un-strict-controle-administratif-du-culte-musulman-908389.html>.

6. François Fillon, “La religion musulmane doit accepter sans condition ce que toutes les autres religions ont accepté”, *La Villette* (January 29, 2017), retrieved January 22, 2018 from <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x5a33nc>.

consensus<sup>7</sup> in French politics. The all-out return to Christian identity politics that is called for and adhered to in opposition to Muslims was a deliberate choice. But the positions of the likes of Francois Fillon and, before him, Nicolas Sarkozy and now Laurent Waquiez<sup>8</sup> point to a blatant contradiction. While they constantly pose as staunch advocates of a repressive *laïcité* when speaking of the religious rights of Muslims, they nevertheless invoke religious freedoms or the “Judeo-Christian roots” of France to justify special arrangements for their political base. This is nothing short of preaching adherence to the law while blowing the dog whistle to his supporters, assuring them that white supremacy remains in place.

The omnipresence of Islamophobia during the campaign was such that candidates who did not engage in some form of promise to “hold Muslims to account” more than others, were immediately discredited. It was the case for Socialist Party candidate Benoit Hamon who not only was sabotaged by his own party but was also bitterly attacked the Manuel Valls’ camp for being too lenient with the so-called “Islamogauchisme” (Islam-leftism), a term that is constantly used against non-Muslim opponents of Islamophobia and which shares the same logic as the term “Judeo-bolchevism”.

With a few notable exceptions, the convergence of the whole French political spectrum around Islamophobia was best illustrated by far-left political parties like Lutte Ouvrière (Trotskyists) which published a violent attack on the struggle against Islamophobia calling it the “Islamist Trojan horse” and “a trap”,<sup>9</sup> and France Insoumise (Unsubmissive France) whose president Jean Luc Mélenchon has on multiple occasions declared his opposition to Muslims expressing their beliefs in public space and even supported the bill against Muslim nannies working with a headscarf.

After his election, Emmanuel Macron has so far failed to address the burning issue of Islamophobia and through his authority as a president to implement policies and nominate state agents who will be in charge of protecting *laïcité* as it is enshrined in the constitution. To the contrary, his Minister of Education, who openly declared his opposition to the presence of Muslim mothers wearing a headscarf during school trips, has launched “*laïcité* units”<sup>10</sup> that will tour the country’s schools in order to tackle - among other things - “attacks against *laïcité*”, be it in the form of questioning

7. Stacy Meichtry, “François Fillon, Embracing His Catholicism, Challenges France’s Secular Tradition”, *Wall Street Journal* (January 3, 2017), retrieved January 22, 2018 from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/francois-fillon-embracing-his-catholicism-challenges-frances-secular-tradition-1483471514>.

8. The new president of the main conservative party, Les Républicains.

9. Lutte Ouvrière, “Lutte de classe”, “La lutte contre l’islamophobie est un piège” (February 2017) retrieved October 3, 2017 from [https://mensuel.lutte-ouvriere.org/2017/01/22/le-piege-de-la-lutte-contre-lislamophobie\\_75202.html](https://mensuel.lutte-ouvriere.org/2017/01/22/le-piege-de-la-lutte-contre-lislamophobie_75202.html).

10. Marie Piquemal, Frantz Durupt, “«Unités laïcité» à l’école : le poison du soupçon envers les élèves”, *Libération* (December 11, 2017), retrieved October 3, 2018 from [http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/12/11/unites-laicite-a-lecole-le-poison-du-soupcon-envers-les-eleves\\_1615726](http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/12/11/unites-laicite-a-lecole-le-poison-du-soupcon-envers-les-eleves_1615726).

schools' curricula or adopting a dress code that does not "fit" - just like when in 2015 and 2016, Muslim school girls were expelled for wearing long skirts.

But despite direct attacks on Muslims, the so-called "Muslim vote" still represents a mirage worth running after. Even the most violent Islamophobes have not shied away from attempting to lure Muslim voters. The National Front's Marine Le Pen and others from her campaign team have openly sought to seduce Muslim voters in a rather incoherent if not awkward manner. Invoking the love of the country and promising them protection from radical Islam, the far right just like conservatives urged "patriotic Muslims" or "France-loving Muslims" to vote for them.

To his credit, Emmanuel Macron let public opinion know about his support for the original *laïcité* law of 1905 and his opposition to it being hijacked to promote Islamophobia. But members of his own government have made a series of declarations in favour of a more repressive vision of *laïcité* and gave reasons for observers to worry about further restrictions on Muslims. Only he can decide to reaffirm his authority on the topic and put some form of order within the ranks of his government.

Fundamental rights for Muslims are considerably shrinking. Secular fundamentalism, i.e the adherence to an ideological form of "*laïcité*" that is based on the direct attacks against religious visibility in public space which in turn is a non-avowed targeting of Muslims, has significantly expanded and the forces resisting it do not seem to cope, while political leaders instead of fighting it for the sake of protecting social cohesion, have found it to be a low-risk, high-return political tactic.

## Justice System

Through the evolution of legislation, the visibility of Muslims in the public is yet again targeted by policymakers. In direct continuation with the European Court Of Justice's March 2017 ruling,<sup>11</sup> the French Cassation Court has given employers the legal tools to discriminate against Muslim women wearing a headscarf. Indeed, as the ECJ ruling considers that "An internal rule of an undertaking which prohibits the visible wearing of any political, philosophical or religious sign does not constitute direct discrimination", the cassation court of France ruled that employers need to first write the prohibition of the headscarf along with other religious signs in the company's internal ruling before considering terminating an employee for wearing it.

There are reasons to fear further legal discrimination. The French state has not changed its course on rulings targeting Muslim visibility. The newly nominated Laïcité Council of the Wise has among its members three of the most violent proponents of Islamophobia, namely Laurent Bouvet, Patrick Kessel and Alain Seksig. Furthermore, the current Minister of Education is a proponent of the new *laïcité* that restricts religious symbols in the public space. In an interview that went viral

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11. Court of Justice of the European Union, "PRESS RELEASE No 30/17" (March 14, 2017), retrieved October 3, 2017 from <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs/application/pdf/2017-03/cp170030en.pdf>.

in November 2017, he declared that according to his “personal view on *laïcité*”, mothers wearing a headscarf must be excluded from attending school activities even as volunteers.<sup>12</sup> His “personal views” are actually a recurring problem for Muslim mothers in France.

The Justice & Liberties For All Committee has been approached by a number of Muslim mothers in Paris who were first accepted to accompany their kids during a school trip but were then asked to leave unless they took off their headscarves. One school principal went as far as calling the police who notified a mother that she had no choice but to uncover her head while a busload of students and parents were watching. Such a case is far from being isolated as poor understanding of *laïcité* and ignorance of the law among public servants are a fertile soil for daily harassment of Muslim mothers. Such ignorance was further supported and exemplified by the State Secretary Christophe Castaner who declared on a major radio station that religious signs are prohibited in public space, an idea that is directly defended by the National Front’s Florian Philippot.<sup>13</sup>

## Failed Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the End of Rule of Law in France

*The lone wolf theory has been completely discredited. It is not enough to say Allah Akbar to turn a criminal act into a terrorist attack.*

Dr Francesco Ragazzi

The minority repression-based strategy has been chosen as French public opinion is calling for more “state authority”<sup>14</sup> and more repression in the face of terrorism. It is hence no coincidence that 60% of French public opinion was in favour of a permanent state of emergency despite its proven ineffectiveness in the face of terrorism.<sup>15</sup> This can be explained by the political communication that has been chosen by the majority of political parties and the media who have successfully normalised the idea that terrorism is inherently a Muslim problem and that by extension, Muslims themselves, their places of worship and businesses are a threat to national security.

The current government of Edouard Philippe (PM) and its predecessors have constantly used the term “radicalisation” and applied it in various ways: “radicalised individuals”, “radical preachers”, “radical mosques”, “radical Islam”, and the list goes on. But before addressing the problematic use of such vague termes, the term “radicalisation” it-

12. “Le Grand Jury”, RTL, “Blanquer sur RTL : pas de voile “normalement” pour une mère en sortie scolaire” (December 10, 2017) retrieved January 9, 2018 from <http://www.rtl.fr/actu/politique/blanquer-sur-rtl-pas-de-voile-normalement-pour-une-mere-en-sortie-scolaire-7791346392>.

13. L’invité de RTL, “Signes religieux : Philippot veut ‘étendre la loi de 2004 à l’espace public’”, RTL, (March 15, 2017) retrieved October 4, 2017 from <http://www.rtl.fr/actu/politique/signes-religieux-philippot-veut-etendre-la-loi-de-2004-a-l-espace-public-7787675379>.

14. Fractures Françaises (July 3, 2017) retrieved January 10, 2017 from <http://m.ipsos.fr/decrypter-societe/2017-07-03-fractures-francaises-2017-defiance-recule-peu>.

15. Baromètre Sécurité des Français (September 2017) retrieved January 10, 2018 from <https://www.youscribe.com/BookReader/Index/2875157/?documentId=3137637>.

self has not been defined by the French state - but we do know against whom it is applied. When the “radicalisation” figures were published in March 2017, the rapporteurs were cautious enough to begin by acknowledging that “radicalisation” is “an “ambiguous concept that is being used under the pressure of events”.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the figures given by the government point to the absence of clear criteria to report people and to the dangers of state-encouraged delation.

The Anti-Terrorist Coordination Unit figures (UCLAT) published the following figures:

1. Individuals on the Terrorism Prevention Database (FSPRT)

A total of 17,393 individuals were enrolled in the FSPRT, including:

- 7,400 individuals reported by the prefectures via the Security Staff Majors (EMS);
- 5,346 individuals reported by the public via CNAPR;
- 5,799 objectives registered by police or gendarmerie services.

2. Origin of reports validated by National Centre of Assistance and Prevention of Radicalisation (CNAPR)

- Of the 5,651 reports validated by the CNAPR:
- 3,939 came from calls to the toll-free number;
- 770 came from the Ministry of the Interior’s online form;
- 941 came from emails from the police and gendarmerie.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, Emmanuel Macron’s Minister of Interior Gerard Collomb<sup>18</sup> gave the figure of “18,500 reported individuals and counting”. Contradictions with the previous figures aside, the French government must be held accountable for the thousands of people that have been reported without knowing it and without the people reporting them knowing what they are reporting. The CNAPR is an open call for delation and ill-intentioned denunciation as it was extensively reported by human rights organisations during the state of emergency.

Furthermore, the government released its four-page assessment of the state of emergency ahead of its decision to lift it. According to the document, 19 places of worship were shut down by the government.<sup>19</sup> But just like the opaque if not arbi-

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16. Jean-Marie Bockel et Luc Cavournas, “Rapport d’Information” fait au nom de la délégation aux collectivités territoriales et à la décentralisation sur les collectivités territoriales et la prévention de la radicalisation (March 29, 2017), retrieved January 23, 2018 from <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r16-483/r16-4831.pdf>.

17. Local authorities and the prevention of radicalisation”, Information Report No. 483 (2016-2017) by MM. Jean-Marie BOCKEL and Luc CARVOUNAS, made on behalf of the delegation to local authorities, (March 29, 2017), retrieved March 8 2017 from <http://www.senat.fr/rap/r16-483/r16-4837.html>

18. “Gérard Collomb au JDD : “Il faut concilier efficacité et générosité” sur la question des migrants”, *Le JDD* (August 5, 2017), retrieved January 23, 2018 from <http://www.lejdd.fr/politique/gerard-collomb-sur-les-migrants-de-calais-il-faut-eviter-les-infrastructures-fixes-3404516>.

19. “Bilan de l’état d’urgence”, Ministère de l’intérieur (31 October 2017) retrieved 8 March 2018 from <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Bilan-de-l-etat-d-urgence>

trary criteria used to report people, the French government must clarify the basis on which its agents make their decisions to punish whole communities by shutting down their places of worship.

However, when it comes to members of Zionist organisations who join the Israeli army and commit war crimes against Palestinians or members of the far-right nebula who join pro-Russian forces in the Ukraine<sup>20</sup> to receive military training and take part in the conflict, the government and the media do not use the term “radicalisation”. As a matter of fact, such information does not make it to mainstream media and is not taken into consideration by the government.

In an interview for this report, Dr Francesco Ragazzi, a lecturer of International Relations at the University of Leiden who specialises on global security, gave the following assessment of the current and previous governments’ approach to “radicalisation”:

There is great opacity when it comes to the criteria used by governments to label individuals as “radicals”. The problem is that many untrained professionals are asked to all of a sudden become counter-terrorism experts and report cases of “radicalisation”, something that has not been defined. The short training sessions they are offered are not enough and reporting the wrong people becomes inevitable. As the multiple terrorist attacks have shown, we do know which individuals are dangerous. After each attack, authorities find out that the culprit was already on a watch list. The problem is not to know who’s going to be the next radical on the list, but which dangerous individual that is being watched - because they are always members of a network - is going to take action. The lone wolf theory has been completely discredited. In addition, it is not enough for someone to say “Allah Akbar” to turn a criminal act into a terrorist attack. What must be done by governments that intend to seriously tackle terrorism in a much more efficient and effective manner, is to adopt a strict division of roles. Education professionals cannot play the role of the police but both need to be able to communicate without political pressure from outside.<sup>21</sup>

The direct consequences of opacity and arbitrariness are challenges to the very notion of France being a democracy where the rule of law prevails. The anti-terrorism law<sup>22</sup> of 2017 that was passed soon after the election of Emmanuel Macron is a direct attack against it. Staunch criticism came from historic NGOs such as the French Human Rights League which raised four “priority preliminary rulings on

20. Mathieu Molard, “Ukraine : Les docs qui montrent l’implication de l’extrême droite française dans la guerre”, Streetpress (29 August 2016), retrieved 8 March 2018 from <https://www.streetpress.com/sujet/1472465929-donetsk-leaks-implication-extreme-droite-francaise-ukraine>

21. Francesco Ragazzi, Interview with Yasser Louati, January 23, 2018.

22. LOI n° 2017-1510 du 30 octobre 2017 renforçant la sécurité intérieure et la lutte contre le terrorisme (October 30, 2017) retrieved January 10, 2018 from <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/loi/2017/10/30/INTX1716370L/jo/texte>.

constitutionality”<sup>23</sup> on the basis that the law represented “serious risks of abuse and misuse of powers”.<sup>24</sup>

The endangering of civil liberties under Emmanuel Macron’s tenure cannot be underestimated. The country’s renowned legal experts such as Mireille Delmas Marty called the transition from the state of emergency to its lifting through the passing of the anti-terrorism law, a passage to “soft despotism”<sup>25</sup> which is no understatement coming from one of the most respected academics.

The Defender of Rights (Ombudsman) Jacques Toubon, declared on his side that “if the implementation of the law leads to targeting in 99% of the cases people who share the same religion, we instil a kind of dissolvent of national cohesion, a poisonous pill.” Furthermore, the bill raised concerns at the UN level. UN rapporteur Michel Forst blasted the bill for relying on a “vague definition of terrorism” and wrote, “What France is doing is not trivial. We want France to do better so it doesn’t inspire bad practices in other countries”.<sup>26</sup> It is only a question of time before France’s example is used by other countries. But in turn, this means that France can no longer lecture other countries on the rule of law.

On top of the law on mass surveillance that was passed in 2015 and which has put the whole country’s radio and online communication under surveillance and the widespread use of *notes blanches*<sup>27</sup> to put individuals under house arrest, wiretap their phones or raid their homes, the 2017 counter-terrorism law includes the extreme measures of the state of emergency. Places of worship and organisations can now be shut at the discretion of the prefect which is highly problematic given the multiple cases of innocent Muslim citizens whose homes were raided, who were put under house arrest and lost their jobs because of arbitrary decisions taken by their area’s prefect. In total, 19 Muslim places of worship have been closed by the government, 749 individuals were placed under house arrest, over 4,500 police raids were conducted and the list of individuals under government surveillance has reached 25,000.<sup>28</sup>

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23. “Question Prioritaire de Constitutionnalité” could be translated as an application for a preliminary ruling on the conformity of a legislative provision with the French Constitution.

24. Jean-Baptiste Jacquin, “La Ligue des droits de l’homme attaque la loi post-état d’urgence”, *Le Monde*, (November 15, 2017), retrieved January 19, 2018 from [http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2017/11/15/la-ligue-des-droits-de-l-homme-attaque-la-loi-post-etat-d-urgence\\_5215132\\_3224.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2017/11/15/la-ligue-des-droits-de-l-homme-attaque-la-loi-post-etat-d-urgence_5215132_3224.html).

25. Mireille Delmas Marty “De l’état d’urgence au despotisme doux”, *Libération* (July 16, 2017), retrieved January 10, 2018 from [http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/07/16/de-l-etat-d-urgence-au-despotisme-doux\\_1584185](http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/07/16/de-l-etat-d-urgence-au-despotisme-doux_1584185).

26. Angélique Chrisafis, “Macron’s Counter-Terror Bill Risks France’s Human Rights Record, Say UN Experts”, *The Guardian*, (September 28, 2017) retrieved January 10, 2018 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/28/macrons-counter-terror-bill-risks-frances-human-rights-record-says-un>.

27. “White notes” are documents used by intelligence agencies which are not signed, dated or have a header but contain written accusations against someone by an intelligence officer with no need to prove the accusation.

28. Ministère de l’Intérieur, “Bilan de l’état d’urgence” (November 3, 2017), retrieved January 30, 2018 from <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Bilan-de-l-etat-d-urgence>.

## Employment

In a ruling on December 19, the administrative court of appeal of Versailles (Yvelines), sided with the decision of the Hospital of Saint-Denis (North of Paris) to cancel an internship agreement with a man because of his beard. The latter was deemed in violation of the secular law and neutrality of the public service.<sup>29</sup>

The Coordination Against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI) has reported similar cases of discrimination at work. For instance in La Rochelle (Atlantic Coast of France), a man's employment was terminated by his employer after weeks of harassment for having a beard that was deemed a "sign of religious extremism". The CRI has further reported 15 cases of anti-Muslim hate speech at work which, of course, went unreported.<sup>30</sup>

Anti-Muslim discrimination is already massive in France. Previous studies that were published a few years ago are still relevant. In 2015 already, a study<sup>31</sup> by Marie Anne Valfort (Paris School of Economics) concluded that Muslim job applicants were four times more likely of being discriminated against than candidates with a Catholic name. In the case of Muslim women, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) concluded that wearing a headscarf reduces a job applicant's chances of securing a job to 1%.<sup>32</sup> France Stratégie, a think tank that is under the Prime Minister's authority, concluded that discrimination in general cost over 150 billion euros to the French economy.<sup>33</sup>

## Media

In October, when Harvey Weinstein's multiple sexual assaults made international news, feminist activists in France launched the *#balancetonporc* online campaign in order to encourage women to call out those who had targeted them. A few weeks later, Tariq Ramadan, a prominent Swiss Muslim figure found himself in the midst of a national hysteria that was launched by his long-time political rivals and carried throughout the media in order to portray him as the "symptomatic case of a Muslim who has problem with women". Several women came forward and accused him of sexual misconduct. The public trial of Tariq Ramadan became the trial of all Muslim communities which were accused of being too silent.

29. France, Cour administrative d'appel de Versailles, 4<sup>ème</sup> chambre, December 19, 2017, 15VE03582 (December 19, 2017) retrieved December 29, 2017 from <https://juricaf.org/arret/FRANCE-COURADMINISTRATIVEDAPPELDEVERSAILLES-20171219-15VE03582>.

30. Abdel Aziz Chaambi, Coordination Contre le Racisme et l'Islamophobie, Interview by email, January 3, 2017.

31. Marie Anne Valfort, "Religious Discrimination in Access to Employment: A Reality" (October 2015), retrieved January 24, 2018 from <http://www.institutmontaigne.org/ressources/pdfs/publications/discriminations-en.pdf>.

32. European Network Against Racism, *Forgotten Women* (May 25, 2017), retrieved January 24, 2018 from <http://www.enar-eu.org/Forgotten-Women-the-impact-of-Islamophobia-on-Muslim-women>.

33. France Stratégie, *Le cout économique des discriminations* (September 20, 2017) retrieved January 24, 2018 <http://www.strategie.gouv.fr/publications/cout-economique-discriminations>.

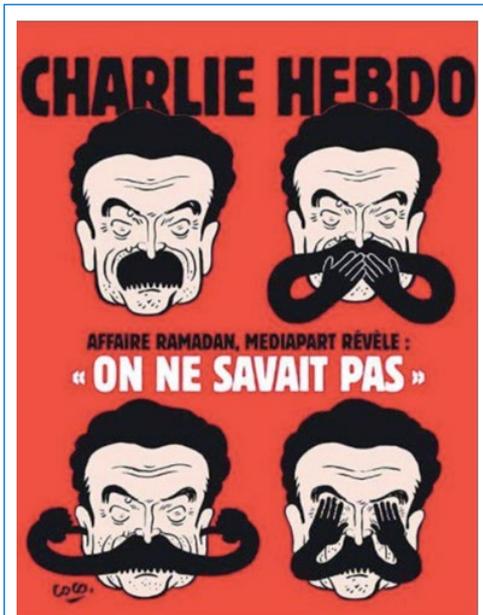


Figure 2: *Charlie Hebdo* and its sympathisers launched a violent campaign against those who had worked with Tariq Ramadan. In this front page, *Mediapart* Director and Co-Founder Edwy Plenel is accused of having known about Ramadan's alleged sexual misconducts but pretended otherwise (8 November 2017).

The violence of the controversy reached its peak when satiric newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* accused Edwy Plenel, the co-founder of investigative newspaper *Mediapart* of having known all along about Tariq Ramadan's rape allegations and not speaking up about it. (Fig. 2) To Edwy Plenel, *Charlie Hebdo's* headlines were "a declaration of war against Muslims by a misguided left".

*Le Bondy Blog*, an online media that is referred to as the voice of the banlieues, was not spared. Using the Tariq Ramadan affair as a platform, former Prime Minister Manuel Valls renewed the attacks against *Mediapart* and Edwy Plenel and targeted *Le Bondy Blog* for being "too lenient with political Islam".<sup>34</sup>

What is relatively surprising but nonetheless disturbing, is the silence from traditional Islamic institutions such as the UOIF (Union of Islamic Organisations of France), the Grand Mosque of Paris, the FNMF (National Federation of Muslims) and umbrella organisations such as the CFCM, in the face of repeated assaults against Muslims by the country's political elites, the media, secular fundamentalist organisations and more worryingly, in the aftermath of the Tariq Ramadan affair.

Individuals who in normal times are in fierce battles to be recognised as "representatives" of French Muslims were nowhere to be found as violent rhetoric from columnists, political and media figures and militant organisations were targeting Muslims for being Muslims. It is to be feared that fear has been internalised by traditional Islamic organisations and that respectability politics, although having been a blatant failure, still seem to be the chosen strategy.

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In its weekly supplement, conservative and heavily subsidised *Le Figaro* (6,456,112 euros in state subsidies in 2016) dedicated the front cover of its weekly supplement *Le Figaro Magazine* to "The Islamosphere, An Investigation into Islam's Agents of Influence". (Fig. 3) The 11-page-long "investigation" by Judith Weintraub, who does not hide her anti-Muslim views either on social media or on television,

34. Les Inrockuptibles, "Manuel Valls charge encore le Bondy Blog et Edwy Plenel" (November 14, 2017), retrieved October 3, 2017 from <https://www.lesinrocks.com/2017/11/14/actualite/manuel-valls-charge-encore-le-bondy-blog-et-edwy-plenel-111008795/>.

contained a list of all public figures who either took a stance against Islamophobia or called out the hijacking of *laïcité* to turn it against Muslims. Even those who have no direct connections with Islamic institutions or anti-Islamophobia organisations were not spared. Among the targets were leading *laïcité* scholar Jean Baubérot; socio-anthropologist Edgar Morin; author of *The myth of Islamisation* Raphael Lliogier; author Rokhaya Diallo; Jean Louis Bianco, head of the state-sanctioned Observatory of Laïcité; Houria Boutheldja, head of the Republic's Indigenous Party; or anthropologist Emmanuel Todd who authored *Who is Charlie*.<sup>35</sup>

The allegations that an Islamist network of agents had infiltrated the

French Republic were further supported by interviews of two other prominent anti-Muslim activists. The first one with former Socialist Prime Minister Manuel Valls whose flirtatious relationship with far-right ideas is no longer a secret, and the second with Pascal Bruckner who had just released a new essay titled “Islamophobia, The Imaginary Racism”.<sup>36</sup> Blasting those who oppose Islamophobia, Bruckner declared in the interview, “[F]ormer Communists, Trotskyists, Maoists compete in their allegiance to bigotry provided it is carried by the followers of the Quran. They hate France not because it oppresses Muslims, but because it frees them. From then on, the enemy in their eyes becomes secularism and especially the dissidents of Islam...”<sup>37</sup>

While proponents of Islamophobia claim freedom of speech to normalise anti-Muslim rhetoric, they are nonetheless first in line to call for censorship of their opponents. The following event best illustrates how French institutions have been infiltrated by strong proponents of Islamophobia and have been weakened by the lack of political courage.

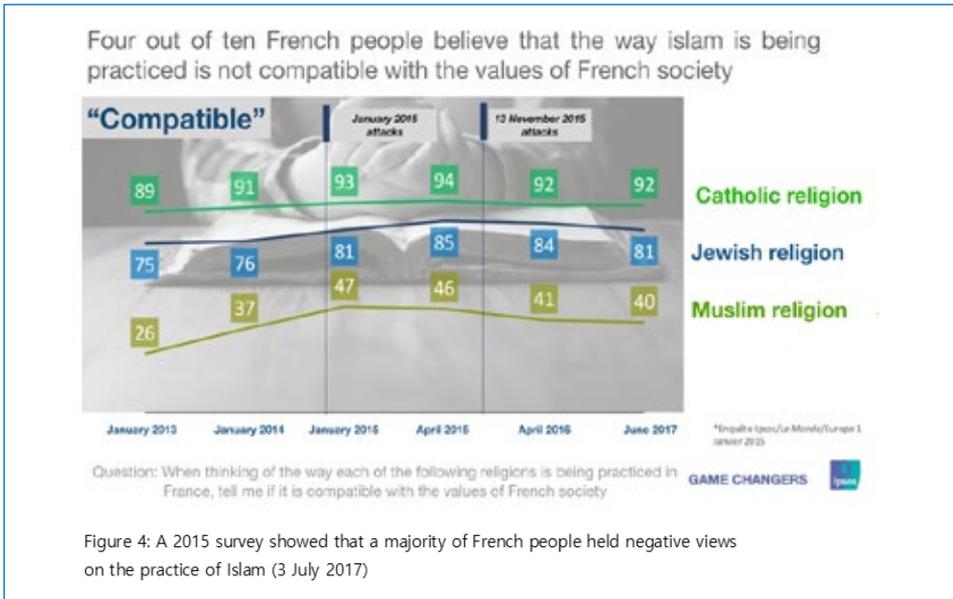


Figure 3 : The newspaper *Le Figaro* dedicated the front cover of its weekly supplement *Le Figaro Magazine* to “The Islamosphere, An Investigation into Islam’s Agents of Influence” 6 October 2017).

35. Emmanuel Todd, “Who Is Charlie”, *Polity*, <http://politybooks.com/bookdetail/?isbn=9781509505777>.

36. Pascal Bruckner “Islamophobie, le racisme imaginaire”, Grasset

37. Pascal Bruckner, “Bruckner : «Ils haïssent la France, non parce qu’elle opprime les musulmans, mais parce qu’elle les libère», *Le Figarovoix* (6 October 2017) retrieved 8 March 2018 from <http://www.lefigaro.fr/voix/religion/2017/10/06/31004-20171006ARTFIG00073-bruckner-ils-haïssent-la-france-non-parce-qu-elle-opprime-les-musulmans-mais-parce-qu-elle-les-libere.php>



On October 3, the University of Lyon II decided to cancel a long-scheduled event titled “Fighting Islamophobia, A Question of Equality”<sup>38</sup> after a violent campaign was launched by far-right activists, staunch advocates for an Islam-hostile version of *laïcité* like the LICRA<sup>39</sup> (League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism), Comité Laïcité République<sup>40</sup> and Le Printemps Républicain. Among the attendees, were the European Commission’s Coordinator Against Anti-Muslim Hatred David Figgieri, the head of the state sanctioned Observatory of Laïcité Jean Louis Bianco, several academics, advocates and legal experts. The University of Lyon, following the demands made by opponents of the event, decided to cancel the event by claiming that “the conditions to guarantee the serenity of the exchanges and the good progress of debates around the question of Islamophobia and its political stakes have not been met”.<sup>41</sup> To many observers, this was a case of censorship and of violation of freedom of speech. In response, three hundred academics and researchers jointly signed a letter titled “To Counter Censorship, Defend Academic Freedoms” in which they expressed their “worries” of seeing

38. Camille Stromboni, “L’annulation d’un colloque universitaire sur l’islamophobie fait débat à Lyon”, *Le Monde*, (October 11, 2017) retrieved January 2, 2018 from [http://www.lemonde.fr/religions/article/2017/10/11/l-annulation-d-un-colloque-universitaire-sur-l-islamophobie-fait-debat-a-lyon\\_5199309\\_1653130.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/religions/article/2017/10/11/l-annulation-d-un-colloque-universitaire-sur-l-islamophobie-fait-debat-a-lyon_5199309_1653130.html).

39. LICRA, “Un colloque « laïcophobe » à l’Université Lumière Lyon 2”, (October 1, 2017) retrieved January 2, 2017 from <http://www.licra.org/5264-2>.

40. Guylain Chevrier, “Colloque annulé à Lyon 2 : l’islamisme et ceux qui le légitiment”, *Comité Laïcité République*, (October 4, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from <http://www.laicite-republique.org/colloque-annule-a-lyon-2-l-islamisme-et-ceux-qui-le-legitiment-g-chevrier.html>.

41. Communiqué de Presse, “Annulation du colloque « Lutter contre l’islamophobie, un enjeu d’égalité ? »”, Université Lyon II (October 3, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from <https://www.univ-lyon2.fr/cp-annulation-du-colloque-lutter-contre-l-islamophobie-un-enjeu-d-egalite--742793.kjsp?RH=Presse>.

heads of higher education institutions trying to control what can and what cannot be debated.<sup>42</sup>

State-owned media represent a major part of the problem. State-owned France 2, for instance, has turned one of its most viewed weekly shows into a platform for Islamophobes to spread their ideas without serious challenges. Notorious activists like Michel Onfray, Alain Finkielkraut, or Manuel Valls have been given a platform to further spread their ideas with no real contradiction on behalf of the hosts. With or without Islamophobes on the set, Islam and Muslims are the permanent topic, always treated in the absence of Muslims themselves. Their absence is no coincidence. The unavoidable result is that Islam is constitutively perceived as a foreign entity that is not compatible with French values as shown in figure 4.

The same applies to the radio. The example of France Culture (part of state-owned Radio France) where Alain Finkielkraut has a weekly show speaks volumes on the silence on behalf of state regulators when it comes to violent anti-Muslim rhetoric. Finkielkraut, a strong advocate for white supremacy through assimilation, the “clash of civilisations”, repression against visible Islam, Muslims and activists, is given a platform on taxpayers’ money. It is during his show that one of his guests and director of the Shoah Memorial George Bensoussan declared that “Arabs are breastfed anti-Semitism” which prompted anti-racist organisations to press charges - in vain, however. Despite repeated racist attacks against Muslims and other minorities and his historic contribution to the rise of Islamophobia since the mid-80s (he was among the first to call for banning Muslim visibility in public schools and is a co-founder of the militant secular fundamentalist organisation Comité Laïcité République), Alain Finkielkraut has so far never been disciplined by his superiors or by the Ministry of Culture.

The convergence from the far-right to left-wing organisations has been made possible around the targeting of Muslim activists and any other opponents of Islamophobia. That organisations push for their ideological agenda is not new and is part of the democratic debate, but for institutions such as universities which are supposed to be places of free debate and intellectual development to choose censorship at the request of such organisations is a deeply worrying situation.

Such censorship is not reserved for Muslim activists.

Broader grassroots anti-racist organisations are under heavy pressure from the French state whose agents fear the well-coordinated work of white supremacists and secular fundamentalists (in the form of formal or informal networks). For instance, the Afro-Feminist event “Nyansapo” was violently attacked for hosting an event exclusively for radicalised people and then was targeted by the socialist mayor of Paris,

42. “Un collectif d’associations et Un collectif d’universitaires et d’artistes”, “Contre la censure à l’université, défendre les libertés académiques”, *Libération* (October 13, 2017) retrieved January 2, 2018 from [http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/10/13/contre-la-censure-a-l-universite-defendre-les-libertes-academiques\\_1602703](http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/10/13/contre-la-censure-a-l-universite-defendre-les-libertes-academiques_1602703).

Anne Hidalgo, who declared the seizing of the Prefect of Paris in order to prevent the event from taking place despite it being held in a private hall.<sup>43</sup> When the SUD union of teachers organised a non-mixed event on “state racism”, fury came not only from conservatives, the far right and their allies from the left but also from the Minister of Education himself who sued the union for using the term “state racism”.<sup>44</sup> As stated by African thinker Achille Mbembe in a November 2017 interview, “we are witnessing a dramatic decline of the idea of equality... the “Other” seems to arouse only disgust, the very figure of what one can not bear anymore.”<sup>45</sup> France is no exception in Europe, as a matter of fact, the 2016 report proved its role as the laboratory of Islamophobia and its leading role in the West to legalise anti-Muslim discrimination and marginalisation.

Censorship and political repression have become ever more acceptable under the guise of fighting “political Islam”, “communautarism” or “attacks against *laïcité*”. Such convergence between the far right, neo-Nazis, Zionist and self-proclaimed left-wing organisations is not new but has only solidified with time. The Lyon II event stated above was only one example of many.

Even state institutions such as the National Digital Council (Conseil National du Numérique) was pressed by the Secretary of State in charge of digital affairs Mounir Mahjoubi in order to revoke the nomination of Rokhaya Diallo. The latter was singled out for her stance against Islamophobia and for calling out “state racism” which gave grounds for the same informal pro-white supremacy network to target her. As the government bowed (again) to their demands, the head of the council, Marie Ekeland, along with the majority of the board decided to resign<sup>46</sup> in protest of the government’s interference to expel Rokhaya Diallo from it.

In an interview to *Le Monde*, Zekri, head of the Observatory of Islamophobia, declared that the decline of anti-Muslim acts are to be linked in part to “the nomination of a prefect responsible for securing places of worship”. According to Zekri “1,098 Muslim sites, mosques or prayer rooms have benefited of protection of the security forces in 2016”. He also noted and praised the efforts of the French state for “the installation of video surveillance devices around certain mosques” and for

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43. Frantz Durupt, “Aux origines de la polémique sur le festival afro-féministe Nyansapo”, *Libération* (May 29, 2017), retrieved January 6, 2018 from [http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/05/28/aux-origines-de-la-polemique-sur-le-festival-afrofeministe-nyansapo\\_1572874](http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/05/28/aux-origines-de-la-polemique-sur-le-festival-afrofeministe-nyansapo_1572874).

44. Frantz Durupt, “Blanquer porte plainte contre un syndicat qui a utilisé l’expression «racisme d’Etat»”, *Libération* (November 21, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from [http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/11/21/blanquer-porte-plainte-contre-un-syndicat-qui-a-utilise-l-expression-racisme-d-etat\\_1611537](http://www.liberation.fr/france/2017/11/21/blanquer-porte-plainte-contre-un-syndicat-qui-a-utilise-l-expression-racisme-d-etat_1611537).

45. Achille Mbembe “La France est en recul partout en Afrique”, *Mediapart*, (November 28, 2017), retrieved January 10, 2018 from [https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/culture-idees/281117/achille-mbembe-linfluence-francaise-est-partout-en-recul-en-afrique?page\\_article=2](https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/culture-idees/281117/achille-mbembe-linfluence-francaise-est-partout-en-recul-en-afrique?page_article=2).

46. Marie Ekeland, “Demain un autre jour”, *CNNum* (December 19, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018 from [https://cnumnumerique.fr/demain\\_autrejour](https://cnumnumerique.fr/demain_autrejour).

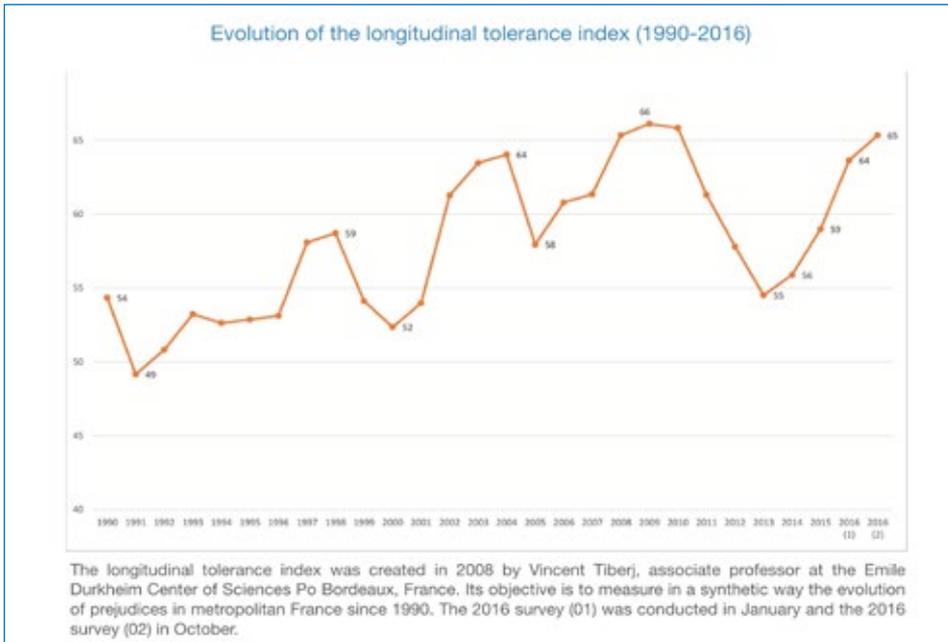


Figure 5: The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights “tolerance index” has positively evolved despite terrorist attacks. The institutions explains this by the fact that “the predisposition for tolerance or intolerance, which coexist in each of us, depends on the context and how elites politics, media and social talk about immigration and diversity.” (30 March 2017)

having “made a major financial effort: 341,000 euros in 2016 and 756,000 euros in 2015” to supply CCTV equipment.<sup>47</sup>

On its side, the state-sanctioned CNCDH (National Consultative Commission on Human Rights) noted no decrease of its “tolerance index”<sup>48</sup> (figure 5) in its March 2017 report. Such dramatic difference between the country’s human rights body and the state of public debate, legislative projects and normalised hate speech in the media, could either point to self-censorship from participants or to a wider silent and tolerant majority in the country.

#### Discrimination in housing

In the report, the Defender of Right makes it clear that “People who think they are perceived as Arab or black also face difficulties, with 39% of unsuccessful searches and 15% of searches lasting more than one year, and for the second 38% of unsuccessful searches and 22% of searches of which the duration exceeds one year.”<sup>49</sup>

47. Abdellah Zekri to Cecile Chambaud, “Les actes antimusulmans en forte baisse en 2016”, *Le Monde* (January 31, 2017), retrieved December, 29, 2017, from [http://www.lemonde.fr/religions/article/2017/01/31/les-actes-antimusulmans-en-forte-baisse-en-2016\\_5072372\\_1653130.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/religions/article/2017/01/31/les-actes-antimusulmans-en-forte-baisse-en-2016_5072372_1653130.html).

48. CNCDH, “Rapport sur la lutte contre le racisme, l’antisémitisme et la xénophobie” (March 30, 2017), retrieved January 10, 2018 from <http://www.cncdh.fr/fr/publications/les-essentiels-du-rapport-sur-la-lutte-contre-le-racisme-2016>.

49. Défenseur des Droits, “Enquête sur l’accès aux droits, les discriminations dans l’accès au logement” (December 12, 2017) retrieved December 29, 2017 from [https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/171213\\_ddd\\_ead\\_discrimination\\_logement\\_num.pdf](https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/171213_ddd_ead_discrimination_logement_num.pdf).

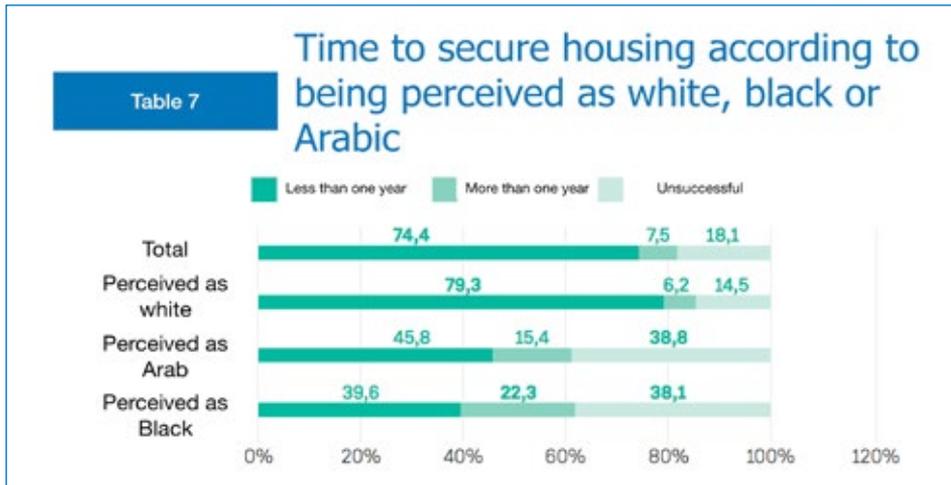


Figure 6: In its 2017 report on discrimination in housing, Ombudman's office concluded that "nearly 20% of immigrants spent more than a year finding housing, twice more than average, and 38% had not yet found at the time of the survey, 17 points" which is more than the national average average (21%).

Being an immigrant or "perceived as not white" exposes individuals to unquestionable difficulties in looking for a place to rent. The access times and the rate of unsuccessful searches reported by persons belonging to these two social groups have the same gaps as those declared by the entire surveyed population.<sup>50</sup>

Massive discrimination in housing was further proved by another survey conducted by the department of the TEPP (Labour, Employment and Public Policy) of the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research). Their team applied to 5,000 rental offers in 50 major cities around France, using the following fake names: Kevin Durand, Mohamed Chettouh, Sébastien Petit and Désiré Sambou. The results revealed that candidates with a North African-sounding name are 27% less likely to receive a response from the renting agency. In the case of rental ads posted by individuals, such candidates are 45% less likely to have an answer.<sup>51</sup>

## Physical and Verbal attacks

*Normalising a Muslim perspective and a Muslim presence in the media and civil society is already seen as a threat.*

Samia Hathroubi

In August, the Muslim feminist organisation Lallab made headlines after it denounced the French Civic Service Agency for removing one of their ads. The state agency had indeed acted after pressure came from Le Printemps Républicain and

50. Défenseur des Droits, "Enquête sur l'accès aux droits, les discriminations dans l'accès au logement" (December 12, 2017) retrieved December 29, 2017 from [https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/171213\\_ddd\\_ead\\_discrimination\\_logement\\_num.pdf](https://www.defenseurdesdroits.fr/sites/default/files/atoms/files/171213_ddd_ead_discrimination_logement_num.pdf).

51. TEPP Rapport de Recherche "Les discriminations dans l'accès au logement en France: un testing de couverture nationale" (December 12, 2017) retrieved December 29, 2017 from [http://www.tepp.eu/doc/users/268/bib/dalton\\_en\\_france\\_1311.pdf](http://www.tepp.eu/doc/users/268/bib/dalton_en_france_1311.pdf)

the National Front which accused the organisation of “Islamism”. The left-wing and far-right organisations’ allegations were followed by an op-ed written by Celine Pina and published in *Le Figaro*. Celine Pina, author of “Guilty Silence, Islamists, They Are Tall Only Because We Are on Our Knees”,<sup>52</sup> who had previously compared the Muslim headscarf to “a Nazi armband”,<sup>53</sup> wrote, “The state must clearly denounce Lallab as a laboratory of Islamism”<sup>54</sup> thus feeding a national controversy around the organisation.

In an interview for this report, Samia Hathroubi, a prominent French Muslim voice, stated that she has also been under fierce attacks for questioning “white supremacy” or anytime she uses the word “white”.

The attacks I face are both misogynistic and racist but there is a second phenomenon that is more complicated to tackle: attacks from an elite which cannot accept your criticism against structural racism and which will label you as ‘anti-Semitic’ or ‘close to the Muslim Brotherhood’ in order to prevent you from being published, from having a scholarship or from securing funding.<sup>55</sup>

Similar cases of public demonisation were experienced by stand up comedian Yassine Belattar who was also accused of being an Islamist by another prominent platform of Islamophobia promotion, the weekly *Marianne*.<sup>56</sup> The artist, who made several public appearances on TV platforms to call out racism and who stood against the ideological use of grief expressed after terrorism attacks to score political points, had several of his shows canceled after municipalities prohibited him from performing. Attacks were again orchestrated by Le Printemps Républicain and its allies from the left and the far right. Such attacks were also aimed at Muslim candidates during the legislative elections of June 2017. For instance, new faces running for office like Feiza Ben Mohammed,<sup>57</sup> Hanan Zahouani<sup>58</sup> or Nadia Omani were targets of well-coordinated smear campaigns attempted at discrediting them as candidates.

52. Céline Pina, “Silence Coupable”, Kero (April 18, 2016), <https://www.editionskero.com/ouvrage/silence-coupable>

53. Bibliothèque Médecis, Public Sénat, (November 20, 2016) retrieved October 4, 2017 from <https://www.public-senat.fr/emission/bibliotheque-medecis/le-rendez-vous-des-livres-et-des-auteurs-11229>.

54. Celine Pina, “Céline Pina : «L’État doit dénoncer clairement l’association Lallab, laboratoire de l’islamisme»”, *Le Figarovox* (23 Auguts 2018), retrieved 8 March 2018 from <http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/2017/08/23/31003-20170823ARTFIG00098-celine-pina-l-etat-doit-denoncer-clairement-l-association-lallab-laboratoire-de-l-islamisme.php>

55. Samia Hathroubi, Interview with Yasser Louati 4 January 2018

56. Martine Gozlan, “Yassine Belattar, faux clown, vrai danger”, *Marianne* (December 15, 2017), retrieved December 20, 2017 from <https://www.marianne.net/societe/yassine-belattar-faux-clown-et-vrai-danger>.

57. Philippe Vardon on Facebook (December 3, 2017) retrieved January 3, 2018 from <https://m.facebook.com/pvardon/photos/a.129112633841009.34757.120292721389667/1561816177237307/?type=3>.

58. Sophie Durand, “Non, Hanan Zahouani, vous ne ferez pas entrer le voile à l’Assemblée!”, *Riposte Laïque* (May 16, 2017), retrieved November 15, 2017 from <https://ripostelaique.com/non-hanan-zahouani-vous-ne-ferez-pas-entrer-le-voile-a-l-assemblee.html>.

## Internet

Facebook and Twitter remain the two biggest platforms where Islamophobia finds safe space to spread. The two have been accused for years of letting racism express itself in the most violent ways. But the purveyors of Islamophobia also publish on their own websites before sharing their content on social media. The most active websites in 2017 were the following :

- *F De Souche* (fdesouche.com): This website was initially a blog and has become widely popular in the ranks of the far right. Rated as highly influential by *Le Monde*, *Arrêt Sur Image* and *Le Figaro*, it has indeed become a news aggregator with a capacity to influence public debate, and launch demonisation campaigns against political opponents be it individuals or organisations. Despite by its far-right editorial line, it has been working with left-wing organisations such as *Le Printemps Républicain* or the “anti-racist” organisation LICRA. When in October a conference against Islamophobia was organised at the University of Lyon, they were the first to call for its canceling and were later joined by the aforementioned organisations. They were also first in line to call for the dismissal of author and journalist Rokhaya Diallo when she was nominated to join the national digital council (CNNum).
- *Riposte Laïque* (ripostelaïque.com): Although not as influential as *FDeSouche*, *Riposte Laïque* has used its highly violent rhetoric against Muslims and calls for violence against them to test the limits of French institutions and how much they can tolerate. Not shying away from propagating fake news, *Riposte Laïque* has engaged in disseminating rumours the ongoing Islamisation of France for instance with the election of Emmanuel Macron<sup>59</sup> or going after Muslim female candidate Sandra Fourastier for daring to run for election: “Sandra Fourastier, with a beautiful French name, is a small 21-year-old convert who does not know how traitors generally end up: with a bullet in the back of the neck, usually inflicted by those whom they have betrayed, who do not trust them at all, for if you are treacherous one day, you are a traitor always, and they brutally murder them once they are done with them”.<sup>60</sup>
- *Figarovox* (www.lefigaro.fr/voix) is an affiliate to France’s right-wing newspaper *Le Figaro*. The platform has been very active in promoting individuals engaged in the Islamophobia network. Although *Le Figaro* remains the major conservative newspaper, *Le Figarovox* has managed to give visibility to and promote personalities from both the left and the right when they agree on “keeping Islam in

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59. Riposte Laïque, “Emmanuel Macron, le candidat des musulmans veut islamiser la France” (Emmanuel Macron, the Muslims’ Candidate Wants to Islamise France) (May 2, 2017), retrieved January 30, 2018 from <https://www.youtube.com/user/ciceropicas>.

60. Sophie Durand, “Faisons barrage à Sandra Fourastier et à l’imposture du voile à l’Assemblée” (May 30, 2017), *Riposte Laïque*, retrieved January 30, 2017 from <https://ripostelaïque.com/faisons-barrage-a-sandra-fourastier-et-a-limposture-du-voile-a-lassemblee.html>.

check”, upholding an aggressive interpretation of *laïcité* or to feed the narrative of a “Muslim problem in France”.

- *Ikhwan* (ikhwan.info)
- *Boulevard Voltaire* (voltaire.fr)
- *J Forum* (jforum.fr)
- *Europe Israel* (europe-israel.org) Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The following individuals and groups share a common belief in an ideologically biased form of *laïcité*. Rather than referring to *laïcité* as it is enshrined in the law and advocating a strict adherence to the law, their version of *laïcité* is a tool to be used in a permanent war against the visibility of Muslims in public space and an all out war against the normalisation of their presence. To further assert the identity-based approach to *laïcité*, this secular fundamentalist network claims that the terrorist threat could be thwarted by applying their more repressive version of *laïcité*. We see such belief in the manifesto of Le Printemps Républicain and various publications and public stances by its members as well as those from the Comité Laïcité République and the LICRA (League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism).

Le Printemps Républicain and its allies from the Comité Laïcité République and the LICRA have so far managed to spark controversy after controversy. They were behind the attacks against individuals and the censoring of opposing voices. What raises concern is not only the violence of their racist rhetoric wrapped in a love of the republic discourse but the weak resistance by state institutions and the silenced voices of those who oppose them. Furthermore, such left-wing secular fundamentalist pressure groups continuously find themselves converging with white supremacist, neo-Nazi and neo-fascist organisations like Riposte Laïque, Résistance Républicaine, FDeSouche or the National Front and its affiliates as well as powerful pro-Israeli organisations like the CRIF (Representative Council of Jewish Institutions).

Le Printemps Républicain was founded in 2016 and has since been among the first to spark controversies centred around Islam and Muslims and has managed to keep them both at the centre of public debates. Their loose if not non-existent clear definitions of “radical Islam”, “political Islam”, and “Muslim Brotherhood” allow its members to attack any individual or organisation that does not agree with their narrow definition of *laïcité* which is no different from the one adopted by the rest of the left-wing Islamophobia network.

Le Printemps Républicain was co-founded by Laurent Bouvet, theorist of the “cultural security” concept, based on the assumption that French Muslims are taking over the French Republic’s identity rather than embracing it; Gilles Clavreul, a protégé of Manuel Valls who shot to prominence by declaring that he believed there is a “hierarchy of racisms”<sup>61</sup> as he had just been nominated head of the antiracist state

61. Alice Géraud, “Gilles Clavreul, la valse antiraciste”, *Libération* (April 16, 2015), retrieved January 3, 2018 from [http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2015/04/16/gilles-clavreul-la-valse-antiraciste\\_1243400](http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2015/04/16/gilles-clavreul-la-valse-antiraciste_1243400).

agency DILCRAH; the mayor of the 20th arrondissement of Paris Frédérique Calandra who is in a constant war against local anti-Islamophobia activists even if she does not have the same level of visibility as the two previous individuals.

The Comité Laïcité République was co-founded in 1989 after then Minister of Education Lionel Jospin sided with the Council of the State that ruled in favour of accepting schoolgirls with their headscarves in public schools. Alain Finkielkraut was among its co-founders. It is now presided by Patrick Kessel who also signed Le Printemps Républicain's manifesto. The organisation is best known for its yearly *Prix de la laïcité* (*laïcité* prize) in order to hijack it from the state and overshadow the official Observatory of Laïcité that grants strict adherence to the law.

At the political level, Les Républicains is no longer a traditional conservative party. Its centre-right component has lost the ideological battle and has been marginalised by the more hardcore, far-right leaning side of the party. Calling for more state authority and a return to “traditional values”, the party's elite no longer shy away from targeting Muslims themselves without using terms like “radical Islam”. The difference between the right and the far right is more blurred than ever and Islamophobia will be part of the party's strategy for years to come especially after Laurent Wauquiez was elected president of the party with an openly racist platform.

Manuel Valls has made a name for himself as a strong advocate of Islamophobia even though he refers to the term as an “Islamist trojan horse”. His reputation is due to his countless racist declarations which had previously prompted Marine Le Pen to feel like she is reading her own speeches when Manuel Valls speaks.<sup>62</sup> One of his most remarked declaration on “the Muslim problem” was made during a colloquium organised by *El País* in Spain.<sup>63</sup>

### **Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

Civil society has shown capacity and potential to converge around the struggle against Islamophobia. But the lack of coherence, coordination and unity remain a long-term problem. Even within the anti-Islamophobia network, rivalries among activists and organisations are a sign that there is a lack of political maturity. In the long run, this results in wasted resources and lost opportunities.

On December 10, the fourth “Day against Islamophobia” was held in the city of Saint Denis (North of Paris) and brought together a wide range of progressive intellectuals who reaffirmed their commitment to fighting Islamophobia in the face of the permanent climate of hate. Activists, academics, authors, union leaders and researchers shared a common platform and voiced a call to

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62. “Manuel Valls sur l’islam: ‘J’ai l’impression de me lire’, affirme Marine le Pen”, *Le Figaro* (April 19, 2016), retrieved January 3, 2018 from <http://video.lefigaro.fr/figaro/video/manuel-valls-sur-l-islam-j-ai-l-impression-de-me-lire-affirme-marine-le-pen/4851743608001/>.

63. Javier Casqueiro, “Manuel Valls: ‘España tiene que preguntarse qué es ser español’”, *El País* (November 22, 2017), retrieved January 3, 2018 [https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/11/20/actualidad/1511192040\\_661151.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/11/20/actualidad/1511192040_661151.html).

action after the presidential and legislative elections unleashed more Islamophobic rhetoric and violence.

The Parti Égalité et Justice (Equality and Justice Party) launched 52 candidates for the legislative elections of June 2017. All of the candidates were from racialised backgrounds with experience in grassroots activism. The initiative was viciously attacked both for putting forward female candidates wearing headscarves and for its links with Turkish networks.

Presidential candidate Benoit Hamon (Socialist Party), despite having been sabotaged by his own political party and bitterly attacked by the Manuel Valls camp for not being aggressive enough against Muslims or for calling out the hijacking of *laïcité*, refused to lead an identity-based electoral campaign and stood firm in the face of attacks from his own camp and opposing ones. His name is still in line to build a new progressive political platform.

In support of Lallab and in a clear sign of exasperation with constant demonisation and calls for censorship, a wide collective of intellectuals, activists, artists and political figures signed a joint column titled “Stop Islamophobic Cyberbullying against Lallab”.<sup>64</sup> The column was hugely successful in mobilising a wide portion of civil society and strengthened the organisation in the face of white supremacy-tainted feminism as advocated by the likes of Elizabeth Badinter or Laurence Rossignol (notorious for her comparing Muslim women wearing a headscarf to “American negroes who were in favour of slavery”).<sup>65</sup>

In order to gain political and institutional momentum against racism and repression, the Justice & Liberties For All Committee was officially launched in May 2017 in Paris, France. The organisation aims at being a force of mobilisation through popular education and grassroots activism, while its research and institutional outreach branches aim at developing a counter-narrative and building coalitions at the national, European and transatlantic level. In June, it coordinated the sending of a delegation to Los Angeles, California to meet with local activists, grassroots organisations and NGOs.<sup>66</sup> The initiative later led to the emergence of a transatlantic coordination against racism and repression composed of American-, British- and French-based organisations. The latter made its first public appearance during the OSCE’s 2017 Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in September 2017 in Warsaw.

64. Collectif, “Stop au cyberharcèlement islamophobe de l’association Lallab”, *Libération* (August 23, 2017), retrieved January 3, 2018 from [http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/08/23/stop-au-cyberharcement-islamophobe-contre-l-association-lallab\\_1591443](http://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/08/23/stop-au-cyberharcement-islamophobe-contre-l-association-lallab_1591443).

65. “French Minister Shocks with Muslim Veil-Slavery Comment”, *Al Jazeera English* (March 30, 2016), retrieved January 3, 2018 from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/french-minister-shocks-muslim-veil-slavery-comment-160330193124341.html>.

66. “Militants contre l’Islamophobie Unissez Vous!”, *Le Muslim Post* (July 3, 2017), retrieved January 3, 2018 from <https://lemuslimpost.com/los-angeles-delegation-anti-islamophobie-militants.html>.

After the far-left political party Lutte Ouvrière's "Le piège de la lutte contre l'islamophobie",<sup>67</sup> another far-left political party, this time the New Anticapitalist Party published a reply in which they condemned such blanket attacks against anti-racist activists.

The potential for civil society is there and awaits to be unleashed. A new generation of activists is indeed pushing lines and breaking traditional barriers between activists of the same camp. The anti-Islamophobia camp though lacks the means to professionalise the work of its activists and go from denunciation to offering a credible alternative.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Identity and security remain the two axes around which Islamophobia has best expressed itself. Despite the election of a new and much younger president, censorship and political repression are becoming ever more normalised and legitimised to protect identity and security. The permanent state of emergency has turned France into a country where the rule of law is under serious threat with a weakened and disorganised Muslim minority that lacks political leverage to assert its rights.

It is on the French state to reassert its authority and commitment to the founding principles of the French Republic in the face of continuous ideological assaults. The continuous hijacking of *laïcité* is a long-term problem for it has engrained the idea in French public opinion that it is a tool solely used as an end to tackle the visibility of Muslims and any religious visibility in public space. The following recommendations are, therefore, put forward :

- Grant autonomy of the justice system and abolish the system of nomination of prosecutors by the government.
- Abolish the use of "white notes" by intelligence services and rely on investigation and proof rather than mere suspicion to prosecute individuals.
- Involve grassroots organisations, legitimate community leaders and education personnel to elaborate more effective counter-terrorism.
- Abolish the newly adopted measure in the 2017 anti-terrorism law that allows arbitrary closing down of places of worship unless a clear definition of radicalisation is adopted and alternatives are offered to affected communities. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right even in places of worship, as long there is no disruption of public safety.
- Protect academic freedom by giving the means to places of higher education to engage in societal debate without fear of pressure from lobbies or political parties.
- Protect freedom of speech by pressing state-owned media to adhere to a charter of plurality and promote Muslim visibility to normalise their presence.

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67. Lutte Ouvrière, "Le piège de la lutte contre l'islamophobie", *Lutte de classe* n°181 (February 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from [https://mensuel.lutte-ouvriere.org/2017/01/22/le-piege-de-la-lutte-contre-lislamophobie\\_75202.html](https://mensuel.lutte-ouvriere.org/2017/01/22/le-piege-de-la-lutte-contre-lislamophobie_75202.html).

- Cancel state subsidies to media outlets that promote individuals condemned for incitement of hatred, calling for discrimination, violence against individuals or who were proven guilty of promoting racism.
- Cancel state subsidies to media outlets which have been condemned of hate speech.
- Facilitate the right of reply to individuals or organisations when attacked on media platforms.
- Train top management of state-owned media on Islamophobia, its consequences on how they protect social cohesion by combatting it.
- Reinforce state authority in applying *laïcité* as it is enshrined in the French Constitution.
- Launch a nationwide assessment on the effects of the 2004 ban on headscarves in public schools.
- Include discrimination cases in official statistics of anti-Muslim racism.
- In strict adherence to *laïcité*, government officials and public office holders must be prohibited from interfering with religious affairs. Religious communities must be left to choose their own representatives and to organise on an autonomous basis.
- Apply existing laws against discrimination at work and increase fines for companies.
- Grant freedom of religion and thought in workplaces

## Chronology

- **25.01.2017:** Director of Shoah Memorial Georges Bensoussan is tried for his racist declarations on state-owned radio station France Culture on a show hosted by Alain Finkielkraut. He declared, “Today we are in the presence of another people in the French nation, which is regressing a number of democratic values that have brought us. [...]. There will be no integration until we get rid of that atavistic anti-Semitism that is hidden, like a secret... anti-Semitism, is breathed to them (Muslims).”
- **29.06.2017:** One year after the international burkini controversy, the mayor of communal de Lorette bans the same outfit in and around the town’s body of water prompting anti-racist organisations to press charges for “religious discrimination”.
- **23.08.2017:** The “Stop Islamophobic Cyberbullying against Lallab” column is published in support of the organisation.
- **23.08.2017:** Celine Pina publishes her column “The state Must Clearly Denounce Lallab as a Laboratory of Islamism”.
- **03.10.2017:** The University of Lyon II cancels a conference on Islamophobia after being pressured by the far right- and left-wing organisations.

- **06.10.2017:** *Le Figaro* publishes its dossier “The Islamosphere”.
- **30.10.2017:** The law to reinforce domestic security and counter-terrorism is adopted.
- **10.12.2017:** The Minister of Education Jean Michel Blanquer declares, “Mothers should not be allowed to wear a headscarf during school trips”.<sup>68</sup>
- **19.12.2017:** The administrative court of appeal (CAA) of Versailles (Yvelines), in a decision of December 19, backed the decision of the Hospital of Saint-Denis (North of Paris) which canceled an internship agreement with a man because of his beard. The latter was deemed in violation of the secular law and neutrality of the public service.
- **29.12.2017:** Christophe Castaner, State Secretary to the Prime Minister, declares that “religious signs are prohibited in the public space” in regards to Muslim women who take part in school field trips. The declaration sparked uproar among specialists of *laïcité*. No law in France prohibits religious signs in the public space.<sup>69</sup>

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68. Le Grand Jury “Blanquer sur RTL: pas de voile “normalement” pour une mère en sortie scolaire” (January 10, 2017) retrieved January 3, 2018 from <http://www.rtl.fr/actu/politique/blanquer-sur-rtl-pas-de-voile-normalement-pour-une-mere-en-sortie-scolaire-7791346392>.

69. Christophe Castaner, “l’assurance chômage c’est un droit mais aussi un devoir” (December 29, 2017) retrieved January 3, 2018 from <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6cdn6x>.

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## Executive Summary

This 2017 report tells the story of how Islamophobia has been a convenient geopolitical and a policy-relevant catalyst for racism writ large in Germany. This trend “started” publically with a defence against “Islam” and “Muslims,” but emerged clearly, yet at times also subtly, as a call for more “Whiteness” in 2017. In multicultural times, this might be explained by the fact that it is still easier to infer an attacked German “culture,” than to call for a white German “culture.” The latter trope is also constitutive of a narrative around an angry and *marginalized* white German “protest voter” that ties a post-World War II German identity, on the one hand, to an aggrieved and victimized “Whiteness” at Germany’s *national core*, on the other hand. This very paradox is anchored in the masterful straddle between “white neglected, marginalized, and angry outsiders” and Germany’s “white national core.” Thus, this year’s focus rests on the neoliberal version of white supremacist political parties in Europe, such as the Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD), along with the political and social strengthening of neo-Nazi/right-wing extremists and the changes in the phenomena of violence that accompany these developments. In the first 210 days of 2017, 205 politically motivated attacks on parliamentarians took place. The year 2017 also witnessed around 5.2 attacks on refugees and 0.3 attacks on aid workers per day, along with around a total of 100 attacks on mosques, as well as, around 908 attacks on German Muslims.

In this report, “Whiteness” is not understood as a skin-/color, but as a moral and economic codification of power relations along ethnic and racializing lines that operates transnationally.” Whiteness thus not only takes on the role of the disguised and invisible norm, but also that of “neutrality,” as will become clearer with the legal ban against the Muslim headscarf. Whiteness should also be understood as pivotal for discursive debates such as the German “Leading Culture Debate,” proposals for a new Asylum Law, or debates around an alleged “Muslim anti-Semitism” that threatens German democracy. Moreover, in German media, 60-80% of the representations of Muslims and Islam are portraying the latter two as physically violent, gender oppressive, religiously fanatic and/or fundamentalist, as well as socially and culturally backward.

The year 2017 also marks one in which official statistics of Islamophobic attacks were registered and made publically available by the government for the first time. This report had a limited scope and much more could have been written about how the issue of Islam, refugees and immigration ruled this year’s election campaign, marginalizing almost all other issues. In conclusion, Islamophobia remains an undeniable force in contemporary German politics.

## Zusammenfassung

Der Bericht für das Jahr 2017 erzählt die Geschichte, wie Islamophobie sowohl ein geeigneter geopolitischer als auch ein policy relevanter Katalysator für Rassismus war. Öffentlich „begann“ das Ganze mit einer Verteidigung gegen „den Islam“ und „die Muslime“, ist aber letztlich zu einer klaren und teilweise indirekten Forderung nach mehr Weißsein im Jahr 2017 hervorgekommen: In multikulturellen Zeiten könnte dies daran liegen, dass es bis jetzt noch einfacher ist, auf eine angegriffene deutsche „Kultur“ zu rekurrieren, als *für* eine weiße deutsche „Kultur“ zu argumentieren. In der Zwischenzeit ermöglichten die Erzählungen rund um einen zornigen und marginalisierten weißen deutschen "Protest"-Wähler erst eine neue Inszenierung von Deutsch-sein nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg: Hier wird nun der marginalisierte Protestwähler mit einer verletzten und schikanierten weißen Kultur im nationalen Kern Deutschlands gleichgesetzt. Das diskursive Paradox ist schon in der Erzählung an sich verankert: Letztere stellt die diskursive Kluft und somit auch Nähe zwischen „vernachlässigten, marginalisierten und wütenden Außenseitern“ und dem „nationalen Kern“ Deutschlands überhaupt erst her. Der diesjährige Schwerpunkt liegt somit auf der neoliberalen Version von rassistischen Parteien in Europa wie der AfD in Deutschland, der politischen und sozialen Stärkung der Neonazis/ Rechtsextremisten und den Veränderungen was die Gewaltphänomene angeht, die diese Entwicklungen begleiten: In den ersten 210 Tagen des Jahres, wurden 205 politisch motivierte Straftaten gegen Parlamentarier\*innen gezählt. Hinzukommen ca. 100 Attacken auf Moscheen, sowie ca. 5 Angriffe auf Geflüchtete und 0,3 Angriffe auf Hilfsarbeiter pro Tag im Jahr 2017, sowie circa 908 Attacken auf deutsche Muslim\*innen.

„Weißsein“ wird hier nicht als Farbe verstanden, sondern als moralische und ökonomische Kodifizierung von Machtverhältnissen entlang ethnischer und rassifizierender Demarkierungen, die transnational wirkmächtig sind.“ Weißsein nimmt damit nicht nur die Rolle der verschleierte und unsichtbaren Norm an, sondern auch die der Neutralität“, wie durch das Kopftuchverbot“ noch deutlich werden wird. Weißsein sollte hier auch als eine tragende Kraft in der deutschen „Leitkulturdebatte“ gesehen werden, sowie in den neuen Vorschlägen für eine (weitere) Verschärfung des Asylrechtes oder in den Diskursen um einen angeblichen „muslimischen Antisemitismus“ der die Deutsche Demokratie gefährdet. In den deutschen Medien werden Muslime und Islam außerdem weiterhin zu 60-80% als physisch gewalttätig, sexistisch, religiös, fanatisch und/oder fundamentalistisch dargestellt in Zusammenhang mit einer generellen sozialen und kulturellen Rückständigkeit/Unterentwicklung.

Das Jahr 2017 markiert auch das Jahr, in dem offizielle Statistiken islamophober Angriffe registriert und von der Regierung zum ersten Mal öffentlich zu-

gänglich gemacht wurden. Abschließend muss gesagt werden, dass dieser Bericht begrenzt ist - viel mehr hätte über die einzelnen Themen oder Fälle geschrieben werden können; wie z.B. über die Deportationen illegalisierter Flüchtlinge, mögliche Änderungen im Asylrecht, mehr Sicherheitspolitik an Europas Grenzen, Flüchtlingsfamiliennachzug, oder wie das Thema Islam, Flüchtlinge und Immigration die Wahlkampagne dieser Wahl anführte und fast alle anderen Themen marginalisierte. Aber da Islamophobie auch weiterhin eine unleugbare Kraft im heutigen Deutschland zu sein scheint, wird es auch in naher Zukunft noch weitere Möglichkeiten geben darüber zu schreiben.

## Introduction

In times of increasing social polarizations, content voids come into existence around issues of politically sensitive but relevant debates, often left for “antagonistic” camps to fill. Identity and racism are two of those sensitive issues. Discussions around Islamophobia and racism in Germany are still at the beginning, with their agents desperately trying to assert their place in a diverse German nation. German (white) identity, on the other hand, in the wake of a post-economic collapse and ongoing crisis, seems to attempt its own representation via tropes of an aggrieved white German core, marginalized, and thus in need of “re-centering.” Hence, when it comes to Islamophobia in 2017, three issues shaping political possibilities and structural limitations within Germany circumscribe this report – all three are outlined in the following chapter in more detail. Most notably, this report calls to attention the rising political power of white nationalism and white conservatism that profited from and accelerated due to the public hysteria around Islam, an imagined German cultural demise and European victimization tropes. Islamophobia undoubtedly became the litmus test of and for political power in Germany and Europe. In a more polarized society, collecting data about minority rights and racism in particular, can thus fill the missing factual gaps of differently lived realities in the same country.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Firstly, there exists a worrying trend of member states of the European Union (EU) shifting to the political right. Within Germany, it is the Alternative for Germany party (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD) that has peddled right-wing, conservative and politically disenfranchised former left-wing voters into its democratic fold. The AfD, including its Islamophobic party program, has been a convenient “retreat” arranged primarily for the conservative parts of the upper and middle classes. A final point here is that it seems reasonable to argue that global (i.e. U.S., Filipino, Indian) as well as European trends have shown that “conservatism” and right-wing extremism can be artfully merged in neoliberal times, with right-wing ideologies embracing a particular form of democratic order, rather than fighting against it entirely. This report thus has a strong focus on white conservatism and neo-Nazi activity, including its non-Muslim targets such as politicians or individuals, who are in favour of refugee rights. It could be argued that society could either witness an erosion of democracy with democratic means or, a return to older forms of Greek and imperial democracy, characterized by a political economy that grants full democracy to only a few.

The second important contextual issue is that the phantasmatic German mainstream label of “migrant” for people who have been escaping war. The latter discursive move blends in well with a general trend that shows the conflation

of terminologies such as refugees, migrants, Muslims and people of color in media, politics and everyday parlance. This powerful linguistic and social move downplays the global crisis of forced displacements<sup>1</sup> to the mere level of “economic migration,” thus paving the way for even more discriminatory or racist resentment, as detailed later in this report. Sadly, the forced displacement of people reached an all-time high<sup>2</sup> with 66 million people displaced worldwide in 2016. Europe’s fear of being overrun by non-white and non-European people from the global south, however, is put in context by the fact that the main countries of asylum for refugees were Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, Iran, Uganda, and Ethiopia<sup>3</sup> - according to the same UNHCR report, Germany took in 669,500 refugees. The triple conflation of “refugee” with “migrant” and “Muslim” thus whitewashes global displacements based on militarization and war (EU, North America, China) and the global war over resources (primarily oil, gas, coltan/tantalum and REE, uranium and water) that are all primarily fought in non-Western and low-income countries. This report thus calls to attention the worrying trend of self-victimizing tropes of inferiority in the EU countries, which are accompanied by massive changes in legally dangerous and politically dubious securitization politics. The move from post-/colonial to securitization politics has over time been marshalled by liberal codes of moral wrong- and right-doings, whilst maintaining most of its material former structures – the year 2017 showed many of those effects - Islamophobia as a discourse being among them.

Thirdly, it is safe to attest that Islamophobia and the global refugee crisis are transnationally related and have led to local and European-wide accelerations of already deeply rooted racisms as well as an expansion of right-wing activities and a conservative tilt to the right of a significant proportion of the German public. The worrying trends toward an undermining of democracy as we have come to know it for the past 70 years is the core of this report. The ongoing structural increase of violence (in quality and quantity) since 2015 in Germany can today be investigated

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1. According to the UNHCR definition, “forced displacement” is either inside a nation-state (internally displaced people, IDPs) or displaced across borders (refugees) as a result of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations. See the UNHCR Report 2016, “Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2016”, retrievable at <http://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2016/>.

2. This statistic is relevant only with reference to its historical limitation: global statistics by “International Organizations” such as the UNHCR, which was created in 1950, are thus limited in their historical scope and the possibilities for comparison they offer. It is, however, safe to say that until today the collection of “conflict” data remains inevitably difficult, due to the strenuous and difficult coordination between IOs, NGOs, and governments to collect comprehensive data on “people on the move” in low or high-intensity conflict situations, especially if access is limited.

3. Of all refugees worldwide, 5.5 million came from Syria, 2.5 million from Afghanistan, and 1.4 million came from South Sudan. Additionally, “[n]ine of the top 10 refugee-hosting countries were in developing regions, according to the United Nations Statistics Division classification. Three of these (the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Uganda) were classified as least developed countries, facing severe structural impediments to sustainable development in addition to the challenges of large refugee flows.” UNHCR Report 2016, *Global Trends*, p. 14.

and shown with data. Since the beginning of 2017, comprehensive nationwide police data sets are collected on racist or discriminatory violence in Germany and made public – though gaps still remain. Yet, data collection in times of discrimination is a political act, just as it is political *not* to collect data. For a more historical-political overview regarding the absence of data before 2017, see the 2015 Islamophobia Germany country report; for a more legal and discursive analysis see the Parallel Report submitted by the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 2015.<sup>4</sup> This 2017 report is thus again born from the difficulty of breaching an incomprehensive and partially selective quantitative data set with qualitative studies to illustrate the magnitude of the described trends. Finally, due to the limited scope of the topic, much of the structural implications or important details are described only briefly in footnotes, while the report is necessarily selective and could not comprehensively cover all relevant developments that took place in 2017.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

Two years of extreme Islamophobic violence in 2015 and 2016, the national elections in 2017 and the entry of the right-wing party Alternative for Germany (AfD) into the national parliament as the third-strongest represented party constitute worrying trends for German democracy. The entry of the AfD into parliament might have served as a temporary buffer for more direct and person-centred violence and could explain the slight decrease of Islamophobic incidents – yet, statistically, the number is too marginal to be able to make a general statement. The slight decrease in Islamophobic incidents is, after all, mirrored by an increase in general racism. Some might argue that it is the quiet before the storm; others might argue the AfD will soon prove their inability to govern. Whatever will come of Europe's tilt to the right, Germany as the strongest country in the EU is representative of a general European trend and is without a government since the September 2017 national election – most likely even until March 2018. This is the longest time that German political fractions have taken to find a suitable coalition partner.

The current European context shows an erosion of support for mainstream parties; the Socialist Democratic Party (SPD) lost most of its constituency and had the

4. For more detail, see “Racial Discrimination in Germany – Manifestations and Human Rights Obligations to Protect Individuals and Groups Against Racial Discrimination”, 2015. Parallel Report on the 19th-22nd Report submitted by the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination under Article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, p. 30. Retrievable at [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/DEU/INT\\_CERD\\_NGO\\_DEU\\_19968\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/DEU/INT_CERD_NGO_DEU_19968_E.pdf).

worst election outcomes on record.<sup>5</sup> During their election campaign, both the SPD and the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) started to embrace public demands for renewed debates about a German *Leitkultur* (leading culture),<sup>6</sup> double-citizenship and a “ceiling” to the number of refugees allowed per year (set to 200,000 refugees<sup>7</sup> per year according to the CDU). This is arguably an outcome of a general right-wing tilt of the voting constituency and the appeasement policies of the more mainstream parties. To defend those party goals, many of the mainstream politicians and parties would argue that “all Germans” would feel a certain sense of “cultural loss,” with the marginalized and angry AfD voter seemingly testifying to that disintegration. Thus, the rationale goes, in order to win back the supposedly lost and angry white German voter, one has to adapt to or accommodate to an extent an AfD discourse. In this way, the power-losing mainstream German parties and the power-winning AfD straddled the thick divide between “neglected outsider” and “national core” and successfully ran election campaigns that mainly centered on anti-refugee sentiments and anti-Muslim racism<sup>8</sup>. For the AfD, this might be because – as referenced earlier – it is (still) easier to argue for an attacked German culture by Muslims, than to argue for a white (-only) Germany.

In conclusion, it is a general European and German myth that neo-Nazi or strongly conservative ideologies ratchet up the more ‘socially acceptable’ forms of democratic worldviews due to class impoverishment or social neglect. In that same mythical vein, it also seems convenient to mark the former East as inherently more prone to racism and violence. Although an economic, or rather neoliberal, momentum is definitely present, anti-Muslim racism has a long tradition of being more than just an economic “career.”<sup>9</sup> Islamophobia is also connected to white and Western fantasies of power: contemporary racializing discourse traffics its content via discursive pathways where “white victimization” and “white superiority” co-exist at the same time.” Furthermore, those intersecting, yet seemingly paradoxical narratives have

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5. Cas Mudde, “What the Stunning Success of AfD Means for Germany and Europe”, *The Guardian*, September 24, 2017, retrieved on September 25, 2017 from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/24/germany-elections-afd-europe-immigration-merkel-radical-right>.

6. Kate Connolly, “Shake Hands and Read Goethe: Attempt to Define German Values Draws Ire”, *The Guardian*, May 5, 2017, retrieved September 5, 2017 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/may/05/german-minister-resurrects-wary-debate-over-countrys-values>. Connolly writes, “The word *Leitkultur* was originally a farming term to describe dominant plant varieties within a habitat. It has long been a favourite word of Germany’s right-wing thinkers, but was first used as a political term by the Syrian Islam expert Bassam Tibi, from the University of Göttingen, central Germany. He said, 20 years ago, that Europe needed a *Leitkultur* to consolidate its common values, such as tolerance, separation of church and state, and human rights.”

7. See for example Günter Bannas, “Zurück zum Streit”, *FAZ.net*, Flüchtlingspolitik, July 24, 2017, retrieved July 28, 2017 from <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/bundestagswahl/parteien-und-kandidaten/bundestagswahlkampf-warum-spd-und-csu-die-fluechtlingspolitik-besetzen-15118847.html>.

8. See also: *Islamophobia in Germany: National Reports 2016 and 2015*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016/2015*, Istanbul, SETA.

9. Said, E. (1978) *Orientalism*. Random House: New York City.

always been expressed through cultural interpellations from imperial/colonial times to the present. This is best shown in the fact that the majority of votes that brought the AfD to power come from the middle class (29%) or upper classes (39%).<sup>10</sup> The not so “new” wave of white-supremacist democrats thus stands in contrast to the more traditional German right-wing/extremist parties and their elites (i.e. *NPD, die Republikaner*), which historically garnered their constituency from low-income and “low-educated” backgrounds<sup>11</sup> in a post-WWII Germany.

## Justice System

The ongoing process against the National Socialist Underground (NSU) has by now reached the status of Germany’s trial of the century, next to the trial of the Red Brigades (RAF) and the Nuremberg Trials. With old men drinking beer with friends in basements in front of Hitler photos; with an accused woman (Beate Zschäpe) who cares more about cats than humans whilst being the (almost fetishized) main focus of the German media (most likely due to her gender); to the point of crucial witnesses dying before they can further testify; to the state shredding important files relevant to the persecution; to finally hiring a fortune teller to solve the case. This trial has not only shown the darkest sides of Germany’s fight in shining light on right-wing organized crime, but has also made an international embarrassment of Germany’s justice and intelligence system.<sup>12</sup> Today, the victims’ lawyers are primarily criticizing the federal prosecutor’s office for assuming that the NSU consisted solely of three people (two of them dead, and Zschäpe the only one left), thus whitewashing the possible existence of a wide network of NSU-supporters far beyond the names we know so far publically. After four years of trial, the final judgment is set for autumn 2018 in Munich and will most likely have a lasting effect since it will signal to German society how right-wing motivated crime is tried and managed in a country with a growing population of non-white and non-ethnic Europeans.

Another important legal event occurred in January 2017. After more than a decade of trying to ban the right-wing party NPD, the final legal judgment of Germany’s

10. Benjamin Bidder interviews Holger Lengfeld, "AfD im Aufwind "Der Gerechtigkeitswahlkampf der SPD war nicht klug", *Spiegel Online*, September 23, 2017, retrieved September 28, 2017 from [www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/afd-im-aufwind-der-gerechtigkeitswahlkampf-der-spd-war-nicht-klug-a-1169313.html](http://www.spiegel.de/wirtschaft/soziales/afd-im-aufwind-der-gerechtigkeitswahlkampf-der-spd-war-nicht-klug-a-1169313.html).

11. For more, see also Holger Lengfeld’s study from summer 2017, in German only: Holger Lengfeld, “Die ‚Alternative für Deutschland‘: eine Partei für Verlierer der gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung?”, Department of Sociology, University of Leipzig. Accessible online at <http://sozweb.sozphil.uni-leipzig.de/de/institut/aktuelles/artikel/news/detail/News/die-alternative-fuer-deutschland-eine-partei-fuer-verlierer-der-gesellschaftlichen-entwicklung-neue-studie-erschiene-von-holger-lengfeld-lehrstuhl-fuer-soziologie-institutionen-und-sozialer-wandel.html> or in print *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 2017, DOI 10.1007/s11577-017-0446-1.

12. Thomas Meaney and Saskia Schäfer, "The neo-Nazi Murder Trial Revealing Germany's Darkest Secrets", *The Guardian Online*, December 15, 2016, retrieved January 1, 2018 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/15/neo-nazi-murders-revealing-germanys-darkest-secrets>. See also: Aleksandra Lewicki, *Islamophobia in Germany: National Reports 2016*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017.

High Court states that there is no legitimate ground to assume that the party would be able to achieve the dissolution of the democratic principles of the German legal and political system. In other words, the court saw the party with 6,000 party members as not posing a threat to German society, its political system or its public order.<sup>13</sup> To date, there have only been two party bans in the Federal Republic of Germany: one against a successor of the NSDAP, the SRP, and the other against the communist KPD.

Less than a month after the Christmas market attack by Anis Amri in Berlin, the German government came forth with new legal milestones in January, propelling Germany's security architecture onto the next level with a new draft law: the Asylum Law is supposed to be altered in order to ease the forced departure of refugees deemed illegal, including those that pose a threat for the internal security of Germany.<sup>14</sup> From surveillance through electronic (ankle) tagging to the state's right to analyse and access cell phones and data carriers of all sorts. According to the German government, the latter is done in order to retrieve the necessary security and identity information of its owner, either for the purpose of deportation or for security reasons. In the case of applications for asylum, 50-60% of all asylum seekers could be affected by the screening and securing of their data.<sup>15</sup> In comparison, for criminals of German nationality, the screening and securing of private data (carriers) needs the legal approval of a judicial court in Germany and cannot be retrieved pre-emptively without legal clearance. Hence, questions as to whether the law will pass the Constitutional Court still remain.<sup>16</sup>

## Employment

In Germany, the public sector (state jobs such as in school teaching or lawyers hired by and working for the state) are regulated by federal and state law. The following descriptions thus intersect in various forms, but not solely, with the legal field as described above.

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13. The Federal Constitutional Court, "No Prohibition of the National Democratic Party of Germany As There Are No Indications That It Will Succeed in Achieving Its Anti-Constitutional Aims", Press Release No. 4/2017, *Constitutional Court of Germany*, January 17, 2017, retrieved January 1, 2018 from <https://www.bundesverfassungsgericht.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/EN/2017/bvg17-004.html>. "While the NPD indeed professes its commitment to aims that are directed against the free democratic basic order and although it systematically acts towards achieving them, which is why its acts constitute a qualified preparation of abolishing the free democratic basic order that it strives for, there are no specific and weighty indications that suggest that the NPD will succeed in achieving its anti-constitutional aims. Neither is there a prospect of successfully achieving these aims in the context of participating in the development of political opinions (aa), nor is it sufficiently discernible that there is an attempt – attributable to the NPD – to achieve these aims by undermining the freedom of participating in the development of political opinions (bb)." For the entirety of the judgement please see BVerfG, Judgment of the Second Senate of 17 January 2017 - 2 BvB 1/13 - paras. (1-1010), [http://www.bverfg.de/e/bs20170117\\_2bvb000113en.html](http://www.bverfg.de/e/bs20170117_2bvb000113en.html).

14. Bundesregierung, Innere Sicherheit, "Konsequenzen nach Anschlag in Berlin - Innere Sicherheit", *Die Bundesregierung.de*, January 10, 2017, retrieved December 2, 2017 from <https://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/DE/Artikel/2017/01/2017-01-10-de-maiziere-maas-sicherheitspolitik-nach-berlinanschlag.html;jsessionid=957D560CC6737C7D77280D69BD44D2D6.s3t2>.

15. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/11546, page 15.

16. See also Fabio Ghelli, "Bundesregierung plant Verschärfung im Asylrecht", *Mediendienst Integration*, March 23, 2017, retrieved on December 28, 2017 from <https://mediendienst-integration.de/artikel/reform-abschiebungengesetz-zur-besseren-durchsetzung-der-ausreisepflicht-kritik-experten.html>.

The vociferous debate about the Muslim headscarf continues frivolously into each New Year and will most likely also entertain German public debates in the near future.<sup>17</sup> This debate is particularly and highly gendered, trapping religiously devout Muslim women who wear the *hijab* (headscarf) at the exclusionary intersections of sexism (vis-à-vis Muslim men and other men) and racism (vis-à-vis white German society and other women). The German headscarf law is handled and interpreted differently in each federal state – it is thus hard to make general statements about its application due to the limits in time and space of the report. Overall, however, it is clear that the “Law of Neutrality,” which bans the headscarf in certain civil servant sectors, stands in opposition to German Basic Law and its engrained Freedom of Religion (*Art. 4 Abs. 1 und 2 GG auf Glaubens- und Bekenntnisfreiheit*).

An example from Berlin, the country’s capital, is that 2017 marks the year when more women sued the state for their discrimination on the job market in the public sector, such as being a teacher or lawyer. In an interview with Shemi Shabbat from the ADNB (Counselling Centre for Equal Treatment - against Discrimination, Berlin<sup>18</sup>), he stated that the newly found courage to sue the state is the result of a new judgment passed by the Higher Labor Court on February 9, 2017. Therein the court stated the following:

In the present case, the defendant federal state [*Berlin*] has directly disadvantaged the plaintiff based on her religion, because it refused employment for the plaintiff at a general education school [*Allgemeinbildende Schule*] in the federal state of Berlin at a primary school (elementary school), because the plaintiff, as a devout Muslim, also wishes to wear a Muslim headscarf on the job. [ . . . ] Based on § 2 NeutrG, the prohibition of wearing a Muslim headscarf in order to serve at a general education school at the primary level (and at secondary level I) constitutes a serious encroachment on the applicant’s fundamental right under Article 4 (1) and (2) [*of the German*] Basic Law. [...] According to the case law of the First Senate of the Federal Constitutional Court, to which the distinguished Chamber has joined, a blanket headscarf ban for teachers in public schools violates their fundamental right under Article 4 (1) and (2) GG to freedom of belief and confession (BVerfG, 27.01.2015, 1 BvR 471/10 and 1 BvR 1181/10 BVerfGE 138, 296 [BVerfG 27.01.2015 - 1 BvR 471/10, 1 BvR 1181/10], see also BVerfG, 18.10.2016, 1 BvR 354/11, NZA 2016, 1522 on the prohibition of headscarves for teachers at public day-care centres).<sup>19</sup>

17. Anna-Esther Younes, *Islamophobia in Germany: National Reports 2015*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016: 191.

18. The Counselling Centre for Equal Treatment - against Discrimination, Berlin: <http://www.adnb.de/en/>

19. LAG Berlin-Brandenburg, "Rechtsprechung", February 9, 2017, retrieved December 25, 2017 from <https://dejure.org/2017,2188> Translations are those of the author.

To date it might seem as a political success to witness ethnic and legal minorities claiming their rights before the law. However, the path to legal equality isn't an easy one and many women decide against it, since the legal procedure is a strenuous one: for instance, after the discrimination takes place, the plaintiff has a two-month leeway to demand compensation for the loss afflicted.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the first hurdle is for the plaintiff to directly pinpoint the discrimination, hire a lawyer, present a sound case and gather all annotated files to make a petition within two months following the discrimination. Then follows a three-month leeway within which the plaintiff must hand over the case and start the legal procedure in front of the Berlin (labour) court. If the plaintiff wins the case – as happened in February 2017 - the best outcome is that the state of Berlin pays the plaintiff 2 or 3 months of their missed salary (in Berlin, the standard wage per month is between c. 3,300 - 4,200 Euro). In conclusion, the new Berlin judgment supports young headscarf-wearing women to make their legal claims, yet the general legal set-up victimizes them while giving them legal support: if the plaintiffs win the case, the compensation of maximum 7,000 – 10,000 Euro still doesn't grant them entry into the job market. It rather serves as a “consolation prize” for a lost battle. The “Law of Neutrality” could henceforth also be understood as a political tool of deterrence against entering occupations that “represent the state.” A desire for cultural dominance, or Whiteness, needs to be considered in order to explain an educational backstreet in which Berlin (and other states all over Germany) is actually desperately looking for teachers, even amongst the retired.<sup>21</sup> In 2016, Berlin went as far as searching for teachers in the Netherlands and Austria<sup>22</sup> making it apparent that technical skills alone are not what is primarily desired. In conclusion, although women have sued the state in 2017, the young women who want to work are trapped between the “Law of Neutrality” and the “Basic Law” not-/granting them their constitutional rights, as long as the state pays compensation instead of including a diverse population into its ranks.

## Education

Karim Fereidooni in his dissertation on anti-Muslim racism in the educational sector found that around 60% of all teaching staff felt discriminated against

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20. According to the Employment Law of Germany (*Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz* [AGG] § 15, *Entschädigung und Schadensersatz*).

21. Spiegel, "Berlin lockt ältere Lehrer mit 20 Prozent mehr Gehalt", February 2, 2018, *Spiegel Online*, accessed on February 11, 2018 at [www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/lehremangel-berlin-will-lehrern-20-prozent-mehr-geld-geben-a-1191057.html](http://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/lehremangel-berlin-will-lehrern-20-prozent-mehr-geld-geben-a-1191057.html).

22. Spiegel, "Pädagogenmangel Berlin sucht in Österreich und Holland Grundschullehrer", February 17, 2016, *Spiegel Online*, accessed February 11, 2018 at <http://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/berlin-sucht-in-den-niederlanden-und-oesterreich-lehrer-a-1077785.html>.

(based on the headscarf or generally anti-Muslim racism)<sup>23</sup> in Germany. Fereidooni, thus, speaks of a powerful gap between the political public calls for “diversity” with an increasing number of pupils of color and the reality faced by many Muslims (of color) who are attempting to enter or are already working in the public educational sector.<sup>24</sup> Similar to the justice system, the discrimination that Fereidooni describes is oftentimes just as outspoken, such as mobbing during apprenticeship, as it is subtle, having direct psychological and institutional consequences as well as affecting the personal psychological future of the young victimized teachers.

According to the ADNB in Berlin, the “Law of Neutrality” as a top-down approach to handle the social debate about Muslim headscarves in Germany, generates its own effects and ramifications in society. Shemi Shabbat, an anti-discrimination counsellor at the ADNB, thus states,

The mere existence of the Law of Neutrality as well as the public discourse about ‘Muslims’ in general encourages school principals to misconstrue the law as having a wider application field as it actually, legally, has. For instance, people filling occupations and positions that are not included in the law are now being discriminated against based on the personal assumption that they are violating the Law of Neutrality with their headscarves. This primarily afflicts other women workers such as interns, trainees, trainers or facilitators from educational projects outside the school, or even the cleaning personal, that are now being prevented from working at schools and come to us to seek help. Some people seemingly assume, that if the state allows not to employ women with headscarves then, of course, they are entitled to, or even should do, the same.<sup>25</sup>

According to the preliminary data of the ADNB in Berlin for 2017 at the time of writing, Islamophobia in the educational sector, kindergartens or with the Youth Welfare Offices clearly shows itself with its gendered and grotesque face: *women* are primarily inhibited from working in the public sector and due to its obscure common sense interpretations also elsewhere. They are also more often the targets of racist accusations of not being in proper command of the German language. *Men*, on the other hand, are more often victims of ascription of violent and demeaning behaviour at Youth Welfare Offices, depicted as bad fathers, criminalized by police, along with experiencing difficulties getting into

23. Karim Fereidooni, “*Diskriminierungs- und Rassismuserfahrungen von Referendar\*innen und Lehrer\*innen ‚mit Migrationshintergrund‘ im deutschen Schulwesen. Eine quantitative und qualitative Studie zu subjektiv bedeutsamen Ungleichheitspraxen im Berufskontext*“ (Dissertation), University of Heidelberg, January 28, 2016, accessed online January 2, 2017, retrievable from <http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/20203>.

24. Karim Fereidooni, “Ich will nicht mit Ihnen zusammenarbeiten, weil das Kopftuch ein Zeichen der Unterdrückungen der Frau ist!” Antimuslimischer Rassismus im Lehrer\*innenzimmer. In: *Politisches Lernen*. Publication Date 2018: 8. (unpublished)

25. Shemi Shabbat, telephone interview on January 5, 2018.

public spaces of enjoyment, such as clubs. In summary, one can attest that women are the inarticulate, repressed Other, whereas men are the hyper-violent and sexually threatening Other.

Many times, higher education personal (as well as politicians or public intellectuals) also use tropes of “freedom of speech,” “ethnopluralism,”<sup>26</sup> “white/German victimhood” and the misconstructions of real facts as mere opinions. A professor of sociology and political science at the University of Würzburg (West Germany) demanded from one of her students during a lecture to take off her headscarf, explaining her reasoning by comparing headscarves to baseball caps, demanding respect from her students as well as arguing that there might be a law for the freedom of religion in society, but “not in science.”<sup>27</sup> At Humboldt University (Berlin), Professor Markus Egg is the head of the English Studies Department and long known for his racist statements and AfD support. He was attacked by students who threw a bucket of water over his head on November 8, 2016, upon which the university responded with a call for more respect of “competing opinions” and a search for the assailants.<sup>28</sup> Law Professor Thomas Rauscher (University of Leipzig) referred to Nazi marches in Poland with a Twitter post stating: “Poland: ‘A white Europe of fraternal nations.’ That’s a wonderful goal for me!” In the debate that followed and the critique he received, Rauscher considered himself to be the “victim.”<sup>29</sup>

## Media

Kai Hafez, professor of International and Comparative Communication Studies (University of Erfurt), stated in an article in February 2017 that 60-80% of all the German press still portray Muslims and Islam primarily via negative stereotypes such as physical violence, women’s repression, fanaticism and fundamentalism, and backwardness.<sup>30</sup> And, although, we can witness a decrease in racializing and discrimi-

26. The outdated but oftentimes conservative or right-wing idea that cultures are mainly homogenous in themselves, having an “authentic core” (in body and spirit) that can be defined and kept apart from other cultures. Different cultures are then supposed to live “parallel” (or next to each other), without mingling or cultural/body exchange.

27. Islam iQ, “Uni-Professoring vergleicht Kopftuch mit Basecap“, October 26, 2017, *Islam iQ online*, retrieved on January 5, 2017 from <http://www.islamiq.de/2017/10/26/uni-professorin-vergleicht-kopftuch-mit-basecap/>.

28. Amory Burchard, “Maskierte greifen Dozenten der Berliner Humboldt-Uni an”, December 2, 2016, *Tagesspiegel Online*, retrieved December 29, 2017 from <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/afd-politiker-und-hu-professor-maskierte-greifen-dozenten-der-berliner-humboldt-uni-an/14927574.html>.

29. Marco Fieber, “Skandal an Leipziger Uni: Professor sort mit rassistischen Tweets für Wirbel”, November 16, 2017, *Huffington Post Online*, retrieved January 2, 2017 from [http://www.huffingtonpost.de/2017/11/15/rassismus-tweet-professor-uni-leipzig\\_n\\_18564594.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.de/2017/11/15/rassismus-tweet-professor-uni-leipzig_n_18564594.html).

30. pro Christliches Medienmagazin, “Medien Nehmen Islam über Terror wahr”, January 7, 2016, retrieved on December 2, 2017 from <https://www.pro-medienmagazin.de/medien/journalismus/2016/01/07/medien-nehmen-islam-ueber-terror-wahr/>. The media outlet research included the ARD & ZDF, die TV news shows “Fakt, Frontal 21, Kontraste, Monitor, Panorama and Report” and “Deutschlandfunk.” For print media it was the following outlets: *Bild*, *Bild am Sonntag*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, *Spiegel*, *Focus*, *Welt am Sonntag* and the economic news magazine *Capital*. 530,000 news pieces were analyzed in total.

natory wording, according to Hafez, we also witness the actual stigmatization of Islam and Muslims today in (1) a selective reporting prism (see above for common subjects) and (2) a stigmatizing representation via images. “Islam has had a ‘negative press’ for the past 1,400 years,”<sup>31</sup> Hafez writes, referring to colonial and religious narratives that constructed the barbaric and religiously molded “Orient” as the antithesis to a fantasized emancipated and free “Europe.” Originally, the educational mandate of state-sponsored public media (such as the ARD, ZDF, MDR, etc.) is to bridge ideological divides in society through reporting. Yet, as Hafez’s thesis goes, since that is not truly done when it comes to Islam, people who usually have little or no contact to Islam, “Muslims,” or the Middle East, take the selective reporting prism and their imagery at face value and as all-encompassing truth. Hafez’s take is to keep sidelining the AfD and their demagogues through non-reporting. The latter is an argument that should at least be debated in Europe and North America, where the named demagogues managed to take centre stage precisely through media/Internet representations that masterfully celebrate racists as “spectacles,” whilst believing democracy to be carved in stone.

Furthermore, if it holds true that the majority of AfD voters, for instance, come from the middle to upper classes and thus enjoy a secure lifestyle, then the media (and the Internet) play an important role when conveying the contemporary political landscapes to this particular voting constituency. Moreover, Daniel Bax, journalist and author of a book on anti-Muslim racism, comments on the (Nazi-era) terminology of “*Lügenpresse*” (lying press) so often heralded by AfD supporters or politicians:

Interestingly enough, no other German party has as many journalists in leading positions as the AfD. This obviously contradicts the prevailing impression that right-wing populists are in blatant opposition to media writ large. The latter is rather a picture that they themselves enjoy cultivating, but in reality they and the racist attitudes they represent are unfortunately part of the mainstream media.<sup>32</sup>

Another important debate in 2017 was a racial profiling debate, carried into 2017 from the New Year’s Eve celebrations in Cologne and primarily spread through media outlets running unfounded stories in a successive and fast-paced manner. As sufficiently explained in the “Islamophobia in Germany: National Report 2016”, it became clear, that the police quickly used racial indicators to separate so-called “NAFRIS” (“North African Intensive Perpetrators” in police terminology) from ethnically white-looking men, thus missing evidence on

31. Kai Hafez, “Der Islam hat eine schlechte Presse“, *Die Zeit online*, February 21, 2017, retrieved May 20, 2017 from <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2016-12/islam-verstaendnis-medien-berichterstattung-populismus-gefahr>.

32. Daniel Bax is a former *taz* journalist and now works with the *Mediendienst-integration.de*, an online information portal for journalists dealing with issues of racism and migration, as well as, security and cultural issues. The interview took place in Berlin on January 12, 2018.

New Year's Eve 2015/2016. Another important side effect of New Year's Eve 2015/2016 is that the incidents apparently called enough attention to women's bodies in public spaces, eventually leading to the establishment of "groping and harassment free" *safe zones* in major cities such as Berlin during New Year's Eve or in Munich during Oktoberfest<sup>33</sup> in 2017. Although it is important to call to attention women's bodies in relation to still existing patriarchy (consider also the *#MeToo* debate of that same year), it is nevertheless questionable that it took an incident involving the "racialized Other" to bring enough attention to a wider structural issue that was until then widely neglected.

Finally, another racializing trope of anti-Semitic allegations against Muslims<sup>34</sup> took place shortly after President Donald Trump announced Jerusalem to be Israel's capital along with his intention to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Just like in other cities of the world, Berlin took to the streets, while protestors were primarily citizens of Arab and Palestinian backgrounds. Shortly afterward, the press distributed stigmatizing allegations about the "Demo of Shame"<sup>35</sup> claiming that chants of "Death to the Jews" were shouted for minutes on end. Although it is true that Israeli flags were burned during the demonstration,<sup>36</sup> the singing of such anti-Semitic chants could not be proved either by video or by audiotapes by various individuals, the organization Jewish Forum for Democracy and against Anti-Semitism (JFDA), or by an Israeli journalist, who was present.<sup>37</sup> And albeit this seems to be a good example for the misrepresentation of facts, several nationwide online and printed articles were published and Minister of Justice Heiko Maas immediately stated that people who shout "death to Jews" should "be tried";<sup>38</sup> in 2018, Maas became the minister of foreign affairs in Merkel's new cabinet. Maas then also called for the establishment of a "commissioner against anti-Semitism" who will answer the following foreign policy question for the German public, which is seemingly left

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33. Philip Kuhn, "Schutzzonen für begripschte Frauen gehören in Deutschland nun dazu", *Welt 24 online*, December 30, 2017, retrieved December 30, 2017 from <https://www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article172026698/Silvester-So-wollen-Staedte-Frauen-vor-Uebergriffen-schuetzen.html>.

34. Anna-Esther Younes, *Islamophobia in Germany: National Reports 2015*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016.

35. Philippe Debionne and Andreas Kopietz, "Demo der Schande. Radikaler Mob verbrennt Israelflagge", *Berliner Kurier*, December 10, 2017, retrieved January 1, 2018 from <https://www.berliner-kurier.de/berlin/polizei-und-justiz/demo-der-schande-radikaler-mob-verbrennt-israel-flagge-29268096>.

36. David Ranan, "Wenn Israels Flagge brennt", *Süddeutsche Zeitung Online*, January 19, 2018, retrieved February 2, 2018 from <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/gastbeitrag-wenn-israels-flagge-brennt-1.3832607>.

37. Emily Dische-Becker, "Massenhafte „Tod den Juden“- Rufe am Brandenburger Tor?", *Über Medien*, December 19, 2017, retrieved January 1, 2018 from <https://uebermedien.de/23715/massenhafte-tod-den-juden-rufe-am-brandenburger-tor/>.

38. Heiko Maas, "Wer 'Tod den Juden' ruft, gehört vor Gericht." *Der Spiegel Online*, December 15, 2017, retrieved January 1, 2018 from <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/heiko-maas-will-holocaust-in-integrationskursen-abfragen-lassen-a-1183363.html>.

untainted by prior media reporting on the so-called Middle East conflict, “Why do we need to experience and witness these forms [of *anti-Semitism*] nowadays on German streets and public places?”<sup>39</sup> Although public media shaming of the demonstrators was common, one of the few groups that publically showed solidarity with the demonstrators was the Jewish Antifa Berlin<sup>40</sup> (many of them Israelis), who stood in solidarity with the Palestinian demonstrators against the media misrepresentations and Maas’s allegations.<sup>41</sup>

The incident was yet more fuel to the fire of inflammatory rhetoric against Muslims as a threat to democracy. Quickly, several political statements were made and most notably a draft proposal was put forth to the parliament by the CDU tackling the ostensibly growing threat of an alleged imported anti-Semitism. German states should thus “ensure that the possibilities of § 54 (1) No. 5 of the Residence Act are consistently applied to foreigners who call for anti-Semitic hatred. It is the will of the German Bundestag [Parliament] to counter the call for hatred against sections of the population and the endangerment of peaceful coexistence by intellectual arsonists early on by classifying this behavior as a particularly serious expulsion interest.”<sup>42</sup> Ten days before the national Holocaust Remembrance Day in January 2018, the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP, and the Greens<sup>43</sup> passed the resolution entitled “Fighting Anti-Semitism in a Determined Way”<sup>44</sup> to counter the increase of anti-Semitism on German soil. Therein, the 2018 Bundestag resolution lists several measures meant to fight the rise of anti-Semitism including appointing a minister responsible for anti-Semitism/Jewish Affairs (*Antisemitismusbeauftragte/n*) to coordinate activities across the different national ministries and states, which would add to another already existing special representative within the Foreign Ministry.<sup>45</sup> While the resolution names anti-Semitism as a general problem, it also highlights that it has “a special breeding ground” (*be-*

39. Jörg Müncheberg, “Eine Schande für die Gesellschaft, die das zulässt”, *Deutschlandfunk*, December 19, 2017, retrieved January 1, 2018 from [http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/antisemitismus-eine-schande-fuer-die-gesellschaft-die-das.694.de.html?dram:article\\_id=406371](http://www.deutschlandfunk.de/antisemitismus-eine-schande-fuer-die-gesellschaft-die-das.694.de.html?dram:article_id=406371).

40. Jewish Antifa Berlin, Germany, “Manifesto – The Chutzpah Bites Back”, *Jewish Antifa Berlin Wordpress*, retrieved January 1, 2018 from <https://jewishantifaberlin.wordpress.com/about-us/>.

41. Jewish Antifa Berlin, Germany, “Statement of Solidarity – Happy Chanuka and Free Palestine”, *Klasse gegen Klasse*, without a date, retrieved January 1, 2018 from <https://www.klassegegenklasse.org/happy-chanuka-und-free-palastine/>.

42. Die Zeit, “CDU und CSU wollen antisemitische Zuwanderer ausweisen”. *Die Zeit Online*. January 6, 2018, retrieved January 7, 2018 from [www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-01/migrationspolitik-csu-cdu-zuwanderer-antisemitismus-ausweisung-bundestag](http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-01/migrationspolitik-csu-cdu-zuwanderer-antisemitismus-ausweisung-bundestag)

43. The AfD and the Left didn’t take part.

44. Drucksache 19/444, Antrag der Fraktionen CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP und Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, *Antisemitismus entschlossen bekämpfen*. Deutscher Bundestag. 17.01.2018. <http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/19/004/1900444.pdf>

45. Special Representative for Relations with Jewish Organizations; Issues relating to Anti-Semitism. See the German Foreign Ministry’s organizational chart, 2-zbV. Usually, the foreign ministry is subdivided by territory or technical responsibilities. Retrievable online at [www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/373562/publication-File/186774/Organigramm-en.pdf](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/cae/servlet/contentblob/373562/publication-File/186774/Organigramm-en.pdf).

*sonderer Nährboden*) in Africa and the Middle East, which seems to allude to the recent wave of refugees, as well as, linking it to their attendant German Muslim and black subjects. The resolution continues in Sub-category Three to ask if the burning of an Israeli flag (in public, for example, during demonstrations) could be summoned by criminal law, while in Sub-category Six it calls for a legal strengthening of the ability to expel foreigners on the basis of anti-Semitism. In Sub-category Seven, it strongly opposes the global BDS movement (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Israel) and demands that jurisdiction verifies whether BDS could qualify as general hate speech and incitement against a people (*Volksverhetzung*) and thus become liable before the law. In Sub-category Sixteen, the resolution demands regular reports on the state of anti-Semitism that shall be discussed regularly in the parliament; in Sub-category Seventeen, a European-wide effort of countries and institutions to cooperate in the fight against anti-Semitism is called for. The fractions of the CDU, the Left, the SPD, and the Greens in the Free State of Thuringia have issued a proposal similar to the one mentioned above, in which BDS is clearly stressed as pivotal in the fight against anti-Semitism and is marked as anti-Semitic.<sup>46</sup>

According to police and intelligence statistics,<sup>47</sup> there have been around 43.6 anti-Semitic physical attacks per year in Germany between 2001 and 2015.<sup>48</sup> In 2016, there were 28 attacks plus two murder attempts; in 2017, there were 28 physical attacks. More than 95% of them were committed by right-wing, white German individuals.

The overview in Figure 1 shows that there was an average of 43 physical anti-Semitic attacks per year (*Gewalttaten*). In comparison, from January to December 2017, 268 refugees (not counting German Muslims) were physically injured during racist attacks, while 15 of them were children<sup>49</sup> according to government data.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, German Muslims experienced 32 physical at-

46. Thüringer Landtag, Antrag der Fraktionen CDU, die Linke, SPD, die Grünen, "Antisemitismus in Thüringen konsequent bekämpfen". Drucksache 6/5415. March 13, 2018, accessed March 13, 2018 from [www.parldok.thueringen.de/ParlDok/dokument/66183/antisemitismus-in-th%C3%Bcringen-konsequent-bek%C3%A4mpfen-vorabdruck-.pdf](http://www.parldok.thueringen.de/ParlDok/dokument/66183/antisemitismus-in-th%C3%Bcringen-konsequent-bek%C3%A4mpfen-vorabdruck-.pdf).

47. Until the beginning of 2017, there were no official statistics on anti-Muslim racism, anti-black racism, etc. The data given in the statistics here is solely and entirely from police and intelligence statistics. The former have collected data without great conceptual clarity especially when it comes to racism. For a more detailed description of the data collection problem, see Anna-Esther Younes (2016): Islamophobia in Germany: National Report 2015, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016.

48. Migration Voter, *Why Germany's Plan to Fight Anti-Semitism through Expelling Immigrants Doesn't Add Up*, February 14, 2018. Online.

49. The last quarter (October to December) of the annual data didn't list children separately. In the second quarter of the year, there were officially no injured children and there is no separate data for the fourth quarter of the year.

50. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache, Antwort, "Proteste gegen und Übergriffe auf Flüchtlingsunterkünfte im (ersten/ zweiten/ dritten/ vierten) Quartal 2017."

**Abb. 3.2: Antisemitische Straf- und Gewalttaten 2001–2015**

Antisem. Straft.	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
PMK-Rechts	1629	1594	1226	1346	1682	1662	1561	1496	1520	1192	1188	1314	1218	1342	1246
PMK-Links	2	6	6	4	7	4	1	5	4	1	6	3	0	7	5
PMK-Ausländer	31	89	53	46	33	89	59	41	101	53	24	38	31	176	78
PMK-Sonstige	29	82	59	53	26	54	36	17	65	22	21	19	26	71	37
PMK-Gesamt	1691	1771	1344	1449	1748	1809	1657	1559	1690	1268	1239	1374	1275	1596	1366

Antisem. Gewaltt.	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15
PMK-Rechts	27	30	38	40	50	44	61	44	31	31	26	37	45	31	30
PMK-Links	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
PMK-Ausländer	1	7	7	3	3	7	3	1	9	6	2	4	4	12	4
PMK-Sonstige	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
PMK-Gesamt	28	39	46	45	56	51	64	47	41	37	29	41	50	44	36

Quelle: Verfassungsschutzberichte 2001–2015

Figure 1: Statistical overview from Migration Voter, February 14, 2018.

tacks, according to government data.<sup>51</sup> So far there are no statistical correlations between anti-Semitic violence and the refugee influx – in fact, the overwhelming majority of perpetrators are white, right-wing German individuals. There is also no considerable increase due to the so-called “refugee crisis” (since 2015) or even an increase in “foreigner violence” (*PMK-Ausländer*). The threat of an alleged “Muslim anti-Semitism” is, however, arguably stigmatizing an already powerless minority of refugees, as well as, Muslim and/or black communities in Germany that have little power to counter such slandering narratives. In conclusion, it is reasonable to wonder about the geopolitical relevance of a public emphasis on an “imported anti-Semitism” by Muslims and blacks that doesn’t seem to correspond to statistical evidence? And, moreover, why is the numeric growth and social threat of right-wing and conservative extremists (as will be shown above) and their attendant political bodies in the parliament not addressed publically in the same manner as “Muslim anti-Semitism”?

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Attacks on politicians constitute another pillar of the other worrying trends indicating an expansion of right-wing and/or conservative-leaning racist worldviews toward the representatives of German democracy and the state. According to

51. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache, Antwort, “Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten im (ersten/ zweiten/ dritten/ vierten) Quartal 2017.”

the government of Germany, there were 205 politically motivated criminal acts (including physical attacks, intimidations, destruction of property) against German parliamentarians in the approximately 210 days between 01.01.2017 and 31.07.2017 (figures on the last five months of 2017 have not yet been made public). In comparison, in 2016, 317 criminal offenses were committed against politicians in around 320 days (01.01.2016 -13.11.2016) and were motivated by the so-called refugee crisis.<sup>52</sup> In the beginning of 2017, the government argued that politicians were targeted when they started rejecting right-wing ideology and when they spoke up in defence of immigration (meaning Syrian and Afghani immigration primarily for Germany).<sup>53</sup> In an interview with ReachOut Berlin, the increase of physical and non-physical attacks against politicians was ascribed not only to the positioning of politicians on issues of refugee asylum and anti-neo-Nazism, but also because most of these politicians weren't explicitly or publicly vocal and positioned on these or similar (i.e. racist) issues before, which turned them into new and visible new targets.<sup>54</sup>

Of the 205 incidents until mid-2017, 93 were right-wing motivated criminal offenses; 18 were left-wing motivated; and 94 cases were not able to be categorized.<sup>55</sup> Many of the 94 uncategorized cases, however, were characterized by rape fantasies against female MPs or Angela Merkel (graffiti, Facebook, emails), other forms of sexualized violence such as insults (primarily against women) and were many times interwoven with references to, for example "Rape Fugees," violent threats of gun violence or bombings, Nazi and pedophilia allusions, and homophobia coupled with allusions to Muslims or Islam.<sup>56</sup> On March 31, 2017, two gunshots were fired from a car at the party office of The Left (*Die Linke*) in Leipzig<sup>57</sup> - notably this incident was also deemed "not categorizable." The latter acts and themes of violence, however, might reasonably indicate right-wing-leaning actors.

The myth of the former East as being more prone to Nazi violence is not supported, with an almost even-handed dataset that includes 13 of the 16 federal German states, with no indication that the East is represented more often.

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52. Kai Biermann und Astrid Geisler, "Rechte Gewalt - BKA fürchtet Tote durch Angriffe von Rechts". *Die Zeit*, online. 13.11.2016. Retrievable online at <http://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2016-11/bka-statistik-rechte-gewalt-politiker>, retrieved December 24, 2017.

53. Deutscher Bundestag, Antwort der Bundesregierung, Drucksache 18/11125, 10.02.2017, p. 4. German original: "Vor allem aber geraten erfahrungsgemäß Parteienrichtungen und Parteimitglieder in den Fokus der rechtsextremistischen Agitation, wenn sie sich in besonderer Weise gegen Rechtsextremismus oder für das Thema Zuwanderung engagieren."

54. Interview with Helga Seyb (Reach Out) and Kati Becker (Registerstelle Berlin), Berlin. 20.12.2017.

55. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/13592.

56. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/13592, pp. 29-45.

57. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/13592, p. 38.

However, according to the German government,<sup>58</sup> such attacks on politicians and their facilities are not happening nationwide and therefore there are no legitimate grounds for understanding the attacks as “strategic and systematic intimidation” of politicians. In several documents, the aggressive deeds are attributed to a “situated impulse to act” (*situativer Tatimpuls*), term that doesn’t exist in legal language, nor does it comprehensively define any collective action taken by a group against another group/person (i.e. neo-Nazis vs. politicians) for any informed understanding of the attack’s context. In early 2017, the government stated that the violent intimidation tactics are used against representatives of a “functioning asylum policy.”<sup>59</sup> Yet, later the same year, the government softened its position, indicating that it does not see any intentional and/or motivated efforts in the violent acts themselves that deem further concern on a structural level.<sup>60</sup>

In Berlin, for instance, a pastor was threatened, a bookseller tracked down and surveyed, and a unionist’s car set on fire, all because they publically announced their support for refugees and stood up against neo-Nazi ideologies. In an interview, the aforementioned unionist, Detlef Fendt, stated that the trend of public intimidations

58. En passant, the government’s response in Drucksache 18/13529 (2017: 3) is also that their main source of information about attacks on politicians comes from the Joint Center for Defense against Extremism and Terrorism (*Gemeinsames Extremismus- und Terrorismusabwehrzentrum, GETZ*). This artful disclosure of unconstitutional data surveillance needs more explanation. At the end of 2006, the “Law for the Establishment of Collective Data Sets of Police Offices and Intelligence Services of the Federal Government and States” was ratified and ensured a data exchange based on common data sets between the police and intelligence services (“Law for the establishment of collective data sets of Police Offices and Intelligence Services of the Federal Government and States” (from December 22, 2006, ratified on December 31, 2006, BGBl, p. 3409). An overview of the law can be accessed online at <http://www.buzer.de/gesetz/7577/> (in German only). Part-and-parcel of that development was the introduction of an Anti-Terror Data Set (*Anti-Terror-Datei, ATD*), in the following March (2007). A legal move as this thus provides for a free data exchange between police offices and the intelligence services in Germany. This includes the Federal Office for the Protection of the Government (*Verfassungsschutz*), the Military Counter-Intelligence Service (*Militärischer Abschirmdienst, MAD*) and the Federal Intelligence Service (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*), and also includes the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF*) as the only federal office that cooperates in the GETZ. (See the GETZ homepage for the list of partners: [https://www.bka.de/DE/UnsereAufgaben/Kooperationen/GETZ/getz\\_node.html](https://www.bka.de/DE/UnsereAufgaben/Kooperationen/GETZ/getz_node.html)). According to Will (2006 & 2012), the law from 2006 has durably changed Germany’s “architecture of security,” actually breaching the constitutional “Principle of Separation” (*Trennungsprinzip*) that was engrained in the Constitution due to the lessons from fascist Germany. The close cooperation between intelligence offices and the police made possible the Nazi persecution of minorities and political opponents. The Principle of Separation introduced after WWII thus secured that such cooperation and form of persecution shall not be possible again. With the 2006 law, this legal separation has been breached for the first time in post-WWII German history, although it was deemed unconstitutional by the High Court of Germany in 2014 (BVerfG, Urteil des Ersten Senats vom 24. April 2013- 1 BvR 1215/07 - Rn. [1-233], [http://www.bverfg.de/e/rs20130424\\_1bvr121507.html](http://www.bverfg.de/e/rs20130424_1bvr121507.html)). In English: BVerfG, Judgment of the First Senate of 24 April 2013 - 1 BvR 1215/07 - paras. (1-233), [http://www.bverfg.de/e/rs20130424\\_1bvr121507en.html](http://www.bverfg.de/e/rs20130424_1bvr121507en.html)). The government seemingly normalizes the breach of the “Principle of Separation” and its replacement with the “Principle of the Availability of Information” in an unapologetic way by way of introducing their data retrieval in the named documents (*Drucksachen. Antworten*). [A large part of this footnote is taken from Anna-Esther Younes (2014) “A Chronicle of A Disappearance: Mapping the Figure of the Muslim in Berlin’s Verfassungsschutz Reports (2002-2009)”, in *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 114-142: pp. 120-121.]

59. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/11125, p. 3.

60. Antwort der Bundesregierung, Drucksache 18/13592, 19.09.2017: “Angriffe auf Büros der im Deutschen Bundestag vertretenen Parteien.”

and violence reminded him of his grandfather who was imprisoned in a concentration camp by the Nazis.<sup>61</sup>

MP Caren Lay's (The Left) experiences are another good example of attacks on political representatives: since 2010, her staff and offices have been attacked 28 times by right-wing supporters. In only one case did the police issue an arrest. According to Lay's office, "There were many conversations with police officials [...], but until today we were continuously told that investigations brought little reliable traces. [*We were told that*] just because somebody is [...] a well-known figure in the local right-wing scene, that that doesn't necessarily mean that [*the police*] can add the respective person to the list of suspects [*sic*]. In various press releases as well as in many personal conversations [*with the police*], MP Lay has regularly criticized the police for their lack of interest in solving the cases."<sup>62</sup>

It is thus worrying to observe a negation of a home-grown neo-Nazi scene (including its violence) whose growth goes way beyond the so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015. The rise of right-wing attacks is attributed primarily to the effects of the refugee influx and downplayed as not having any prior structural implications or comparable events. A similar attitude can be found toward the National Socialist Underground (NSU) complex later in the report.

From January 2017 onwards, Islamophobia became a subcategory of "hate crimes" in official police statistics of "politically motivated criminal acts."<sup>63</sup> In a more detailed response from the government<sup>64</sup>, focusing on the months from April to June, the data shows an emphasis on person-centred attacks on individuals. Around 97% of all incidents registered by the police were officially categorized as right-wing motivated crimes.<sup>65</sup> Overall in 2017, there were up to 1,906 criminal attacks on refugees (5.2 attacks per day); 286 attacks against refugee shelters (0.8 attacks per day); and 132 criminal acts and physical attacks against (refugee) aid workers (0.4 attacks per day).<sup>66</sup> The numbers are provisional, due to change (it is probable that they will go up rather than down), and are solely police and intelligence statistics. These numbers on refugees and their immediate environment alone, however, now prove, statistically, that (violent) Islamophobia is *the* pivotal force in contemporary German racism/-s and a continuous driving force in German society writ-large.

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61. Jo Goll und Torsten Mandalka, RBB 24, 18.02.2017, "Neukölln erlebt neue Welle rechtsextremer Gewalt". Accessible at <https://www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2017/02/neukoelln-rechtsextreme-gewalt-.html>, retrieved January 4, 2018.

62. The personal list was sent to the author in December 2017, by MP Lay's office. The quote is taken from an email exchange with MP Caren Lay's office. December 21, 2017.

63. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/12319.

64. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/146.

65. Deutscher Bundestag, hib 584/2017.

66. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/889. 23.02.2018.

Attacks on mosques are more difficult to assess. According to the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DİTİB), in 2016 around 76 DİTİB and other mosques were attacked in the first three quarters of the year, compared to 97 in 2017.<sup>67</sup> Police data and categories were changed with the new information catalogue that was introduced in 2017, which means that attacks on religious Muslim institutions that are not full-fledged mosques (such as prayer rooms at airports) or even adjacent buildings or side-street vandalism are no longer included in the records. Overall, the government registered around 71 attacks on mosques and 908 “anti-Islam” (*islamfeindlich*) motivated crimes against German Muslims (ranging from verbal to physical attacks and murder attempts).<sup>68</sup> A list sent by the anti-discrimination research office of the DİTİB<sup>69</sup> collected all government registered attacks on mosques<sup>70</sup> together with attacks registered by the DİTİB (DİTİB mosques and others, however not all mosques in Germany). Overall, this list shows 101 attacks on mosques in Germany throughout 2017, while the government statistics registered only 57 attacks on mosques from January until the end of September. FAIR international,<sup>71</sup> the Federation against Injustice and Racism in Cologne, has their own list with attacks on mosques in Germany, merging the official government statistics with those of their own media analysis. FAIR international thus counts 71 attacks on mosques for the year 2017 in Germany. The Counselling Centre for Equal Treatment (ADNB)<sup>72</sup> in Berlin also noted that it happens that busses in the vicinity of Berlin refuse to stop near refugee asylums, which are oftentimes in isolated locations and hard to reach otherwise.

In 2016, there were 2,545 attacks against refugees in person (excluding attacks on asylum homes or aid workers). Aid workers were attacked 217 times and asylum

67. DİTİB - The Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs, usually referred to as DİTİB, is one of the largest Islamic organizations in Germany and runs a regular register on racist attacks against their institutions and worshippers. For more information see [www.ditib.de/](http://www.ditib.de/)

The numbers were retrieved via email and depict only the statistics for the first three quarters of the year 2016 and 2017. The last quarter of police statistics is not yet finished. The data for 2017 is also provisional and might still change due to new and incoming data from the police or individual mosques in the next couple of months. (All data is of 21.12.2017)

68. See Deutscher Bundestag, Antwort, “Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten”: Drucksache 18/12535 (30.05.2017, 1. Quartal), Drucksache 18/13330 (16.08.2017, 2. Quartal), Drucksache 17/148 (30.11.2017, 3. Quartal); Drucksache 19/987 (28.02.2018, 4. Quartal).

69. Ulrich Paffrath is a PhD student at the Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and also serves as an assistant researcher about anti-Muslim racism and racism at the DİTİB academy in Cologne. The complete list he assembled was sent to the author on January 10, 2018.

70. See: Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksachen 18/12319, 18/13330 and 19/148.

71. FAIR International is a non-governmental and independent counselling and information center on issues of racism and anti-Muslim racism, in particular. Since 2014, FAIR International collects data on attacks against mosques, and since 2016 data on physical and verbal attacks on “Muslim identified” or Muslim-positioned persons. The data presented in this report are open to change and provisional. The provisional list was sent to the author by Taner Aksoy, managing director of FAIR, on January 12, 2017. For more information please visit [www.fair-int.de/](http://www.fair-int.de/).

72. Telephone interview with Shemi Shabbat on January 5, 2018. The data is preliminary, the final report for 2017 will be published in March 2018. ADNB, The Counselling Center for Equal Treatment - against Discrimination, Berlin: <http://www.adnb.de/en/>

homes 988 times.<sup>73</sup> In 2015, there was no comprehensive police/government data collection. It is notable that there is no direct relation between the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) federal states and the so-called West German federal states when it comes to racist incidents. This again does not support the mainstream myth that most racist or Islamophobic attacks and incidents occur in the former East (GDR). Noticeable for the year 2015 is that there were 326 male criminal right-wing suspects, compared to 40 female right-wing criminal suspects.<sup>74</sup> This may imply that actual physical violence is still predominantly perpetrated by males, though it does not mean that women do not occupy important (supportive) roles, which are not reflected in criminal offenses or at least in their statistics.

Importantly, Islamophobic incidents are often not reported to the police nor accounted for in their statistics. People are often too scared or ashamed, do not know where to go, or are blocked from reporting in subtle ways by local law enforcement authorities.<sup>75</sup> At a local Berlin level, Kati Becker from the local Register<sup>76</sup> stated, “We are not part of migrant or Muslim networks or organizations and thus we do know and see very little of what is actually happening. However, if we have interviews with victims of racist attacks or if we engage in reach-out programs in mosques, for instance, we hear that people are having racist encounters almost daily. The estimated number of unreported cases is thus most likely a lot higher than our statistics.”<sup>77</sup>

In Berlin, the preliminary data for 2017 collected by Reach Out and the Berlin Registers shows a decline in racist attacks in comparison to the year before. Compared to 360 racist attacks (verbal attacks, intimidations, arson attacks, where people could have been or were hurt) in 2016, including 13 of an Islamophobic nature, they reported a decline to 201 racist attacks (provisional data as of 20.12.2017) in 2017, including 11 Islamophobic attacks. According to Helga Seyb from Reach Out

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73. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/11298.

74. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/7000, p. 12.

75. See also: Aleksandra Lewicki (2017) *Islamophobia in Germany: National Reports 2016*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017: 232.

76. Registers are documentation centers for racist, dehumanizing and antifeminist attacks, graffiti, demonstrations, verbal and physical attacks, stalking, incitements to violence, arson attacks and more.

77. Kati Becker is the coordinator of all registers in Berlin. The coordination office is located in the same office as ReachOut (Victim's Counselling Center for victims of Right-Wing Extremism, Racism and Anti-Semitism, see: [www.reachoutberlin.de/](http://www.reachoutberlin.de/)). The project description of the Berlin Registers is taken from their homepage: “The documentation-centre's aim is not only to record and analyse extreme right incidents but also to uncover discrimination in everyday life on a local basis. Opposed to existing statistics, documentation-centres don't only record criminal charges like property damages or assaults but also incidents with a lower threshold like stickers, insults and threats that for one reason or another weren't reported to the police. The documentation of such incidents at local drop-in centres is a possibility for victims to share their experiences and not be left alone with the incidents. [...] The documentation of incidents is published on the homepage of the Berlin documentation-centres [...]. Every year the districts analyse the incidents. [...] Documentation-centres are limited in their operating range. They can only include those incidents that are published by the police or are documented by the drop-in centres or the victim counselling centre.” For more information or an overview of the data see <http://www.berliner-register.de/>. Kati Becker and Helga Seyd were interviewed together at the facilities of ReachOut on December 20, 2017.

and Katja Becker from the Register, racist attacks in Berlin have doubled since 2015. Anti-Muslim racism, however, statistically stagnates; in terms of reporting, it exhibits a slight numeric decline.

In Munich, the local Register<sup>78</sup> accounted for 14 Islamophobic incidents and attacks, which would mirror the Berlin statistics and shows similar trends for the southwest of Germany and one of its most important cities. Due to a limited allocation of registers or victim counselling centres in Germany,<sup>79</sup> data centres and thus data remains primarily located in the former East, contributing to a distorted representation of the former East as inherently more racist, sexist, violent and overall dangerous.

Overall it is safe to attest to an increase of violence in certain spaces (i.e. mosques, against German politicians); a marginal decrease in other cases (asylum homes, physical attacks against refugees and/or “Muslims”); and an increase in numbers concerning racist attacks writ large since 2015 - for Berlin even a doubling since 2015 according to Reach Out.

### Different Phenomena of Violence

The new liberal game over democracy’s definition also finds expression in the public display of violence. The Federal Office for the Protection of the Government (*Verfassungsschutz*) has published data that clearly shows an increase in (certain types of) violence from 2015 to 2016. Right-wing motivated criminal offenses rose to 23,555 (22,960 in 2015), while left-wing motivated criminal offenses decreased to 9,389 (9,605 in 2015), with a further 5,233 offenses not categorizable (4,391 in 2015). Additionally, two new group categories were introduced for surveillance, both relating to right-wing extremists that are willing to use guns and reject the democratic order of the constitution: the so-called *Reichsbürger* and *Selbstverwalter*.<sup>80</sup> The Federal Ministry of the Interior notes a climax in politically motivated crimes for the year 2016<sup>81</sup> so far - still without taking into account the official statistics for 2017.

Along with the electoral gain of the Islamophobic AfD and a public debate that tried to stigmatize or critically dissect many of the AfD arguments, Germany nevertheless witnessed an increase in everyday racism writ large. Whilst attacks on “Muslims” and refugee asylum homes are slightly decreasing, comparing to 2015

78. München-Chronik. The Munich Chronicle is a research and documentation center for racist, dehumanizing and antifeminist attacks, graffiti, demonstrations, verbal and physical attacks, stalking, incitements to violence, arson attacks and more. The homepage has been online since December 12, 2017. For a more detailed description of their work see <https://muenchen-chronik.de/>.

79. For more background information, see: Anna-Esther Younes, *Islamophobia in Germany: National Reports 2015*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, Istanbul, SETA, 2016: 189 – 191.

80. Bundesministerium des Inneren (ed.) “Verfassungsschutzbericht 2016“, Published on July 4, 2017. Accessible online at <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2017/07/vorstellung-verfassungsschutzbericht-2016.html>.

81. Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik 2016/Police Crime Statistics for the Federal Republic of Germany 2016. April 24, 2017. Accessible online at <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/DE/2017/04/pks-und-pmk-2016.html>.

and 2016,<sup>82</sup> it becomes also apparent that attacks are now less focused on primarily one target group/scapegoat (i.e. anti-Muslim racism) and instead seem to widen their scope, including more ethnic minorities. This official political climate might be explained in two ways. Firstly, Islamophobic attacks are occurring in the form of organized attacks in public (against refugees, politicians, Muslims) or demonstrations (PEGIDA), because the respective representatives (AfD) are now part of the German parliament, which might ostensibly signal more tolerance toward racist violence. Secondly, everyday racism and violence (beyond Islamophobia) that shows itself in a more “organic” and spontaneous way is increasing. With their Islamophobic election campaign for national elections the AfD was the subject *and* agent of a wave of a general increase in racist attacks whilst lowering the bars for public demonstrations of racial hysteria. However, depending on how the AfD will perform eventually, the worrying rise in numbers of right-wing extremists with and without guns remains the same.

An example for the normalization/increase of generally racist public demeanours is a Facebook post from November 3, 2017 in the Federal State of Hesse (Hessen, West Germany). It depicts the famous photo of Anne Frank on a pizza box cover headlined by a well-known German food producer’s emblem (Dr. Oetker) and its all-time famous slogan, “The one fresh from the oven.”<sup>83</sup> (Fig. 2) The photo was posted by Mister W<sup>84</sup> in a Facebook group called “The Patriots,” which included 19 MPs of the AfD and 33 AfD MPs of various federal parliaments (*Landtagsabgeordnete*).<sup>85</sup>



Figure 2: Facebook post of a photograph of Anne-Frank on a pizza box cover headlined by “The one fresh from the oven.”

Ulrich Paffrath,<sup>86</sup> who researches anti-Muslim incidents, writes, “For the data collection period 2017, we witness already a linguistic radicalization in comparison to 2016. The latter finds expression especially in the ‘hate mail’ that are being received [*by DITB mosques*]. The perpetrators are increasingly willing to

82. The interview with ReachOut took place on December 20, 2017.

83. The reprinting of this Facebook screenshot is for the purpose of citation. The author would also like to thank Dr. Oetker and their legal team for their cooperation during the research as well as to the bakery Backhaus Eckhardt in Wetzlar and their lawyer for further information.

84. Facebook quickly took down the photo although “The Patriots” still continue as a Facebook group, albeit now with more self-regulation concerning their own posting rules. The bakery fired Mister W after they learned about the posting.

85. Parliamentary Debates in the Federal Parliament. Speech by Caren Lay, the Left, accessible on Facebook, December 13, 2017: [www.facebook.com/linksfraktion/videos/10155251843788434/?hc\\_ref=ARRK2azf7578dzTokG\\_JK3MLLxH9th3vYFoJ-hj0CH6MhoXOVXicsgA6NLQOYskkKkU](https://www.facebook.com/linksfraktion/videos/10155251843788434/?hc_ref=ARRK2azf7578dzTokG_JK3MLLxH9th3vYFoJ-hj0CH6MhoXOVXicsgA6NLQOYskkKkU)

86. Ulrich Paffrath is a PhD student at the Goethe University of Frankfurt am Main (Germany) and also serves as an assistant researcher on anti-Muslim racism and racism at the DITB academy in Cologne.

use right-wing extremist or dehumanizing formulations, which in parts (especially linguistically) equate to familiar tropes of Nazi anti-Semitism (i.e. bacillus, parasites in the German national body, Islamic vermin, etc.)<sup>87</sup>. Another example, according to Paffrath, that also infers right-wing extremist attitudes of the perpetrator(s) is “the often-used word ‘popular body’ (*Volkskörper*) in combination with descriptions of minorities as alien matter or pathogens/germs/viruses, such as: ‘[...] you are the poisonous sting in the healthy national body that we must tear out completely.’”<sup>88</sup>

Although organized Islamophobic demonstrations might have decreased in number, spontaneous violence and brutalization levels increased. For example,



Figure 3: The 22-year-old Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed al-Gohary killed in a hit-and-run incident in Cottbus, on April 15, 2017.<sup>90</sup>

in Cottbus (East Germany) on the night of April 15, 2017, a car sped up in a 30 km/h restricted inner-city zone and killed the 22-year-old Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed al-Gohary in a hit-and-run incident. (Fig. 3) Whilst the architecture student was lying on the street, dying, witnesses and friends stated that people started insulting Shaden in racist ways, believing she was a refugee.<sup>89</sup>

One witness stated that the people who were in the car eventually came back on foot and started saying things like “Well, they gotta check the street first, since they don’t have streets at home. They should fuck off to their damn country.”<sup>91</sup> After the police arrived, racist vitriol apparently continued but didn’t make it into the first official police reports. Only after a young woman published a leaflet days later, was the press informed about the incident and the prosecution first heard of the hate-speech and vitriol at the scene. To date, the investigations continue, including internal police investigations as to why valid information was left out of the police reports. The Berlin-based newspaper *Der Tagesspiegel* reports that a

87. Excerpts from a hate-mail sent to the Central Mosque of Cologne on September 9, 2017 (Kölner Zentralmoschee). Sent via email by Paffrath on January 3, 2018. Translation by Anna-Esther Younes.

88. Excerpts from a hate-mail sent to the Central Mosque of Cologne on September 8, 2017 (Kölner Zentralmoschee). Sent via email by Paffrath on January 3, 2018. Translation by Anna-Esther Younes.

89. Hend El-Behary, “Was the Egyptian Student in Germany Killed in a Racially-Charged Attack?” *Egypt Independent*, April 20, 2017, retrieved on July 20, 2017, from <http://www.egyptindependent.com/was-egyptian-student-germany-killed-racially-charged-attack/>. The photo of Shaden Mohamed el-Gonary was taken from the same article for the purpose of citation.

90. The photo of Shaden Mohamed el-Gonary was taken from an article in the *Egypt Independent* for the purpose of citation.

91. Sylvia Belka-Lorzen, Adrian Bartocha, Torsten Mandalka, “Zeugen: Wagen beschleunigte vor dem Aufprall“, rbb 24, August 11, 2017, retrieved on August 20, 2017 from <https://www.rbb24.de/panorama/beitrag/2017/08/tod-aegyptische-studentin-cottbus-auto-beschleunigung.html>.

big part of the smoke screen surrounding the case (including witnesses that didn't want to be named publically) might be due to the fact that the extremist neo-Nazi scene in Cottbus has already led to a series of tensions, intimidating the public and strengthening the positions of sympathizers - so far secretly. In January 2017, 120 neo-Nazis marched through the city centre, right next to the police station and in a legally unannounced deployment.<sup>92</sup> The reporting journalist, Alexander Fröhlich, drew a parallel to Germany in the beginning of the 90s and it is reasonable to understand this neo-Nazi demonstration as a political provocation and a social intimidation/recognition.

## Internet

Today, the media and the Internet compulsively merge, for the better or the worst, representing the fourth (trans-/national) pillar in a national democracy. Most of what was said about the media in this report, can equally be said about the Internet (see the Anne Frank collage discussed in this report that appeared on Facebook). Furthermore, next to the more mainstream reporting criticized by Hafez or Bax in the media section of this report, it seems that the right-wing online portal "Politically Incorrect News" (PI News) has garnered more followers since the Islamophobia report in 2015. Back then, PI News counted around 100,000 visitors per day, in 2016 it had 120,000, and by 2017 it further increased to 150,000 visitors per day. For the past 10 years there is a constant rise in visitors to this right-wing conservative, pseudo-liberal and outright white supremacist portal that semi-artfully stages itself under the heading "News against the Mainstream · Pro-American · Pro-Israeli · Against the Islamization of Europe · For the Constitution and Human Rights."<sup>93</sup> The main topics the PI News pivots are Islamization, crime, the 2017 elections, immigration, the Left, activism and "old media" (seemingly referring to themselves as the "new media.")<sup>94</sup>

## Central Figures in the Islamophobic Network

The central figure in this report has been an aggrieved white subject that is, at best, utterly disturbed and, at worst, traumatized by the perceived "cultural loss" due to more diversity in the nation state. This aggrieved white figure takes on political currency by seemingly representing Germany's margins and center at the same time: it represents the "law of neutrality," the 'angry' protest voter that helped the AfD enter the German parliament, as well as, the right-wing attackers and the

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92. Alexander Fröhlich, "Studentin aus Ägypten erst angefahren und dann verhöhnt. Tagesspiegel, April 27, 2017, retrieved December 14, 2017 from <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/toedlicher-autounfall-in-cottbus-studentin-aus-aegypten-erst-angefahren-und-dann-verhoeht/19723060.html>. For further information see also Alexander Fröhlich, "Hundert verummte Neonazis marschierten durch Cottbus, PNN, January 14, 2017, retrieved December 14, 2017 from <http://www.pnn.de/brandenburg-berlin/1148120/>.

93. Politically Incorrect News, PI News, <http://www.pi-news.net/>.

94. Politically Incorrect News, PI News, <http://www.pi-news.net/>. Retrieved and viewed on December 30, 2017.

overwhelming majority of times when law enforcement could or has not pursued important hints and facts.

Another reliable figure that represents the continuous investment in Islamophobic resentment is the regular demonstrations of the various PEGIDA fractions throughout Germany. In 2017, 76 demonstrations against the “Islamization of the Occident” were held (around 6.3 demonstrations per month) with an average of 46.8 participants per gathering. The intelligence service (*Verfassungsschutz*) of Bavaria, for that matter, monitors the activities of PEGIDA-Munich, PEGIDA-Nuremberg, and PEGIDA-Franken due to direct links to right-wing extremist groups and unconstitutional activities.<sup>95</sup>

Six months after the elections, Merkel finally consolidated her government with more women than ever before in German history (six women, nine men in the cabinet, while six of 15 ministry positions have gone to women). Yet, current German and European geopolitics seem to clearly signal a new era of governance: in a post-2009 economic era, seven to nine years later, a “new” political elite with entrepreneurial qualities – and weaknesses – has entered into governments, selling nationalist and racist attitudes to consumer-citizens who want to maintain a good conscience whilst holding on to an economic affluence lone gone. Dr Alice Weidel, lesbian, mother, and former investment-banking economist, could be labelled a “global nativist” and one of the spearheads of the AfD leadership.<sup>96</sup> Weidel is in a way symptomatic for this “new” political right-wing elite: her role, as well as that of others, shows that formerly excluded (sexual) minorities are today able to rally behind the banner of racist exclusion whilst pursuing neoliberal economic politics that further the disintegration of the social fabric in the name of “freedom” and “security.” Whether this nationalist-conservative future will also be open for a “king to be pregnant,”<sup>97</sup> is still left open.

The rhetoric of “economic migrants,” through which (primarily) refugees of war and conflict zones are categorized as “worthy of protection” and “not worthy of protection,” is enabling the tightening of security and immigration law in the face of a global human crisis primarily funded by European money. To date, Germany is amongst the world’s top five countries for weapons’ exports (based

95. See Deutscher Bundestag, Antwort, “*Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten*”: Drucksache 18/12535 (30.05.2017, 1. Quartal), Drucksache 18/13330 (16.08.2017, 2. Quartal), Drucksache 17/148 (30.11.2017, 3. Quartal); Drucksache 19/987 (28.02.2018, 4. Quartal).

96. Paul Hockenos, “Meet the Lesbian Goldman Sachs Economist Who Just Led Germany's Far Right to Victory”, September 24, 2017, *Foreign Policy Online*, accessed February 28, 2018 from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/09/24/meet-the-lesbian-goldman-sachs-economist-who-just-lead-germanys-far-right-to-victory/>

97. In 1969, fantasy author Ursula K. Le Guin published her famous sci-fi book *The Left Hand of Darkness*, in which she tackled topics such as war and culture and deconstructed conventional views of gender, sexuality and race. Here, I am referring to one of the most famous sentences in her book, namely “The king was pregnant.” Le Guin died on January 22, 2018.

on economic profit) and it has followed its legacy of selling weapons to warring factions in war, dictatorships,<sup>98</sup> as well as conflict zones<sup>99</sup> since the 1970s.

In the meantime, the new government is expanding the Ministry of the Interior to "Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Homeland." What this new expansion of words, in particular that of "homeland" (*Heimat*), will entail in a material and legal way – other than appeasing a more and more right wing-leaning voter constituency<sup>100</sup> – is not yet fully clear. What is clear, however, is that this political move happens in the wake of the rise of the AfD into parliament, PEGIDA's continuing weekly marches, as well as, against the backdrop of refugee influxes and a steady increase in direct physical violence against those seen as Muslims and people of color writ-large.

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In June 2017, another *National Action Plan against Racism* (*Nationaler Aktionsplan gegen Rassismus*, NAP) was published by the government.<sup>101</sup> Although the government received several critiques for its past NAPs from the Institute for Human Rights in Germany,<sup>102</sup> it might nevertheless be a step in the right direction. For this year's report, homophobia and transphobia were included in the action plan. Although their inclusion is important for any intersectional analysis of racism, it still doesn't become sufficiently clear why homophobia and transphobia against white people as general phenomena were included in a report on racism – the question remains also unanswered in the document.

Between January and September 2017, German pilots solemnly embraced civil disobedience as a political action and goal: 222 deportations (primarily to Afghanistan) were stopped because German pilots refused to fly with the soon-to-be-deported on board. The pilots believed Afghanistan to be an unsafe place.<sup>103</sup>

According to the MEDIENDIENST who conducted the research on MPs of various ethnicities, there is a small increase in the number of MPs whose origin does not rest entirely inside German borders. It doesn't become clear how many are of color and how many are white, and their number is still marginal, but with 8.2% as

98. Botta, Felix A. Jiménez, "The Foreign Policy of State Terrorism: West Germany, the Military Juntas in Chile and Argentina and the Latin American Refugee Crisis of the 1970s". In: *Contemporary European History*, 1-24, 2018, Cambridge University Press.

99. Deutsche Welle, "Germany's Cabinet Approved Record-Breaking Arms Exports", January 24, 2018, *Deutsche Welle Online*, accessed February 28, 2018 from <http://www.dw.com/en/germanys-cabinet-approved-record-breaking-arms-exports/a-42282068>.

100. Frankfurter Allgemeine, "Heimatministerium - Mia san wer", February 7, 2018, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung Online*, accessed February 7, 2018 from <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/heimatministerium-der-traumder-csu-und-bayern-15438036.html>.

101. Bundesministerium des Inneren, "Nationaler Aktionsplan gegen Rassismus", June 14, 2017, *Bundesministerium des Inneren*, bmi.bund.de, retrieved on December 27, 2017 from <https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/publikationen/2017/nap.html>

102. <http://www.institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de/themen/schutz-vor-rassismus/nationaler-aktionsplan-gegen-rassismus/>.

103. Jon Sharman, "Pilots Stop 222 Asylum Seekers Being Deported from Germany by Refusing to Fly", *The Independent Online*, December 5, 2017, retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/german-pilots-refuse-deport-asylum-seekers-lufthansa-angela-merkel-migrants-a8092276.html>.

opposed to 5.9% in the years before, there is a slight increase in terms of representation (58 out of 709 parliamentarians). That makes 58 MPs with “migration stories” in their family and 709 ethnically white German MPs. The Left party scores the highest with 13 out of 69 MPs, the AfD has 8 out of 92, Merkel’s CDU has 7 out of 246 MPs, and the SPD 15 out of 153.<sup>104</sup> In comparison, 22.5% of the German population has one or two parents of non-German nationality and/or descent.

After the seemingly intended misrepresentation of the Anti-Trump Demonstrations of Palestinians and Arabs in Germany, The Jewish Antifa Berlin stood in solidarity as one of the few public acts of group solidarity with the protesters and published a counter-narrative to the mainstream media representation.

Starting in April, people took to Twitter to resist negative representations of Muslims, Islam and mosques by Journalist Constantin Schreiber. That month a Twitter campaign was born under the hashtag “My Mosque Report,” countering the negative representation with personal love messages from people and their relationship to their mosque/-s.<sup>105</sup>

An ongoing research funded by the European Commission – Directorate of Justice maps counter-narratives to Islamophobia in eight European Union member states, including Germany<sup>106</sup>.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Since 2005, the first female chancellor of Germany and currently the leader of the G7<sup>107</sup> (the world’s seven economically strongest countries), Dr Angela Merkel, has undoubtedly steered the country with subtle and clever tactics, playing off formerly left-wing tropes against conservative ones in a post-/economic crisis and culturally diverse Europe. Especially, her soft politics regarding the cultural and political opening for gay and lesbian marriage equality as well as her humanitarianism expressed toward refugees in times of war, have not always been straightforward, but rather have cautiously straddled the political lines between enemies and supporters of these policies. Her attempt at opening Germany, and by extension, Europe, to a more multicultural reality has left her with few friends inside the political establishment in Germany (including her own party) or Europe - most notable are the antagonisms with the next generation of young, conservative and right-wing leaning political representatives such as Kurz

104. Mediendienst Integration, “Abgeordnete mit Migrationshintergrund im 19. Deutschen Bundestag”, *Mediendienst Recherche*, September 28, 2017, retrieved December 26, 2017 from [https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/MDI\\_Recherche\\_Bundestag\\_2017.pdf](https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/MDI_Recherche_Bundestag_2017.pdf).

105. See: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/meinmoscheereport?lang=en>

106. For an overview of the initiatives and counter-narratives to Islamophobia in Germany see: Hernández Aguilar, L.M. (2018). Dominant Counter-Narratives to Muslim Hatred, Research Report Germany. Working paper 3, Counter-Islamophobia Kit series, CERS University of Leeds.

107. Member States: Germany, France, United Kingdom, USA, Japan, Canada, Italy. Together, these countries represent around two-thirds of the global net wealth.

in Austria over the so-called refugee crisis. The AfD, conservative groups, and right-wing movements have successfully used the rising political tensions resulting from late 20th-century European changes toward more multiculturalism (even if those were not always embraced by the political establishment) by operating along tropes of socio-political grievances, white victimization, cultural trauma and powerlessness.

This report called to attention the dangers that lie in the democratic ideal of granting representative rights to all groups, without understanding that political and economic power is allocated very differently amongst those same groups. The fantasy of “freedom of representation” for everyone, thus, quickly finds its reality in a socioeconomic power gap where socioeconomically weaker groups are structurally unable to defend themselves against the misrepresentation by more powerful groups. Hence, the return of a “white nostalgia” on a “freedom-of-representation-for-everyone” ticket - in place of a more global and egalitarian Europe that protects its weakest links - threatens minority rights generally. In this respect, the observable normalization of racist hate speech and violence, physical threats against state representatives and in particular against Muslims, bears witness to a much larger structural change that needs to be tackled. In the following, some policy recommendations are articulated:

- Yearly state publications of statistics concerning Islamophobic incidents (including separate categories for refugees; asylum homes; aid workers; verbal and physical attacks on the latter two; as well as, two separate categories for attacks on mosques and German Muslims), racist incidents and right-wing (-motivated) crimes by the government should be made accessible to the public. This should entail a description of the definition of the categories (how the data is collected, defined and registered) as well as a comprehensive and easily accessible overview of the most important facts for policy work and journalists.
- *Registerstellen* (victims’ registers) and *Opferberatungsstellen* (victims’ counsels) must be implemented in *all* federal states and in *all* major cities. They should be kept separate from state institutions, but in close proximity to each other in order to ease access and anonymity for the victims.
- A comprehensive and nationwide awareness campaign for victims of anti-Muslim racism concerning the existence of registers and victim counselling offices as well as their legal rights should take place.
- The educational mandate of the state-funded public media should entail more distinguished reporting on minorities, in particular Islam and Muslims and should support and encourage more self-representation. The latter should include the hiring of more journalists of color, journalists of non-heteronormative sexual orientation and gender identities, as well as taking into account special measures to ensure the inclusion of class-wise underprivileged candidates and people who are forced to operate in a world designed primarily for those commonly called “abled-bodied.”
- Police and legal authorities have to be sensitized to Islamophobia and organized

right-wing (neo-Nazi) and racist movements. In that vein critical Whiteness and anti-racism trainings for police would be an important measure in order to be better able to properly situate a crime scene as well as monitoring systems within police work protocols regarding issues of racial discrimination.

- The government's National Action Plan against Racism should also include a more detailed description of the general state of racism in Germany writ large, as the approach to the concept and term "race" seems academically outdated<sup>108</sup>, the guidelines for action don't exceed the naming of funding programs. Overall, it seems like a loose description of already existing government programs of various sorts and general statements about racism. However, if properly executed, as it seems to be intended<sup>109</sup>, an action plan based on the already existing UN guidelines could be a good supplement for German civil society and government politics and could complement a yearly publication of statistics tackling racism and Islamophobia.
- More post-/colonial and anti-racist educational approaches in school and university curricula are needed in order to reflect the diversity of the student body and their histories as well as their personal and group experiences in Germany.

## Chronology

- **01.01.2017:** Islamophobia becomes a category in police statistics and criminal reports and is thus statistically and officially registered by the government as of 2017.
- **10.01.2017:** Weeks after Anis Amri's Christmas market attack in Berlin, the government proposes a new Draft Asylum Law, which would massively curtail refugee rights.
- **09.02.2017:** The Labour Court in Berlin judges that the "Law of Neutrality" violates the basic rights of headscarf-wearing women who want to enter the profession of teaching. The judgement states that it violates Article 4 (1) and (2), the right to freedom of belief and confession, of the German Basic Law.
- **15.04.2017:** Egyptian student Shaden Mohamed al-Gohary is hit by a car in a hit-and-run incident in the city of Cottbus, and verbally abused in a racist matter, whilst lying injured on the ground. She eventually dies three days later in hospital.
- **January to December, 2017:** The government counts 71 attacks on mosques, whereas non-governmental organizations have different accounts, varying from 70 to more than 100 attacks over the entire year. The government also counted approximately 908 attacks on German Muslims.
- **January to December, 2017:** In the first 273 days of 2017, there were 1,413 attacks on refugees and 93 attacks on aid workers in Germany.

108. Die Bundesregierung, *Nationaler Aktionsplan gegen Rassismus*. Bundesministerium des Inneren, Berlin, 2017, p. 14.

109. Ibid., p. 39.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**GREECE**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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ALİ HUSEYİNOĞLU, ALEXANDROS SAKELLARIOU



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## Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Greece in 2017 taking all local, national and international developments into consideration. The primary outcome of this year's report is that Islamophobia continues to exist in different fields across Greece. Compared to last year's report, Islamophobia in Greece did not seem to decline in 2017. It remains manifested primarily on the level of hate speech towards Muslims and to a lesser extent on the level of physical violence. Yet, attacks against a young Muslim immigrant's house in Athens took place in 2017. Also, three masjids that had been functioning for years were closed down by the Greek police while demonstrations were also organised so as to prevent the education of refugee children at Greek public schools. Meanwhile, even if it is likely to open in 2018, public discussions and protests against the construction of an official house of prayer for Muslims in central Athens continued throughout 2017.

Based on the report's existing findings, Islamophobia is primarily manifested in Greek politics, printed and electronic media, and among some Orthodox Church officials, while it is relatively marginal in the education and justice system. Also, the Greek law is not robust enough in fighting anti-Muslim hatred inside Greek society. In general, the vast majority of perpetrator(s) of Islamophobic attacks remain unidentified; even those reproducing Islamophobic discourses, such as certain Metropolitans or politicians, are not penalised for their hate-motivated behaviour. With the exception of a few state and NGO initiatives, almost no progress has been achieved countering Islamophobia across Greece. For the purpose of addressing this vacuum, an observatory mechanism should immediately be formed that will monitor and record any type of Islamophobic incidents. A series of training seminars particularly for civil servants and journalists could be organised to develop their knowledge about Islam in Greece.

## Περίληψη

Η παρούσα έκθεση εξετάζει την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα για το 2017 λαμβάνοντας υπόψη όλες τις εξελίξεις σε τοπικό, εθνικό, αλλά και διεθνές επίπεδο. Το βασικό συμπέρασμα της έκθεσης είναι ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία συνεχίζει να υπάρχει στην Ελλάδα σε διάφορα πεδία και συγκρινόμενη με την προηγούμενη χρονιά βρίσκεται μάλλον στο ίδιο επίπεδο. Κατά κύριο λόγο εκδηλώνεται με τη μορφή ‘ρητορικής μίσους’ εναντίον των Μουσουλμάνων και λιγότερο μέσω της άσκησης βίας. Παρά ταύτα έχουν καταγραφεί ορισμένες επιθέσεις, όπως εναντίον της οικίας ενός μαθητή από το Αφγανιστάν στην Αθήνα. Επίσης, ορισμένοι χώροι προσευχής που λειτουργούσαν για χρόνια έκλεισαν έπειτα από παρέμβαση της αστυνομίας, ενώ καταγράφηκαν και φέτος αντιδράσεις για την ενσωμάτωση παιδιών προσφύγων στα ελληνικά δημόσια σχολεία. Ως προς το αναμενόμενο πρώτο επίσημο τζαμί της Αθήνας, το οποίο αναμένεται να λειτουργήσει εντός του 2018, οι δημόσιες συζητήσεις και αντιδράσεις για την κατασκευή του συνεχίστηκαν και το 2017. Με βάση τα διαθέσιμα στοιχεία της έκθεσης, η Ισλαμοφοβία εντοπίζεται κατά κύριο λόγο στο πεδίο της πολιτικής, στα έντυπα και ηλεκτρονικά ΜΜΕ, και στον χώρο της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας, ενώ είναι σχεδόν ανύπαρκτη σε τομείς όπως η εκπαίδευση και το δικαστικό σύστημα. Είναι σημαντικό να τονιστεί ότι το ελληνικό νομικό σύστημα δεν αντιμετωπίζει επαρκώς τη ρητορική μίσους και τις επιθέσεις κατά των Μουσουλμάνων καθώς η πλειονότητα των δραστών ή όσων αναπαράγουν Ισλαμοφοβικό λόγο, π.χ. ορισμένων πολιτικών ή Μητροπολιτών, δεν εντοπίζεται ή δεν τιμωρείται, αν και πολλοί εξ αυτών είναι γνωστοί. Με την εξαίρεση ορισμένων πρωτοβουλιών από τη μεριά του κράτους και κάποιων ΜΚΟ, δεν εμφανίζεται κάποια ιδιαίτερη πρόοδος στην αντιμετώπιση της Ισλαμοφοβίας. Για την αντιμετώπιση αυτού του κενού θα ήταν χρήσιμη η σύσταση ενός παρατηρητηρίου για την Ισλαμοφοβία, το οποίο θα μπορεί να καταγράφει όλα τα περιστατικά. Επιπλέον, θα ήταν χρήσιμη η διοργάνωση σειράς σεμιναρίων ιδίως για δημόσιους λειτουργούς και δημοσιογράφους, προκειμένου να ενημερωθούν σχετικά με το τι είναι το Ισλάμ και για την παρουσία του στην Ελλάδα.

## Introduction

Islamophobia in Greece is mainly found on the discursive level, while physical attacks against immigrants and refugees based on religious motivation are fewer compared to other European countries - although they are difficult to record. There are three main fields that have played a crucial role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public sphere: politics, i.e. political parties and organisations mainly of the right and the extreme right; religion, i.e. certain church figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece; and finally the media and the Internet. The main issues for the reproduction of Islamophobic discourses were the terrorist attacks in Western societies; the so-called refugee issue and the presence of immigrants and refugees mainly in Athens and the Aegean islands; the construction of the mosque of Athens; and issues related to the Muslim Turkish minority where Islamophobia is sometimes reflected through the lens of Turcophobia.<sup>1</sup> The report is based on data collected during 2017 and takes into consideration international events that might have influenced the appearance or the rise of Islamophobia. The material was mainly collected from printed and electronic media, websites and blogs, reports of NGOs, international organisations and state authorities, and formal or informal contacts with members of the Muslim communities.<sup>2</sup>

## Significant Incidents and Developments

There were four important incidents and developments that affected Islamophobia in Greece during 2017. First, the so-called “refugee crisis” continued to play a significant role in the increase of hatred especially towards Muslim refugees settled primarily in Athens, Thessaloniki and the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea. Similarly to 2016, Islamophobic discourse and physical attacks continued to increase as the route of refugees to major European countries such as Germany, known also as the Balkan Route, remained closed and around 55,000 refugees remained in Greece in 2017. Meanwhile similarly to previous years, certain circles continued to exploit international developments, i.e. the terrorist attacks around the world, for the sake of boosting Islamophobia inside Greek society. Second, the determination of the Greek government to include refugee children into the Greek public schooling mechanism and enable the continuity of their primary education at these schools continued to meet with strong reactions from some parents of schoolchildren of

1. For some physical attacks targeting sacred places of Muslims with anti-Turkish slogans see Ali Huseyinoglu, “Questioning Islamophobia in the Context of Greece”, *IRCICA Journal*, Volume III, Issue 6, Fall 2015, 73-74.

2. It is worth noting that Greece has also been included in the OSCE Hate Crimes reporting mechanism since 2012. Apart from official statistical data from the Greek state, some minority and majority NGOs dealing with human and minority rights in Greece also contribute by reporting Islamophobic actions to this mechanism. The Western Thrace Minority University Graduates Association and the Western Thrace Turks Federation in Europe primarily report about biases against Muslims in Western Thrace, Rhodes and Kos, while the Greek Helsinki Monitor and Racist Violence Recording Network offer reports on Muslims in the rest of Greece.

majority-Greek schools - though to a lesser extent compared to 2016. Others manifested their disapproval of the new textbooks for religious education introduced in 2017 on the grounds that the overall content included more information about basics tenets of Islam and other religions that was not only biased in their favour but also concealed their fanaticism and racism. Third, even if debates and reactions about the mosque in Athens persisted, its construction was almost completed at the end of 2017. Earlier, in August 2017, the Ministry of Education, Research and Religion had already appointed 14 people - only four of them Muslims – to the board of directors of the mosque, which is planned to open in 2018. Fourth, some masjids located inside the premises of NGOs, owned and functioned by members of the Muslims Turkish minority of Western Thrace, were closed down on the grounds that they lacked official permission.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

In the field of politics, Golden Dawn (GD) is the most significant agent with regard to the reproduction of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. Such views and attitudes have been consistently present in the party's ideology and agenda since 2010 when for the first time it entered the political sphere in the local elections in Athens. During 2017, GD continued reproducing such discourses almost on a weekly basis through the party's official website arguing that through the arrival of immigrants and refugees the Islamisation of Greece has already started.<sup>3</sup> A text uploaded on the party's official website reads,

The presence of Islam in Europe is the arm of the New Order for the terrorisation and enslavement of all the autochthonous people having as an ultimate goal the demolition of every European country through the mixture of races that will take place via the unstoppable illegal immigration of Muslims from Asia and Africa. [...] If we don't fight for our values and civilisation, then ethnic cleansing and submission to the 'barbarians', that arrive [in Greece] in thousands without meeting any kind of resistance, is certain.<sup>4</sup>

GD's Islamophobic discourse was also evident in the parliamentary discussions on the construction of the mosque of Athens or immigration in which GD's MPs

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3. "The Islamisation of Europe in Numbers: In Greece Muslim Population Has Raised Six Times!", (January 17, 2017), xryshaygh.com, retrieved on December 8, 2017 from <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/h-islamopoihsh-ths-eurwphs-me-arithmous-sthn-ellada-eichame-ejaplasiasmo-to>.

4. "The Procedure of Europe's Ethnic Cleansing and Submission to Islam Has Started", (September 17, 2017), xryshaygh.com, retrieved December 8, 2017 from <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/h-diadikasia-ethnokatharshs-kai-upotaghs-ths-eurwphs-sto-islam-echei-jekinh#ixzz4t0QWDpqqd>.

- especially after the terrorist attacks in Europe (e.g. in Manchester or Barcelona) - have argued that jihadists are killing children throughout Europe<sup>5</sup> implying that a mosque in Athens and immigrants and refugees constitute a direct threat, and, in this way, promoting a politics of fear.<sup>6</sup>

Apart from GD, politicians from the right, liberals or even of the centre-left have expressed views which could be considered as Islamophobic especially in relation to immigration and following the terrorist attacks in European cities. The former Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, for example, argued in a talk during a meeting of the European People's Party think tank that Europe is threatened by a 'tsunami of immigrants' who come and practice every kind of smuggling, trafficking or even Jihad.<sup>7</sup> In the same direction, Andreas Loverdos, an MP of the centre-left socialist party (PASOK), after the attack in Barcelona argued that the problem of Islamic (sic) terrorism is related with immigration and this is where the main focus of Europe should be.<sup>8</sup> Thanos Tzimeros, on the other hand, the president of a small neo-liberal party, after the attack in Barcelona argued that Europe should forbid halal food for Muslims because that way they will have nothing to eat, and they will leave Europe.<sup>9</sup> In the same spirit, the mayor of Argos in Peloponnese, has also argued that Europe and, of course, Greece is in a process of Islamisation through immigrants and refugees and that there is a plan to destroy national identities and eliminate the national consciousness of the next generation.<sup>10</sup>

On September 12, the leader of a political party in Greece made a clear link between preserving for a long time the threshold for entering parliament in the general elections and the presence of Muslims in the region of Western Thrace. During his press conference at the 82nd Thessaloniki International Fair, Vasilis Leventis, the leader of the Union of Centrists – a Greek political party with seven MPs at the Greek Parliament – underlined that the main reason for keeping the 3% election barrier since 1993 has primarily been to prevent the one political party of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace from entering the Greek Parliament. He openly stated the following,

Tsipras [i.e. the Prime Minister] was ready to lower it to 2%. I insisted that it remains at 3% since it is a matter of Muslims. Votes of Muslims range between 1.8% and

5. Parliamentary Proceedings (Session PKE, May 25, 2017 and Session PAZ, June 21, 2017).

6. Alexandros Sakellariou, "Fear of Islam in Greece: Migration, Terrorism and 'Ghosts' from the Past", *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 4 (July 2017).

7. "Samaras in EPP: Europe in Danger of a 'Tsunami' of Immigrants", *protothema.gr*, (September 28, 2017), retrieved December 8, 2017 from <http://www.protothema.gr/politics/article/717600/samaras-sto-ell-i-europi-kind-uneuci-apo-to-tsunami-tis-anexelegtis-metanasteusis-/>.

8. "Loverdos's Turn towards the Extreme Right Audience", (August 19, 2017), *thepressproject.gr*, retrieved December 8, 2017 from <https://www.thepressproject.gr/article/115516/Strofi-Loberdou-sto-akrodeksio-koino>.

9. Retrieved December 13, 2017 from <https://twitter.com/thanostzimeros/status/898268459590713346>.

10. Retrieved December 8, 2017 from [http://koinosparanomastis.blogspot.gr/2017/02/blog-post\\_14.html](http://koinosparanomastis.blogspot.gr/2017/02/blog-post_14.html).

2.2%. We could not allow a Muslim party to enter the Greek Parliament. In the case that the votes of Muslims reach 5%, then, we would rise the entrance barrier to the parliament to 5%. We need to be clear. Above all is the interest of Greece.<sup>11</sup>

In his statement he also underlined that in case the access of a Muslim party is allowed, then, Greeks should be ready to hear slogans from Muslims (implying members of the autochthonous Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace) stating “Long live Erdoğan” inside the Greek Parliament. Doing so, Leventis also implied that any possible entrance of an Islamic political party into the Greek Parliament would also work for the national interest of the neighbouring country, namely Turkey. The strongest reaction to Leventis’ statements came from the political party of Muslim Turks in Western Thrace. In its written statement, the Friendship, Equality and Peace Party condemned Leventis for using racist and Islamophobic discourse and targeting all Muslims living in Greece as dangerous and a threat to the country.<sup>12</sup>

Reflections of politics can also be observed in some decisions taken by the Greek state authorities on the religious liberties of Western Thracian Muslims residing inside or outside of Western Thrace. That is, in 2017, three masjids located inside non-governmental organisations belonging to members of the Muslim Turkish minority were closed by the Greek police. On February 17, the masjid located inside the Education, Culture and Sports Association of Muslims in Imathia-Veria;<sup>13</sup> on March 9, the one inside the Educational and Cultural Association of Muslims in Didymoticho;<sup>14</sup> and on June 30, the Osmaniye Masjid located inside the Educational and Cultural Association of Macedonian-Thracian Muslims in Thessaloniki were shut down by the Greek police.<sup>15</sup> The reason for their closure was the same: they all lacked the necessary permission to function a house of prayer inside their premises. Nevertheless, the heads of all three NGOs emphasised that as citizens of Greece they were entitled to the right of freedom of religion. Moreover, the possibility to perform religious activities had already been highlighted in their constitutions. Therefore, they had the right to teach the basic tenets of Islam and the Quran and pray collectively with other Muslims. It is useful to underscore that all masjids functioned without having any kind of problem with local Greek authorities; the one in Imathia had functioned for two years, while the one in Thessaloniki had been open for almost 12 years. Therefore, it seems that the decision regarding the closures of the masjids had political aspects that should not be underestimated.

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11. Retrieved December 11, 2017 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rEy5Wtc0EeU&feature=share>.

12. Retrieved December 22, 2017 from <http://www.debpartis.org/indexENG1.php?s=detailsENG&id=5359>.

13. “The Greek Police Has Shut Down the Masjid of Western Thrace Turks in Veria”, *Millet*, (March 2, 2017), 16.

14. “They Also Closed the Masjid in Didymoticho”, *Gündem*, (March 17, 2017), 9.

15. “Hindrance of Greek State for Muslims in Thessaloniki to Pray”, *birlikgazetesi.net*, (June 30, 2017), retrieved 23 December, 2017 from <http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/12986-yunan-devletnden-selankte-yaayan-muesluemanlarin-badet-etmelerne-engel.html>.

## Justice System

With regard to the justice system there were no particular events or developments that could be considered as Islamophobic. What could be mentioned, though, is that during 2017 the trial of a well-known author who wrote an Islamophobic text after the attacks of November 2015 in Paris<sup>16</sup> was to take place on July 21, but it was postponed for 2018. She is going to be on trial for violating the anti-racist law (n.4285/2014) and certain articles of the penal code and more particularly for public incitement of violence and hatred. It should be noted that the author was supported by other authors and journalists arguing either that her prosecution was in violation of her right of freedom of speech or that she said nothing wrong because Islam is indeed a problem and is not a moderate religion.<sup>17</sup>

## Education

Regarding education and in relation to the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education there are no particular events to mention. On the contrary significant policies contributed to the direction of confronting Islamophobic attitudes (see section on civil society and political initiatives to counter islamophobia in this report). Three issues could be mentioned in this section, however, which are directly related to education. The first one is the reaction by a group of parents with the support of extreme-right groups, GD<sup>18</sup> among others, the church and certain theological circles,<sup>19</sup> against the new textbooks for religious education, which began to change last year and included more information about other religions and, of course, Islam. These parents compiled a document stating that they did not accept their children being taught about other religions in a biased way which concealed their true teachings that, in their view, include fanaticism, racism and hatred – the accusations were mainly aimed at the new teaching material regarding Islam. As a result, they returned the school textbook their children had received in the first days of the school year to the ministry and in the accompanying letter characterised them as “unacceptable”. The second issue worth mentioning is the reactions on October 28, the national commemoration day, when an 11-year-old student from Afghanistan was chosen in a lottery to carry the Greek flag in the student parade, according to the new edu-

16. Alexandros Sakellariou, “Islamophobia in Greece: National Report 2016”, in Enes Bayrakli and Farid Hafez (eds.), *European Islamophobia Report* (Istanbul: SETA, 2016), 210.

17. Giannis Pretenderis, “Fanaticism”, *Ta Nea*, (May 15, 2017), retrieved on December 6, 2017 from <http://www.tanea.gr/opinions/all-opinions/article/5445683/fanatismos/> and Apostolos Doxiadis, “The Obscurantist Attack against Soti Triandafyllou”, *protagon.gr* (May 14, 2017), retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.protagon.gr/apopseis/editorial/44341409721-44341409721>.

18. “Parliamentary Enquiry”, *Golden Dawn*, (September 16, 2017) retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.xryshaygh.com/koinovoulio/view/erwthsh-gia-tis-aparadectes-leptomerhs-anafores-sto-islam-apo-to-biblio-ths>.

19. Panagiotis Tsangaris, “Greek Wake up! It’s Time. Resistance Now!”, *Panhellenic Union of Theologians*, (September 23, 2017), retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.petheol.gr/nea/ellenaxypnaertheoraantistasetoratoup-anagiotetsankarengengrammateatespanelleniasenosestheologon>.

cational legislation. The school administration and the school’s parents association decided otherwise and gave him the sign with the school’s name instead.<sup>20</sup> Finally, although not to the same extent as in the previous year, there were some reactions against the decision to matriculate refugee children at public schools in order to incorporate them into society and avoid their social exclusion in various regions of Greece (e.g. Oraikastro and Filippiada).<sup>21</sup>

**Media**

As was mentioned in the previous reports, the media of the extreme right plays the primary role in the reproduction of Islamophobic discourses, e.g. the newspaper of Golden Dawn, or *Makeleio*, *Stobos* and *Eleftheri Ora*. This situation remains true for 2017 as well. (Figures 1 and 2)

Other examples come not only from right-wing or centre-left newspapers but also from some lifestyle and gossip press. (Figure 3) *Dimocratia*, similarly to the previous years, is a newspaper which reproduces Islamophobic discourses, es-



Figure 1: The front page of *Golden Dawn’s* newspaper states, “They Islamise Greek Children”. September 20, 2017



Figure 2: The front page of *Eleftheri Ora* reads, “Jihadists Threaten to ‘Blow Up’ the Parliament during the Holy Week”. March 24, 2017

20. “They Took the Parade Flag from the 11-Year-Old Amir”, (October 28, 2017), TVXS, retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/piran-ti-simaia-tis-parelasis-apo-11xrono-amir>.

21. “New Situation of Bullying against [Refugee] Children in Oraikastro”, (February 17, 2017), nooz.gr, retrieved December 8, 2017 from <http://www.nooz.gr/greece/neo-skiniko-ekfovismoi-paidion-sto-oraiokastro> and “Out of School 70 Refugee Children Because of Racist Reactions in Filippiada”, (March 24, 2017), athens984.gr, retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.athina984.gr/2017/03/24/ektos-scholiou-70-prosyfygopoula-logo-ton-ratsitikon-antidrascon-sti-filippiada/>.

pecially after terrorist attacks have occurred abroad, talking about “the monsters of Islam” and “the crazy [people] of Islam” on its front pages. Another interesting theme was the headlines and front pages of some newspapers regarding the danger Greece might face because of the presence of extremists in Greek society who preach in some of the tens of unofficial or even illegal prayer houses in Athens. According to *Dimocratia*, the police were keeping a close eye on an imam who they characterised as a “moving-bomb” - because he was considered very dangerous - while other newspapers like *Eleftheria tou Typou* argued that there are mosques of hatred in Athens which threaten the country’s security. (Figure 4) It has to be noted that most of these articles included very confusing information of what exactly is taking place, with very little documentation, speaking only with police sources and, in most cases, reproducing information from previous years (2014-2015) without any new ‘sources’.

Similar articles, however, were published in moderate right-wing newspapers like *Kathimerini*<sup>22</sup> where one can find articles by Takis Theodoropoulos who in the last years regularly writes about the so-called clash of civilizations, the violent character of Islam or the invention of Islamophobia.<sup>23</sup> What needs to be underlined is that in most of these cases and despite the validity or the novelty of the information a



Figure 3: Front page of the gossip newspaper *Espresso*: “Second Round of Profit in September in Mykonos with Allah’s Blessing. Remos in a Fiesta for Islam”. August 11, 2017



Figure 4: The front page of *Eleftheria tou Typou* states, “Mosques of Hatred in Attica”. August 23, 2017

22. Giannis Souliotis, “Imams of Hatred in Athens”, (September 3, 2017), *Kathimerini*, retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.kathimerini.gr/925101/article/epikairothta/ellada/oi-imamhdes-toy-misoys-sthn-a8hna>.

23. Takis Theodoropoulos, “The Invention of Islamophobia”, (February 5, 2017), *Kathimerini*, retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.kathimerini.gr/894999/opinion/epikairothta/politikh/h-epinothsh-ths-islamofovias>.

kind of moral panic is constructed through attractive headlines and photos on front pages trying to disseminate a fear about Islam and Muslims.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, an online newspaper based in Komotini, *Antifonitis*,<sup>25</sup> expressed intolerance against Islamic places of worship and hatred against Greece's Ottoman past in its news coverage of the devastating fire in the Çelebi Mehmet Mosque (referred in the following section) in Didymoticho on March 22. With the headline "Will We All Cry for the Bayazid Mosque?", the content reflected Çelebi Mehmet as an Asian invader of Greek soil because of whom many Greeks had suffered. Eventually, the article claimed, he barbarically built a mosque in his name in the centre of the city. According to *Antifonitis*, not even a penny should be spent for the restoration of this mosque. Rather, the money should be spent for the restoration of the Hellenic heritage monuments in Thrace.<sup>26</sup> Even though the Greek officials acted in the opposite direction and immediately started restoration works, it seems that it will take some time to completely restore the structure since the damage from the fire was extensive.

Certain newspaper publications, along with a documentary prepared by Vice Greece and broadcasted on Antenna TV channel on February 20, clearly indicate how Islamophobia in Greece is also reflected through the lens of anti-Turkish discourse. The head of a group who occupied the construction site of the central mosque being constructed in Athens underlined that "any Greek who demands the construction of a mosque in Athens is a traitor with Turkish seed".<sup>27</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

One crucial problem in Greece is the lack of evidence regarding assaults which are perpetrated based explicitly on religious motivation. Reports in Greece are usually categorised under xenophobic and racist attacks with no particular focus on the religious motivation; this can be attributed perhaps to the fact that in most cases the motivation is not clear. Attacks against immigrants, for example, which during the second half of 2017 were on the rise in Aspropyrgos, a region near Athens, mainly targeted Muslims from Pakistan. However, it is not always easy to record them as clearly Islamophobic - the most appropriate characterisation might be xenophobic *and* Islamophobic. These attacks are believed to have reached 70 or 80 in 2017 and it is argued that the per-

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24. It is important to mention that various studies show negative views about Islam and Muslims in Greece. See for example "Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe", Pew Research Center, (May 10, 2017): 161; and a study of the National Centre for Social Research, Dimitris Angelidis, "We Live ... Our Myth about Immigrants", (March 21, 2017), Efimerida ton Syndakton, retrieved December 6, 2017 from <https://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/zoyme-ton-mytho-mas-gia-toys-metanastes>.

25. Antifonitis was a local newspaper, which circulated fortnightly between 1998-2015.

26. March 24, 2017, retrieved December 26, 2017 from <http://antifonitis.gr/online/4301>.

27. Retrieved on December 28, 2017 from <https://video.vice.com/gr/video/the-mosque-of-athens/58a1d561841ef40f3f2b66c4> (seconds between 14:30 and 14:50).

petrators meet and use the local GD offices as their point of departure.<sup>28</sup> Since October 2017, a new extremist group emerged in Athens, under the name 'Crypteia' inspired by an ancient Spartan group. They claimed responsibility for an attack on the house of the young Afghan boy who was chosen to participate in the national celebrations of October 28 as his school's flag-bearer - although the school administration decided otherwise. (See Education section) They also claimed responsibility for an attack against two Muslim immigrants, one of them an imam, in November 2017.<sup>29</sup> It should also be mentioned that outside the location where the official mosque of Athens is going to be built many anti-Muslim slogans have been written on the walls. (Figures 5 and 6)

Regarding Western Thrace, two incidents of robbery occurred in 2017 and resulted in minor material damage to mosques in central Komotini. On April 4, the entrance of the Kirmahalle Mosque was found vandalised early in the morning and some money located inside the muezzin's room was stolen. A similar attempt had also been reported two months earlier while unidentified individual(s) tried to steal some items from the yard of Şehreküstü Mosque.<sup>30</sup> Apart from these two incidents, interviews with Muslims living in different parts of the country confirm that there were no other physical attacks on any



Figure 5: The graffiti on the wall near the construction site writes, "Fuck Islam".



Figure 6: The entrance of the construction site for the official mosque in Athens with Christian crosses attached to the railings and the writing "Christ has risen".

28. "70-80 Racist Attacks Only in Aspropyrgos in 2017", (October 9, 2017), Ta Nea, retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.tanea.gr/news/greece/article/5476327/exoyn-ginei-70-80-ratsistikes-epitheseis-mono-ston-aspropyrgo-to-2017/>.

29. "Crypteia: The Fascist Group That Attacks Immigrants", (November 28, 2017), The Toc, retrieved December 6, 2017 from <http://www.thetoc.gr/koinwnia/article/omada-krupteia-i-fasistiki-organwsi-pou-xtupaei-metanastes>.

30. "They Broke the Entrance Door of Kirmahalle Mosque in Komotini", Millet, (April 4, 2017), 5. Since the perpetrators were unidentified, this action might not be considered as Islamophobic but an incident of theft without any anti-Muslim intention.

functioning official mosque, masjid or cemetery property located in Western Thrace, Thessaloniki, Rhodes and Kos Island<sup>31</sup> throughout 2017.

Last but not least, Çelebi Mehmet Mosque (known also as Bayazid Mosque, built in 1420 and located in central Didymoticho) is one of the oldest mosques in the Balkan Peninsula. During restoration works, a catastrophic fire broke out on the night of March 22 which resulted in serious damage to the monument. Initially, there were some rumours about a possible attack by Islamophobes targeting the centuries-old relic of Greece's Ottoman cultural heritage. Yet, the final findings of the investigation by Greek authorities have indicated that the cause of fire was welding materials used for restoration purposes.<sup>32</sup>

On the whole, from discussions with Muslims it became clear that Islamophobia in Greece is not as severe as in other European countries and has probably decreased compared to previous years, especially with regard to physical attacks. However, it was mentioned that a key issue is the Islamophobic attitudes and views held by state authorities and more particularly the police or the secret services which seem to uphold an Orientalist perspective and which sometimes leads to Islamophobia.<sup>33</sup> An interesting parameter is that according to a study of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Muslims themselves consider these attacks as mainly based on their ethnic or immigrant background, secondly on their skin colour and thirdly on their religion. It should be added that in most cases they hesitate or are afraid of reporting the attack to the authorities.<sup>34</sup>

## Internet

The Internet is a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and the expression of hatred against Islam and Muslims. Similarly to previous years' reports, many extreme right-wing websites continue to disseminate 'news' about Muslim countries in relation to violence (e.g. killings, rapes, murders, etc.) which in most cases are not reliable. These stories are used to cultivate and spread the fear of Islam and to create a repulsive image of Islam and Muslims. Such websites include, of course, the official website of GD and of its youth division (<http://www.xryshaygh>).

31. On both islands, there were a number of mosques established during the Ottoman administration of the Dodecanese region. Yet, contrary to demands of the Islander Turks for opening some already-existing mosques for religious purposes, only one mosque is open for use on each island. The rest remain closed, dilapidated and require immediate restoration so as not to collapse. Ali Huseyinoglu, "Past and Present of Islam in the Balkans: The Case of Greece", *Avrasya Etüdleri*, 50 (2), 2016, 38-41.

32. Kostas Kantouris, "This Is How the Bayazid Mosque Collapsed Because of Fire", *Makedonia*, (10 April, 2017), retrieved December 22, 2017 from <https://makthes.gr/%CE%AD%CF%84%CF%83%CE%B9-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%83%CF%84%CF%81%CE%AC%CF%86%CE%B7%CE%BA%CE%B5-%CE%B1%CF%80%CF%8C-%CF%84%CE%B7-%CF%86%CF%89%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%AC-%CF%84%CE%BF-%CF%84%CE%AD%CE%BC%CE%B5/>.

33. Information collected from interviews with Muslims.

34. "Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Muslims, Selected Findings", (Luxemburg: European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017): 27, 35, 40.

com/ and <http://www.antepithesi.gr/>); [ethnikismos.gr](http://ethnikismos.gr/), which is related to GD since many articles appear on both websites; the website of a journalist, writer and turcologist (sic), i.e. a specialist in Turkey, where a special section dedicated to Islam can be found (<http://nikosxeiladakis.gr/>); and all the websites of the newspapers, which belong to the extreme right, mentioned in the media section of the report



Figure 7: "Islam out of Greece"<sup>37</sup>

(<http://www.stoxos.gr/>, <http://www.makeleio.gr/>, <https://www.elora.gr/portal/>). Apart from the above, one can find blogs with Islamophobic content and images supporting that Islam and Muslims should leave Greece because Islam is a "violent and savage religion" (Figure 7) and that all illegal immigrants - mainly Muslim - are threatening Greece.<sup>35</sup> It is also very common to find Islamophobic pages and comments on Facebook or Twitter, such as the Facebook groups "Stop Islam in Greece" and "No to a mosque in Athens".<sup>36</sup>

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As has been presented in previous sections of this report, the extreme right and more particularly GD are central figures in the Islamophobia network, building on what has been termed "politics of fear". Specific websites also play a key role in the construction of panic regarding Islam and the presence of Muslims in Greek society. In this section two additional players in the field are mentioned. The first is a neo-liberal former minister of the conservative party Nea Dimocratia, Andreas Andrianopoulos, who teaches at the American College of Greece (Deree) and is the director of the Institute of Diplomacy and International Developments at the same college. Through speeches, articles, books, his website and mainly his Twitter account, he continuously (re-)produces Islamophobic messages talking about "Islamic beasts" after terrorist attacks, about the threat of the thousands of immigrants coming to Greece, and, on the whole, implying that there is a cultural

35. Ion, "Greece in Decay", (August 24, 2017), [prwthentekatou.blogspot.gr](http://prwthentekatou.blogspot.gr), retrieved December 7, 2017 from [http://prwthentekatou.blogspot.gr/2017/08/blog-post\\_25.html](http://prwthentekatou.blogspot.gr/2017/08/blog-post_25.html); "Religion of Peace", (June 16, 2017), [myrmithonas.blogspot.gr](http://myrmithonas.blogspot.gr), retrieved December 7, 2017 from <http://myrmithonas.blogspot.gr/2017/06/h.html>; "Step by Step the Enemies of the Greeks Are Moving", (June 10, 2017), [panagiotisarvanitis.blogspot.gr](http://panagiotisarvanitis.blogspot.gr), retrieved December 7, 2017 from [http://panagiotisarvanitis.blogspot.gr/2017/06/blog-post\\_10.html](http://panagiotisarvanitis.blogspot.gr/2017/06/blog-post_10.html)

36. <https://www.facebook.com/STOP-Islam-in-Greece-657137137706110/> and <https://www.facebook.com/oxi.tzami/>

37. From the blog <http://myrmithonas.blogspot.gr>.

chasm between Islam and the West and that those who are friendly and open to Muslims will pay the price in the future.<sup>38</sup>

The second player is some members of the Orthodox Church of Greece, especially some Metropolitans. It is important to note that the Church on the whole is not Islamophobic and does not express hatred towards Muslims. However, there are some cases that need to be taken into serious consideration. The Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim is a central figure in Islamophobic discourses since he continuously argues that Islam is a fake religion and Muhammad a fake prophet, adding that Islam is violent and very dangerous.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, the Office for Heresies and Para-religions of the Metropolis of Piraeus launched an announcement arguing that it is impossible to see Islam in any other way [i.e. as a religion of peace] because nowadays Islam is conquering the West using jihad.

Islam gallops conquering the Western world! Islamic expansionism and its all the more greater infiltration of Western societies during the last decades is now an unquestionable reality visible to the bare eye. [...] Under such appropriate circumstances many Muslim organisations wish to dominate in the European space and establish this theocratic, fascist and imperialist construction of the 'prophet' Muhammad.<sup>40</sup>

The Metropolitan of Kalavryta Ambrosios, who is another central figure in such discourses, has repeatedly expressed views against immigrants, especially Muslims. For Ambrosios, Greece and Europe have already been invaded by Muslims who started their criminal activity with attacks, thefts, injuries and murders of innocent Greek people.<sup>41</sup>

### **Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

There were three developments in 2017 from the part of the state that could be considered as important in confronting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred. In 2016, a new curriculum and textbooks for the class of religious education were introduced as a pilot in selected schools. This year, it was decided to expand the new introductions to cover all Greek schools despite the reactions mentioned above. Furthermore, the programme of the Ministry of Education about the incorporation of refugee children continued to be implemented in 2017 in various regions

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38. Andreas Andrianopoulos, "The Islam of Our Future", (January 1, 2017), [www.andrianopoulos.gr](http://www.andrianopoulos.gr), retrieved December 7, 2017 from [http://www.andrianopoulos.gr/2017/01/blog-post\\_55.html](http://www.andrianopoulos.gr/2017/01/blog-post_55.html); his Twitter account is available at <https://twitter.com/andrianopoulos4/status/910114199086469121>; <https://twitter.com/andrianopoulos4?lang=el>; <https://twitter.com/andrianopoulos4/status/909420730726699008>

39. "Letter of the Metropolitan of Piraeus, Serafeim, to the President of the Turkish Republic", (April 12, 2017), retrieved December 7, 2017 from [goo.gl/mqStGV](http://goo.gl/mqStGV).

40. "Can We See Islam in Another Way?", (March 21, 2017), retrieved December 7, 2017 from <https://www.ekklesiaonline.gr/mitropoleis/boroume-na-doume-islam-allo-tropo/>.

41. "Our Christian Greece is Lost. The Conquest Is Achieved Without War Conflicts", (January 23, 2017), retrieved December 7, 2017 from [http://mkka.blogspot.gr/2017/01/blog-post\\_23.html](http://mkka.blogspot.gr/2017/01/blog-post_23.html).



Figure 8: Poster announcing a discussion against Islamophobia and the acceptance of refugee children in schools in Thessaloniki (March 4).



Figure 9: Poster announcing a discussion against Islamophobia, imperialism and the extreme right in Ptolemaida (June 25).

of Greece despite local reactions and obstacles.<sup>42</sup> Finally, in 2017, the construction of the official mosque proceeded, although not as fast as scheduled; in the summer, the mosque's board of directors was selected and the relevant legislation was signed by the Ministry of Education.

With regard to the media, a new European project was launched about the way journalists should cover issues related to immigrants and ethnic or religious minorities throughout Europe. In this project the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT) was a partner and one of the project's main outcomes was a booklet of guidelines including, among other topics, a special section on ethical

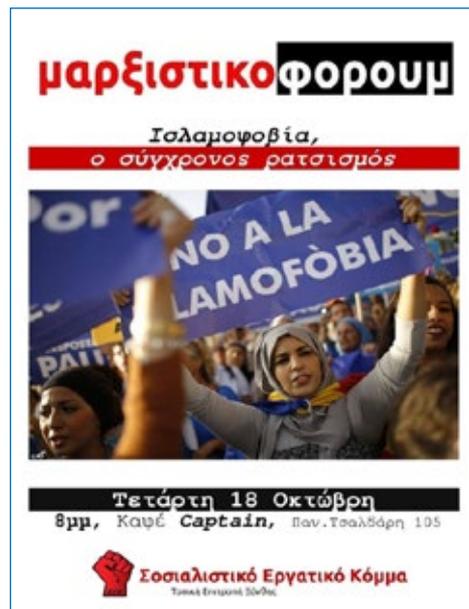


Figure 10: Poster announcing a happening entitled "Marxist Forum, Islamophobia – The Modern Racism" in Xanthi (October 18).

42. For the legal background of these two cases see Konstantinos Tsitselikis and Alexandros Sakellariou, "Greece" in Oliver Scharbrodt et al (ed.), *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018): 320.

reporting of Muslim communities.<sup>43</sup> Adding to the above, in January 2017, a new European project, including a partner from Greece, was launched, called the Counter Islamophobia Kit (CIK), the overall aim of which is to produce a transferable toolkit of counter-narratives to Islamophobia, building on an assessment of the range and content of counter-narratives to Muslim hatred and hostility in eight national case study contexts and their application, operation and impact on prevailing narratives of hate and hostility.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, throughout the year, discussions against Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred were organised around Greece, mainly by anti-racist and anti-fascist left-wing groups (Figures 8, 9, 10).

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

According to the existing data it could be argued that the level of Islamophobia in Greece has remained constant in 2017. Islamophobia is primarily manifested in the public discourse of specific political parties, by certain politicians of the right and far-right, some clerics of the Orthodox Church of Greece, and on different platforms of the Greek media. The SYRIZA-ANEL coalition government continues to take steps in combating xenophobic and Islamophobic behaviour. However, they are far from being adequate.

- First, confronting Islamophobia requires the establishment of an official observatory mechanism that will monitor and record Islamophobic incidents on the level of discourse and that of physical attacks.
- Second, the legal mechanism in Greece is not effectively tackling Islamophobia and the Greek law is not robust enough to discourage Islamophobic actions and hate speech. As a result, many of the perpetrators remain unidentified and unpunished. There is a need for the effective implementation of the existing anti-racist legislation (n4285/2014), which punishes hate speech and the incitement of violence that takes place in public, through the media, the Internet or in any other way.
- Third, the Orthodox Church of Greece should not only punish its Metropolitans who insist on using Islamophobic discourse, but also discourage any attempt of reproduction of anti-Muslim hatred by its clerics.
- Fourth, even though Islam is an old religion in Greece dating back to the Ottoman times, knowledge about the fundamentals of Islam is highly limited, which provides another space for Islamophobia to flourish inside Greek society. In this respect, the new textbooks for religious education introduced this year, which

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43. "Reporting on Migration and Minorities: Approach and Guidelines", *Respect Words: Ethical Journalism against Hate Speech* (Seville: Respect Words Project, 2017): 19-23.

44. For more information see the project's website <https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/>.

include more information about Islam, are likely to assist the overall understanding of Islam in Greece. For the same purpose, training seminars should also be provided particularly for those journalists, teachers, police officers, coastguards and other civil servants who have contact with Muslims.

- Finally, it is significant to remember that Muslims should not be excluded from decision-making mechanisms combating anti-Muslim hatred in Greece. An effective mechanism of dialogue and cooperation should immediately be formed, such as a platform where views of Muslims will be taken into full consideration by Greek decision makers in Greece's fight against Islamophobia.

## Chronology

- **17.02.2017:** The masjid located inside the Education, Culture and Sports Association of Muslims in Imathia-Veria was closed by the Greek police.
- **04.03.2017:** An assembly and discussion entitled “No to Islamophobia, we welcome refugee children in our schools” took place in Thessaloniki.
- **09.03.2017:** The masjid inside the Educational and Cultural Association of Muslims in Didymoticho was closed by the Greek police.
- **22-23.03.2017:** Catastrophic fire broke out inside the Çelebi Mehmet Mosque in central Didymoticho during restoration works.
- **04.04.2017:** The entrance door of the Kirmahalle Mosque was found vandalised early in the morning.
- **17.06.2017:** Demonstration in Samos against the alleged Islamisation of the island.
- **23.06.2017:** Discussion organised in Thessaloniki entitled “Islamophobia, imperialism and anti-racist fight today”.
- **25.06.2017:** Discussion takes place in Ptolemaida under the title “Islamophobia, imperialism, extreme right and anti-racist fight today”.
- **30.06.2017:** The Osmaniye Masjid located inside the premises of the Educational and Cultural Association of Macedonian-Thracian Muslims in Thessaloniki is shut down by the Greek police.
- **12.09.2017:** Islamophobic statements by Vasilis Leventis, the leader of the Union of Centrists, targeting the entry into the Greek Parliament of any political party of the Muslim Turkish minority in Western Thrace.
- **24.09.2017:** Event organised by Golden Dawn in Almyros, Volos entitled “Against the impoverishment and the Islamisation of Greece”.
- **September – October 2017:** Reactions against the new textbooks for religious education from parents, theological and church circles and the extreme right.
- **18.10.2017:** Discussion in Xanthi takes place entitled “Marxist Forum: Islamophobia – The Modern Racism”.

- **06.11.2017:** An attack against the house of an Afghan pupil is perpetrated by the extreme-right group Crypteia, who make their debut appearance.
- **16.11.2017:** Event organised in Thessaloniki by Golden Dawn together with the Serbian nationalist party “Radical Serbian Party”. A common decision is taken to form an Orthodox coalition in the Balkans against Islamisation and globalisation.
- **22.11.2017:** Attack by Crypteia against two immigrants; one of the victims is an imam.

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NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

Today, Hungary is one of the prime examples of a country hosting only a minuscule Muslim community but exhibiting severely negative public attitudes towards and fear of Islam. Since 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 and its media orbit managed to portray Islam and Muslims as an existential threat to both the country and Western culture. Framed by a flagrant anti-Islamic rhetoric by now omnipresent in right-wing political and media circles, anti-Muslim narratives became uncontested in the country’s current political atmosphere and enjoy the unconditional support by 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.

In 2017, the hijacking of popular fears of Islamisation, terrorism, and mass migration from the Middle East and Africa culminated in two ‘national consultations’: one on the EU’s refugee resettlement policy, the other on an alleged plan of the U.S.-Hungarian entrepreneur George Soros seeking to flood Europe with migrants and Islamise the continent.

Despite the popular and political hysteria surrounding Islam and Muslims, institutionalised Islamophobia remains a political tool employed by the government and its orbit on the level of political rhetoric. Its goal is to manipulate domestic audiences by mongering and amplifying irrational fears for political purposes. Using anti-Muslim tropes and Islam and foreign terrorism as a scapegoat usually does not translate into concrete, explicitly Islamophobic measures or physical attacks. Islamophobia remains a comfortable political tool, not an ideological end in itself.

## Összefoglaló

A mai Magyarország tökéletes mintapéldája egy olyan országnak, ahol a helyi muszlim közösség rendkívüli kis létszáma ellenére a közvélemény muszlimokról alkotott nézetei igen negatívak és félelemmel teli. A 2015-ös év eseményei óta az iszlámról folytatott társadalmi viták a magyar média és politikai élet legfontosabb és leggyakoribb témáivá váltak. A magyar szélsőjobbal licitálva, a kormányzó konzervatív Fidesznek és a Fidesz-közeli médiának sikerült egy olyan narratívát szalonképesé 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 média által gyártott narratívák valamint a mára már a magyar közéletben mindenütt jelenlévő iszlámellenes retorika mostanra már a magyar lakosság túlnyomó többségének megingathatatlan támogatását élvezik. Egy olyan társadalmi és politikai légkör, amelyben a lakosság nem rendelkezik semmiféle tényleges ismerettel az iszlámról egy olyan helyzethez vezet melyben iszlámellenes kirohanásokat mindenmú tét és következmény nélkül lehet intézni a politikai élet bármely színpadán és a tömegsajtóban. Mindezek ellenére, az intézményesített iszlámellenesség eddig még továbbra is csupán politikai eszközként szolgál a kormány és az azt támogató körök számára és nem lépte át a politikai retorika verbális határait. A szóbeli iszlámellenesség célja továbbra is a hazai közvélemény manipulálása és a politikai érdekeket szolgáló félelemkeltés. 2017-ben az iszlamizációtól, a terrorizmustól és az Afrikából és a Közel-Keletről érkező tömeges bevándorlástól való általános félelem politikai célokra történő kiaknázása két „nemzeti konzultáció” megtartásában csúcsondott ki: egy az EU a menekülteket elosztó kvótarendszeréről, egy másik pedig Soros György amerikai-magyar milliomos állítólagos tervéről, mely a nemzetállamok felszámolása érdekében Európát nagy számú bevándorlóval árasztaná el és iszlamizálná.

Az iszlám és muszlimok körüli közéleti és politikai hisztéria ellenére az iszlámellenes szóbeli kirohanások gyakorisága, valamint a terrorizmussal közvetlen párhuzamba állított iszlám bűnbaknak való kikiáltása Magyarországon eddig még nem került sor konkrét fizikai atrocitásokra. Az iszlámellenesség továbbra is csupán egy kényelmes politikai eszköz, nem pedig egy ideológiai célkitűzés.

## Introduction

Often styled as ‘Islamophobia without Muslims,’<sup>1</sup> in recent years Hungary has developed into a primary example of a country characterised by widespread intolerance, negative attitudes, essentialisation and fear towards Islam while lacking both a significant Muslim community living in the country or a large number of Muslim refugees in its territory.<sup>2</sup> According to a recent Pew Research study, Hungarians are one of nations worldwide that fear an influx of large number of refugees from the Middle East to the greatest extent (65%). This result is in par with percentages observed in Greece, Italy, Turkey, and Lebanon. However, while these countries are either the recipients of or hosts to large numbers of Middle Eastern refugees often reaching millions, there are less than 600 refugees currently in Hungary.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, fears of and negative sentiments towards Middle Eastern migrants are most likely the result of deliberate government narratives. The government has been leading a concentrated campaign targeting immigration, Islam, EU and civil society policies, and specifically the U.S.-Hungarian billionaire George Soros in direct or indirect ways.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

After the unprecedented events of 2015 that saw the unfolding of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ in the country and along its borders, the right-wing government has been continuously employing an increasingly anti-Islam and anti-migration narrative combined with more recent attacks on liberal civil society members and the EU itself culminating in the aforementioned campaigns framing two national consultations in 2017. Anti-Islam incidents are almost exclusively taking place in discursive forms in the arenas of EU, national, and regional politics, societal discourses and the media. This non-physical form of incidents is hardly surprising given the almost complete lack of (visually identifiable) Muslims or mosques or other physical Islamic institutions in the country. In general, the increasingly hostile, essentialising and fearmongering tone of discourses surrounding the immigration and integration of Muslims, EU resettlement quotas and global events linked to Islamic terrorism have been dominating domestic discourses and brought about the consolidation of highly negative if not openly hostile general attitudes towards Islam, Muslims, refugees, and migrants. Narratives of the right wing in general and the government in particular

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1. Michał Buchowski/Katarzyna Chlewińska, *Tolerance and Cultural Discourses Diversity in Poland* (Florence: European University Institute, 2010), pp. 32-33.

2. Islam in Hungary today has a very low number of followers and no historically indigenous community. According to the latest official census of 2011, only 0.056 per cent of the country’s residents indicated their affiliation to Islam. While various estimates put the number of the country’s Islamic community between 25,000 and 50,000, their share still remains well under 1 per cent (0.1 or 0.3 % respectively).

3. Jacob Pushter, Dorothy Manevich, “Globally, People Point to ISIS and Climate Change as Leading Security Threats,” Pew Research Center, (August 1, 2017), retrieved December 21, 2017, from <http://www.pewglobal.org/2017/08/01/globally-people-point-to-isis-and-climate-change-as-leading-security-threats/>.

were characterised by the effort to use Islam as one of the main arguments in the country's stand-off both with Brussels and with large segments of its domestic civil society 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. In this process, the government managed to find suitable scapegoats to manipulate the focus of debates and public sentiments: since 2015, it's been the masses of 'invading' refugees who for the current time in the country's history represented a physical factor to be dealt with.

On the verbal level, targeting both the domestic and foreign audiences, the ruling Fidesz government and its allies have been employing an narrative construct, frequently repeated, referring to Islam in contrast to Europe's Christian culture and displaying both religion, immigration and Western European liberalism as existential threats to the fundamentals of Europe. Prime Minister Orbán and his party keep referring to themselves (and to other V4 countries) as the sole defenders of Christian Europe, unwilling to submit to the EU's anti-nation state refugee policy seeking to allegedly alter the ethno-religious composition of the Christian continent. According to the logic of this mantra, the 'self-defence' of the Hungarian people is juxtaposed to the overt effort of a number of international actors, such as the EU, international civil society, or George Soros himself, to Islamise Europe by 'masses disloyal to autochthonous nations' and to 'eradicate European nation states and their identities'.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, this openly hostile attitude from the government has not just created an uncontested (and incontestable) majority consensus depicting the Islam-immigration-terrorism nexus as an existential threat, it has also served as a dog whistle to the most hateful of right-wing groups and individuals opposing Islam, immigration, civil society, or EU trafficking in dark conspiracy theories drawn from the pages of tabloids, like-bait sites and the far reaches of radical right-wing circles across Europe.

Thus, the trends set in the aftermath of the 2015 'refugee crisis' continue to be utilised with increasing vehemence and kept alive by additional actors and elements building upon a *Migration-Islamisation-Terrorism nexus* supported by an anti-Christian, liberal elite aided by domestic civil society actors seeking to undermine European nation states and the continent's Christian identity through mass illegal immigration and consequent Islamisation. Both within international and domestic discursive contexts selecting the small, voiceless domestic Muslim community as well as a negatively framed religion completely unknown to domestic audiences as the government's 'scapegoat' continues to be a political success.

It is important to note that from a rhetorical, or linguistic point of view, since the beginning of the 'refugee crisis' in 2015, the conservative media and the gov-

4. "Semjén Zsolt: Égni fognak a külvárosok", Magyar Nemzet, (October 9, 2017), retrieved December 21, <https://mno.hu/belfold/semjen-zsolt-egni-fognak-a-kulvarosok-2420500>

ernment 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 and adding an additional layer to the level of fearmongering.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

As mentioned before, most Islamophobic incidents and discursive events related to Hungarian political discourses of this year were largely dominated by the topics of mass immigration into the EU, Islamic terrorism as well as the country's civil society alleged to be aiding 'foreign interests' and supporting mass immigration and resettlement culminating in two *national consultations* (referenda) on whether to accept mandatory EU quotas for relocating migrants. The first one, titled *Allítsuk meg Brüsszelt* (Let's Stop Brussels), in March 2017, was a repeated attempt to gain popular legitimation to act against European Union policies and domestic civil society supporting refugees. While the questions themselves did not mention Islam or Muslims directly, within the context of the campaign and international events, 3 of the 6 questions were capable of implying animosity towards Muslims. These questions, according to the sequence of the referendum, were the following:

- In recent times, terror attack after terror attack has taken place in Europe. Despite this fact, Brussels wants to force Hungary to allow illegal immigrants into the country. What do you think Hungary should do? (a) For the sake of the safety of Hungarians these people should be placed under supervision while the authorities decide their fate. (b) Allow the illegal immigrants to move freely in Hungary.
- By now it has become clear that, in addition to the smugglers, certain international organisations encourage the illegal immigrants to commit illegal acts. What do you think Hungary should do? (a) Activities assisting illegal immigration such as human trafficking and the popularisation of illegal immigration must be punished. (b) Let us accept that there are international organisations which, without any consequences, urge the circumvention of Hungarian laws.
- More and more foreign-supported organisations operate in Hungary with the aim of interfering in the internal affairs of our country in an opaque manner. These organisations could jeopardise our independence. What do you think Hungary should do? (a) Require them to register, revealing the objectives of their activities and the sources of their finances. (b) Allow them to continue their risky activities without any supervision.

The so-called foreign agents mentioned in Q3 and 4 are to be understood as those organisations that have been successfully combatting the Fidesz government's

growing autocratic style and anti-refugee stance since the 2015 crisis. These are the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, Transparency International, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, and Amnesty International.<sup>5</sup>

The second consultation was launched directly against the American-Hungarian millionaire and philanthropist George Soros and his alleged plan to Islamise Europe. In October, the government sent out questionnaires to all four million of the country's households asking for people's views on seven statements describing the philanthropist's alleged plan to flood Europe, and Hungary in particular, with millions of Muslim migrants and refugees.<sup>6</sup> The government made the seven following assertions about what it calls the 'Soros Plan':

- George Soros wants Brussels to resettle at least one million immigrants per year onto European Union territory, including in Hungary.
- Together with officials in Brussels, George Soros is planning to dismantle border fences in EU Member States, including in Hungary, to open the borders for immigrants.
- One part of the Soros Plan is to use Brussels to force the EU-wide distribution of immigrants that have accumulated in Western Europe, with special focus on Eastern European countries. Hungary must also take part in this.
- Based on the Soros Plan, Brussels should force all EU Member States, including Hungary, to pay immigrants HUF 9 million in welfare.
- Another goal of George Soros is to make sure that migrants receive milder criminal sentences for the crimes they commit.
- The goal of the Soros Plan is to push the languages and cultures of



Figure 1: Cover Figyelő entinel, a magazine closely affiliated with the government with the headline Combatants re oming to Europe depicting two NGOs, the Hungarian Helsinki Committee and Migration Aid in a frame imitating the flag of the Islamic State. For unknown reasons, the shahāda, the Islamic creed testifying the one God is featured in a giberish Arabic instead of the original لا إله إلا الله ilāha illā ilāh.<sup>7</sup>

5. 'National Cosultation 2017: Let's Stop Brussels!', Hungarian Spectrum, (April 2, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/national-consultation/>

6. 'On George Soros and from George Soros', Hungarian Spectrum, (December 8, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/soros-plan/>

7. Source: <http://nepszava.hu/cikk/1145131-halandzsazva-uszit-a-figyelo>, retrieved, 16. November, 2017

Europe into the background so that integration of illegal immigrants happens much more quickly.

- It is also part of the Soros Plan to initiate political attacks against those countries which oppose immigration, and to severely punish them.<sup>8</sup>

In the run-up to the ‘national consultation of the Soros Plan’, the government employed an openly fearmongering strategy accusing the EU and Europe’s left-leaning parties and civil society actors of supporting and implementing the ‘Soros Plan’. As an example, in a speech held during a parliamentary session, PM Orbán envisions ‘hordes of migrants raping Europe’ and Hungary’s unwillingness to submit to the ‘Soros Plan’ leading to the enforced opening of borders and the mass resettlement of ‘up to 60 million migrants’ from the Middle East and Africa.<sup>9</sup> Also, in a radio programme, Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén claimed that the ‘Soros Plan’, a branch of the ‘Jacobine, Bolshevik version of Freemasonry’ [sic], that ‘hates Christian values’ and ‘wishes nothing more than to eradicate nation states’, is in fact responsible for ‘creating the migrant crisis’ by ‘importing millions of Muslims’. He also spoke of the rise of parallel societies, infight within migrant communities, rising crime levels and ‘burning suburbs from Malmö to Marseille’.<sup>10</sup> This is a clear reference to last year’s debates claiming that major European cities, such as London, Brussels, Marseille, Berlin, Stockholm and Malmö had become “no-go” areas due to high levels of immigration.<sup>11</sup>

Another element of the propaganda campaigns leading up to both national consultations has been to twist the meaning of the term ‘open society’ that serves as the name of Soros’ foundation, which has been aiding Hungary with over \$400 million since it’s foundation in the country back in 1984. In the government’s interpretation, open borders and mass migration aim at destroying the supposedly Christian identity of Hungary, as the government contends.<sup>12</sup> In accordance with this logic, the government has been waging an overt campaign against NGOs that have been helping refugees since 2015. Many of these NGOs, such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee or Migration Aid, have been partially financed by Soros’ Open Society Foundation, a fact that gives the government the occasion to persecute liberal, pro-refugee civil society organisations in the country. A prime

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8. ‘Soros: A hatalom hazugságokat terjeszt’, HVG, (November 20, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171120\\_Soros\\_A\\_hatalom\\_hazugsagokat\\_terjeszt](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171120_Soros_A_hatalom_hazugsagokat_terjeszt)

9. “Orbán inváziós népcsoportokat lát, és bezárkózik”, HVG, (September 18, 2017), retrieved December 20, 2017, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170918\\_A\\_forro\\_osz\\_parlament\\_orban\\_soros\\_gulyas\\_percrol\\_percrer/2/pp/66777](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170918_A_forro_osz_parlament_orban_soros_gulyas_percrol_percrer/2/pp/66777)

10. “Semjén Zsolt: Égni fognak a külvárosok”, Magyar Nemzet, (October 9, 2017), retrieved December 21, <https://mno.hu/belfold/semjen-zsolt-egni-fognak-a-kulvarosok-2420500>

11. Henry Mance, “Hungary Says London Is a ‘No-Go’ Zone Due to Immigration,” Financial Times, (September 21, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <https://www.ft.com/content/a29fbf40-8000-11e6-8e50-8ec15fb462f4>.

12. ‘On George Soros and from George Soros’, Hungarian Spectrum, (December 8, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/soros-plan/>

example of this relentless campaign is the ban of Bernadett Szél, co-chair of LMP (Legyen Más a Politika, 'Politics Can Be Different', a liberal green party) from attending the Parliamentary Committee on National Security (PCNS), of which she is a bona fide member. By tradition, the chairman of PCNS has been a member of the opposition until the position was filled by Szilárd Németh (Fidesz) in 2014. He announced that "those politicians who lie about the national consultation campaign and have been supporting the Soros Plan all along, as LMP politicians do, cannot take part in the discussions of the National Security Committee, whose task is the prevention of the implementation of the Soros Plan."<sup>13</sup> Németh accused Szél, a 'Soros agent', to have worked in a Soros-financed organisation that was supportive of migrants. Additionally, the government news service accused Szél to have nominated an expert to testify before the committee who failed the obligatory security clearance. The expert was born in Kabul, and before he began working for the LMP, had worked for MigSzol (Migration Solidarity, a pro-refugee NGO active during the 2015 'refugee crisis'), described by Németh to be 'the most pro-migrant organisation of Soros.' The expert, who was also Szél's assistant, was deemed to be a risk to national security.<sup>14</sup>

Due to the lack of domestic events, world events with reference to Islam, Muslims or Muslim-majority or Middle Eastern countries are systematically used both by political and media actors to justify the government's mainstream anti-Islam narratives. These often reinterpreted, decontextualized or reframed news segments usually include reports on terrorist attacks, militant organisations of Muslims – most prominently the so-called Islamic State -, Western European migrant and refugee communities, the Middle East conflict, but also on non-violent political or societal events from Middle East/Muslim countries. Certain, unverified news items are sometimes picked up uncritically by politicians and the media. A particularly embarrassing example of this was a Facebook post in which Fidesz MP Szilárd Németh believed an unverified DAESH statement claiming the Las Vegas attacker Stephen Paddock was 'a soldier of the Islamic State'.<sup>15</sup>

In the middle of the anti-Soros Plan campaign, an LMP member managed to acquire information on the naturalisation of Arab Christians. Accordingly, in the period from 2012 to 2017, the Hungarian government granted Hungarian citizenship to a total of 822 mostly Egyptian Copts. While there are only a handful of cases

13. MTI, 'Németh Szilárd kitiltotta Szél Bernadettet a nemzetbiztonsági bizottságból', Magyar Nemzet, (January 15, 2018), retrived January 18, 2018, from <https://mno.hu/belfold/szel-bernadett-nem-vehet-reszt-a-nemzetbiztonsagi-bizottsagi-ulesen-2440314>

14. 'On George Soros and from George Soros', Hungarian Spectrum, (December 8, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/soros-plan/>

15. "Las Vegas: Németh Szilárd kézpénznek vette az Iszlám Állam szavait", HVG, (October 3, 2017), retrieved December 21, 2017 from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171003\\_Las\\_Vegas\\_Nemeth\\_Szilard\\_keszpenznek\\_vette\\_az\\_Iszlam\\_Allam\\_szavait](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171003_Las_Vegas_Nemeth_Szilard_keszpenznek_vette_az_Iszlam_Allam_szavait)

where non-Christian refugees from Arab or Muslim countries have been granted even asylum, Vice Prime Minister Zsolt Semlyén justified the move with ‘interests of national policy’ and claimed it to be the proof of the country’s ‘hospitality towards real refugees’.<sup>16</sup>

## Justice System

Islam is one of the religions recognised by the state 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.<sup>17</sup> However, in a television interview given to right-wing commentator Zsolt Bayer on EchoTV in November, the Fidesz Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Gergely Gulyás revealed the government’s plan to ban the building of mosques in Hungary. In unison with the commentator, he equalled mosques with ‘problems’, which ‘forces the government to treat the presence of Islam in a country as a matter of national security, not of freedom of religion’.<sup>18</sup> It is neither clear nor known how this announcement is about to effect existing mosques, community centres, or prayer rooms in the country nor if there will be any legal follow-up of this announcement that resembles a rhetorical move within the government’s anti-migration propaganda rather than a result of a well-devised sociopolitical strategy. Also, the government seems to have no problem co-financing – together with the Turkish government – the restoration works of Gül Baba’s *türbe* (mausoleum), a Muslim pilgrimage site dating back to the 16th century in Budapest. In his response to Gergely Gulyás, the chairman of the MIK (Magyar Iszlám Közösség, Hungarian Islamic Community), Zoltán Bolek warned of the ‘spread of uncontrolled garage mosques’ that the country’s two Islamic organisations are unlikely to have control over and ‘reminded the Centre for Counterterrorism of having information on the existence of a Wahhabi mosque’.<sup>19</sup>

Back in November 2016, 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 Islamic mosques or minarets, the Muslim call for prayer,

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16. “Kiderült, hogy több száz menekültet fogadott be a magyar kormány”, HVG, (October 4, 2017), retrieved December 21, 2017 from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171004\\_Kiderult\\_hogy\\_tobb\\_szaz\\_menekultet\\_fogadott\\_be\\_a\\_magyar\\_kormany](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171004_Kiderult_hogy_tobb_szaz_menekultet_fogadott_be_a_magyar_kormany)

17. 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](http://mandiner.hu/cikk/20150421_a_szeretet_vagy_a_haboru_vallasa_az_iszlam).

18. “Magyarországon nem lesz mecset: tiltakoznak az iszlám jogvédők”, index, (November 5, 2017), retrieved December 27, 2017, from [https://index.hu/belfold/2017/11/05/magyarorszagon\\_nem\\_lesznek\\_mecsetek\\_tiltakoznak\\_az\\_iszlam\\_jogvedok/](https://index.hu/belfold/2017/11/05/magyarorszagon_nem_lesznek_mecsetek_tiltakoznak_az_iszlam_jogvedok/)

19. Dávid Dercsényi, ‘A Fidesz mecsetépítési tiltása lenne az igazi biztonsági kockázat’ HVG, (November 9, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171109\\_mecset\\_epites\\_tiltas\\_fidesz\\_biztonsagi\\_kockazat](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171109_mecset_epites_tiltas_fidesz_biztonsagi_kockazat)

the wearing of Muslim religious attire such as the chador, the niqab, the burqa and the burkini. 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.<sup>20</sup> This piece of local legislation encountered massive protests from the side of the civil society. As a result, in April 2017, the Constitutional Court ordered the municipality to withdraw the legislation for contradicting a number of basic rights guaranteed by the Hungarian Constitution.<sup>21</sup> In November 2017, however, the Ásotthalom council voted in favour of the same legislation that has been amended by merely removing any words referring to Islam from the text.

### Employment

There have not been any reported events of discrimination against Muslims in the field of work or employment. Hungary has had a fundamentally different experience with Muslims entering the workforce than Western Europe. Firstly, Hungary’s Muslims are numerically and proportionately very small, the boldest estimate not reaching the 0.3% margin. Secondly, the bigger portion of Hungarian Muslims is made up of ethnically Hungarian, domestic-born converts – (73,4 %) in 2013 -,<sup>22</sup> usually not displaying any visual or linguistic differences to non-Muslim Hungarians. The wearing of any Islamic garment remains extremely rare in Hungary. Thirdly, ethnically non-Hungarian Muslims who have mostly arrived as students from ‘brotherly socialist’ secular Arab republics, such as Algeria, Syria, Palestine and Iraq to pursue engineering or medical studies at Hungarian universities are usually highly educated and integrated. Whether or not the practice of Islam plays any role in the personal lives of foreign-born Hungarian Muslims and their descendants, the external identification of these individuals by the host society is more likely to be based on their ethnic 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 neither on personal, nor on professional levels.

### Education

There have been no major changes in the field of education since 2015. 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

20. “Toroczkai odacsap a bevándorlóknak: megtiltják a mecsetépítést Ásotthalmon,” hvg.hur, (November 24., 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124\\_toroczkai\\_asotthalom\\_muszlim\\_tiltas](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20161124_toroczkai_asotthalom_muszlim_tiltas).

21. ‘Elmeszelte Toroczkai rendeletét az Alkotmánybíróság’, HVG, (April 12, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412\\_alkotmanybirosag\\_toroczkai\\_asotthalom](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20170412_alkotmanybirosag_toroczkai_asotthalom)

22. “A népesség nemzetiségi, anyanyelv, családi, baráti közösségben használt nyelv és kulturális kötődés szerint”, Hungarian Central Bureau of Statistics, (April 17, 2013), retrieved December 29, 2017, from [http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak\\_teruleti\\_00](http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/tablak_teruleti_00)

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, e.g. the rise of Islam, the Ottoman Empire, or de-/colonisation, the portrayal of non-European regions remains marginal, schematic and lacking critical analysis.<sup>23</sup>

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 analyses of the migrants’ realities is rarely the subject of such ‘expert opinions’.

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.<sup>24</sup>

## 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.<sup>25</sup> The narrative that’s been given prominence since the intensification of the ‘refugee crisis’ in 2015 allowed for the securitisation of Islam and Muslim immigration to a level that is it 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. Given the dominance of stately owned or government-friendly media belonging to the Fidesz orbit, the government’s ongoing anti-Islam mantra enjoys an uncontested predominance. Besides the obvious negative portrayal of Islam in general, state media outlets also bombard their audiences with subtler, yet severely unnuanced reporting on a number of issues linked to Islam pointing towards an alleged Islamisation of Europe and the envisioned deterioration of the continent’s security through the influx of ‘invading hordes’ of migrants. This strongly fearmongering style of reporting enjoys a priority status in

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23. Zsuzsanna Mikáné-Szolnoki, “Az arab világ és az iszlám - A magyar középiskolai történelem tankönyvek összehasonlító elemzése,” *Elektronikus Könyv és Nevelés, Országos Széchenyi Könyvtár*, (2003) 5:1.

24. HVG, “Migrációkutató intézetet alapít a Századvég,” *hvg.hu*, (September 1, 2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150911\\_Migraciokutato\\_intezetet\\_alapit\\_a\\_Szazadv](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20150911_Migraciokutato_intezetet_alapit_a_Szazadv).

25. Freedom House, “Hungary: 5-Year Decline in Press Freedom,” *freedomhouse.org*, (2015), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-press/2015/hungary>.

state media outlets and is repeated in a very propaganda-like frequency, especially during the run-up to ‘national consultation’ campaigns.<sup>26</sup>

While the uncontested government rhetoric that has been defining narratives in the political arena is omnipresent in the state-controlled segment of the media, certain other segments sport an even more radical, blatantly anti-Muslim narrative. One of the most notorious examples of this segment is the privately owned television channel EchoTV, strongly promoting government and more radical right-wing stances. In September, one of EchoTV’s programmes, *Informátor*, specialised in investigative journalism, aired an episode portraying the Islamic community living in the country. Besides images of DAESH mixed together with Muslims praying in a Budapest mosque, the programme was busy shedding as negative a light as possible on the community and offering a strongly suggestive narrative of the country’s ongoing Islamisation, the spread of Sharia law and NGOs having secret networks to import Islamist terrorist into the country in order to invade it. Also, a pro-government security expert László Földi described the ‘refugee crisis’ as a ‘state of war’ and organisations and individuals helping refugees as ‘war criminals and collaborators’ who should be ‘liquidated without trial’. The statement caused massive public protest and the court ordered the removal of the programme from the television’s website.<sup>27</sup>

Földi is one of those, often self-declared, ‘experts’ that are frequent guests in both state and government-friendly media outlets providing simplistic and often highly populist and Islamophobic answers about current events and Islam itself.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

The only notable physical anti-Islam incident taking place in 2017 was a protest of a handful of activists of the Hungarian branch of the Génération Identitaire spanning an 8-meter-long banner on top of the Buda Tunnel reading ‘Islamisation kills’. The action was seeking to derive attention to the perceived Islamisation of the continent and the lack of fences along the external borders of other EU member states. According to the chairman of the movement, ‘Islamisation starts with a single mosque’.<sup>28</sup>

There are only a handful of mosques and prayer rooms in the entire country and they have not reported any incidents yet; attacks on Muslim individuals are also not known.

26. Interview with Omar Sayfo, independent media commentator specialised on Islam and Middle East affairs (Budapest, January 6, 2018).

27. “Megbírságotlák az Echo TV Informátor című műsorát Földi László miatt”, HVG, (December 21, 2017), retrieved January 04, 2018, from [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171221\\_megbirsagoltak\\_echo\\_tv\\_informator\\_cimu\\_mu\\_sorat\\_foldi\\_miatt](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20171221_megbirsagoltak_echo_tv_informator_cimu_mu_sorat_foldi_miatt)

28. Balázs Dezse, “Hatalmas molinóval tiltakozott az iszlamizáció ellen a budapesti Identitás Generáció”, Pesti Srácok, (October 5, 2017), retrieved, January 5, 2018, from <http://pestisracok.hu/hatalmas-molinoval-tiltakozott-az-islamizacio-ellen-budapesti-identitas-generacio/>

## 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 have 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, Western Europe’s Muslim communities, Islamic countries and Islam itself. Sites such as *kurucinfo.hu*; *meteon.hu*; *legfrissebb.info*; faith- and Church-affiliated *vigyazo.hu*.; explicitly anti-migrant sites such as *napimigrans.hu* (lit. ‘daily migrant’); or anti-Islam sites such as *dzsihadfigyelo.com* (lit. ‘Jihad watch’) flood social media with content often bordering on hate speech.<sup>29</sup>

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 origin, linked to crime, impossible to integrate, etc.), as well as those applied to the Jewry (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 a highly derogatory, racist and vulgar style – have become 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’.<sup>30</sup>

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

By now, there is a widespread consensus regarding Islam as an existential threat to both the country and Europe, and utterances and discourses referring to Islam and Muslims in negative terms are commonplace in the arenas of politics, the media and the Internet. It is the result of a well-devised fearmongering strategy pursued by the government and the right wing that makes use and amplifies the population’s sentiments, fears, lack of information and experience regarding Islam. While originally a trope employed by the far right, the strategy of framing Islam as a scapegoat has been adopted as the main element of government propaganda tapping on popular fears of an unknown, obscure religion with full steam since 2015. Concentrated government and right-wing propaganda discourses employing verbal Muslim-bashing has proven to be a conduit through which Hungarian society’s frustrations can be channelled in politically and socially safe ways.<sup>31</sup> Consequently,

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29. Interview with Omar Adam Sayfo (December 29, 2017).

30. Omar Sayfo, “On Islamophobia and on Its Beneficial Effects,” Hungarian Free Press, (March 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/03/20/omar-sayfo-on-islamophobia-and-on-its-beneficial-effects/>.

31. Omar Sayfo, “On Islamophobia and on Its Beneficial Effects,” Hungarian Free Press, (March 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/03/20/omar-sayfo-on-islamophobia-and-on-its-beneficial-effects/>.

this strategy of verbal anti-Islamism serves as one of the main cornerstones of the ideological construct employed by the government and its orbit.

In that sense, the entire government, including its media and economic orbit, ideological loyalists and supporting public figures could be regarded as one big ‘Islamophobia network’. Notorious government politicians frequently employing anti-Muslim utterances such as Vice Prime Minister Zsolt Semlyén, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, Speaker of the National Assembly László Kövér, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Gergely Gulyás, and, of course, Prime Minister Orbán himself as well as a large number of other politicians and public figures such as Ásotthalom’s Jobbik Mayor László Toroczka, far-right commentator Zsolt Bayer, or government loyalist security expert László Földi could all be identified as this network’s central figures.

However, Islamophobia is a means, not an end in itself. It is part of a government’s propaganda seeking to achieve goals other than countering Islam or discriminating against Muslims. Apart from a few cases, verbal Islam-bashing is not translated into physical violence or actual political consequences in legislation. The erection of the southern border fence or tight immigration laws have the primary purpose of securing popular votes and keeping the opposition at bay in order to further strengthen the government’s domestic power basis and remain in power, and to a lesser degree aim to genuinely counter any real or imagined threat emanating from Islam. While there are certainly many public figures and ordinary citizens who are genuinely afraid of and thus hostile towards Islam and Muslims, in Hungarian domestic contexts these fears are completely irrational and unjustified. Therefore, trying to identify a well-connected ‘Islamophobia network’ would be missing the point.

### **Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

As far as this research is concerned, there are no significant civil society initiatives that explicitly counter Islamophobia in Hungary. There are a number of NGOs working to protect refugees and their rights – such as the Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Migration Aid, or MigSzol – but none of these organisations deal explicitly with Muslims, Islam, or Islamophobia. While there are condemning reactions to the strongest Islamophobic utterances in the media and in politics from the country’s Islamic communities, there seems to be no trace of any plans or strategies to counter Islamophobia in a systematic way on any levels. Oppositional parties are unwilling to lose even more votes by standing up for a hopeless cause not promising the slightest of political benefits and only blowing even more wind into the sails of government propaganda.

## 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.<sup>32</sup> 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 Hungary, a small Central European country, ethnically highly homogenous, isolated in cultural-linguistic terms and 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, one would be hard-pressed to consider large parts of Hungarian society 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-running 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, educational, academic, or cultural – to combat these narratives and to replace them.
- 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

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32. Omar Sayfo, "On Islamophobia and on Its Beneficial Effects," Hungarian Free Press, (March 20, 2016), retrieved February 5, 2017, from <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2016/03/20/omar-sayfo-on-islamophobia-and-on-its-beneficial-effects/>.

should both strive for increased interreligious and intercultural exchanges and dialogues between Muslim and non-Muslim Hungarians on the grassroots level in order to enable more personal and institutional contact.

## Chronology

- **18.09.2017:** In a speech held during a parliamentary session, PM Orbán envisions ‘hordes of migrants raping Europe’ and Hungary’s unwillingness to submit to the ‘Soros Plan’ leading to the enforced opening of borders and mass resettlement of ‘up to 60 million migrants’ from the Middle East and Africa.
- **04.10.2017:** Protesting the lack of border fences along the external borders of other EU members, a handful of activists of the Hungarian branch of the Génération Identitaire displays an anti-Islam banner on the Buda Tunnel, a Budapest landmark.
- **05.10.2017:** In a television programme on migration, pro-government security expert László Földi described the ‘refugee crisis’ as a ‘state of war’ and organisations and individuals helping refugees as ‘war criminals and collaborators’ who should be ‘liquidated without trial’. The court ordered the removal of the programme from the television’s website.
- **07.10.2017:** The government begins the mailing of the questionnaire for ‘the national consultation about the Soros-Plan’ accusing the philanthropist’s alleged plan to flood Europe, including Hungary, with masses of Muslim immigrants.
- **05.11.2017:** In a television interview given to right-wing commentator Zsolt Bayer, Gergely Gulyás, the Fidesz deputy speaker of the National Assembly, announces the ban of mosques in Hungary describing the presence of Islam in a country as a matter of national security, not of freedom of religion.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**IRELAND**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

Anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination continue to impact on Muslim communities in Ireland and indeed broader society. Whether as lived experiences of exclusion or in the manner in which Muslim communities and Islam are presented in Ireland, this report underscores the need for meaningful action in the fight against Islamophobia in the Irish context. Drawing on data provided by the European Network Against Racism Ireland and media sources, this report makes clear the realities of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Ireland. Muslim men, women and children are subjected to a range of exclusionary practices underscoring the need for legislative change in regard to hate crime.

In the political space, as with previous years, 2017 bore witness to anti-Muslim/Islam statements being made by an elected local government representative. Arguably more important, the past twelve months have witnessed another anti-Muslim/Islam and immigration group, Generation Identity, launch in Ireland. The connectivity between anti-Muslim/Islam politics in Ireland with that in other parts of Europe is clear.

Unfortunately, media reporting on Muslim/Islam related issues continues to be problematic. While there is some evidence of nuance in the analysis undertaken for this report, there remains a need for greater reflexivity on the part of some media professionals when reporting on Muslims/Islam in Ireland. In particular, the collocation of Muslim/Islam with terrorism; scaremongering; and sensationalist reporting witnessed in 2017 need to be addressed.

On a positive note, a number of actions took place across the year wherein civil society groups and individuals including non-governmental actors, academics and others undertook various initiatives to challenge the exclusion of Muslim communities in Ireland and abroad. These included protests against the European Court of Justice ruling that impacts upon the rights of Muslim women to wear the hijab in work; and also initiatives to include and educate against Islamophobia in schools.

## Introduction

The “Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2017” presents the lived realities of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Ireland. This is the third report on the Irish context and it is again striking to note, on the one hand, how little has changed – that is Islamophobia persists in Ireland; on the other hand, it is worrying to again see yet another anti-Muslim/Islam group, reflecting broader European trends, form in the state.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

The findings presented here demonstrate a continuity of anti-Muslim/Islam issues from previous years. In terms of politics, 2017 witnessed the addition of another anti-Muslim political grouping – Generation Identity UK and Ireland - in Ireland as well as an elected representative making clearly anti-Muslim/Islam public statements. Lived anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination continue unabated in Ireland, a state still without hate crime legislation. There is evidence, however, of change afoot in the area of discrimination on the basis of religious identity – an issue that has negatively impacted on Muslim communities in Ireland as noted in previous reports. Media reporting on Muslim communities and Islam continues to be problematic. There remains evidence in media reports of an alleged ‘clash of civilisations’ between the ‘Muslim world’ and the ‘West.’ While a deeper analysis of media practices in Ireland was beyond the scope of this report, there is evidence of scaremongering and sensationalist reporting when it comes to Muslims/Islam in the Irish context. Finally, 2017 has also witnessed further action on the part of civil society actors in the context of challenging Islamophobia in Ireland. These actions are discussed below before concluding with policy recommendations that can help address Islamophobia in Ireland.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

Controversy arose in September wherein reports emerged of local government, Councillor Brian Murphy, a member of the main party in the Irish Government (Fine Gael) disseminating anti-Muslim messages on social media.<sup>1</sup> According to reports, Cllr Murphy posted, “Sharia law is operating in Ireland and most of the political class either do not know or do not care. It is a subversion of our legal system.”<sup>2</sup>

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1. McQuinn, C. and Armstrong, K., “‘We Will Take Any Necessary Action’ – Taoiseach Distances Himself from FG Councillor’s Comments on Islam and Refugees,” *Irish Independent*, September 7, 2017.

2. Ibid.

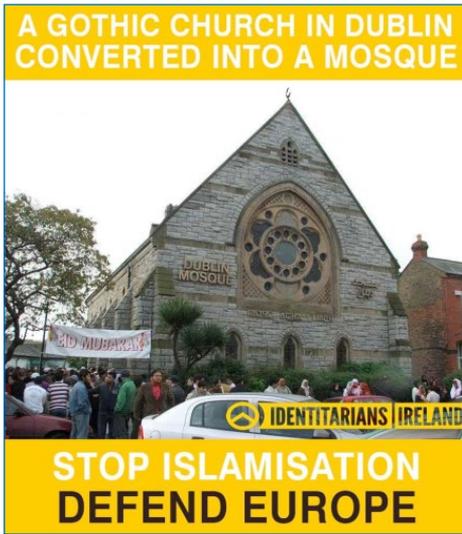


Figure 1: Claims of 'Islamisation' and Dublin Mosque



Figure 2: Campaign by GI on the alleged 'Islamisation of Ireland'

Responding to media outlets, Cllr Murphy later stated, “Islam does not integrate or assimilate and that should not be a controversial statement, the evidence is there in the no-go zones around Europe and the billions and billions that now have to be spent monitoring an ever increasing number of Jihadis in every European country.”<sup>3</sup>

The leader of Fine Gael, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, distanced himself from Cllr Murphy’s claims, noting that action would be taken by the party. This was followed in November by the announcement that the party whip had been removed from Cllr Murphy for a period of twelve months.<sup>4</sup> The removal of the whip means that Cllr Murphy cannot claim to represent Fine Gael at any political forum.<sup>5</sup>

Last year’s report noted the presence of groups such as Identity Ireland and the attempted launch of PEGIDA Ireland. The year 2017 witnessed the emergence of an anti-Muslim/Islam political movement, namely Generation Identity UK and Ireland, a group affiliated with the

Identitarian movement on the European continent.<sup>6</sup> Generation Identity UK and Ireland launched in mid-2017. Since their formation in Ireland, in addition to organising meetings, Generation Identity have been active in raising awareness of their organisation and their policies, which are both anti-immigration and anti-Islamic.<sup>7</sup> The following images portray some of the activities undertaken by the group in Ireland. The messages that Generation Identity are trying to communicate in most of these are

3. Ibid.

4. McMahon, A., “FG Councillor Loses Party Whip after ‘Sharia Law’ Comment,” *The Irish Times*, November 3, 2017.

5. Ibid.

6. Identitarian Movement, “Home,” (retrieved January 10, 2018), <https://identitarian-movement.org/>.

7. Generation Identity Ireland/Northern Ireland Facebook page (retrieved January 10, 2018), <https://www.facebook.com/giEIRE/>.

self-explanatory. (Figs. 1, 3, 4, 5) Figure Two relates to news reports on the submission of plans for a new mosque and community centre in Dublin city. In Figure Two, Generation Identity are claiming that Ireland is being ‘Islamified’. In Figures Six and Seven, which were removed the following day, Generation Identity present an image of a council worker, ostensibly on official business, placing posters on large wooden plant boxes at the end of Grafton Street in Dublin City Centre. These posters are branded with the logo of Generation Identity Ireland and include the line “THANK YOU FOR TOLERATING THE ISLAMISATION OF EUROPE.” They also include the title and logo of Dublin City Council thus portraying the local authority as placing the actual boxes there in an effort to “PREVENT ISLAMIC LORRY ATTACKS.”

On another note, this time from mainstream politics, in March, the government launched its Migrant Integration Strategy.<sup>8</sup> With the exception of the



Figure 3: GI Poster/online image



Figure 4: GI Sticker on lamppost in Limerick.



Figure 5: Banner display by GI on Motorway Flyover in Dublin, November 2017.



Figure 6: Poster in Dublin City Centre 22nd/23rd of December 2017

8. Pollak, S. and Edwards, E., “Hate Crime Legislation Needed ‘As Matter of Urgency,’” *The Irish Times*, March 23, 2017; Department of Justice and Equality, *The Migrant Integration Strategy: A Blueprint for the Future* (2017), retrieved January 10, 2018, [http://www.integration.ie/website/omi/omiwebv6.nsf/page/JWKY-AJEE6A1021139-en/\\$File/Migrant\\_Integration\\_Strategy\\_English.pdf](http://www.integration.ie/website/omi/omiwebv6.nsf/page/JWKY-AJEE6A1021139-en/$File/Migrant_Integration_Strategy_English.pdf).



Figure 7: Poster in Dublin City Centre 22nd/23rd of December 2017

use of an image of a hijab-wearing Muslim woman on its cover, the document only refers to Muslim communities once and the context is highly problematic. The text states,

Radicalisation has been a particular issue for other European societies where ideologies that seek to undermine the state have prompted some young people, particularly second-generation Muslim immigrants, to undertake terrorist actions.<sup>9</sup>

### Education

The issue of discrimination in school admissions faced by Muslim children and those of other minority faiths has been noted in the 2015 and 2016 submissions to the *European Islamophobia Report*.<sup>10</sup> While, at time of writing, legislative change has yet to be implemented in this regard, Irish Education Minister Richard Bruton proposed in June 2017 that schools, the overwhelming majority of which are under Catholic Church patronage, will be barred from discriminating on point of entry against those whose religious identity does not align with the faith ethos of the school in question. The only exception, relates to the ability of schools associated with minority faith backgrounds.<sup>11</sup>

### Media

Previous submissions to the *European Islamophobia Report* for Ireland have evidenced the problematic character of media reporting, by some, on Muslim communities and Islam in Ireland. The year 2017 is no different. On a positive note, there is evidence of nuanced reporting on the part of some individuals in the media industry; see, for example, the work of Denis Staunton discussed below.<sup>12</sup> However, a number of issues have been identified in the necessarily perfunctory analysis reported here on the manner in which Muslims/Islam are represented in the media in Ireland. The anal-

9. Ibid.

10. Please refer to "Islamophobia in Ireland: National Report 2016" in Enes Bayraktli & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016* available at <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/IRELAND.pdf>.

11. Doyle, K., "'Baptism Barrier' to End as Bruton Plans to Stop Catholic Schools Admitting on Basis of Religion," *Irish Independent*, June 28, 2017.

12. Staunton, D., "British Man Who Carried Out Attack Was Not under Investigation; Police Name Khalid Masood (52) from West Midlands as Attacker," *The Irish Times*, March 24, 2017.

ysis discussed here focuses on selected media reports made in Irish print newspapers across 2017. It is important to note that this analysis should not be taken as exhaustive of all media reports on Muslims/Islam in Ireland; such an analysis is beyond the scope of this report. Here, specific periods of time and selected media coverage were chosen in order to delimit the focus of analysis for this report.<sup>13</sup>

Media reports in 2017 call for greater reflectivity on the part of media actors in relation to their use of language vis-à-vis reporting on Muslims/Islam. The collocation of terms such as “Islamic cell,”<sup>14</sup> “jihad terror” and “Muslim extremists”<sup>15</sup> maintains. The collocation of such terms can serve to stigmatise whole communities, associating them with terrorist activities on the basis of their religious identities. It remains clear that the notion of some putative ‘civilizational clash’ also persists. Writing in the *Irish Independent* under the headline “A Willingness to Kill and Be Killed Shows a Mindset Almost Impossible to Confront”<sup>16</sup> O’Regan notes,

What has been described as the ‘great war of civilisations’ is mirrored in the vast vacuous gulf which has opened up between the West and much of the Islamic world. It has its roots deep in history, stretching back to events such as the Crusades. The armies of Europe invaded the Middle East in a vain attempt to rid the Holy Land of a Muslim presence...

The ‘clash of civilisations’ trope is simplistic and reductive and presents an inaccurate image of an incompatibility of peoples; it presents Muslim communities in the West as ‘alien’ and not *really* belonging. This point of alleged incompatibility is also taken up by Ian O’Doherty writing for the same publication in the aftermath of the London Bridge terrorist attacks. Under the headline of “Our Leaders Are Scared to Admit the Ugly Truth about Extremism”<sup>17</sup> in an article that speaks to the potential of a terrorist attack in Ireland, O’Doherty states,

So why anyone would be surprised that Ireland is now known as a convenient backdoor for terrorists? We’ve a national ostrich tendency to stick our head in the sands

13. See Lexis Nexis, ‘Home,’ (2018) retrieved January 10, 2018, <http://bis.lexisnexis.co.uk/products/newsdesk>. Four critical events were chosen; namely, the terrorist attacks in London (Westminster Bridge and London Bridge); the terrorist attack on the Manchester Arena; and the terrorist attack in Barcelona. Media reports relating to Muslims and Islam on the day of the attacks and in the six subsequent days were sourced using the Nexis media database search platform and subjected to analysis. The publications included in the search of Nexis media database were *The Irish Daily Mail*; *The Irish Examiner*; *The Irish Independent*; *The Irish Times*; *The Irish Mirror.ie*; *The Sunday Independent*; and archival coverage (as noted by Nexis) from *The Evening Herald*; and the *Metro Herald*. The search terms used on the Nexis database were, for example, “London Bridge AND Muslim! OR Islam!” – only the location was changed in each search but remaining terms were maintained.

14. “Barcelona Suspects Brought Before Court; Alleged Member of Islamic Cell Says Group Were Planning Much Bigger Attack,” *The Irish Times*, August 23, 2017.

15. Bracken, A., “Gardaí Target Irish-Based ‘Dirty Dozen’ as Jihad Terror Threat Rises,” *Irish Daily Mail*, May 26, 2017.

16. O’Regan, G., “A Willingness to Kill and Be Killed, Shows a Mindset Almost Impossible to Confront,” *Irish Independent*, March 25, 2017.

17. O’Doherty, I., “Our Leaders Are Scared to Admit the Ugly Truth about Extremism,” *Irish Independent*, June 10, 2017.

and delude ourselves into thinking that we should be the only country in the Western world which will remain immune from the cancer of Muslim extremism...

O'Doherty continues and places the blame for terrorist attacks carried out by groups such as the so-called Islamic State in the faith of Islam itself, again serving to potentially associate all Muslims with terrorism due to their religious beliefs. He writes, "...despite the reliably hapless Nórín O'Sullivan parroting the great lie of our times that this has nothing to do with Islam, it has everything to do with Islam." These lines are followed later with the claim that "Islam and the West are simply incompatible."

On a more positive note, there was also some evidence of more nuanced approaches to reporting issues relating to Muslim communities and Islam in Ireland. In what could be held as an example of sensitive reporting practice in the aftermath of the Westminster Bridge terrorist attack, an article headlined "British Man who Carried Out Attack Was Not under Investigation; Police Name Khalid Masood (52) from West Midlands as Attacker,"<sup>18</sup> Denis Staunton did not refer to Masood's faith as the reason underpinning his actions. Indeed, Staunton referred to the perpetrator of the attack as an "Englishman" and noted that "[t]he Islamic State terror group claimed responsibility for the attack describing Masood as one of the group's 'soldiers,' but the claim has not been verified."

Other articles emphasised that groups that engage in terrorist activities should not be deemed as representative of the faith of Islam and Muslim communities.<sup>19</sup> Others still noted that Muslim communities in Ireland do not support the acts of terrorism perpetrated by individuals and groups allegedly in the name of Islam.<sup>20</sup> The issue of anti-Muslim hostility also received coverage in Irish media.<sup>21</sup>

Arguably the most striking theme relating to Irish media reports covering Islam and Muslim communities was the level of sensationalism. This was particularly evident in reports that referred to the alleged risk of potential terrorist attacks in Ireland by groups or individuals affiliated with e.g. the so-called Islamic State. The thread running through reports of this kind is one which refers to an alleged lack of preparedness/ability to prevent terrorist attacks in Ireland on the part of the Irish security apparatuses; and moreover, that such an attack is inevitable. In one example, in the period following the attack on the Manchester Arena a headline in the *Sunday Independent* read, "Ireland Wide Open to Terrorism Due to Weak Security Measures."<sup>22</sup> The main body of the article notes that "[A] lack of anti-terrorist border controls is leaving the island, North

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18. Staunton, D., "British Man Who Carried Out Attack Was Not under Investigation; Police Name Khalid Masood (52) from West Midlands as Attacker;" *The Irish Times*, March 24, 2017.

19. Fisk, R., "We Must Look to the Past, Not to Isil, to Discover the Real Meaning of Islam," *Irish Independent*, May 27, 2017.

20. O'Neill, K., "Muslims in Ireland Have no Tolerance for Radicals," *Irish Daily Mail*, June 8, 2017.

21. Irish Examiner, "Dublin Mosque Steps Up Security for Ramadan," *Irish Examiner*, May 27, 2017.

22. Cusack, J., "Ireland Wide Open to Terrorism Due to Weak Security Measures," *Sunday Independent*, May 28, 2017.

and South, open to *Islamic* attack....” (my emphasis).<sup>23</sup> In what can be read as a call for the profiling of Muslim men, women and children, the author further states,

Immigration controls are not specifically aimed at likely targets. This means people from non-Muslim backgrounds are as subject to entry refusal or deportation as much as anyone connected with the Sunni extremist organisations...<sup>24</sup>

The headline in a report by Bracken notes, “Gardaí Target Irish-Based ‘Dirty Dozen’ as Jihad Terror Threat Rises,”<sup>25</sup> before claiming in the main text that “... gardaí have identified a dozen Muslim extremists, most of whom are not Irish born.” The latter aspect of this statement implicitly raises the issue of the alleged ‘enemy within.’

A key factor in the increased sensationalism in media reporting on Muslim communities, Islam and an alleged heightened risk of terrorism, centred on the revelation that one of the London Bridge terrorist attackers had lived in Ireland. According to reports, Rachid Redouane resided in Ireland for a period of eighteen months between the years 2014 and 2016. On this basis, according to unnamed sources, there “were fears [that] up to 40 ‘backdoor’ terrorists are in this country waiting to carry out an attack here in the UK.”<sup>26</sup> Figures Eight and Nine offer two samples of associated headlines.



Figure 8. Flanagan, P., “London Killer in Ireland for 18 mths LONDON KILLER IN IRELAND FOR 18MTHS”<sup>27</sup>



Figure 9. Flanagan, P. and Byrne, P., “SECRET LAIR OF IRISH JIHADI”<sup>28</sup>

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Bracken, A., “Gardaí Target Irish-Based ‘Dirty Dozen’ as Jihad Terror Threat Rises,” *Irish Daily Mail*, May 26, 2017.

26. Flanagan, P., “London Killer in Ireland for 18 mths,” *Irish Daily Mirror*, June 6, 2017.

27. Irish Daily Mirror, June 6th, 2017.

28. Irish Daily Mirror, June 7th, 2017.

Arguably, the most sensationalist reports centre on a press conference held in a Dublin mosque wherein a “deradicalised”<sup>29</sup> Muslim woman informed the press of her belief that terrorist networks are operating in Ireland. One headline emanating from associated reports read “Ireland Is Terror Target, Ex-radical Muslim Woman Says.”<sup>30</sup> Another headline stated, “‘There Are at Least 150 Extremists Here Who See Ireland as a Soft Touch’; Nicola Anderson Talks to a Young Muslim Woman about How She Became Deradicalised after Being a Jihadi Wife.”<sup>31</sup> According to Anderson, the woman at the centre of the press conference “revealed the presence of a far greater presence of radical Islam in Ireland than was previously estimated.” The woman in question also stated that she had previously met two of the London Bridge terrorist attackers both in Ireland and the UK.<sup>32</sup> The manner in which some in the media reported the statements of the woman in question calls for greater responsibility in the reporting of such issues and the avoidance of sensational coverage.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

The below content derives from reports of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination as publicised in the media and data on self-reported experiences of such exclusionary practices as communicated to the European Network Against Racism Ireland (henceforth ENAR Ireland).<sup>33</sup> This year, reports were filed regarding lived experiences of verbal abuse, physical assault, attacks on mosques, online hostility, and the distribution of anti-Muslim literature.<sup>34</sup>

Reports of verbal abuse as communicated to ENAR Ireland evidence experiences of anti-Muslim hostility in public and in the workplace. Comments below evidence anti-Muslim verbal abuse towards both men and women. Arguably most disturbing about these, apart from their general content, is the presence in both incidents of children.

...my wife with two daughters (5 and 3 yr old) were crossing the pedestrian line when a man in green car... start honking the horn from about 100 metre... my wife stood there and the man... shouted “take off your black mask of the face, u filthy woman...”

I was with my 2-year-old baby in the playground giving him swings, then there came 3 boys and 3 girls, then suddenly after few minutes they started to talk

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29. Anderson, N., “‘There Are at Least 150 Extremists Here Who See Ireland as a Soft Touch’; Nicola Anderson Talks to a Young Muslim Woman About How She Became Deradicalised After Being a Jihadi Wife,” *Irish Independent*, June 10, 2017.

30. O’Gorman, C., “Ireland is Terror Target; Ex-radical Muslim Woman Says,” *Irish Daily Mail*, June 10, 2017.

31. Anderson (2017).

32. Ibid.

33. The author would like to extend his thanks to the European Network Against Racism Ireland for providing data on reports of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Ireland.

34. All data in this report have been anonymised.

about 9/11... I ignored it and then suddenly a water balloon came and bursted near my leg...

I saw two of my friends getting Islamophobic abuse hurled at them by two lads they were going up and intimidating my friend asking her what she was 'hiding' behind her face covering while her 16-year-old sister looked on in horror. They cornered her at the side of a car. I called out to them 'you alright lads' (both [perpetrators were] in their 40s) they started on at me... I am also a visible Muslim woman.... [one] man got really aggressive on... but his friend called him off..

[A] [c]yclist knocked on my car window to express his frustration by me overtaking him. Then he started yelling and saying racist statements 'you all are f...ing muslims suicide bombers'...

In the latter quote, the person targeted noted his concern for his young child who was sitting in the back seat of the car and the child having to witness such abuse. These quotes are snapshots of the form that anti-Muslim verbal abuse can take in Ireland. While ostensibly the perpetrators in these quotes are adults/young adults, it is not only adults who use such terms.

I was walking... with my husband and kids... there was a group of kids from a football club they were shouting Allahu Akbar at me... once I ignored, they did twice I ignored they shouted third time and they were laughing...

Such experiences are not restricted to public spaces but can also manifest in the workplace, whether it is a publicly accessible space or not. Whilst undergoing training for a newly acquired job, a professional who had just started a new job was subjected to anti-Muslim comments by a colleague as reported to ENAR Ireland by a close friend.

In the first few weeks of work, during the introduction and health and safety phase, a colleague who had been ignoring him stated at a department meeting, addressing the whole department, that he had a serious health and safety concern, "given the new recruit". His concern/question was whether the building had a "bomb protocol" and if so that every staff member be made aware of it, in light of the "new staff they [the local Government body] have hired." He was later overheard to justify his concern in the canteen, commenting on how 'this is how these lads [Muslims] operate, get into infrastructure... then plan attacks from the inside.

I work at the fast food restaurant in the town square. I was working a night shift... This incident started with a dispute over the order... [after refusing to leave the counter the customer] got agitated and started using racial slurs at me, calling me "smelly Arab" (although I am not Arab), "Paki cunt", "Muslim Bastard"... if there was not a counter separating us, I believe he would have tried to hit me.

The following incidents reported to ENAR Ireland and in the media document experiences of physical assault where the person in question was targeted on the basis of their Muslimness.

As I walked home from work at 6.40 p.m. I noticed a piece of food hitting a woman who was walking in the opposite direction to me. She was wearing a

burqa. My attention was immediately drawn to 4 teenage boys who were sitting outside a restaurant eating. The woman immediately changed direction and walked away from them.

I was standing on a bus stop... An older gentlemen cycled passed me and spat at me without saying anything. The only reason I can think of is my religious background as I am a Muslim female and I wear the Hijab as part of my dress code. The type of Racism I have experienced in the past was all verbal like people telling me to go back home, or to go fight ISIS or foolishly screaming Paki or Osama Bin Laden... this is the first time something like this happened to me... I had a conversation about what happened to me with another Muslim friend who experienced the same thing in the same area from an older gentlemen...

An incident reported in late 2017 related to the court proceedings in a case taken against a woman, aged fifty-eight and her role in an alleged assault on a Muslim teenager aged seventeen. It was reported that the alleged perpetrator “pulled [the] Muslim schoolgirl’s veil from her face and slapped her glasses off as she roared abuse.”<sup>35</sup> The Muslim teenager was on her way home from school and has claimed to suffer from suspected post-traumatic stress disorder in addition to physical injuries.<sup>36</sup>

Media reports in 2017 highlighted a number of incidents wherein Muslim communities in general were subjected to anti-Muslim hostility. These included the distribution of anti-Muslim literature in a town in the west of Ireland selected to host eighty refugees from Syria. Leaflets were distributed ahead of the arrival of the refugees which were “anti-Islamic” while urging locals to “‘preserve freedom in the West’ by refusing Muslims entry into Ireland.”<sup>37</sup>

In June, reports emerged of an attack on a mosque in Galway City.<sup>38</sup> The attack happened during evening prayers in the days following the London Bridge terrorist attack. Windows in the mosque were shattered after rocks were thrown at them. Up to one hundred people were in the mosque at the time of the attack but nobody was harmed.<sup>39</sup> Also in June, a report emerged in a local Limerick newspaper, based on interviews with local imams, of attacks on the mosques in which they lead prayers. While an exact number of attacks was not given, the report refers to ‘several’ occasions wherein offensive items were delivered via the mail.<sup>40</sup> These included the delivery in the post of verses of the Qur’an wrapped in bacon as well as offensive images of the Prophet Mohammed, the receipt of a number of threats, and windows being broken and vandalism. Individuals

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35. Phelan, A., “Woman (58) ‘Pulled Veil off 17-Year-Old’s Face and Roared Abuse at Her in Attack on City Street,” *The Irish Times*, October 2, 2017.

36. Ibid.

37. Irish Examiner, “Shock at Hate Leaflets ahead of 80 Refugees’ Arrival,” *Irish Examiner*, January 9, 2017.

38. Dunne, S. (2017) “Muslims ‘Terrified’ after Galway Mosque Attacked During Prayers,” *The Irish Times*, June 6, 2017.

39. Ibid.

40. Sheridan, A. (2017).

broke into one of the mosques on three separate occasions, during one of which the perpetrators urinated on the mosque's carpet. Reports were made to ENAR Ireland of email communications to other mosques that were racist in their content.

## Internet

The following section demonstrates the realities of anti-Muslim abuse in the online sphere. As with offline, the effects of experiences of anti-Muslim abuse online can also have a real and lasting impact on those targeted.<sup>41</sup> This is just a sample of the content available on social media and other Internet platforms. Reports were made to ENAR Ireland of the presence on social media of comments such as "All Muslims are potential terrorists." Other examples include comments on Facebook at the foot of online news reports or discussion boards such as:

Comments on Irish political website: multiple threats against the Muslim community both in Ireland and in Europe. Some advocating the 'elimination of Muslims' in a manner like Hitler eliminated Jews.

The post was an article from Journal.ie: the worst comments suggested that refugees and in particular Muslim refugees will rape and commit sexual violence in Ireland.

One report to ENAR Ireland related to a post made on Facebook by the Irish Patriot Movement (IPM). The report stated, "After IPM posted a letter from a mother concerned that school organises visits to the mosque a comment below the post was received: 'Just make sure your son brings a gallon of petrol with him when he visits the mosque.'"

The following tweet was reported to ENAR Ireland and evidences the severity of online abuse. According to the report, "The user shows the image of Muslims in Srebrenica and their graves after the genocide as a 'solution' to the Muslim 'problem'. He used the same image in another conversation with this comment: 'You fucking slimy rat muzzie fucks are going into a ditch soon.'" (Fig. 10)



Figure 10: Image shared on Twitter, reported to ENAR Ireland advocating genocide.

41. Awan, I. and Zempi, I., 'We Fear for Our Lives: Offline and Online Experiences of Anti-Muslim Hostility,' Report, Tell MAMA, (2015), retrieved January 8, 2018, <https://www.tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/resources/We%20Fear%20For%20Our%20Lives.pdf>.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In addition to the groups mentioned in the previous reports,<sup>42</sup> anti-Muslim/Islam and immigrant individuals and groups operating in Ireland include Identity Ireland and the National Party. To these can be added Generation Identity UK and Ireland.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Two notable initiatives were undertaken by the group Muslim Sisters of Eire (MSOE), a Muslim women's organisation. In March, the MSOE held a protest outside of the European Commission office in Dublin in response to the ruling by the European Court of Justice which is believed de facto allows companies to discriminate against Muslim by banning the wearing by staff of so-called "political, philosophical or religious symbols" in the workplace. The MSOE were supported in their protest by ENAR Ireland.<sup>43</sup> Building on this activity, later in April, the MSOE organised a one-day conference entitled "Being Me: Muslim Women Defying Stereotypes" which included contributions from prominent activists, academics, politicians and a member of the Irish police service An Garda Síochána.<sup>44</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report underscores the need for meaningful action in the fight against Islamophobia in the Irish context. A number of policy recommendations have been made here, that, if acted upon, could go some way toward challenging Islamophobia in Ireland. Civil and political actors concerned with the persistence of anti-Muslim/Islam discourses and practices must act immediately. The growing number of anti-Muslim groups in Ireland underscores the need for urgent action to be taken if Islamophobia is to be confronted meaningfully. The fact that many of these recommendations have been made before should give policymakers pause for thought.

- The Irish Government must implement hate crime legislation, based on best practice, and recognise religious communities as potential targets for hate crime.<sup>45</sup>
- Efforts must continue to encourage greater reflexivity when reporting Muslim/Islam related issues among media actors in Ireland. This does not mean restricting press freedom.
- The state must take action against political groupings that target and potentially incite hatred towards minorities.
- Political parties in Ireland must ensure that their representatives do not engage in promulgating anti-Muslim rhetoric.

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42. See previous yearly submissions on Ireland for the *European Islamophobia Report*.

43. MacDonald, S., "'Backlash' against Ruling Allowing Hijab Ban in Workplace," *Irish Independent*, March 20, 2017; Pollack, S., "Protestors Warn ECJ Ruling to Further Alienate Muslim Women," *The Irish Times*, March 21, 2017.

44. Dublin City Interfaith Forum, "Events," retrieved January 12, 2018 <https://www.dublincityinterfaithforum.org/event/109/being-me-ndash-muslim-women-defying-stereotypes>.

45. See Haynes, A., Schweppe, J., Carr, J., Carmody, N. and Enright, S., 'Out of the Shadows: Legislating for Hate Crime in Ireland - Preliminary Findings,' 2015, Limerick: HHRG/ICCL.

## Chronology

- **07.01.2017:** Anti-Muslim and anti-refugee leaflets distributed in Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon in the west of Ireland.
- **21.03.2017:** Muslim Sisters of Eire hold protest outside European Commission office in Dublin against the European Court of Justice ruling on the wearing of, among others, religious symbols in the workplace.
- **June 2017:** Reports of separate attacks at mosques in Limerick and Galway are reported in the media.
- **09.06.2017:** Press conference held in a Dublin mosque wherein a Muslim woman claims that there are a number of 'radicalised' individuals operating in various locations in Ireland.
- **21.06.2017:** Legislative change in the context of schools' admissions policies and the ability to discriminate on the basis of religious identity proposed by relevant minister.
- **07.09.2017:** Reports in media of Fine Gael Party Councillor in Dublin making anti-Muslim/Islam statements in social media.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**ITALY**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

The Italian context is hit by a deep “social malaise” that has found an echo in a dynamic of xenophobia and aversion against a multi-ethnic society and religious pluralism. Over the years, the impact on public opinion of a political discourse characterized by anti-Islamic rhetoric has been significant and decisive. In 2017, the question of the *Ius soli* Bill (draft law) for second-generation migrants was a classic example of this trend and a progressive legitimization of clearly xenophobic statements.

In addition, the flow of refugees provoked a virulent populist rhetoric and numerous public events organized by extreme right-wing movements and parties (*Lega Nord*, *Forza Nuova* and *Casa Pound*). In the course of 2017, attacks against migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and, in particular, against Muslim communities intensified and were motivated by the defence of Western and Christian values. Newspapers close to right-wing parties were the main vehicles of prejudices against Islam and Muslims. During 2017, a specific research on Italian newspapers identified 146 titles that could be defined as discriminatory, of which 20% were associated with Islam.

These articles claimed that Muslims were incompatible with Italian civilization and, above all, equated them all to terrorists. An important increase of instances of hate speech against Islam by Internet-based neofascist and Catholic fundamentalist groups was also recorded.

Recently the Italian government signed the “National Pact for an Italian Islam” with the main Islamic organizations in order to open a structural dialogue and to guarantee religious freedom by the establishment of legal mosques. This is a fundamental step toward the recognition of Italian Islam and the presence of Muslim communities as privileged interlocutors in the promotion of peaceful coexistence. However, the agreement must be followed by an effective policy of religious integration, which appears very difficult, given the widespread anti-Islamic feelings and the growing consensus in support of xenophobic and populist rhetoric.

## Sintesi

Il contesto italiano è investito da un profondo malessere sociale che ha trova eco in una dinamica di xenofobia e avversione alla società multietnica e al pluralismo religioso. Nel corso degli anni l'impatto sull'opinione pubblica di un discorso politico caratterizzato dalla retorica anti-immigrazione e anti-islamica è stato significativo e determinante. Nel 2017 la questione della proposta di legge sullo *Ius soli* per le seconde generazioni è stato un esempio paradigmatico di questo trend e della progressiva legittimazione di affermazioni chiaramente xenofobiche. Lo stesso si può riflettere sull'emergenza degli sbarchi dei flussi di rifugiati che ha promosso una virulenta retorica populista e numerose manifestazioni pubbliche organizzate dai partiti e dai movimenti di estrema destra (*Lega Nord, Forza Nuova e Casa Pound*). Nel corso del 2017 si sono intensificati gli attacchi contro i cittadini migranti, rifugiati, richiedenti asilo e, in particolare, contro le comunità musulmane fondate sulla difesa dei valori occidentali e cattolici. I mass-media, in particolare le testate giornalistiche vicine alla destra, sono stati il principale veicolo dei pregiudizi contro l'Islam e i musulmani. La religione e la cultura musulmana è spesso descritta negli editoriali come incompatibile con i valori italiani e, soprattutto, si alimenta paura e odio con la reiterata equazione "Musulmano uguale terrorista". Si registra un aumento importante dei discorsi di odio contro l'Islam in Internet di gruppi neofascisti e di gruppi di fondamentalisti cattolici. Recentemente il governo ha siglato il "Patto Nazionale per un Islam italiano" con le principali organizzazione islamiche italiane con l'obiettivo di aprire un dialogo strutturato e garantire la libertà religiosa attraverso la costruzione di moschee legali. Un passo fondamentale nell'ottica del riconoscimento dell'Islam italiano e della presenza delle comunità musulmane come interlocutore privilegiato nella promozione della convivenza pacifica. Tuttavia, l'accordo raggiunto dovrà essere seguito da un'effettiva politica di integrazione religiosa che appare assai complicata e difficile, considerato il diffuso clima anti-Islamico e il crescente consenso alle retoriche xenofobe e populiste.

## Introduction

Right-wing parties, extreme right-wing political movements, and Catholic fundamentalist groups have promoted in recent years a virulent campaign against Muslim communities and migrants pursuing the discourse of the “clash of civilizations” between Islam and Christianity. The previous Italian report on Islamophobia contained an important analysis for understanding the present, as there is a clear and strong continuity between the past years and 2017.<sup>1</sup> The main right-wing political leaders, opinion makers and intellectuals have contributed to a climate of hatred towards Muslim immigrants and towards a multicultural society in the name of security and freedom. The effects of the enduring economic crisis, the recent terrorist attacks in European cities and the so called refugee crisis have provided fertile ground for the pervasive xenophobic attitudes in Italian society. In 2017, there were a significant number of physical attacks on immigrants, asylum seekers and refugee centers and numerous demonstrations directed at reaffirming “national supremacy.” Undoubtedly, the Italian case appears in certain ways anomalous if compared to the rest of Western Europe. The specificity of Muslims in Italy comes from the great number of their countries of origin, their scarce or sporadic visibility in public space, and the weakness of their representativeness before public institutions. Moreover, data from 2016 estimated that among the foreigners present in Italy, 32.6% (equal to 1,642,000 people) are Muslim compared to 53% (equal to 2,671,000 people) who are Christian, a number that far from prefigures an Islamist cultural and religious hegemony in our territory.<sup>2</sup> Despite this reality, Islamophobia is at the core of many political debates and mobilizations encouraging a widespread moral panic. The role of mass media and social networks is fundamental in strengthening the “entrepreneurs of Islamophobia.”

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The political debate about Italian citizenship for second-generation migrants (“Ius soli” Bill) shows an evident racist trend in the representations of migrants and, especially, of Muslims communities. The whole Islamophobic rhetoric aimed “to defend Catholic values,” joined a growing neo-nationalism, and is the basis of the violent campaign orchestrated by the conservative and extreme right wing against the law which secures Italian youngsters with migrant background and born in Italy the right of citizenship. The Northern League (*Lega Nord*) is the traditional key in-

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1. Giacalone C, “Islamophobia in Italy: National Report 2015”, E. Bayrakli, F. Hafez (eds), *Islamophobia in Europe Report 2015*, SETA, Istanbul, 2016.

2. Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, IDOS, Roma 2017, p. 191.

terpreter and bearer of these explicitly anti-immigrants and anti-Islamic positions, promoting both xenophobic public discourses and discriminating local policies in the north of the country.

In his discussion of the Italian variant of populism, Laclau notes that the Northern League has moved increasingly into a “theory of the enemy” endorsing the idea that if a radical change were to happen, the social field would have to be split in two.<sup>3</sup> Over time, the anti-Islamism of the Northern League took on radical forms of mobilization against the construction of mosques and Islamic centers in some major cities of the northern regions in which the majority of immigrants is concentrated. The mobilizations against the mosques in the last decade and during 2017 promoted by the Northern League and extreme-right movements aim undoubtedly at strengthening a logic of the “internal enemy” and endorsing a logic of social antagonism. The partial, but significant support of local citizens to this strategy, is the outcome of this emphasis on “dangerous foreignness.” The Northern League’s leader Matteo Salvini declared in various interviews that the *Ius Soli* Bill represents a potential risk regarding national security, placing the equation between terrorists, foreigners and Muslims, at the core of his hatred speeches. Other famous right-wing politicians Maurizio Gasparri, senator of *Forza Italia*, and Giorgia Meloni, leader of *Fratelli d’Italia*, have been “spokespeople” of this battle; the latter collected 100,000 signatures against the *Ius soli* Bill in 2017.

*Forza Nuova* and *Casa Pound* call themselves “fascists of the third millennium” and organized many demonstrations against Islam and Muslims in 2017, in continuity with the recent past. The slogan “Italy Christian, Never Muslim” expresses the “clash civilization” rhetoric, obsessively repeated in the name of ultra-nationalism. (Fig. 1) It is important to highlight that the Islamophobic demonstrations are accompanied by the public complaints of local associations and priests who are in favor of dialogue and inclusion. However, these counter-initiatives are not as numerically strong as the Islamophobic events at local level. Furthermore, the antiracist events are, in general, focused on the support of migrants.

Between June and October 2017, *Forza Nuova* organized a protest against local Catholic priests, called “heretics” or “Judases,” and considered guilty of being open to Islamic communities and sympathetic to their right to obtain a legal place of worship. But, not all the Catholic milieu expresses the same openness. For example, in a village in Lombardy, the local priest organized a prayer “asking Mary the strength to defend Christianity from every relativist and materialistic attack and Islamism,” as written in the flyer distributed to the population.

In July, the *Partito Anti-Islamizzazione* (Anti-Islamization Party) was founded by a little-known journalist of the right-wing newspaper *Il Giorno* with the political

3. Laclau E., *On Populist Reason*, Verso, London, 2002.



Figure 1: In Savona (Liguria) Forza Nuova put up the Islamophobic banner “Italy Christian, Never Muslim” and a banner against the National Association of Partisans.

program “to fight the Islamization of society and to defend the Italian rules and culture.” The Facebook page of this ethereal party was visited and shared by thousands of people in a short time and, recently, the page reached almost 18,000 followers.

Meanwhile, the local popularity of *Forza Nuova* and *Casa Pound* is growing as evidenced in their presence in administrative elections, for example in Ostia close to Rome, and the opening of various local branches in all part of Italy, especially in metropolitan areas. Moreover, in local administrative elections, *Casa Pound*

presented an electoral list called “Sovranità” (Sovereignty) together with the Northern League. The next electoral campaign, forecasted for March 2018 in the national elections, will probably be one of the most important “discursive fields” to renovate anti-migrant and Islamophobic rhetoric for the populist parties seeking political consensus.

## Justice System

The lack of a new law on religious freedom, able to replace the old legislation on cults launched during the Fascist period (1929-30), brings forth an important issue. Due to this legal lack, different local governments have introduced discriminatory regulations that act against the religious freedom - principally of the Islamic communities. For example, the “Anti-Mosque Law” introduced in 2015 by the government of Lombardy imposes a series of restrictive criteria for building new mosques. In 2017, other regions, like Liguria and Veneto, both governed by right-wing parties, following Lombardy, established stringent criteria for the construction of new religious buildings. Conveniently, these rules are regularly rejected by the Italian Constitutional Court and other courts thus prohibiting their implementation at the local level. In the recent past and in the year under question, several town councils in Northern Italy governed by the *Lega Nord*, have unlawfully implemented ordinances to prohibit the wearing of the veil and hijab – the latest case being the Major of Rovigo (Veneto).<sup>4</sup> These measures have always been invalidated by local courts in accordance to national anti-discrimination laws. However, in some cases, it is very important to highlight the ambivalent, schizophrenic attitude of the Italian courts

4. See “Rovigo, il sindaco Bergamin vieta il burqa. Voglio donne col volto scoperto”, *Il Resto del Carlino*, 6/29/2017, retrieved October 01, 2018, from <http://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/rovigo/politica/burqa-vietato-1.3233892>

toward the issue of the veil and public spaces. The Court of Milan has issued two different judgements: in 2016, the court ruled that the exclusion of a candidate from a job selection due to her refusal to remove the hijab constitutes a direct religious discrimination. In 2017, the same court dismissed the appeal lodged by certain associations against a resolution of the Lombardy government banning the so-called Islamic veil in offices and hospitals in the name of public security and due to the concrete threat constituted by the inability to identify people entering public places.<sup>5</sup> The interaction between gender, religious affiliation and ethnicity is a serious and critical issue concerning Muslim women and their discrimination in everyday life.

## Education

In the Italian school system the student population of foreign-origin pupils is equal to 9.5% (814,851 units) and concentrated in kindergartens and primary schools.<sup>6</sup> The significant presence of students with a Muslim background poses a serious challenge to the pedagogical and educational practices of Italian schools and the need to disseminate a culture of openness of religious and cultural differences. In the analyses carried out on this issue, it is important to point out that there is still a kind of cultural-historical prejudice against Islam in the educational program.<sup>7</sup> The effects are important on the schooling integration of Muslim pupils and their relationship with the image of “enemy” inside Italian society. To this general perspective, we must add the problem, increasingly important, of spatial and educational segregation on the basis of ethnicity in the main Italian metropolitan areas. A recent research, realized in Milan, highlights the “white flight” process, mainly in the multicultural and popular neighborhoods, laying the groundwork for the potential dynamics of ethnic/religious closure and discriminating factors linked to the quality of the educational paths of pupils.

## Media

The traditional right-wing and anti-Islamic newspapers continue to comply with the *refrain* of the incompatibility of Italian culture and the presence of Muslim communities. A report of *Carta di Roma* on the three main right-wing newspapers (*Libero*, *Il Giornale* and *La Verità*) in 2017 found that there were 146 titles that could be defined as discriminatory, of which 20% were associated with Islam.<sup>8</sup> Many examples of false and negative images of Muslims, often based on fake news, circulated in the Italian printed media (see figure 2).

5. Dossier Immigrazione, IDOS; Roma, 2017.

6. MIUR, Gli alunni stranieri nel sistema scolastico italiano a.s. 2015/2016, 2017 ([www.istruzione.it/allegati/2017/Notiziario\\_alunni\\_Stranieri\\_nel%20sistema\\_scolastico\\_italiano\\_15\\_16.pdf](http://www.istruzione.it/allegati/2017/Notiziario_alunni_Stranieri_nel%20sistema_scolastico_italiano_15_16.pdf)).

7. Pacchi C., Ranci C., *White flight a Milano. La segregazione sociale ed etnica nelle scuole dell'obbligo*, FrancoAngeli, Milano, 2017.

8. See Barretta Paola, Milazzo Giuseppe, “Notizie da paura. Quinto Rapporto Carta di Roma. 2017”, retrieved January 21, 2018, from <http://www.cartadiroma.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Rapporto-2017-Notizie-da-paura-1.pdf>



Figure 2: “Islam Also Rules on Snacks at Schools, Mortadella Banned for Italian Children.”<sup>9</sup>

Recently, a fake news about the refusal to host a Christmas party at a primary school with the presence of Muslim students was recalled by a famous “democratic columnist” in *Corriere della Sera*, the most important Italian newspaper.

A lot of discussions and instances of hate speech have been fuelled by another fake news about the Muslim wedding between a young girl (9 years old) and a 35-year-old man. All newspapers reported this fake news and, in some cases, the hard opinions of right-wing columnists were

published condemning the “barbaric Islamic cultural practices.”<sup>10</sup> The largest parts of the articles against Islam and Muslims concentrated on gender relations and Muslim women’s bodies with many examples of aggressive discourse. Among the Islamophobic articles linking religion to terrorism, the following example is illustrative.

After the terroristic attack in Sweden, the editor of *Libero* Vittorio Feltri published a virulent article against Islam and Muslims entitled “React with Violence.” Some passages of the article are paradigmatic of the logic of “Islamophobic entrepreneurship”:

For years the West suffers violence by bearded fanatics, who hate even their women, and we, stupidly, instead of sending them with a kick in the ass back to their deserts, we strive to appease and placate them. We court them, we give up our traditions in the hope that they accept them. We are intimidated by Muslims and we are enslaved by their medieval traditions, to the point of being funny. Vain efforts, given that these gentlemen, rather than being grateful, kill us with bombs, with suicide bombers and now – a new fashion – with trucks driven into crowds (*Libero* 4/9/2017).<sup>11</sup>

The paranoia of an Islamic supremacy in Italy is well represented by the latest book (published in December 2017) of Mario Belpietro, director for many years of the most important right-wing newspaper *Libero* and director of *La Verità* (ironically

9. *Libero* (June 16, 2017)

10. See Ali Darwish, “La storia della bambina di 9 anni data in sposa è falsa. L'Islamofobia no”, 11/22/2017, retrieved October 25, 2017, from <https://thevision.com/attualita/fake-news-padova>

11. Vittorio Feltri, “Noi li accogliamo e loro ci ammazzano. Feltri: “Basta, reagiamo con violenza”, *Libero*, 4/9/2017, retrieved December 18, 2017, from [www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/opinioni/12353750/feltri-li-accogliamo-e-loro-ci-ammazzano-reagiamo-con-violenza.html](http://www.liberoquotidiano.it/news/opinioni/12353750/feltri-li-accogliamo-e-loro-ci-ammazzano-reagiamo-con-violenza.html)

The Truth), entitled *Islamofollia* (Crazy-Islam). In this book all the negative stereotypes against Islam as an oppressive religion and culture are presented and, more significantly, the book condemns certain leftist politicians, associations, and parts of the Catholic Church as responsible of misunderstanding the real threat represented by Islamic communities and their efforts to impose their vision of the world. The same journalist, in December 2017, was acquitted by the Court of Milan for the accusation of Islamophobia in relation to the title “MUSLIMS BASTARDS” published after the attacks in Paris in 2015 in *Il Giornale*; the court ruled that Islamophobia was not present.

Finally, in September, the newspaper *Quotidiano Nazionale* in a series of articles published an opinion poll based on the 500 interviews with Muslims who reside in Italy. The narrative of the main results presented a stereotypical picture of a Muslim as not integrated, close to Jihadism, opposing Italian values of freedom and in favor of the Islamization of society despite the fact that a small number of the sample declared an affiliation to traditional Muslim values.<sup>12</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Specific data on physical and verbal attacks based on religious hatred is not available, so it is very difficult to offer significant and systematic information on Islamophobic acts. Moreover, the collected data on hate crimes has strong limitations because the Italian law forbids the processing of personal information, which is deemed sensitive, and it is difficult to disaggregate anti-Muslim behavior from attitudes.<sup>13</sup>

From different sources and reports, however, we can highlight certain events in 2017 in which Muslim migrants were involved and attacks against immigrants in general. In January, residents organized by *Forza Nuova* stopped an Egyptian family from entering their public housing provided to them by the Municipality of Rome; and Again Always in Rome, a neo-fascist group injured a couple of workers from Bangladesh and Egypt. The last significant event was the arson of Marrakesh Lounge Bar in a small town close to Milan during the night May 24 as a result of a fake report, picked up by politicians and the media, of the alleged celebrations by Moroccan immigrants after the jihadist attacks in London.<sup>14</sup>

A series of physical attacks were reported in different contexts in the north and south of Italy especially against centers for asylum seekers and stand as evidence of the climate of violence and racism in Italy.

12. For data and questionnaire, retrieved January 24, 2018, [www.quotidiano.net/cronaca/musulmani-in-italia-1.3411763](http://www.quotidiano.net/cronaca/musulmani-in-italia-1.3411763)

13. Dessi G., *Forgotten Women: The Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Women in Italy*, European Network Against Racism, Brussels, 2016, p. 4 (<http://www.enar-eu.org/Forgotten-Women-the-impact-of-Islamophobia-on-Muslim-women>)

14. See “Milano, danno fuoco al bar dopo la falsa notizia girata tra social, tv e politici: “Festeggiamenti dopo Manchester”, *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 5/25/2017, retrieved January 17, 2018, from <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2017/05/25/milano-danno-fuoco-al-bar-dopo-la-falsa-notizia-girata-tra-social-tv-e-politici-festeggiamenti-dopo-manchester/3614105>

## Internet

In the last decade, many surveys have pointed out an increase of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitudes in the Italian public opinion.<sup>15</sup> In line with this, a survey on “Immigration and Insecurity” realized in September 2017 by the Research Institute Demos shows the 46% of interviewees “strongly agree and/or agree” with the statement that “Immigrants are a threat for public order and security.”<sup>16</sup> Here, it is important to highlight the fact that for a large part of the public the image of the “dangerous migrant” (or dangerous asylum seeker) is usually represented by the Muslim. As written in the Jo Cox Ministerial Commission on Racism in 2017, “compared to the pre-2001 period, when the social stigma would target mainly the status of foreigner-immigrant, today direct target is becoming the religious identity: in fact, immigrants end up crushed on their (presumed) Muslim religious identity which is strictly linked to terroristic membership.”<sup>17</sup>

This anti-Islamic feeling is reflected in social networks. A significant research on intolerance based on an analysis of Twitter realized by Voxdiritti in 2016 ranked Muslims as the fourth most targeted group (6% of tweets).<sup>18</sup> Epithets collected reflect the classic negative image of Muslim: “Terrorists,” “Bedouin,” “Abdullah”, “Moroccan” and “Vu cumprà.”<sup>19</sup>

In regards to websites there are various examples of hate speech and the diffusion of fake news about Islam and Muslims such as *voxnews.info*, which has been reported to Google administrators and the postal police many times. It is important to notice the presence in the Internet of different fundamentalist websites and Facebook pages (for example the websites *www.radiospada.org*, *www.lanuovabq.it/it* and *www.lalucedimaria.it*) dedicated to spreading negative images of Islam, defending Catholic traditions and, in some cases, to opposing Pope Francesco because of his attention to interreligious dialogue and migrants.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In comparison with previous reports on Islamophobia in Italy the central figures of the Islamophobia network have not changed: Matteo Salvini, leader of Northern

15. Alietti A., Padovan D., “Religious Racism. Islamophobia and Antisemitism in Italian Society”, *Religions* 2013, 4, 584–602; Pew Research Center, “Faith in European Project Reviving”, June, 2015 ([www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/06/Pew-Research-Center-European-Union-Report-FINAL-June-2-20151.pdf](http://www.pewglobal.org/files/2015/06/Pew-Research-Center-European-Union-Report-FINAL-June-2-20151.pdf)).

16. Osservatorio Europeo sulla Sicurezza, *Immigrazione e sicurezza*, 9/13/2017, retrieved January 15, 2018, from <http://www.demos.it/a01427.php>

17. Commissione “JO COX sulla Xenofobia, il razzismo e i fenomeni di odio”, Camera dei deputati, XVII LEGISLATURA, (Relazione finale 2017, ([http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/shadow\\_primapagina/file\\_pdfs/000/007/099/Jo\\_Cox\\_Piramide\\_odio.pdf](http://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/shadow_primapagina/file_pdfs/000/007/099/Jo_Cox_Piramide_odio.pdf)).

18. Retrieved February 12, 2017, from <http://www.voxdiritti.it/ecco-la-nuova-edizione-della-mappa-dellintolleranza>

19. The terms *Bedouin*, *Moroccans* are used as insults in popular discourse; the term “*vu cumprà*” refers to street sellers from the Maghreb.

League; Giorgia Meloni, leader of *Fratelli di Italia*; Riccardo Fiore, national secretary of *Forza Nuova*; and representatives of *Casa Pound* such as Gianluca Iannone (the founder of the neofascist movement) and Davide di Stefano, the main actors of the sociopolitical mobilization against migrants, asylum seekers and Muslims.

During 2017, in the north and center of Italy, the discriminatory politics of exclusion directed towards migrants and Muslim citizens promoted by several right-wing mayors, counsellors and politicians of different municipalities continued. Public security ordinances and rules for limiting access to social benefits were used by local administrations as tools to achieve such goals.<sup>20</sup>

It is very important to highlight that around these figures revolves a “black galaxy” composed of various neo-Nazi and neofascist groups, often linked to each other, sharing a virulent Islamophobia and anti-multiculturalism rhetoric such as *Gioventù Identitaria*, the Italian division of the *Génération Identitaire* movement founded in 2013 in France and present in various European countries; *Lealtà Azione*, founded in Milan in 2010; *Casaggi*, founded in Florence in 2005. These groups are expanding, beyond their respective geographic context.<sup>21</sup>

This extremist right-wing network has been joined by specific groups of Catholic fundamentalists who, as written previously, promote a vision of the clash of civilization between Islam and Christianity and the defence of “Catholic order” in the face of the invasion of Muslim migrants. A bright example of this configuration is the editor-in-chief of online Catholic fundamentalist newspaper *La Croce*, Mario Adinolfi, ex parliamentarian of the left-wing party *Democratic Party*. His latest book, *O capiamo, o moriamo* (We Understand or We Die), published in September 2017, presents a classical panoply of Islam paranoia and reproduces the image of an Islamic conquest of Italian society as a result of Muslim birth rate.

### **Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

Across Italy there are many anti-racism civil society organizations and Catholic associations that are directly involved in fighting xenophobia and discrimination, offering help and legal support to victims or promoting integration through public events and initiatives. At national level, the Anti-Discrimination National Office is an important tool for reporting and fighting Islamophobia in Italian society, aimed mainly at enlarging the anti-discrimination network involving local administrations and local civil society. In this case there are different levels of criticality, for example the latter’s direct control by government and the ensuing lack of autonomy.<sup>22</sup>

20. As in the past, most of these administrative acts have been rejected by the courts on the basis of anti-discrimination legislation.

21. For a map of this Italian “black galaxy” built on the analysis of Facebook pages see <http://patriaindipendente.it/progetto-facebook/>

22. European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), *Report on Italy*, Council of Europe, 2016 ([www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/italy/ita-cbc-v-2016-019-eng.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/italy/ita-cbc-v-2016-019-eng.pdf)).

The most important political development was the “National Pact for an Italian Islam” signed in February 2017 by the Minister of Interior, the main Islamic organizations in Italy, and the Coordinator of the Council for relations with Islam. The document was based on the preliminary work carried out by the specific council of experts, politicians and the legal representatives of the Islamic associations. The document outlines some pivotal aspects of the promotion of the relationship between the state and the Islamic communities based on a decalogue of commitments of Italian Islam’s representatives directed to support religious pluralism and to foster relations with public institutions.<sup>23</sup> Among these commitments are the training of imams, the transparency in the administrative management of the Islamic centers, and sermons in Italian. Finally, the document proclaims the commitment of the minister to promote regular dialogue meetings, to provide specific pathways for legal recognition of future agreements and, overall, to promote a conference with the National Association of Italian Municipalities on the theme of mosques in which to reaffirm the right to religious freedom.

However, this agreement is not an “official agreement” between the Italian state and Islam. It is not based on Article 8 of the Constitution, which regards the relations of non-Catholic confessions and the Minister of Interior. The problem is that an Islamic confession that meets the constitutional parameters indicated does not yet exist, because Islam is still a complex world, where the representativeness of single organizations is uncertain.<sup>24</sup> In this manner, the state recognition of Islam is certainly important in the future dialogue with the next national government.

In 2017, there were different initiatives aimed at promoting inter-religious dialogue on a sociocultural level. For example, the initiative to counter the prejudicial image of Islam as a religion of “closure” and intolerant was promoted by the administration of Turin joined by the Muslim communities: Islamic centers were open for all citizens and public events such as seminars and exhibitions were organized during Ramadan in 2017.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

From available data and information on Islamophobia, 2017 was a year with a significant increase of Islamophobic discourses on different levels: social, political, in the mass media and social networks. The next election year will be a battleground against immigrants and, in particular, against Islamic communities. The public opinion, especially from the popular strata, appears more and more likely to lean towards politics of “national preference” and the rhetoric of Islam’s threat and

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23. Retrieved December 05, 2017, from [http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/patto\\_nazionale\\_per\\_un\\_islam\\_italiano\\_1.2.2017.pdf](http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/patto_nazionale_per_un_islam_italiano_1.2.2017.pdf)

24. Cardia Carlo, “Integrazione. Islam italiano, via lunga e necessaria”, 2/3/2017, *Avvenire*, retrieved December 18, 2017, from <http://www.avvenire.it/opinioni/pagine/via-lunga-e-necessaria>

risk of massive immigration – the main claims of the extreme right-wing parties and movements. The legitimacy in the public spaces and, sometimes, in the mass media of xenophobic and anti-Muslim political leaders and columnists was the decisive change in the past year.

While we are writing this report, the Northern League's candidate for the presidency of the Lombardy region, the Italian region which is economically stronger and with the highest numbers of immigrants, declared his conviction of "the risk that the white race disappears and is replaced by migrants."<sup>25</sup>

There is a strong necessity to build a strong relationship among anti-racist organizations, Islamic associations and left-wing parties to oppose this very dangerous dynamic, which is contrary to civil coexistence and religious pluralism. In this sense, as mentioned, the role of democratic institutions and the judiciary system is crucial in establishing a framework of legality on the basis of anti-discrimination law. The aforementioned agreement by the government represents, undoubtedly, a significant step forward towards a different pattern of relationship between Islamic communities and public institutions, especially as the right to pray is recognized and legally framed. But, this is not enough because widespread hate speech and social hostility against Muslims requires greater attention and serious work in necessary at all levels of social life. The role of Islamic associations in this sense is determinant for a long-term inclusion strategy of religious pluralism. In any case, it reaffirms social and religious rights of Muslims, and to support contrasting actions against Islamophobia. But also, there is a principle of "loyalty" to Italian constitutional principles and the legal tools to pursue integration and social cohesion.<sup>26</sup> The responsibility of local and national governments is to realize better conditions for a more stringent social and political participation of Muslim communities and associations in the public sphere, removing obstacles to this objective, and strengthening anti-discrimination action. In this sense, it is important to remember the General Policy Recommendation n. 5 formulated by the ECRI to combat intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, inviting particular attention to the removal of unnecessary legal or administrative obstacles to the construction of sufficient numbers of appropriate places of worship for the practice of Islam and its funeral rites.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, the different Islamic associations and groups need to strengthen their positive collaboration for sustaining the pathways toward inclusion and democratic spaces of dialogue. Another fundamental tool for combating Islamophobia is

25. See "Fontana: «Razza bianca da difendere». Poi precisa: «È stato un lapsus». Salvini: siamo sotto attacco". Il Corriere della Sera, Milano, 1/18/2018, retrieved January 30, 2018, from [http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18\\_gennaio\\_15/attilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml](http://milano.corriere.it/notizie/politica/18_gennaio_15/attilio-fontana-immigrati-razza-bianca-difendere-candidato-centrodestra-regione-lombardia-bcf74404-f9e8-11e7-b7a0-515b75eef21a.shtml).

26. Dossier Statistico Immigrazione, IDOS, Roma, 2017.

27. European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Report on Italy, Council of Europe, 2016 ([www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/italy/ita-cbc-v-2016-019-eng.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/country-by-country/italy/ita-cbc-v-2016-019-eng.pdf)).

the improvement of data collection on hate speech in social networks and regarding the victims of religious hatred. The role of the UNAR and civil society appears decisive in this regard. The public institutions at national and local level are responsible for implementing and sustaining a strategy for an inclusive religious program, and effective social and cultural integration.

But, the probable political change in the upcoming elections can have a negative impact on these efforts and potential inclusive actions.

In light of this critical situation, it is necessary to sustain the following main policies:

- To implement the “National Pact for an Italian Islam” at local level in order to open a real dialogue with Muslim communities and to guarantee their religious freedom.
- To create a different national system of data collection on religious hatred, hate speech and attacks against Muslims in order to have a reliable and annual picture of the situation.
- To strengthen the role of the (Ufficio Nazionale Antidiscriminazioni Razziali, National Office Racial Antidiscriminations) in its anti-discrimination program directly to local municipalities and its capabilities to fight acts of discrimination toward Muslims on all levels of everyday life.
- To organize a project with NGOs and Islamic associations for training courses dedicated to administrators, official, social and health operators in order to increase the knowledge of Islam and anti-discrimination practices.

## Chronology

- **24.01.2017:** Rome - Neofascist activists of *Casa Pound* and *Forza Nuova* prevented access to public housing to an Egyptian family, assigned by the Municipality of Rome.
- **06.02.2017:** Pistoia - Demonstration of *Forza Nuova* against the building of a mosque and local priest favourable to it.
- **24.05.2017:** Milan – The Marrakesh Lounge Bar, a socialization bar for local North African migrants, was set on fire.
- **28.06.2017:** Perignano (Pisa) – *Forza Nuova* placed a banner against a local priest of a small village, proclaimed guilty of supporting migrants and nurturing relationships with Muslim families.
- **04.07.2017:** Milan – Foundation of the Anti-Islamization Party “for fighting the radicalization of Islam and any efforts to subjugate the social and cultural freedom of the West.”
- **04.07.2017:** Vobarno (Lombardy) – At night, a Molotov bomb is thrown at a hotel that was preparing to host migrants.
- **09.07.2017:** Ostia (Rome) – *Casa Pound* organized an attack on the beach against migrant street vendors.

- **27.07.2017:** Nuoro (Sardinia) - Two Nigerians boys are injured by a bomb thrown at the Refugee Centre.
- **20.08.2017:** The Newspaper *Libero* publishes a front-page headline against the *Ius Soli* Bill and the Italian prime minister stating “Gentiloni Awards the Terrorists: Citizenship to All!”
- **15.08.2017:** Rimini - A couple was arrested in a bus after they robbed, insulted (“I’ll make you miscarry, nigger of shit”) and pushed a Senegalese woman (39), who was six months pregnant.
- **07.09.2017:** Cantù (Lombardy) - *Forza Nuova* placed a banner on the gate of a local Catholic church against the parish priest, accused of being guilty of supporting dialogue with the Muslim community.
- **13.09.2017:** Publication of the book *O capiamo, o moriamo* (We Understand or We Die) by Catholic extremist Mario Adinolfi with specific content against Islam and Muslim migrants.
- **03.10.2017:** Publication of the book *Maometto e il suo Allah, ovvero l’invenzione del Corano* (Mohamed and his Allah, or the invention of the Qur’an) by famous editor-in-chief and politician Magdi Cristiano Allam, who converted to Catholicism years ago.
- **13.10.2017:** Cremona (Lombardy) – The local parish priest of a small village organized a rosary against Islam.
- **28.10.2017:** Rome - A Bengali man and an Egyptian man were brutally beaten by far-right youths while they waited for the bus after work.
- **09.11.2017:** Legnano (Lombardy) – Militants of *Forza Nuova* placed a banner stating “Learn to defend us and to fight invasion” and circulated flyers with phrases from the Qur’an.
- **11.11.2017:** Savona – *Forza Nuova* placed two banners, one against the “Islamization of Italy” and the other against the National Association of Partisans.
- **21.11.2017:** The publication of the book *Islamofollia* by Maurizio Belpietro.
- **29.11.2017:** Como – An attack by a neo-Nazi skinhead group against a Migration Centre.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
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## Executive Summary

The presence of Islamophobia in 2017 Latvian politics is the most striking departure point for the current report. This year has been marked by the strengthening of an Islamophobic attitude in political discourse which was manifested in the pre-election agendas of parties and political alliances. However, politicians lined up into completely opposing positions in their attitudes towards a previously drafted law on the restriction on wearing face coverings and could neither reject nor adopt it. Regarding the labour market, it should be noted that it is difficult for asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa to achieve socio-economic integration in Latvia because knowledge of the Latvian language is compulsory in the labour market, and the business environment is largely reluctant towards such job seekers. Institutions in charge of personal integration and socio-economic inclusion have failed to propose realistic solutions for these problems. As opposed to other state institutions a positive example is the Ministry of Education and Science which provides financial support to educational bodies that admit underage asylum seekers and draft individual curricula for their tuition. In the media environment, Islamophobia is manifested on a regular basis, e.g. in scandalous headlines, bias interpretations and in the form of fake news. Islamophobic attitudes are still mostly voiced on the Internet: on webpages of far-right groups, social networks, forums and blogs, and especially in comments of news agency portals where clearly Islamophobic statements can be found regularly. Regarding the central figures in the Latvian Islamophobic network, in 2017 public attention was attracted only by the organisation *Tēviņas sargi* (Fatherland guards) who staged an open act of intimidation near the premises of the *asylum seeker* accommodation centre *Mucenieki*.

## Kopsavilkums

Vispārīgi raksturojot islāmafobijas klātbūtni Latvijā 2017. gadā dažādās jomās, vispirms jāizceļ politika. Šo gadu raksturoja islāmafobiskas attieksmes nostiprināšanās politisku diskursā, ko apliecina partiju un partiju apvienību priekšvēlēšanu programmas. Toties attieksmē pret agrāk izstrādāto sejas aizsegšanas ierobežojuma likumprojektu politiķi nostājās diametrāli pretējās pozīcijās un nespēja to ne noraidīt, ne pieņemt. Runājot par darba tirgu, jāuzsver, ka patvērumu meklētājiem no Tuvajiem Austrumiem un Ziemeļāfrikas ir sarežģīti sociālekonomiski integrēties Latvijā, jo darba tirgū ir obligātas latviešu valodas zināšanas un uzņēmējdarbības vidē dominē noraidošā attieksme. Par personu integrāciju un sociālekonomisko iekļaušanos Latvijā atbildīgās iestādes nav spējušas piedāvāt reālus risinājumus problēmu novēršanai. Uz pārējo valsts iestāžu fona pozitīvi izceļas Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, kas finansiāli atbalsta izglītības iestādes, kas uzņem nepilngadīgos patvēruma meklētājus un izstrādā individuālus plānus viņu izglītošanai. Plašsaziņas līdzekļi ir vide, kur islāmafobija rod izpausmi regulāri: gan skandalozos avīžu virsrakstos, gan tendenciozā interpretācijā, gan viltus ziņu formā. Islāmafobiska attieksme joprojām visaktīvāk izpaužas interneta vidē: labēji radikālo grupu mājas lapās, sociālajos tīklos, forumos un blogos, bet it īpaši ziņu portālu komentāru sadaļās, kur regulāri atrodami klaji islāmafobiski izteikumi. Runājot par centrālajām figūrām islāmafobijas tīklā, nākas secināt, ka 2017. gadā sabiedrības uzmanību piesaistīja tikai *Tēvijas sargi*, kas sarīkoja demonstratīvu iebiedēšanas akciju pie patvēruma meklētāju izmitināšanas ēkas Muceniekos.

## Introduction

The dynamics of current events in the last years in Latvia suggest that Islamophobia is a complicated phenomenon which needs to be looked at from various perspectives. On the one hand, we can assume that Islamophobic outrages in Latvia reflect the general mood of public dissatisfaction about the socio-economic situation in the country primarily exemplified in the rising risk of poverty. On the other hand, an Islamophobic attitude can be regarded as a manifestation of prejudice against Otherness, an attitude that has been accumulated over a long period of time. The incidents of 2017 should also be analysed against the background of specific political and intellectual developments. Ideologically, Islamophobia in Latvia is closely related to problems of nationalism and ethnic minorities. It must be taken into consideration that most of the population of Latvia has never encountered a Muslim in their daily life and, therefore, in the case of Latvia we can speak of an Islamophobia without Muslims.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

There have been two incidents that deeply characterise the situation in Latvia. In November, Martins Grinbergs (Mārtiņš Grīnbergs), who was arrested by Turkish authorities and convoyed to Latvia, was sentenced to 10 years and three months in prison for fighting with ISIS.<sup>1</sup> In February, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a note from the UAE about an incident at Riga Airport stating that security staff had failed to honour Muslim traditions and the diplomatic immunity of their newly appointed ambassador. The airport staff explained that during a security check the ambassador had not been asked to take off her traditional Muslim outfit and headscarf. They stated that the ambassador had only been asked to take off her coat and that she had been frisked in line with the standard procedures for airport security requirements in the European Union.<sup>2</sup> This incident reflects a misinterpretation of different cultural norms and a lack of knowledge: the airport security officers identified the traditional female Muslim attire as a “coat” and according to regulations, all passengers are usually required to take off their coats during security checks.

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1. “Prokurore par Mārtiņa karošanu «Islāma valsts» rindās: Sods ir atbilstošs,” *Apollo*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from [http://www.tvnet.lv/apollo/arhivs/813625-prokurore\\_par\\_martina\\_karosanu\\_islama\\_valsts\\_rindas\\_sods\\_ir\\_atbilstoss](http://www.tvnet.lv/apollo/arhivs/813625-prokurore_par_martina_karosanu_islama_valsts_rindas_sods_ir_atbilstoss).

2. “Lidosta “Rīga”: AAE vēstniecei netika prasīts novilkt musulmaņu tērpu,” *Latvijas Avīze*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://www.la.lv/lidosta-riga-aae-vestniecei-netika-prasits-novilkt-musulmanu-terpu/>.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

In 2017, Latvian municipal elections were the main political event in the country. Most pre-election programmes contained hidden discrimination. Right-wing and centrist parties and party alliances (*Nacionālā apvienība*,<sup>3</sup> *Zaļo un zemnieku savienība*,<sup>4</sup> “*Gods kalpot Latvijai*”,<sup>5</sup> “*Vienotība*”,<sup>6</sup> “*Savam novadam*”,<sup>7</sup> *Latvijai un Ventspilij, Latgales partija*<sup>8</sup>) in their pre-election programmes underlined their support for traditionally acknowledged religious organisations<sup>9</sup> in Latvia, e.g. the National Alliance (*Nacionālā apvienība*) promised to “safeguard traditional family values, based on both Latvian wisdom of life and Christian values.”<sup>10</sup> It has to be emphasised that also the left, i.e. the social democratic party Harmony (*Saskaņa*), voiced an identical opinion and promised “to respect the national self-esteem of each regional inhabitant and their affiliation with traditional religious communities”.<sup>11</sup>

Some pre-election programmes demonstrated clearly Islamophobic attitudes, e.g. in Riga, the Action Party of Eurosceptics (*Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija*) included in their programme the following slogan “We are not against Muslims, we are

3. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Nacionālā apvienība „Visu Latvijai!” – „Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=yLeZ0nmGfEr6Ga%2BQP6VEqA%3D%3D>.

4. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=EWj9G68gmxxdloJ7QayTZA%3D%3D>.

5. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Gods kalpot mūsu Latvijai,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=i3K7lWd45u3RKQ%2BH19alhA%3D%3D>.

6. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Partija Vienotība,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=hpKynfWwX%2BNeMCjmXiPIWg%3D%3D>.

7. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Savam novadam,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=RQp8M%2B7TX3JnIjAaeKzoEg%3D%3D>.

8. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Latgales partija,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=liMtjBdz3HfVubL%2FrrBukg%3D%3D>.

9. The Latvian legislation recognizes the prevalence of the following traditional religious organizations and communities: Lutheran, Catholic, Orthodox, Old-Believer, Methodist, Baptist, Seventh-Day Adventists, and Jewish.

10. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Nacionālā apvienība „Visu Latvijai!” – „Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=t73FtbBbeJvZLnUDNyeNgA%3D%3D>.

11. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Saskaņa sociāldemokrātiskā partija,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=pq3SbOOrz2diTrjsG2UxQg%3D%3D>.

against the Islamisation of Latvia and Europe.”<sup>12</sup> The harshest of all was the National Alliance (*Nacionālā apvienība*), which stated, “We are in support of not letting into Liepāja illegal immigrants called ‘refugees’ – potential criminals, terrorists and idlers! There will be no mosques here!”<sup>13</sup>

## Justice System

A draft law on the restriction on wearing face coverings worked out by the Ministry of Justice (2015) is still under consideration and has not reached the parliament of Latvia, which will have to decide whether to adopt it as legislation. On November 14, the Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the Latvian Saeima did not pass a decision on the draft “Law on the Restriction on Wearing Face Coverings” because representatives of several institutions and several MPs had voiced criticism about the quality of the indicative abstract and the wording of the draft.<sup>14</sup> Several state institutions and officials objected to the draft law on the restriction of face coverings. The Office of the Ombudsman pointed out that by restricting specific groups right to wear head veils it is impossible to reach the intended aim which is to ensure the existence of a united and harmonious society.<sup>15</sup>

## Employment

Muslims who have entered Latvia during the last years face a risk of discrimination in the labour market. The Law on Immigration states that an asylum seeker is granted the right to employment only if he or she has not received a decision from the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs on the status of a refugee or an alternative status within six months after applying, when this has not occurred through any fault of the applicant. (Law on Immigration Article 9.5.23). The right to employment without restrictions is granted to all individuals who have obtained the status of a refugee or alternative status.

During a poll conducted by the market and public opinion research centre SXDS 750, business owners and managers were surveyed. The business environment in Latvia is predominantly negative towards asylum seekers from the Middle East and North Africa: 74% of businessmen would rather not offer employment to asylum seekers. A more positive attitude is demonstrated by large and medium-sized

12. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Eiroskeptiķu Rīcības partija,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=8k1v7yBEuCMERyWBkqtfTQ%3D%3D>.

13. Centrālā vēlēšanu komisija. “Nacionālā savienīga Taisnīgums,” 2017. gada 3. jūnija pašvaldību vēlēšanas, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://pv2017.cvk.lv/CandidateLists/CandidateList?candidateListId=0zFqpAsLIE456csFZERqxQ%3D%3D>.

14. “Sejas aizsegšanas ierobežojums joprojām tālu no pieņemšanas,” *Apollo*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from [http://www.tvnet.lv/apollo/arhivs/813314-sejas\\_aizsegšanas\\_ierobejojums\\_joprojam\\_talu\\_no\\_pienemsanas](http://www.tvnet.lv/apollo/arhivs/813314-sejas_aizsegšanas_ierobejojums_joprojam_talu_no_pienemsanas).

15. “Pret sejas aizsegšanas ierobežojumiem vēl daudz iebildumu,” *lat.grani.lv*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://lat.grani.lv/latvia/12972-pret-sejas-aizsegšanas-ierobejojumiem-vel-daudz-iebildumu.html>.

companies as half of those businessmen responded that they would be ready to offer a job to asylum seekers. Furthermore, there is a common regularity in so far as the larger the company, the more willingness to employ asylum seekers: 56% of the large companies (with 250 employees or more) would be ready to employ an asylum seeker. Among medium-sized companies (50 to 249 employees) 41% expressed readiness to employ asylum seekers. Among small businesses (10 to 49 employees) 29% would be willing to employ refugees, whereas only 14% of the micro-companies (less than 10 employees) would hire refugees.<sup>16</sup>

## Education

The “Guidelines for Municipal Employees Working with Newcomers (Immigrants)” drafted by the Riga City Council and the Latvian Centre for Human Rights proposes that underage asylum seekers, refugees and persons with alternative status should be granted an opportunity to obtain education in the official language (Latvian) either in a state or municipal educational institution.<sup>17</sup> The Ministry of Education and Science based on information provided by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs or the State Border Guard upon a request by the parents of the minor or his or her representative decides upon the educational institution taking into consideration the location where he or she is accommodated. Within three months, underage asylum seekers are given the possibility to attend school and they are entitled to finish obtaining general education also after the age of 18. The Ministry of Education and Science provides financial support to educational bodies that admit underage asylum seekers (but not minors who have been granted the status of refugee or alternative status) and draft individual curricula for their tuition.

## Media

The main mass media topics in 2017 in Latvia were terrorism, migration and face-covering attire. News about acts of terror were, as usually, republished from Western news agencies; however, regarding different analytical publications about global socio-political processes, the authors referred mainly to the Russian mass media. As a result, the public opinion in Latvia about the Islamic world is influenced by the Russian information space which is freely accessible for most of the population due to their good command of the Russian language. An example of this is the leading cultural Internet journal *Satori* which published a summary on the difficul-

16. “Puse lielo uzņēmumu gatavi piedāvāt darbu patvēruma meklētājiem, mazie – būtiski neatsaucīgāki,” *Citadele*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <https://www.cblgroup.com/lv/mediju-telpa/preses-relizes/2017/puse-lielo-uznemumu-gatavi-piedavat-darbu-patveruma-mekletajiem-mazie-butiski-neatsaucigaki/>.

17. Vadlīnijas pašvaldības darbiniekiem darbā ar jauniebraucējiem (imigrantiem) (Rīga: Rīgas dome, 2017), p. 9.

ties that the academic world faces in attempts to define “Islamic fundamentalism”<sup>18</sup> where all references led to Russian sources.

The articles on migration concentrated on the problem of how to live peacefully with people from other cultures and religions. The media concluded that the possibilities for refugees entering the labour market were related to the work culture in their countries of origin: those refugees who came from countries where work culture was similar to Latvia's, i.e. where working hours, workloads and the fulfilment of employer's requirements were regulated by law, did not have problems with finding a job, keeping the job, and getting along with their colleagues.<sup>19</sup>

The media actively followed the consideration of the draft law on the restriction of wearing face coverings and published different opinions on wearing headscarves at work and in educational institutions, relating to the situation in Austria and Switzerland - Austria bans full-face veils<sup>20</sup> and Muslim girls in Switzerland cannot be exempted from swimming classes where boys and girls swim together.<sup>21</sup>

Among others, the Russian language newspaper *Vesti Segodna* stood out on 21 June with a front-page photo of a refugee family and the headline “Whole Villages of Arabs Are Sent to Latvia”.<sup>22</sup> The article referred to an interview of an influential German politician, Co-Chair of the Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance in the European Parliament Ska Keller to the German newspaper *Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, where Keller had stated that in Latvia a whole Syrian village could be accommodated. This article shows signs of fake news since the opinion of Ska Keller was presented as the general position of the European Parliament. The headline gave the impression that a decision had already been passed although this was just the opinion of one politician – an opinion that had already been distorted in the German media.

## Internet

Islamophobic attitudes were most actively displayed on the Internet. Even though aggressive comments usually follow every article on any subject, an Islamophobic attitude was most evident in comments on news about acts of terror in European cities. Looking back at 2017, the portal *pietiek.com* published the following account of

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18. Zanders, Māris. “Tuvojas Ziemassvētki, īstais brīdis parunāt par islāmu,” *Satori*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://www.satori.lv/article/tuvojas-ziemassvetki-istais-bridis-parunat-par-islam>.

19. “Bēgļu integrācija darba tirgū,” *Ir*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://www.irlv.lv/blogi/politika/beglu-integracija-darba-tirgu>.

20. “Austrija aizliedz parandžas,” *Diena*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/pasaule/eiropa/austrijas-jaunais-parandzu-aizliegums-apmulsina-policiju-14182392>.

21. “ECT: Musulmaņu meitenēm jāapmeklē obligātās peldēšanas stundas,” *Diena*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/pasaule/eiropa/ect-musulmanu-meitenem-jaapmekle-obligatas-peldesanas-stundas-14163533>.

22. “Арабов в Латвию шлют деревнями,” *Livejournal*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <https://bक्सartis.livejournal.com/246385.html>.

events: “This year so far Muslims have carried out in total 94 attacks in 18 countries killing around 1363 people and injuring around 978.”<sup>23</sup>

An Islamophobic reaction in social networks was caused by a Facebook post of Latvian Liga Fatima Legzdina (*Līga Fātima Legzdiņa*), who converted to Islam 10 years ago: “I invite you to come to a mosque, to get to know brothers and sisters, read the Koran and understand that only the Western civilisation is evil.”<sup>24</sup> Outrage in social networks was caused also by another Latvian Muslim convert, the producer and publicist Roberts Klimovics (Roberts Klimovičs), who declared in a TV interview: “I believe that Latvians and not only Latvians, but all women should marry only Muslim men. I do not advise Muslims to marry Latvian women.”<sup>25</sup> In these cases, Islamophobia manifested itself in linguistic form: expressions such as “madness”, “mental illness”, “Muslim fanaticism” were consistently used in relation to Islam and Muslims.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In 2017, the organisation *Tēvijas sargi* (Fatherland guards) gained public attention by staging an open act of intimidation near the premises of the *asylum seeker* accommodation centre *Mucenieki*. On 30 September, the organisation posted photographs on social networks showing their members in camouflage pants and hooded jackets standing in line near the building of the *asylum seeker* accommodation centre.<sup>26</sup> A representative of the group, Janis Sils (Jānis Sils), explained the intention of the stunt as follows: “This is Latvia, the land of Latvians, and our rules must prevail. These are things that we should not be afraid to say loudly, stand up for, and even fight for.”<sup>27</sup> The group is comprised of men whose ideological discourse also includes gender issues: “For a nation to be vital, to be sparking with the flame of life, it is necessary to have a clear division of male and female roles. Unfortunately, now one of these opposite poles – the masculine – is being purposefully degraded. [...] immigration to Europe is a natural result of unsettled balance. Because who are these immigrants? Mostly young, vital, aggressive men!”<sup>28</sup>

23. “Takfir: divieļu kari jeb kāpēc musulmanis nogalina musulmani,” *Pietiek.com*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from [http://m.pietiek.com/raksti/takfir\\_divielu\\_kari\\_jeb\\_kapec\\_musulmanis\\_nogalina\\_musulmani\\_r\\_n?nomob](http://m.pietiek.com/raksti/takfir_divielu_kari_jeb_kapec_musulmanis_nogalina_musulmani_r_n?nomob).

24. “Islāmticīgās latvietes Līgas Fatimas ieraksts “Facebook” izraisa traci sociālajos tīklos,” *Kasjauns.lv*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from [http://jauns.lv/raksts/zinas/251598-islamticigas-latvietes-ligas-fatimas-ieraksts-facebook-izraisa-traci-socialajos-tiklos?utm\\_source=delfi.lv&utm\\_medium=widget-include&utm\\_campaign=Links-in-partner-sites](http://jauns.lv/raksts/zinas/251598-islamticigas-latvietes-ligas-fatimas-ieraksts-facebook-izraisa-traci-socialajos-tiklos?utm_source=delfi.lv&utm_medium=widget-include&utm_campaign=Links-in-partner-sites).

25. “Klimovičs: Latvietēm vajadzētu precēties tikai ar islāma ticīgajiem,” *TVNET/ONLINE TV*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from [http://www.tvnet.lv/online\\_tv/72852-klimovics\\_latvietem\\_vajadzetu\\_preceties\\_tikai\\_ar\\_islama\\_ticigajiem](http://www.tvnet.lv/online_tv/72852-klimovics_latvietem_vajadzetu_preceties_tikai_ar_islama_ticigajiem).

26. ““Tēvijas sargu” biedējošā akcija Muceniekos piesaista Drošības policijas uzmanību,” *Latvijas Avīze*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://www.la.lv/tevijas-sargu-biedejosa-akcija-muceniekos-piesaista-drosibas-policijas-uzmanibu/>.

27. “Pavisam vienkārši – šī ir latviešu zeme. Saruna ar saruna ar biedrības “Tēvijas sargi” pārstāvi Jāni Silu,” *Latvijas Avīze*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://www.la.lv/pavisam-vienkarsi-si-ir-latviesu-zemel/>.

28. “Pavisam vienkārši – šī ir latviešu zeme. Saruna ar saruna ar biedrības “Tēvijas sargi” pārstāvi Jāni Silu,” *Latvijas Avīze*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://www.la.lv/pavisam-vienkarsi-si-ir-latviesu-zemel/>.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Under the International NORDPLUS ADULT project “SURPRISE: Meeting Other Culture” carried out by the Latvian Christian Academy, a guidebook,<sup>29</sup> with an identical title was published. In 2017, the centre for public policy *Providus* started two important projects: (1) Visualizing Migration (2017–2018) which aims at fostering inclusion of migration-related issues in the curricula of high school social science classes in order to improve understanding of migration processes and change the perception of newcomers in Latvian society;<sup>30</sup> (2) “RACCOMBAT – Preventing and Combatting Racism and Xenophobia through Social Orientation of Non-Nationals” (2017–2019) with the aim to incorporate elements of the rule of law in language tuition and social orientation of non-nationals.<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In Latvia, the opinion grows stronger that Islam is a dangerous phenomenon and in order to strengthen secular freedom, the freedom of Muslims should be restricted. Moreover, this opinion is defended not only by right-wing political forces but also by the leftists causing concern about the institutionalisation of Islamophobia in Latvia. Islamophobia fits very well into the landscape of current ethnic and political problems in Latvia; namely, the transition from Russian to Latvian as the language of instruction in all schools of Latvia and the delay in opening the Soviet KGB files which provides fertile soil for different conspiracy theories.

Employment is the decisive factor of socio-economic inclusion and integration. It is necessary to introduce a transition period during which it would be possible to become employed while beginning to learn Latvian. Allowing refugees to start working at an earlier stage would reduce their dependence on the social aid system and would accelerate their integration into society.

To reduce the existing prejudice against Muslims, the media should emphasise positive examples of integration and good practice instead of making the issue of Muslims topical only after acts of terrorism.

Since educational institutions currently prefer STEM subjects, a devaluation of humanities is taking place which in turn denies young people the ability to understand the genesis of different cultures and traditions in a world dominated by

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29. Dišlers, G., Dolace, D., Altošar, A., Mereckiene, R., Petronis, V., Gossner, J., SURPRISE: Meeting Other Culture (Riga: Sava Gramata, 2017). Available at: <http://www.projects.kra.lv/NORDPLUS/SURPRISE%20handbook%20PDF.pdf>.

30. “Migrācijas vizualizācija,” *Providus.lv*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://providus.lv/article/migracijas-vizualizacija>.

31. “RACCOMBAT: Rasisma un ksenofobijas novēršana un apkarošana, attīstot citu valstu pilsoņu sociālās prasmes,” *Providus.lv*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://providus.lv/article/raccombat-rasisma-un-ksenofobijas-noversana-un-apkarosana-attistot-citu-valstu-pilsonu-socialas-prasmes>.

globalised capitalism. Schools are producing a “business proletariat”,<sup>32</sup> capable of dealing with the latest technologies but unable to delve deeper into issues of human history - including history of religions -, while they easily adopt already-made opinions and “non-disputable” truths.

## Chronology

- **24.02.2017:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a note from the UAE about an incident at Riga Airport stating that security staff had failed to honour Muslim traditions and the diplomatic immunity of their newly appointed ambassador.
- **03.06.2017:** During the municipal pre-election programmes parties and political alliances demonstrated Islamophobic attitudes.
- **21.06.2017:** *Vesti Segodna* published an article titled “Whole Villages of Arabs Are Sent to Latvia”.
- **30.09.2017:** The organisation *Tēvijas sargi* (Fatherland guards) staged an act of intimidation near the premises of the *asylum seeker* accommodation centre *Mucenieki*.
- **14.11.2017:** The Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee of the Latvian Saeima did not pass a decision on the draft law entitled “Law on the Restriction on Wearing Face Coverings”.
- **04.12.2017:** The portal *pietiek.com* reported that in 2017 Muslims had carried out a total of 94 attacks in 18 countries killing around 1363 people and injuring around 978.

32. Kļaviņš, Kaspars. “Ekstrēmisma teorētiskie avoti,” *Latvijas Avīze*, retrieved December 27, 2017, from <http://www.la.lv/ekstremisma-teoretiskie-avoti/>.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**LITHUANIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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DAIVA REPEČKAITĖ



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## Executive Summary

Overall, 2017 was a peaceful year, with few recorded incidents of mistreatment of individual Muslims or their communities and little prominence of Islamophobic discourse on official channels. Nonetheless, Lithuania remained on the route of the global circulation of Islamophobic statements and images. Such materials were often translated from foreign sources and adapted to the local context by enthusiastic translators, ‘concerned citizens’ or, perhaps naively, mainstream journalists. Such messages focused on predictable main themes: alleging that Muslims disproportionately commit crimes in Western Europe, and local authorities do not report or investigate them in the name of political correctness; conflating refugees, Muslims and migrants to scaremonger; accusing Muslims of being agents of Europe’s loss of identity and Christian values.

Islamophobic messages were typically spread as foreign and local philosophers’ ideas or concerned citizens’ opinions, and as such have a right to be present in the marketplace of ideas as long as they do not contain incitement or calls to discriminate, as exemplified by an op-ed by Vytautas Sinica discussed below, where the author called for discriminatory screening on the basis of religion after a terror attack in Barcelona. Thus, at this stage, the main recommendation for Lithuanian and EU authorities, civil society and equality bodies is to continue monitoring these developments, proactively identify hate speech and calls to discriminate, and report and prosecute perpetrators accordingly when legal boundaries have been overstepped.

There is also a need for awareness raising in media organisations about the boundaries between freedom of speech and hate speech, as well as about the impact of uncritically spreading prejudice and providing a platform for Islamophobic speakers and authors to express their ideas. This is crucial in the struggle against fake news, which remain prominent in the far-right ecosystem of information, where websites and social network sites cite, translate and recycle Islamophobic messages across borders.

## Santrauka

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad 2017 metai Lietuvoje buvo gana ramūs: išpuolių prieš individualius musulmonus ir jų bendruomenes užfiksuota mažai. Net jei oficialiuose informacijos šaltiniuose pasitaikydavo islamofobiškų teiginių, jų sklaida ir poveikis buvo riboti. Nepaisant to, Lietuvoje išliko globalios islamofobiškų teiginių ir vaizdinių apytakos stotele. Vietiniai entuziastai, „susirūpinę piliečiai” ir, galbūt tiesiog iš naivumo, didžiųjų žiniasklaidos priemonių žurnalistai entuziastingai vertino ir vietiniam kontekstui pritaikė islamofobišką medžiagą iš užsienio. Šio turinio temos buvo nesunkiai nuspėjamos: įrodinėjimai, esą musulmonai atsakingi už neproporcingai didelę nusikaltimų dalį Vakarų Europoje, o tenykštės institucijos tų nusikaltimų netiria ir apie juos nepraneša politinio korektiškumo vardan; pabėgėlių, musulmonų ir migrantų suplakimas siekiant įbauginti visuomenę; kaltinimai, esą musulmonai atsakingi už Europos tapatybės ir krikščioniškų vertybių nykimą.

Islamofobiškas turinys daugiausiai sklido iš užsienio atvykusių ir vietinių filosofų idėjų ar „susirūpinusių piliečių” nuomonių pavidalu. Tokie tekstai turi teisę gyvuoti idėjų „rinkoje” tol, kol juose nekurstoma neapykanta ir neraginama diskriminuoti religijos pagrindu, kaip kad nutiko vėliau cituojamame Vytauto Sinicos tekste, kuriame autorius propaguoja diskriminacines patikras religijos pagrindu po teroro išpuolio Barselonoje. Taigi pagrindinė rekomendacija Lietuvos ir ES politikos formuotojams, pilietinei visuomenei ir lygių galimybių institucijoms būtų toliau stebėti idėjų sklaidą, imtis veiksmų aptikti neapykantos kurstymą ir raginimus diskriminuoti, o kai įstatymų numatytos ribos peržengiamos – pranešti apie tokius atvejus atitinkamoms institucijoms ir juos nubausti įstatymų numatyta tvarka.

Taip pat yra poreikis gilinti žiniasklaidos darbuotojų žinias apie ribą tarp spaudos laisvės ir neapykantos kurstymo, taip pat – apie tai, kokį poveikį daro jų sprendimai nekritiškai skleisti išankstines nuostatas ir suteikti platformą islamofobiškiems veikėjams ir autoriams reikšti savo idėjas. Ši rekomendacija svarbi ir kovos prieš netikras naujienas, kurios užima labai svarbią vietą kraštutinės dešinės informacijos ekosistemoje, kur tinklalapiai ir socialinių tinklų erdvės cituoja, verčia ir perdirba islamofobišką informaciją iš kitų valstybių.

## Introduction

The latest census in Lithuania of 2011 states that 2,727 residents, or 0.09%, consider themselves Sunni Muslim.<sup>1</sup> Islamophobic discourse, predictably, was largely ‘imported’ rather than generated from local demographics.

After the debates surrounding the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 and the implementation of the EU quota in 2016, the year 2017 saw a relative normalisation of asylum. The government’s new policy to send refugees to smaller municipalities generated a flow of negative comments, with readers claiming that small Lithuanian towns will now be filled with ‘unintegrated’, burqa-wearing immigrants.<sup>2</sup> However, mainstream media remained just as eager to publish comments from experts on Islam, participants of international counter-prejudice projects, and the Muslim communities.

In this context, the present study is based on (1) analysis of activities of key institutions, (2) an inventory of articles on the main news websites tagged with ‘Muslims’ or ‘Islam’, (3) an analysis of the content of Internet sites identified in EIR 2016 as well as keyword searches on the web and Facebook, and (4) interviews with Mufti Romas Jakubauskas, and Renata Vanagėlienė, advisor at the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson. The report starts with the main discursive events relating to spreading of prejudice against Muslims, scaremongering and calls to discriminate, before mapping out the central figures in the ecosystem of Islamophobic messages and civil society initiatives to counter Islamophobia. Conclusions and recommendations are provided at the end of the report.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

The main alleged incidents against Muslims were recorded in prisons (see the section Justice System). There were very few incidents reported in Lithuania throughout 2017. Most of them, as shown below, relate to spreading prejudice against Muslims and building the population’s resistance to refugee resettlement.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

Discussions on Muslims and their rights were not politically prominent. The most notable example of a politician engaging in Islamophobic discourse was when Egidijus Vareikis, deputy chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Lithuanian

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1. Statistics Lithuania, “Results of the Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Lithuania,” 2013. Retrieved on January 5, 2018, from <http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/>.

2. Deimantė Gruodė, „Savivaldybių galvos skausmas: pabėgėlių neapgyvendinsi palapinėje,” *Kauno diena*, February 27, 2017, from <http://m.kauno.diena.lt/naujienos/lietuva/salies-pulsas/savivaldybiu-galvos-skausmas-pabegeliu-neapgyvendinsi-palapineje-799196>.

Parliament, wrote a scaremongering op-ed for the largest news website, *Delfi*, claiming that towards the end of the 21st century Sharia will become dominant in Europe. “[I]t will mean that instead of a community that promotes knowledge and technology, some sort of illiterate barbarism will dominate,” he wrote.<sup>3</sup>

### Justice System

There were reportedly 11 Muslims serving sentences in Lithuania as of May 2017. In 2017, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson received a complaint over non-accommodation of a Muslim inmate’s religious dietary restrictions. Since the same complaint was pending in court, the Ombudsperson did not pursue the investigation further.<sup>4</sup> Another Muslim inmate reported to the equality authority that a prison officer had allegedly confiscated and thrown away his prayer mat and torn his Koran. The complaint was forwarded to other authorities for investigation.<sup>5</sup>

There were 17 crimes of incitement registered, none of them as criminal offenses; 13 were forwarded to the courts and 5 closed by the prosecutor. The statistics are not disaggregated on the grounds of discrimination.<sup>6</sup>

### Employment

A focus group convened by the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson established that ethnic and religious minorities face discrimination as many employers do not employ minority candidates over lack of national language proficiency or fear of unfamiliar religion, customs or traditions. However, stakeholders agreed that discrimination tends to be implicit and difficult to prove.<sup>7</sup> No employment data by religion were released in 2017, and the ombudsperson did not report complaints in the area of employment. The research by the Institute of Ethnic Studies, quoted in the EIR 2016 report, remains the most up-to-date.

### Education

According to stakeholders participating in the Equal Opportunity Ombudsperson’s focus group, schools lack experience in dealing with diversity. Children face

3. Egidijus Vareikis, „Trejos Europos civilizacijos laidotuvės ir vienas prisikėlimas,” *Delfi*, November 30, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/politics/egidijus-vareikis-trejos-europos-civilizacijos-laidotuves-ir-vienas-prisikelimas.d?id=76493303>.

4. Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, “Sprendimas dėl galimos diskriminacijos religijos pagrindu teikiant maitinimo paslaugas laisvės atėmimo įstaigoje tyrimo,” August 28, 2017 No. (17)SN-120) SP-68.

5. Correspondence with Renata Vanagėlienė, senior advisor at the Legal Department, Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, January 16, 2017.

6. Information Technology and Communications Department under the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania, „Oficialioji statistika apie nusikalstamumą LR savivaldybėse, 2017 / Sausis - Gruodis,” retrieved January 8, 2018, from [https://www.ird.lt/paslaugos/nusikalstamu-veiku-zinybinio-registro-nvzr-paslaugos/ataskaitos-1/nusikalstamumo-ir-ikiteisminių-tyrimu-statistika-1/view\\_item\\_datasource?id=6760&datasource=18706](https://www.ird.lt/paslaugos/nusikalstamu-veiku-zinybinio-registro-nvzr-paslaugos/ataskaitos-1/nusikalstamumo-ir-ikiteisminių-tyrimu-statistika-1/view_item_datasource?id=6760&datasource=18706).

7. Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson, “Diskriminaciją dėl tautybės patiriančių asmenų apsauga Lietuvoje,” June 20, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <http://www.lygybe.lt/naujienos/diskriminacija-del-tautybes-patirianciu-asmenu-apsauga-lietuvoje/769>.

bullying over their accents or lack of Lithuanian language proficiency. Thus, although Lithuanian laws oblige educators and publishers of educational materials to prevent discrimination, there is an implementation gap.<sup>8</sup> No education data by religion were released in 2017, and the ombudsperson did not report complaints in the area of education.

## Media

Mainstream media continued providing a platform for Islamophobic speakers and statements with little editing and no disclaimers. French writer and philosopher Pascal Bruckner gave a speech at the French Institute, titled “The West vs Radical Islam and Putin’s Russia”. Bruckner’s claim that Europe had two enemies - “radical Islam in Western Europe and the Russians” was disseminated by the Lithuanian public broadcaster and the largest news website, *Delfi*.<sup>9</sup> On the Catholic news site *Bernardinai*, Bruckner went on to claim that the term ‘Islamophobia’ is presented as ‘imaginary racism’.<sup>10</sup>

The role of *Delfi* as a marketplace of all kinds of ideas remained prominent in 2017. Lithuania’s largest news site republished texts from various blogs, including texts which had no Islamophobic intentions, but contributed to stereotyping and scaremongering. For example, a diary of a woman who attended a Muslim wedding abroad states: “The Muslim world is unknown, alien and hard to comprehend for us, Europeans

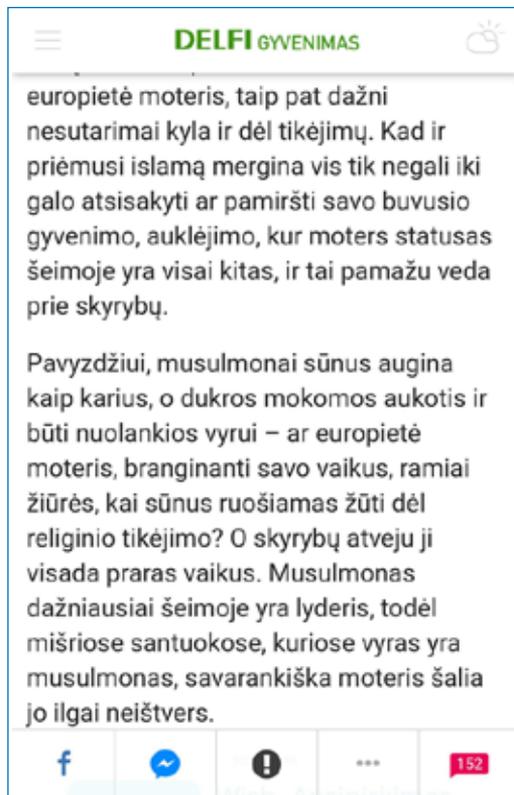


Figure 1: Text from Delfi, conflating Muslims and jihadis.<sup>11</sup>

8. Ibid.

9. Agnė Kairiūnaitė, „P. Bruckneris: noras būti laimingam nuo gimimo iki kapo duobės – slegianti idėja,” *LRT*, March 26, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <https://www.delfi.lt/veidai/kultura/p-bruckneris-noras-buti-laimingam-nuo-gimimo-iki-kapo-duobes-slegianti-ideja.d?id=74167700>.

10. Pascal Bruckner (translated by Dangė Vitkienė), “Islamofobija. Įsivaizduojamas rasizmas,” *Bernardinai*, translated from *nzz.ch*, May 15, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2017-05-15-pascal-bruckner-islamofobija-isivaizduojamas-rasizmas/159353>.

11. Virginija Buškevičiūtė-Lukauskienė, „Meilė neklausia tautybės, arba visa tiesa apie mišrias santuokas,” *Info ekspresas*, republished by *Delfi*, March 12, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <https://www.delfi.lt/gyvenimas/meile/meile-neklusia-tautybes-arba-visa-tiesa-apie-misrias-santuokas.d?id=74008042>.

[...]. Seeing a Muslim wedding with my own eyes allowed me to understand once again how lucky we, girls and women, are to live according to Western rules.”<sup>12</sup> Similarly, *Delfi* republished an article from *Info ekspresas* on mixed marriage. (Fig. 1) Conflating Muslims and jihadis, the author asked, “Would a European woman, who cherishes her children, calmly look on as her son is being prepared to die for his religious belief?”<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, accounts from anti-prejudice campaigns also ended up in *Delfi*. A participant of an international youth exchange, called ‘Beyond the label #refugee’, wrote a diary-like entry of his first visit to a social centre for asylum seekers, where he met a family from Syria. “I’ll admit, before meeting the refugees I had a different image in my head – angry, dirty, privilege-requesting newcomers from the Middle East. The family I met immediately dispelled any stereotypes dwelling in my head about refugees,” the young man wrote.<sup>14</sup> *Respublika*, a far-right weekly and website, denounced conferences and youth exchanges focusing on refugees as a method to “entangle naive local youth” into refugee integration.<sup>15</sup>

Overall, in the name of freedom of opinion and an attempt to be a diverse marketplace of ideas, mainstream media gave a platform to both Islamophobic and anti-Islamophobic authors. Separation between facts and opinion, fact-checking and impact assessment of prejudice perpetuated in op-eds remained areas to be improved.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

The Mufti Jakubauskas describes Islamophobic incidents as ‘petty’. Although he believes his community would tell him should such incidents happen, he asserts that the established Muslim community (Tatars) is protected by long-standing traditions of coexistence. Asked whether his community’s women in religious attire told him of any incidents, he said “There are verbal remarks and unwanted stares, but they do not escalate to the level where [a woman] would be hurt or refused service. Staring is not a crime.”<sup>16</sup>

12. Justina Šveikytė, „Iš musulmonų vestuvių grįžusi lietuvė: supratau, kokios laimingos esame,” *rinkosaitke.lt*, republished by *Delfi*, October 12, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <https://www.delfi.lt/gyvenimas/istorijos/is-musulmonu-vestuviu-grizusi-lietuve-supratau-kokios-laimingos-esame.d?id=75998407>.

13. Virginija Buškevičiūtė-Lukauskienė, „Meilė neklausia tautybės, arba visa tiesa apie mišrias santuokas,” *Info ekspresas*, republished by *Delfi*, March 12, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <https://www.delfi.lt/gyvenimas/meile/meile-neklausia-tautybes-arba-visa-tiesa-apie-misrias-santuokas.d?id=74008042>.

14. Unnamed, „Praleido dieną su Vilniaus musulmonais: viskas yra kitaip nei įsivaizduojate”, *Delfi*, July 26, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <https://www.delfi.lt/pilietis/naujienos/praleido-diena-su-vilniaus-musulmonais-viskas-yra-kitaip-nei-isivaizduojate.d?id=75317359>; similar article published as Adas Viliušis, „Pažintis su Vilniaus musulmonų bendruomene,” *Bernardinai*, July 28, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, from <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2017-07-28-pazintis-su-vilniaus-musulmonu-bendruomene/162155>.

15. Olava Strikulienė, „Į pabėgėlių integraciją ketinama įpainioti naivų vietinį jaunimą,” *Respublika*, October 22, 2017.

16. Interview with R. Jakubauskas, January 8, 2018.



Figure 2: Screenshot of Vytautas Sinica's article on terror attacks in Barcelona.<sup>20</sup>

coordinated and culturally condoned. He also advocated banning foreign-funded NGOs that help refugees.<sup>19</sup>

Prolific far-right author Vytautas Sinica, writing for *Alkas*, seconded U.S. President Donald Trump's comments, calling mainstream U.S. media 'fake news' organisations unless they "condemn Islam as a religion of hate, which incites terror attacks." He also called for "proper checks" on Muslims already living in Europe and "repressing them at the first suspicion."<sup>21</sup> As Figure 2 shows, these thoughts were also circulated in the right-wing information ecosystem (in this case *Pro Patria*), replacing the word 'repressing' with 'punishing', in a statement that "there isn't and cannot be a place for Muslims, especially from North Africa, in peaceful and civilised Europe, and those who are already there will be duly surveilled and punished under grounded

## Internet

As in the past years, Islamophobic messages could be found on far-right websites. The most mainstream of them is *Propatria*. In an op-ed, philosopher Vytautas Radžvilas, who teaches at Vilnius University, compared Muslims in London, allegedly potential jihadis, with disenfranchised Polish-speaking residents of Lithuania in the 1990s, who opposed Lithuanian independence.<sup>17</sup>

*Alkas*, another far-right news source, translated an article by Giulio Meotti of the Italian *Il Foglio* attributing the act of terror in Barcelona to an Islamist claim on Spain.<sup>18</sup> The website also published a conference paper by politician and environmentalist Vitalijus Balkus, where he claimed that the incidents of sexual harassment in Cologne had been

17. Vytautas Radžvilas, „Išsigelbėjimo Europai ieškokime su Višegrado šalimis (II),“ *Propatria*, April 12, 2017.

18. Giulio Meotti, "Musulmonai sako Europai: vieną dieną visa tai bus mūsų," *Alkas*, August 25, 2017.

19. Vitalijus Balkus, "Migracija gali tapti katastrofa Lietuvai," *Alkas*, November 11, 2017.

20. Vytautas Sinica, „Trys trumpi klausimai po žudynių Barselonoje“. *Pro Patria*, August 18, 2017, retrieved on March 5, 2018.

21. Vytautas Sinica, "Jau atbukome teroro išpuoliams?" *Alkas*, August 28, 2017.

suspicion...”<sup>22</sup> This call is perhaps the closest that authors (disregarding people posting comments under online articles) got to inciting discrimination.

Facebook remained a location where Islamophobic beliefs could spread in the form of pages and groups, which followed the far-right ideology, as evident in Figure 3.

One Facebook group, No to refugees in Lithuania, translated and reposted articles from foreign far-right websites like *Breitbart*. (Fig. 4) The main Lithuanian sources were *infa.lt* and *Pro Patria*.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There is no single party that is following a primarily Islamophobic agenda. While conservative politicians continued decrying Europe’s loss of the Christian domination, they did not obstruct the implementation of the refugee quotas or introduce measures that disproportionately affect Muslims. Fringe parties mentioned in the EIR 2016 report, like the Lithuanian People’s Party or Coalition of Nationalists against Corruption and Poverty were marginalised during the election of 2016 and did not substantially influence the public discourse.

Unlike marginal politicians, Islamophobic philosophers exert considerable influence over young people. Far-right media and activists, failing to find compel-



Figure 3: Far-right group uses the slogan ‘Lithuania for Lithuanians’ as their cover photo on Facebook.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 4: Example of an anti-refugee Facebook group citing the website Breitbart.<sup>24</sup>

22. Ibid.

23. Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/norapefugees/>

24. Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/norapefugees/>

ling bad examples among Muslims in Lithuania, generously invited foreign speakers to warn Lithuanians of the alleged perils of multicultural society. As with the case of Bruckner, his beliefs are relatively mainstream in France, and hence he received mainstream coverage as a prominent foreign speaker.

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Organisations like the Islam Culture and Education Centre, the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson and various local entities participating in cross-border exchange projects were engaged in promoting dialogue and dispelling prejudice. For example, International Tolerance Day was, as previously, an opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities in a multicultural society.<sup>25</sup> The Ahmadiya Community organised the first cleanup of the main square in Vilnius after the New Year's festivities, aiming to highlight the positive contribution of Muslims to society.

Caritas Lithuania, *Priimsiu pabėgėlių* Facebook group<sup>26</sup> and similar initiatives worked to deconstruct stereotypes and promote dialogue. Various articles and resources relating to ethnically and religiously mixed families continued to be posted on *Mišri šeima* website (*misriseima.lt*). The NGO Active Youth (Aktyvus jaunimas) implemented youth projects to connect local and refugee youth in cultural and sport activities, as well as to raise awareness of hate speech. The ongoing Together: Refugees & Youth (TRY) project aims to involve refugees in youth work and teach youth workers and volunteers to better respond to the needs of refugees. NGO Žmogus dėžė implemented an awareness project for youth with less exposure to multicultural society and fewer opportunities to travel.<sup>27</sup> A school in Zarasai joined an awareness raising project titled “Schools as ambassadors of the European Parliament”, inviting the school's community to discuss, among other topics, Islam in Europe.<sup>28</sup>

The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's equality and diversity awards provide an annual platform to nominate initiatives that promote dialogue and peaceful co-existence. Egdūnas Račius, a leading expert on Islam, was nominated again in 2017. These and other awards also encouraged journalists to take up human rights topics.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

As previously, Islamophobic messages in Lithuania did not target the centuries-old Tatar community. It is the conflation of foreignness and religion that lends itself

25. Municipality of Širvintos region, „Jaunimas. Tarptautinis renginys, skirtas tolerancijos dienai,” November 30, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, <http://www.sirvintos.lt/lt/naujienos/5/jaunimas-tarptautinis-renginys-skirtas-tolerancijos-dienai.:11501>.

26. Facebook group <https://www.facebook.com/pabegelis/>.

27. Auksė Podolskytė, „Pabėgėlis: kas slepiasi ir formuoja šią etiketę.” *Erasmus Plus* August 4, 2017, retrieved on March 5, 2018. <http://www.erasmus-plus.lt/rezultatas/pabegelis-kas-slepiasi-ir-formuoja-sia-etikete-248>.

28. Zarasų Ažuolo gimnazija, “Projektas ‘Mokyklos - Europos Parlamento ambasadorės.’” September 5, 2017, retrieved on March 5, 2018. <http://www.azuolas.info/2017/09/05/projektas-mokyklos-europos-parlamento-ambasadores/>.

to Islamophobia. Tatars are regarded as ‘good Muslims’, and most of the facts used for Islamophobic framing in Lithuania had to do with the so-called refugee crisis, crimes committed in Western Europe, or developments in North Africa. From Italian journalists like the aforementioned Giulio Meotti to French philosophers, prophets of doom and gloom were imported to scare and warn Lithuanians of the changes brought about by multiculturalism.

Many of these speakers and authors recycled and perpetuated prejudice against Muslims, but were careful not to overstep legal boundaries defining hate speech. Calls to discriminate remained in niche websites, on social networks and especially in anonymous comments. Mainstream journalists, however, were often oblivious to the impact of normalising Islamophobic messages and uncritically interviewing Islamophobic authors.

Thus, although 2017 has not seen an escalation of tensions between communities in Lithuania, authorities could take the following actions based on the findings of this report:

- Proactively explain the definition of hate speech and its boundaries in publications, expert comments and media training activities.
- Identify key players in the Islamophobia network and their funding sources, trace their origins and report them to society.
- Put pressure for more transparency of ‘alternative’ media ownership and funding sources, monitor such media channels and promote their accountability.
- Monitor and combat the fake news ecosystem.
- Recommendations for civil society actors emerge as follows:
- Continue providing opportunities for newsmakers to engage with diverse communities and experts.
- Raise awareness and take-up of inclusive, accurate and non-stereotypical vocabulary in the media and education.
- Monitor hate speech and immediately alert authorities when legal boundaries are overstepped.
- Deconstruct the discourse against ‘political correctness’ by explaining the impact of hate speech and stereotyping.

## Chronology

- **22.03.2017:** Pascal Bruckner gives a speech in Vilnius at the Institut Français, titled “The West versus Radical Islam and Putin’s Russia’.
- **April 2017:** The State Security Department releases its annual report for 2016.<sup>29</sup> Egdūnas Račius, the leading Lithuanian expert on Islam, accused the institution of scaremongering, as it alleged that Islamist activity is taking place in Lithuania despite lack of evidence.<sup>30</sup>
- **28.08.2017:** Ruling No. (17) SN-120) SP-68 by the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson on catering in prisons. The complaint was over non-accommodation of a Muslim inmate’s religious dietary restrictions. Since the same complaint was pending in court, the Ombudsperson did not pursue the investigation further.

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29. State Security Department of the Republic of Lithuania, “Valstybės saugumo departamento veiklos ataskaita 2016,” 2017, retrieved January 8, 2018, [https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2016\\_veiklos-ataskaita-VIESA\\_0330.pdf](https://www.vsd.lt/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2016_veiklos-ataskaita-VIESA_0330.pdf).

30. Egdūnas Račius, „Radikalieji islamistai atidunda į Lietuvą,” *Delfi*, April 10, 2017, retrieved December 20, 2017, <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/e-racius-radikalieji-islamistai-atidunda-i-lietuva.d?id=74300926>.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**MACEDONIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## The Author

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## Executive Summary

In 2017, the end of the political crisis generated by the change of power in Macedonia was in sight. In the first half of the year, racism towards Albanians and Muslims in the media and the protests on the streets of the country, aimed at dehumanizing the requests of the Albanian people.

Cases of Islamophobia were sparked off by the unresolved interethnic disputes between Macedonians and Albanians. Yet, it is hard to pinpoint the exact nature of bias in the cases of Islamophobia when the victim is a Albanian Muslim since Muslim Albanian as ethnicity and religion often overlap and both give rise to hate crimes.

Hate speech in social and other media significantly increased in the beginning of 2017 and during the local elections in October. Discrimination and Islamophobia were also present in the field of employment, education and judicial institutions, which will be especially noted in this report.

Encouraging Muslims is an essential task in fighting Islamophobia. This process should be led by authorities with the cooperation of the Islamic Religion Community in Macedonia. The training of the local Muslim NGOs in detecting and processing hate speech and hate crime against Muslims is also important.

NGOs that are active in promoting and defending human rights have to deal with this issue separately beyond the narrative of pure discrimination. However, Islamophobia is often triggered by the global movements as well, the terrorist attacks in Europe, the political situation in the U.S., the wars in the Middle East even - all these were among the factors that generated Islamophobia in Macedonia.

This report will carefully follow the activities, analyze and explore the attitudes of the government and its institutions, the education system, politicians, media, justice system, etc., as well as identify potential problems and difficulties in detecting Islamophobia.

## Извршно Резиме

Во 2017-та година се надзираше крајот на политичката криза. Во првата половина на годината албанофобијата и исламофобијата во медиумите, социјалните мрежи и на улиците се одвиваше во насока да се дехуманизираат барањата на Албанците.

Тоа објаснува зашто случаи на исламофобија беа поттиканти од нерешените меѓуетнички несогласувања меѓу Македонците и Албанците. Но тешко е да се разликува потсвесниот мотив кога се разгледува еден случај, посебно кога жртвата е од албанска националност со исламска религија.

Говорот на омраза на социјалните и други типови медиуми се зголеми во почетокот на 2017 и за време на локалните избори. Дискриминацијата и исламофобијата беа исто видливи во сферата на образованието, вработувањето и судството, и ќе биде посебно забележано во извештајот.

Важна задача е да се охрабруваат муслиманите да се борат против исламофобијата. Овој процес треба да го водат властите во соработка со Исламската верска заедница на Македонија, но исто и треба да се обучуваат локалните муслимански невладини организации при откривање и процесирање говор на омраза и злосторство од омраза против муслиманите.

Невладините организации кои се активни во промовирање и бранење на човековите права мораат да се справаат поединечно со овој проблеми, измајќи го наративот на класичната дискриминација.

Сепак, исламофобијата е често поттикната од глобалните движења, како и од терористичките напади во Европа, политичката ситуација во САД, дури и војните на Средниот Исток и сè што е сегмент на создавање исламофобија во Македонија.

Овој извештај ќе ги следи активностите, анализира и истражи ставовите на Владата и нејзините институции, образовниот систем, политичарите, медиумите, судството, итн, како и да ги идентификува и детектираат проблемите за да пронајде случаи на исламофобија.

## Introduction

The reader is kindly directed to “Islamophobia in Macedonia: National Report 2016” for an extensive description of the political situation and crises, as well as the context of Islam and the ethnic structure in Macedonia. All information in this report pertains to the period between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2017.

The methodology used for drafting this report consists of desk research of media reports, reports from NGO organizations, reactions of the Ombudsman office<sup>1</sup> and the Commission for Prevention of Discrimination, cases directly reported to the author, and online correspondence with important stakeholders.<sup>2</sup> The languages of the data collected and used in this report are English, Macedonian, and Albanian.<sup>3</sup>

Different religious groups have a relatively long tradition of living alongside each other in Macedonia. Many cases of Islamophobia are triggered by the unresolved interethnic disputes. These can be easily noticed in hate speech in social and other media, in the rhetoric of the politicians but also in cases of concrete discrimination in employment and the judicial processes. However, Islamophobia is often spurred by external factors as well. Macedonia was part of the route of the recent so-called migrant crisis. The political discourse around this issue affects not only the daily politics of the country, but also the attitudes toward Muslims in general.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

The political scene among Albanian parties was tense but under the initiative of the Albanian government, they demonstrated solidarity in a joint document,<sup>4</sup> which was a prerequisite for a new coalition with the SDSM (Socijaldemokratski sojuz na Makedonija – Social Democratic Union of Macedonia) or the VMRO - DPMNE (Vnatrešna makedonska revolucionerna organizacija – Demokratska partija za makedonsko nacionalno edinstvo, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity). The media called this document the “Tirana Platform” and it was the reason for the start of the first protest in 2017, called “Тврдокорни” (Hardcore).<sup>5</sup>

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1. The report of Ombudsman will be published in March 2018.

2. The author of the report emailed NGOs and state institutions about sending information on reported cases of Islamophobia or discrimination.

3. The author wants to express her gratitude to Jasmin Redjepi and Fatmire Ajdari for collecting data from the media in the Albanian language.

4. E Magazin, January 7, 2017, Objavena zaednickata platforma na albanskite partii <http://emagazin.mk/vesti/vest/30585?title=site-detali-objavena-zaednichkata-plat%D1%84orma-na-albanskite-partii-za-pregovorite-zanova-vlada>.

5. Focus, 24.02.2017, 100 тина тврдокорни го започнаа протестот во Скопје, <http://fokus.mk/stotina-tvrdo-korni-go-zapochnaa-protetot-vo-skopje/> (Accessed December 25, 2017)

A new wave of protests started<sup>6</sup> again, now under the motto “За Заедничка Македонија” (For a Joint Macedonia) and finished every day in front of the assembly, where they addressed the MPs. On April 27, the new president of the assembly was elected, Talat Xhaferi, in a tense atmosphere.<sup>7</sup> The protesters stormed inside the parliament.<sup>8</sup> Parliamentarians, journalists, and police officers were brutally attacked; the most severely injured was the leader of the Albanian party Zijadin Sela.<sup>9</sup>

Three weeks after the attacks, Zoran Zaev, leader of the SDSM, received the mandate from President Ivanov to form a new government.<sup>10</sup>

The local elections that were held in 2017 will be analyzed separately in this report, due to the fact that they were a central moment in the Islamophobia network.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The protestors of so-called “Тврдокорни” (Hardcore) on September 2, stated, “They [the government] are threatening us with erasing the Macedonian name and the present Macedonian identity. They are threatening us with assimilation with the large Islamic migration.”<sup>11</sup>

The reaction of the citizens to the restoration of the Ali Pasha Mosque in Ohrid was the following: “What is most interesting in this case is the permanent insistence on building a minaret, which as we highlighted, should be 32 m, thus making it the most dominant object in the very heart of the city. It will change the image of Ohrid...”<sup>12</sup>

Following this announcement on social media, a heated debate were sparked among the residents of Ohrid<sup>13</sup> and insults were directed at Muslims. At a press conference, the Minister for Culture Robert Alagjovzovski publicly picked a side: “We

6. Pesev, Aleksandar, *TV24*, March 27, 2017, Протести за заедничка Македонија, retrieved December 25, 2017, from <http://24vesti.mk/protesti-na-za-zaednichka-makedonija>

7. DW na mak.jazik, 27 April 2017, Талат Џафери избран за претседател на Собранието, retrieved December 25, 2017, from <http://www.dw.com/mk/Talat-Xhaferi-Izbran-za-prtsedatel>

8. BIRN, April 27, 2017, 30 Пратеника евакуирани, кризата продолжува, <http://prizma.mk/trieset-pratenitsi-evakuirani-krizata-prodolzhuva/>

9. Banevski, Hristijan, April 27, 2017, Повредени повеќе пратеници, најтешко Села, <http://vesti.mk/read/news/12892414/4455884/povredeni-povekje-pratenici-najteshko-sela>

10. Dervishi, Fatlume. May 17, 2017, Заев доби мандат за нова влада, <http://www.alsat-m.tv/mk/Zaev-dobi-mandat-za-formiranje-valda>

11. Fokus, September 02, 2017, “Тврдокорните” денес на протест ќе ја бранат македонштината, <http://fokus.mk/tvrdokornite-denes-na-protest-ke-ja-branat-makedonshtinata/>

12. <http://vecer.mk/makedonija/vandalizam-vo-srcteto-na-ohrid-ne-ni-treba-minare-od-30-metri>

13. There was supportive text on this historical fact, like the column of the Sasho Ordanoski: “Will there be a minaret of 32 meters on the Alipashina Mosque?” The shortest answer would be: Yes, it will sprout. Well, what? – [www.civilmedia.mk](http://www.civilmedia.mk), November 27, 2017, Ниско ми го скрои минарето, <https://civilmedia.mk/nisko-mi-goskroi-minarto/>.

will stop the project so as to see and find a common solution. We will not allow for construction work where this could incite ethnic tension and where this is not in accordance with the law. In that regard, we are clear.”<sup>14</sup>

A significant number of Muslims on social media networks complain about border crossing profiling. The sole profile that is targeted and singled out is on the basis of whether an individual visibly Muslim. The president of the LEGIS Association<sup>15</sup> publicly called the authorities and the public services to stop his persecution, but also that of other prominent Muslims.<sup>16</sup>

On December 28, Trump’s administration in Florida bestowed an acknowledgement prize upon the head of Islamic Religion Community in Macedonia for “Life-long Achievement” for his fight against extremism, radicalism and Islamophobia.<sup>17</sup>

## Justice System

The *Urgent Reform Priorities* is a document<sup>18</sup> of the European Commission based on a report, which contains specific proposals of action, and imposes urgent reforms in the judiciary. It is also known among the public as the “Pribe Reforms.”

The judiciary reforms are visible in the complaint proceedings which took place in 2017. An example is the Monstrum case, where the defendants were sentenced to life imprisonment without the necessary evidence.<sup>19</sup> The Supreme Court decided to release the convicted and to impose cautionary measures on them.<sup>20</sup> The court justified this decision by stating, “The factual situation was wrong and partially established.”<sup>21</sup>

One of the reasons for the lack of trust of the community toward the judiciary bodies can be noticed with the help of the analysis of two violent protests where the consequences were extremely different.<sup>22</sup>

14. Anadolu Agency, December 16, 2017, “Minister Alagozovski: The Reconstruction of Ali Pasha Mosque Will Stop“

15. [https://civilmedia.mk/as-sum-slobodn-makar-i-da-mi-gi-zabranit-sit-dstinazii-vo-svtot/](https://civilmedia.mk/as-sum-slobodn-makar-i-da-mi-gi-zabranit-sit-dstinazii-vo-svtot)

16. A considerable number of Muslims turned to the Ombudsman about this issue and received a response from the Ministry of Interior Affairs that no procedure was being pressed against them. However, the halt at the borders continues despite the denial of the ministry.

17. Fokus, December 25, 2017, Доналд Трамп го награди поглаварот на ИВЗ, Сулејман Реџеџи за животно постигнување, <http://fokus.mk/donald-tramp-go-nagrada-poglavarot-na-ivz-sulejman-redhepi-za-zhivotno-postignuvane/>

18. European Commission, Brussels, September 14, 2017, FYRM: Assessment and Recommendations of the Senior Experts’ Group on systemic Rule of Law issues 2017.

19. As a reminder, the case of Monstrum (2012) involves five citizens of Macedonian ethnic background who were killed under mysterious circumstances. Only two hours after the attack, the Interior Minister of that time held a press conference declaring that this was an organized crime orchestrated by Islamic radicalization. Five Muslim citizens were sentenced to life imprisonment. Fakulteti, May 2, 2012, ТРОЈЦА ОД УАПСЕНИТЕ СТРЕЛАЈЕ ВО ПЕТМИНАТА КАЈ СМИЉКОВСКОТО ЕЗЕРО [http://www.fakulteti.mk/news/12-05-02/trojca\\_od\\_uapsenite\\_strelale\\_vo\\_petminata\\_kaj\\_smiljkovskoto\\_ezero.aspx](http://www.fakulteti.mk/news/12-05-02/trojca_od_uapsenite_strelale_vo_petminata_kaj_smiljkovskoto_ezero.aspx)

20. PLUSINFOR, December 1, 2017, Обвинетите од „Монструм“ ќе се бранат од слобода <http://plusinfo.mk/vest/135854/obvinetite-od-monstrum-od-deneska-se-na-sloboda->

21. <http://24vesti.com.mk/sluchaj-%E2%80%9Emonstrum%E2%80%9C-del-od-roditelite-revoltirani-odbrana-ta-ochekuva-osloboditelna-presuda>

22. Telma, Top Tema, May 24, 2017-th. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkJ3kl695lg>. In this press report there are several comparisons regarding the double standards of the judiciary, including the one in this report.

Activity	Consequences	Verdict
Protests after the verdicts of the Monstrum case* (Muslim participants)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broken court windows</li> <li>• Mild injuries to policemen</li> </ul>	3 years of imprisonment 24,000 euros for material damages to the court** 2 (maximum penalty)
Protests in front of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia and violent entry into the building*** (The participants are part of the protests under the slogan of "For a Joint Macedonia" and are Macedonian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material damage to the assembly premises</li> <li>• Severely injured MPs, journalists, employees, policemen, protesters, and attempted murder.</li> </ul>	Conditional sentence of 6 months to 18 months (minimum sentence)****

\* Синиша Јаков Марушиќ, BIRN, July 4, 2014, Ескалираа протестите поради пресудите во "Монструм", <http://www.balkaninsight.com/mk/article/Eskaliraa-protstitute-po-presudite-za-Smilkovsko>.

\*\* BIRN, July 30, 2014, Osuđeni demonstranti sa protesta zbog slučaja "Monstrum" <http://www.balkaninsight.com/rs/article/osu%C4%91eni-demonstranti-sa-protesta-protiv-presude-u-slu%C4%8Daju-monstrum>.

\*\*\* Александра Денковска, NOVATV, April 28, 2017, Собрание: Насилство, дивеење, претепани пратеници и заспана полиција, <http://novatv.mk/sobranie-nasilstvo-diveene-preterani-pratenitsi-i-zaspana-politsija>.

\*\*\*\* Марија Митевска, Слободна Европа, May 23, 2017, Се покажаа и судот условно ги осуди за насилствата во Собранието <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/28504314.html>.

The research on public opinion on courts and human rights conducted by the Helsinki Committee of Macedonia (HCM) illustrates utterly expected data whereby citizens of the Macedonian ethnic community believe significantly more than the citizens of the Albanian ethnic community that the current situation in the judiciary system is satisfactory.<sup>23</sup>

## Employment

Legislation in Macedonia provides limited protection to the right of freedom of religion in the employment process and at the workplace. In Macedonia, the right to be absent from work in order to attend *Jummah* prayer is not regulated by labour legislation. Regarding the *Jummah* prayer, in the beginning of 2017, Muslim employees asked permission to attend *Jummah* prayers in writing, through an email to the Ministry of Finance in Macedonia, but they received a negative response from the legal department.<sup>24</sup>

In September, a case of discrimination in employment was reported to the author by an English teacher who applied for employment at an elementary school in Ohrid, where during the interview, she was told by the principal that she would have to remove her headscarf if she wants to work at the school. The case was reported at the Inspectorate within the Ministry of Education. In the end, another candidate was hired.

23. Извештајот во сенка за Поглавје 23 [дел од Проектот "Мрежа 23+], Хелсиншкиот Комитет за човекови Права, May 13, 2017, Скопје

24. Email to the author.

The author had another case of discrimination reported to her which occurred at the 8 Septemvri Hospital in Skopje. The employee was ordered to remove her headscarf if she wanted to continue working, because the Internal Rule Book require this. The mentioned rule book is not publicly available so the article that prohibits this cannot be found.

In October, the personal confession of a Muslim woman spread on social media networks. During a job interview at the country's largest pharmacy chain, she was told to remove her headscarf if she wanted to work for the company. The author of the research got in touch with the Muslim woman who confirmed her experience, but also, the experience of other Muslim women with this company. This claim is substantiated with clearly visible evidence as no pharmacy belonging to this chain employs a veiled Muslim woman.

## Education

Muamer Doko, the principal of Bratstvo and Edinstvo Elementary School in Ohrid, removed the sisters Hilal and Hazal L. from education, claiming that the headscarf was forbidden.<sup>25</sup> The Ombudsman condemned this action,<sup>26</sup> the Commission for Prevention of Discrimination<sup>27</sup> gave their opinion on it, and the case was reported at the Helsinki Committee for further processing. The Ministry of Education issued a public statement where it underlines the right of the girls to go to school with a headscarf.<sup>28</sup>

In an elementary school in Gevgelija, the key city in the so-called refugee crisis, a questionnaire was distributed, containing the following question: "Would you mind if a member of a given nation: (1) Comes to your country as a visitor; (2) Lives permanently in your country; (3) Lives in your building or neighbourhood; (4) Is your friend; (5) Goes to school with your child/children, etc. The options given were: Citizens of Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. The pupils were supposed to choose the country and select an answers from 1 to 5.<sup>29</sup> The questionnaire was immediately withdrawn, because it was not approved by the Ministry of Education.

The hospital described in the example of discrimination on the basis of religion in employment does not even allow female students with a headscarf to do their internship there. This form of discrimination was reported to the author in February

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25. TV21, Девојките кои носеа шамии се вратија во училиште, September 20, 2017, Ohrid.

26. Pravdiko, September 19, 2017, Омбудсман: На девојчињата во Охрид да им се дозволи со шамија да ја следат наставата, <http://www.pravdiko.mk/ombudsman-na-devoichinata-vo-ohrid-da-im-se-dozvoli-so-shamija-da-ja-sledat-nastavata/>

27. Makfaks, September 22, 2017, Комисијата против дискриминација го брани правото на носење верски симболи, <http://makfax.com.mk/daily-news/>

28. Kanal 5, September 19, 2017, Известување на МОН за случајот со двете девојчиња од Охрид, [http://www.kanal5.com.mk/vesti\\_detail.asp?ID=133269](http://www.kanal5.com.mk/vesti_detail.asp?ID=133269)

29. Билјана Јордановска, Civil Media, November 9, 2017, Рецепи: Одговорност за ширење страв од мигрантите меѓу учениците <https://civilmedia.mk/rpi-odgovornost-za-schir-strav-od-migrantit-mu-utchnizit/>

2017 by a Muslim girl who missed the semester because she could not complete the necessary practice, which is a precondition for participation in exams. She sought help from the Helsinki Committee; however, due to unknown reasons, the victim of the discrimination renounced further legal action and left the Medical Faculty.

The Survey Analysis Report<sup>30</sup> published by the CDT Research Centre in October 2017 and promoted in Macedonia focuses on youth perceptions and attitudes related to stigmatization and Islamophobia. According to the report, contact with refugees decreases the level of Islamophobia and stigma among the youth toward refugees.

- On a scale of 1 to 5, the level of stigma toward immigrants among youth in the EU is 2.76. Thirty-five percent of the respondents stated that they had never any contact with immigrants. (Fig. 1)
- The research points out that the chief reason for negative attitudes toward immigrants is the negative perception of Islam. (Fig. 2)

The results about knowledge about Islam are presented in Figure 1. On average, respondents were able to correctly answer approximately two (2.19) out of six questions. It is worth noting that respondents from European Union countries are as knowledgeable (2.18) as those in the Western Balkan countries (2.20).

Respondents from Hungary were the most informed about Islam. On average, they gave correct answers to more than half of the questions (3.08). In contrast, the lowest level of knowledge was observed among the Italian youth, with an average of 1.37 correct answers. Further support for the claim that the overall knowledge

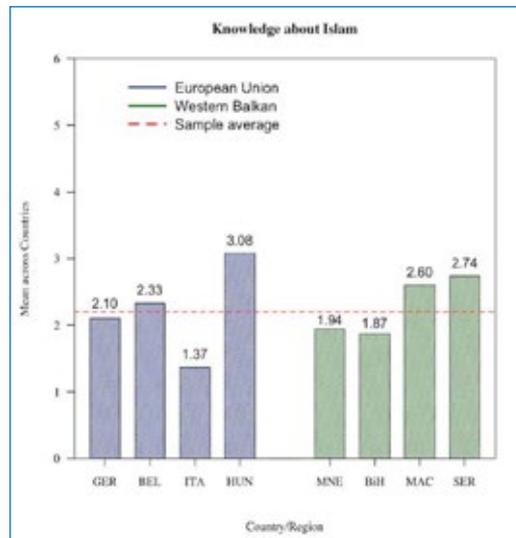


Figure 1: "Knowledge about Islam." Graph published in the Survey Analysis Report by the CDT Research Center in October 2017.

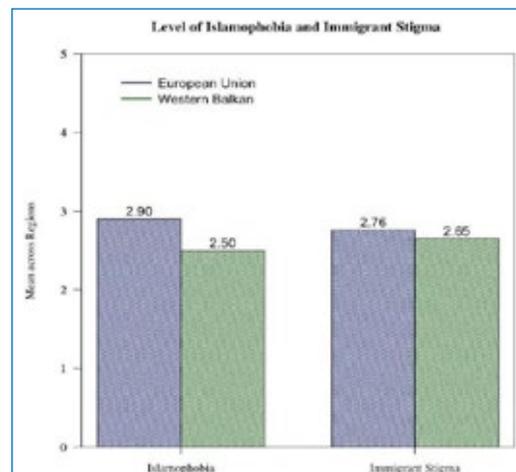


Figure 2: "Level of Islamophobia and Immigrant Stigma." Graph published in the Survey Analysis Report by the CDT Research Center in October 2017.

30. Survey Analysis Report. The study was developed by Nemanja Batrićević - CDT Research Center, October, 2017.

of Islam is at an unsatisfactory level comes from the fact that 16% of the respondents were unable to answer a single question. Equally striking, close to two-thirds (62%) of the sample was unable to provide an answer to more than 2 questions.

The level of Islamophobia and immigrant stigma are presented in Figure 2. In the total sample, young people averaged 2.7/5 points on the Islamophobia scale. It is worth recalling that the average knowledge of Islam is 2.2/6, which points to the possibility that, in part, negative attitudes originate from pure lack of knowledge. Importantly, on average, participants from Western Balkan countries are less Islamophobic (2.5) than their counterparts from the EU (2.9). Interestingly, while we see significantly different levels of Islamophobia in the two regions, the attitudes on immigrants in the EU (2.76) and the WB (2.65) are similar.

## Media

According to the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Macedonia, the Criminal Code contains five articles under which hate speech spreading and promotion can be placed.<sup>31</sup> The existing articles provide sufficient basis so that court proceedings are initiated against the people spreading hate speech. Thus far, not a single person has been convicted of hate speech perpetrated in the media.<sup>32</sup>

In 2017, on the hate speech website ([www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk)), seven cases of hate speech due to religious affiliation were reported: five cases of hate speech toward refugees and migrants and two cases of hate speech on the basis of religious affiliation (Islamophobia and xenophobia) on web portals.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 3: The third generation of the kindergarten Bleta.

On July 20, the following image of the graduation picture board of the kindergarten “Bleta (Bee)” appeared on social media networks. (Fig. 3)

The next day, headlines in printed and electronic newspapers in Macedonian and Albanian read “In a Phantom Kindergarten in Chair Municipality [*Bleta* means bee], Children Are Being Indoctrinated with Islamic Customs and Rituals!”<sup>34</sup> Another

31. Article 179, 319, 417 p. 3, 394-g and Article 407-a.

32. „Ефикасноста за законска регулатива за заштита од говор на омраза-Законот во сенка на политичкото толерирање на говор на омраза.” –Македонски Институт за Медиуми, Скопје 2017, м-р Ненад Живановски.

33. Helsinki Committee Macedonia, Reports, <http://govornaomraza.mk/reports/>

34. Skopjeinfo, July 21, 2017, Скандал во скопска градинка: Децата се принудени да се молат (фото) <http://www.skopjeinfo.mk/skandal-vo-skopska-gradinka-decata-se-prinudeni-da-se-molat-foto>

headline reads, “Instead of Feeding the Kids with Honey, Bleta Feeds the Kids with Ideology.”<sup>35</sup> The article further states, “... it is about abusing children for the purpose of their Islamic ‘education,’ always in the spirit of extremism, isolation, mental restraint and exclusion of other cultures and religions...”<sup>36</sup>

Amid the tense political climate throughout 2017, as well as the local elections at the end of the year, the rival parties used all available media means to dehumanize the opponent with the frequently used negative narrative of Muslims: ISIS, Taliban, etc. Such words were used to attack the Albanian political party BESA, for which an article stated, “The exceptional, offensive, disruptive, and nihilistic behaviour of the BESA movement further raises doubts about the impact of the Tekfir sect, some of which are suspected of being the leaders of this pre-Taliban group.”<sup>37</sup>

After the declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the USA, at the UN General Assembly voting, Macedonia voted against Trump’s decision.<sup>38</sup> The Macedonian news portal Infomax, right-wing oriented, stated online, “Even in its foreign policy, Macedonia stood shoulder to shoulder with the radical Wahhabi regimes.”<sup>39</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

In the centre of Skopje, a girl with a headscarf was attacked. Her name is Sumeja Ademi, a student at the Faculty of Law. The perpetrators were a group of high school children. During the attack, the following words were directed at her: “terrorist”, “sod off and go back to Arabia” and “dirty Shiptar woman.” The case was reported to the Helsinki Committee<sup>40</sup> and the Ministry of the Interior; however, as minors are involved, there is no progress in the investigation.

The news of the prohibition from entering a pool for a girl in a burkini, with the explanation that the visitors would not feel comfortable in the presence of a woman in a burkini,<sup>41</sup> spread on social media. All public pools in Macedonia according to their rules and regulations prohibit clothes that go below the knees – and therefore the burkini as well.<sup>42</sup>

35. FOL, July 20, 2017, Nektari i Kopshtit Bleta, ne vend te mjaltit, helm ideologjik!, <http://fol.mk/nektari-i-kopshtit-bleta-ne-vend-te-mjaltit-helm-ideologjik/>

36. Adrijan Kerimi, ALSAT, July 21, 2017, Верски обреди во градинка во Скопје, ИВЗ реагира, <http://www.alsat-m.tv/mk/>

37. AKTUALE, December 26, 2017, Ndikim i udhëheqësisë Tekfire te Lëvizja Besa?, <http://www.aktuale.mk/ndikim-i-udheheqesise-tekfir-te-levizja-besa/>

38. a1on, December 27, 2017, Македонија гласаше против одлуката на Трамп за Израел, <http://a1on.mk/archives/835217>

39. Infomax, December 21, 2017, МАКЕДОНИЈА РАМО ДО РАМО СО ВАХАБИСТИЧКИТЕ РЕЖИМИ: „Дипломатијата” на Заев гласаше против САД и Трамп во ОН!<http://infomax.mk/wp/Дипломатијата>” на Заев гласаше против САД и Трамп во ОН!

40. НСМ, February 23, 2017, Нападната студентка поради национална припадност и верско уверување, <http://www.zlostorstvaodomraza.mk/reports/view/377>

41. Daniela Mirceska, civilmedia, October 24, 2017, “За никабот и тоа што го покрива” [www.civilmedia.mk](http://www.civilmedia.mk), 24.10.2017

42. Правила на однесување (Пливачки базен), <http://www.salaboristrajkovski.gov.mk/kapaciteti/regulativi-zakoristenje-bazen> (Article 5, paragraph 16: “... it is forbidden to swim in shorts without lining and under the knees”).

In the city of Radovich, the program *The Prophet Muhammed and Trustworthy Society* was stopped indirectly by the local authorities. The doors of the premises, which are under the authority of the local municipality, were closed; after entry was enabled, there was no electricity on the premises.<sup>43</sup>

## Internet

The research of the Macedonian Media Institute titled “The Effectiveness of the Legislation for Hate Speech Protection” stated,

The common evaluation of the legal incrimination of hate speech is solid, despite some inconsistencies, where outside of the penal justice system, the following cases of indisputable misuse of freedom of expression remain undeservedly untouched: journalist writings or statements given through the public information media, speeches and statements of representatives of political parties which encourage or defend violence...<sup>44</sup>

On the official Facebook group of the VMRO DPMNE, the political party's local committee in the city of Gevgelija, used the visit of Macedonia's Prime Minister

Zoran Zaev to Mustafa Pasha Mosque during the Ramadan Feast (Eid al-Fitr), accompanied by the Grand Mufti (*Reis-ul-ulema*) of the Islamic Religion Community as a call to mobilize Macedonians.<sup>45</sup> (Fig. 4)

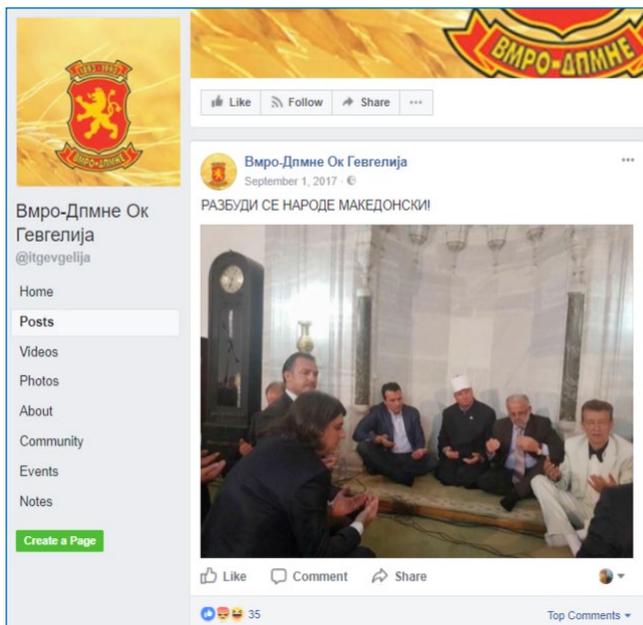


Figure 4: Post on official Facebook group of the VMRO DPMNE OK GEVGELIJA: “Wake up, Macedonian people!” Posted on September, 1, 2017 and retrieved on December 21, 2017.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

This year will also be remembered as a year marked by xenophobia reaching its peak. Despite the fact that the Balkan route is closed,

43. Anadolu Agency, April 20, 2017, Во Радовиш спречена програмата за раѓањето на пратеникот Мухамед”, <http://aa.com.tr/mk/балкан/vo-radovis-sprece-na-programata-za-rodendenot-na-muhammed>

44. “The effectiveness of the legislation for hate speech protection” – Macedonian Media Institute, Skopje 2017, Dr. Nenad Zhivanovski.

45. FB GROUP, Вмро-Дпмне Ок Гевгелија, September 1, 2017, РАЗБУДИ СЕ НАРОДЕ МАКЕДОНСКИ!, <https://www.facebook.com/itgevgelija/photos/a>

the number of refugees insignificantly small, refugees were still in the spotlight of the period preceding the local elections. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's draft "Strategy for Integration of Refugees and Foreigners 2017-2027"<sup>46</sup> brought about hate speech in the assembly, the streets, social networks, and media. The VMRO DPMNE was the party that has incessantly been spreading fear among the population with the alleged 150,000 refugees that were to become asylum-seekers in Macedonian cities. At the parliamentary session of August 16, the words "migrant/refugee" were mentioned 88 times by the VMRO MPs.<sup>47</sup> The xenophobia sparked by politicians' speeches resulted in specific activities. AWAKENING, a civic initiative, was created overnight,<sup>48</sup> which went viral in the social media networks; this initiative gathered signatures in municipalities for a referendum against the settling of migrants. After the signatures were collected, the counsellors in the municipalities discussed the proposal and it was only the VMRO counsellors and their coalition partners that voted for holding a referendum. A visual presentation follows of all the phases where the VMRO DPMNE took measures for the intentional and conscious spreading of xenophobia and Islamophobia.

On August 16, in the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, VMRO DPMNE's members from the assembly booth called on the government not to settle Macedonia with refugees.<sup>49</sup>

On September 9, a Facebook campaign started named "AWAKENING – NO TO MIGRANTS."<sup>50</sup>

The text reads,

AWAKENING! No to migrants!  
Let's preserve our neighbourhood and



Figure 5: The cars in the Skopje municipality of Aerodrom were "decorated" with posters calling for "Awakening" and "Saying NO to migrants." Published on August, 18, 2017.

46. Lokalno, July 21, 2017, МИНИСТЕРСТВОТО ЗА ТРУД ПРЕДЛАГА СТРАТЕГИЈА ЗА ИНТЕГРАЦИЈА НА БЕГАЈЦИ И СТРАНЦИ ВО МАКЕДОНИЈА, <http://lokalno.mk/ministerstvoto-za-trud-predlaga-strategija-za-integratsija-na-begalci-i-strantsi-vo-makedonija/>

47. Sobranie, August 16, 2017, <http://sobranie.mk/sessiondetails.nsp?sessionDetailsId=0d46cc3a-68dd-4764-93c8-f3123c09aa17&date=16.8.2017>

48. Sinisha Stankovikj, VOANEWS, August, 31, 2017, Бегалците - жешка тема во Македонија, <https://mk.voanews.com/a/macedonia-migrants/4009798.html>

49. Republika, August, 16, 2017, Данев: Каде ќе ги населите мигрантите, меѓу „Вардарска“ и „Островска“ и во станови во Аеродром?, <http://republika.mk/811270>

50. MKD, August, 18, 2017, Во скопски Аеродром кампања „Будење! НЕ за мигранти“, <https://www.mkd.mk/makedonija/politika/vo-skopski-aerodrom-kampanja-budenje-ne-za-migranti>

municipality, our city, the way we remember it and the way we want to live in it. Let's prevent the SDSM-government's decision to bring in migrant settlers and the construction of housing for them,

because nothing would be the same afterwards.

...ENOUGH, IT IS TOO MUCH! AWAKENING is needed, let's preserve Macedonia! Now is the time to say NO to this DEADLY PROJECT FOR MACEDONIA!<sup>51</sup>

In a specific location in the municipality of Aerodrom, people started to gather signatures for scheduling the referendum with the slogan "NO to migrants in Aerodrom."<sup>52</sup> (Fig. 5)

On September 6, the council of the Aerodrom Municipality decided to schedule a referendum, against the migrants in their municipality.<sup>53</sup>

In the city of Bitola, on August 4, the political party who led the campaign against the migrants, VMRO DPMNE, made a public statement.<sup>54</sup>

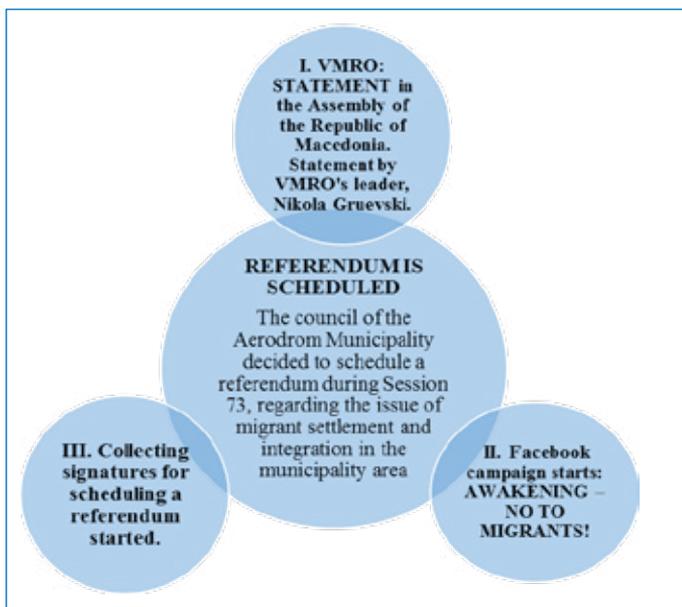


Figure 6: This is graphic explanation of the previously elaborated case - all three phases that were linked and eventually led to a referendum vote.

51. Translated by the author from Macedonian language to English.

52. NOVATV, August 23, 2017, Параноја за лажни бегалски кампови поддржана од VMRO-ДПМНЕ, <http://novatv.mk/paranoja-za-lazhni-begalski-kampovi-poddrzhana-od-vmro-dpmne/>

53. Republika, September 6, 2017, Референдум во Аеродром ќе има: СДСМ ги изневери аеродромци, не гласаше за референдум, <http://republika.mk/817983>

54. TVTERA, August 4, 2017, Дали во Битола ќе се градат згради за мигранти?- праша VMRO-ДПМНЕ, [tera.mk/dali-vo-bitola-ke-se-gradat-zgradi-za-migranti-prasha-vmro-dpmne/](http://tera.mk/dali-vo-bitola-ke-se-gradat-zgradi-za-migranti-prasha-vmro-dpmne/)

55. FB GROUPТ, Будење Битола, [https://www.facebook.com/budenjebitola?ref=br\\_rs](https://www.facebook.com/budenjebitola?ref=br_rs)

56. Vesna, Sherovska, TERA, September 1, 2017, Над 4000 потписи собра „Будење”, <http://tera.mk/nad-4000-potpisi-sobra-budene/>

On September 12, the Facebook campaign “AWAKENING, NO TO MIGRANTS SETTLING IN BITOLA!” started.<sup>55</sup>

Figures 7 and 8 were posted by other Facebook groups.

In the centre of the city, on September 1, a gathering of signatures for scheduling a referendum started.<sup>56</sup>



Figure 7: "People of Bitola, let's not allow the construction of refugee camps. So that we don't have this scenario: Chkembari – Bitola 2027..." Published on the Facebook page Bitolcani/Bitolcanki – NEW, on August 7, 2017, retrieval on December 23, 2017.



Figure 8: "So there won't be any camps as there wasn't any law for a bilingual Macedonia? Caution, people from Bitola L Let's prevent the 'Bitola girl 2027'". Published on the Facebook page Bitolcani/Bitolcanki – NEW, on August 8, 2017 and retrieved on December 23, 2017.

In the council of Bitola, on September 5, the governing majority, led by the VMRO DPMNE, scheduled a referendum.<sup>57</sup>

Around 20 municipalities decided that citizens will vote on a referendum regarding the government's strategy on migrants on the local election day (October 15).

In Shtip, the Union of Young Forces of the VMRO DPMNE posted the image below on their official Facebook profile, (Fig. 9) while the VMRO Municipal Committee of Gevgelija asked citizens to sign the initiative in mass numbers.<sup>58</sup> (Fig. 10)

The official Facebook page of Butel Municipality, "I love Butel," joined the anti-refugee movement by posting a photo of the author of this report, and



Figure 9: The Union of Young Forces of the VMRO DPMNE in Shtip posted the above image and accompanying text, "A school day after migrants have settled." Published in July, 28, 2017 – it was deleted after two days.

57. Zaneta, Zdravevska, Slobodna Evropa, September 5, 2017, Кавга за датумот на референдумот за бегалци во Битола, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/28717488.html>

58. Facebook group: Вмро-Дпмне Ок Гевгелија, <https://www.facebook.com/itgevgelija/>

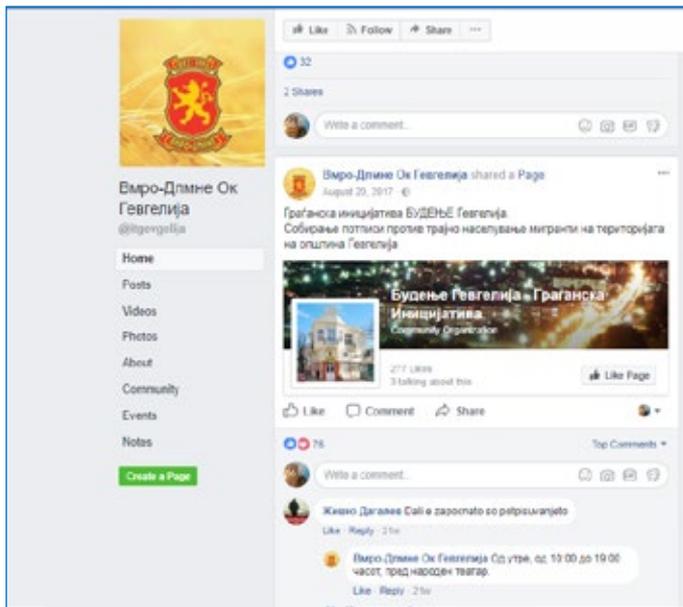


Figure 10: The VMRO DPMNE GEVGELIJA civic initiative “AWAKENING Gevgelija.” Posted on August, 29, 2017, retrieved on December 23, 2017.



Figure 11: “Skopje 17.08.2017; ???” Even though the photo was taken in August 2015, the Facebook post claimed it was current. Posted on August, 19, 2017.

a collage of photos of fighters, refugees, etc. (Fig. 11) The case was reported to the cybercrime department, which deleted the page after a few hours.

Many human rights organizations warn of the spread of Islamophobia and other forms of hate speech in this campaign. “The Helsinki Committee warns that the continual spreading and inciting

of hate speech, can easily be conducive to perpetrating hate crimes.”<sup>59</sup>

The Ministry of Local Government didn’t allow the referendum against migrants to be held on the Election Day, i.e. October 15. The government that voted for this referendum lost the general election.<sup>60</sup>

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The Helsinki Committee of Macedonia publishes *The Discrimination Informer* every month with specific cases of discrimination but also recommendations on how to eliminate this type of discrimination.

The HCM also runs websites for monitoring and reporting hate speech and hate crime ([www.govornaomraza.mk](http://www.govornaomraza.mk) and [www.zlostorstvaodomraza.mk](http://www.zlostorstvaodomraza.mk)). In the field

59. Helsinki committee for Human Rights Macedonia, September 7, 2017, Реакција кон ксенофобијата за бегалците, Helsinki [http://www.mhc.org.mk/announcements/630?locale=mk#\\_ftn2](http://www.mhc.org.mk/announcements/630?locale=mk#_ftn2)

60. 24 VESTI, September 4, <http://24vesti.com.mk/carovska-nema-stanovi-za-migranti-vmro-dpmne-shiri-lazhni-vesti>, <http://24vesti.com.mk/carovska-nema-stanovi-za-migranti-vmro-dpmne-shiri-lazhni-vesti>

of hate crime, the OSCE-ODIHR office in Warsaw organized trainings on how to monitor and report hate crimes against Muslims, where several human rights activists from Macedonia were present.

On the media level, worth mentioning is the weekly show “На иста страна” (On the same side), where a single question is discussed from the point of view of various religions, like the status of women, the celebrations of holidays, prayers, etc. Also in this field, the news agency Anadolu Agency has a website in the Macedonian and Albanian languages, where it presents unusual news related to positive developments in Muslim society.

The new government slogan is “A society for all”<sup>61</sup> which gives people a sense of optimism and feeling of belonging. For the first time in Macedonia, a Muslim woman with a headscarf ran for councilor in the Municipality of Struga, and became the first hijab-wearing councilor.<sup>62</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Research points to the conclusion that Islamophobic incidents in Macedonia are closely correlated with politics. The dynamics of events in 2017 have led to the conclusion that research is required in the field of hate speech in political instances, which have led to hate crimes. There are factors which contribute to the difficulty of tracking Islamophobia in Macedonia.

Regarding policy recommendations those of last year’s report are still relevant today. The main problem is the lack of a central documentation on Islamophobia.

- Cooperation between governmental bodies, the Islamic community and NGOs in fighting discrimination against Muslims should be fostered.
- The Islamic community should be more active in the field of Islamophobia and in training imams to encourage Muslims to report the cases of discrimination or other forms of intolerance against Muslims.
- Regulation of Islamic practice (prayer, *Jummah*, and headscarf) and available ways to accommodate this in education and employment should be raised.
- Commitment to countering violent extremism, and supporting projects in this sphere,<sup>63</sup> but not at the expense of freedom of religion and not solely focusing on Islam or Muslims.

61. SlobodnaEvropa, March 4, 2017, СДСМ: Концептот за едно општество веќе победи, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/28351476.html>

62. VOA - Глас на Америка, October 12, 2017, Емина Шерифоска, кандидатка на советничка листа на СДСМ за Струга, за Гласот на Америка зборува за местото на жената во општеството. <https://www.facebook.com/glasnaamerika/videos/>

63. During the period between December 2016 to June 2017, Analytica think tank implemented a project titled “Mother Schools for Countering Radicalism.” This project was implemented in cooperation with Women Without Borders. The project aimed to raise awareness on countering radicalism and enhance the competence and capabilities of mothers from Skopje to deal with the phenomenon of radicalization in their relationship with their children. The project was held at the Municipality of Chair, which is considered to be one of the most affected municipalities when it comes to violent extremism. The author of the report attended this school.

- Effective investigation on the previous year's attacks on masjids and mosques – specifically the masjid in the city of Kriva Palanka.

## Chronology

- **23.02.2017:** A young Muslim student was attacked in the city centre of Skopje.
- **19.09.2017:** Primary school in Ohrid, expels two students from school because they were wearing headscarves.
- **21.10.2017:** First woman in a hijab enters the City Council of Struga.
- **15.12.2017:** Ministry for Culture stopped the restoration of the minaret of Ali Pasha Mosque in Ohrid, until legal procedures have been checked.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**MALTA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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SARA EZABE MALLIUE



## The Author

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## Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Malta in 2017 taking into account all the important developments on national level. The report was compiled based on information primarily from the Internet, which includes websites of Islamophobic groups, the media, and also social media. Together with this, studies and reports conducted by European organizations and agencies were also taken into consideration. Some of these statistical reports were from 2017 and others predated this year. The author also took into account personal encounters with Muslims in Malta, both Maltese Muslims and foreign Muslims and their experiences and suggestions.

In a nutshell, the most prominent points discussed in this report include Islam in schools, the recent rise of a new far-right party which participated in the 2017 general elections, and the rise of Islamophobic and hateful comments and memes on the Internet, especially on social media. The report also highlights the rejection of Islam in schools, which has given rise to a strong Islamophobic sentiment. There is little research by Maltese institutions on Islamophobia. There is an evident need for additional research and policy in Malta. Although, Muslim people complain in closed groups that employment with the ‘headscarf’ is difficult, there is no research to back this in Malta. On a national level, the efforts made by the European Commission Coordinator David Friggieri in combating anti-Muslim hatred are a step in the right direction. The round table discussions held with NGOs and students will help with addressing the needs of the community in a better way. On the other hand, the FRA report is one of the pivotal steps in combating Islamophobia; research should also be carried forward by research groups on a national level.<sup>1</sup>

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1. European Commission website. For more see [http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=50085](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=50085).

## Sommarju Eżekuttiv

Dan ir-rapport jeżamina l-Iżlamofobija f'Malta fis-sena 2017 filwaqt li jqis l-iżviluppi importanti kollha fuq livell nazzjonali, Ewropew u globali. Ir-riċerka diskussa hawn taht kienet akkumulata primarjament mill-Internet li tinkludi websajts ta' 'gruppi Islamofobiċi, il-midja, u kif wkoll midja soċjali. Flimkien ma' 'dan, studji u rapporti mwettqa minn Organizzazzjonijiet / aġenziji Ewropej gew eżaminati wkoll. Xi wħud minn dawn ir-rapporti statistiċi huma tal-2017 u oħrajn li saru fis-sena ta' qabel. L-awtur ġabret xi riċerka minn laqgħat ma' Musulmani f'Malta, kemm Musulmani Maltin u kif wkoll Musulmani barranin li jghixu f'Malta li qasmu l-esperjenzi u s-suggerimenti tagħhom.

Fil-qosor, l-aktar punti prominenti li ġew diskussi f'dan ir-rapport jinkludu l-Islam Fl-iskejjel, iż-żieda reċenti ta' 'partit ġdid li kkontesta l-Elezzjonijiet Ġenerali tal-2017 u ż-żieda ta' kummenti u memes Islamofobiċi. Johroġ biċċar in-nuqqas ta' riċerka mwettqa f'Malta, hija diffiċli li wieħed jipprova li l-Islamofobija hija eżistenti u qed tiżdied, madankollu bla rapporti irreġistrati lokalment. Minn studji mwettqa minn aġenzija Ewropea dan johroġ b'mod aktar ċar. Hemm hteġa evidenti għal aktar riċerka u politika soċjali f'Malta dwar din il-problema. Għalkemm, il-poplu Musulman jilmenta f'gruppi magħluqa li l-impjeg bil "headscarf" huwa diffiċli, m'hemm l-ebda riċerka biex tipprova dan f'Malta, iżda dan ma jfissirx li m'hemm l-ebda problema jew li l-problem hija inqas sinifikanti. Fuq livell Ewropew l-isforzi magħmula mill-Koordinatur tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea dwar il-ġlieda kontra l-mibegħda kontra l-Musulmani, David Friggieri huma pass fid-direzzjoni t-tajba. Id-diskussjonijiet li saru ma' l-NGOs u l-Istudanti flimkien mar-rapporti u t-taħriġ huma l-passi positivi għall-ġlieda kontra l-Iżlamofobija. Madankollu, din għandha wkoll issir mill-politiċi fuq livell nazzjonali.

## Introduction

Malta is an island in the heart of the Mediterranean and throughout history, it has had a bitter past with Muslims because of its war with the Ottoman Empire. Having a geographically strategic position, Malta served as a bridge between the Northern African countries and the European continent throughout history. Arabs from North Africa spent around 200 years in Malta in a period when Islam was the predominant religion on the island. However, at the present time, Malta is a European country which differentiates itself from Arabs and Muslims. This background has served to bring forth mixed feelings in welcoming Muslims in Malta, especially in the wake of the influxes of migrants from zones of conflict such as Syria, Libya, and a series of African countries. The common myth of a 'Muslim invasion' is a frequently used phrase. The size of the island and its overpopulation in parallel with the historic tales of Muslims in Malta, and the influx of Muslim asylum seekers have awakened xenophobic and Islamophobic reactions in the local population. Moreover, the Trump rhetoric in 2016/2017 and the 'Muslim ban' have also impacted the country and attitudes towards Muslims.

The Islamophobic sentiment has seen a rise in the past three years, mostly impacted by the fear created by the growing influx of migrants and also the effect of the global political climate and terrorist attacks in neighbouring countries. Although, the Muslim community in Malta is relatively a small, forming only 2.6% of the whole population,<sup>2</sup>The highlights being, the request for prayer space, the political discourse on the niqab ban, and teaching Islam in schools, which has been a great controversy in 2017 and has sparked a strong rejection of Islam. In conjunction to this, although there have been no reports of physical hate crime, hate speech online is a major issue and Malta is also seeing the rise of a far-right party which has participated in the general elections for the first time. There were no reported developments related to employment and justice.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

In the year under review, there were two main events which influenced the attitudes towards Islam in Malta. The first was the teaching of Islam in schools. The main problem is the limited knowledge about Islam and Muslims in Malta, beyond the fact that most Muslims are considered as foreigners. Although the proposal came from the Minister for Education, this proposal was strongly rejected and Muslims were perceived as invaders, while their request for their rights was

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2. Pew Research Center Growing Muslim Population, (November 29, 2017), accessed January 1, 2018 [http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/pf\\_11-29-17\\_muslims-update-20/](http://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/pf_11-29-17_muslims-update-20/).

viewed as problematic. Another development was the Maltese Patriots running in the general election. Although, they did poorly in terms of votes their media campaign and social media advertisements disseminated many Islamophobic and xenophobic ideas in the community which led to hostility in relation to the teaching of Islam in schools. Both 2016 and 2017 were challenging for the Muslim community in Malta and brought it face to face with negative sentiments which were not countered by a positive narrative.

## Politics

In 2017, Malta had the general election. The far-right party Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin (Maltese Patriots) participated in the election with a candidate in each district.<sup>3</sup> Although, the party claims to be simply patriotic it has issued a number of controversial statements some of which can be categorized as Islamophobic, xenophobic and racist. Fortunately, none of the candidates were elected to parliament. Most of their slogans oppose integration and foreigners in Malta.<sup>4</sup> They usually highlight their opposition to Islam while they have been organizing a number of protests and gaining support in the last years. One of the recent protests opposed Muslims praying in public places: they held an event where they served pork sandwiches at the same spot where Muslims had organized prayer gatherings.<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 1) Albeit this party is not represented in parliament, there are a number of members of parliament of the Nationalist Party and the Labour Party who have expressed xenophobic sentiments and also linked terrorism with the burqa.<sup>6</sup> These views are usually expressed on their social media pages, while it should be made clear that they are not members of Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin. In a study carried out in 2015, Malta featured as one of the countries to be least comfortable with someone from a different religion 46% of respondents expressed such a sentiment.<sup>7</sup> Thirty-nine percent of respondents claimed to feel 'totally uncomfortable,' ranking Malta second in this category.<sup>8</sup>

3. "Maltese Patriots Announce They Will Contest Next General Election" TVM, (May 9, 2017) accessed on December 27, 2017, <https://www.tvm.com.mt/en/news/maltese-patriots-announce-they-will-contest-the-next-general-election/>.

4. Tim Diacono "Patriots Plan for Referendum on Forced Integration, Is Legally Impossible", Malta Today, (December 31, 2017), accessed December 27, 2017, [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/73021/patriots\\_plan\\_for\\_referendum\\_on\\_forced\\_integration\\_is\\_legally\\_impossible#.W10DkK3MxE4](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/73021/patriots_plan_for_referendum_on_forced_integration_is_legally_impossible#.W10DkK3MxE4).

5. 'Patriots distribute pork sandwiches during protest against praying Muslims', Times of Malta (January 17, 2016), accessed December 28, 2017, (<https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20160117/local/patriots-distribute-pork-sandwiches-during-protest-against-praying.599139>)

6. Tim Diacono, 'Minister Insist, Burqa, Niqab Ban no threat to Religious Freedom' Malta Today, (October 21, 2015) accessed December 20, 2017, [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/58422/minister\\_insists\\_burqa\\_niqab\\_ban\\_no\\_threat\\_to\\_religious\\_freedom#.W10UG63MxE4](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/58422/minister_insists_burqa_niqab_ban_no_threat_to_religious_freedom#.W10UG63MxE4).

7. EC, Special Eurobarometer 437, 'Discrimination in the EU in 2015', Report published in 2015, p. 31.

8. Ibid., p. 32.



Figure 1: Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin serving pork sandwiches.<sup>9</sup>

## Education

One of the most controversial and debated developments in Malta in 2017 was the proposal by the Ministry of Education to consider teaching Islam to Muslim students in school. This has sparked a heated debate both on national television and on social media, whereby many people were irritated and infuriated by the proposal. (Fig. 2) This happened following the closing of the secondary school of the only Islamic school in Malta, Mariam Al Batool. Although this would have been restricted only to Muslim students it still led to an uncomfortable situation which exposed the fact that Muslims are still considered as ‘Others’ and can only enjoy a number of rights as permitted by the majority. The Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin also protested this and claimed that it is part of the so-called invasion. Although, the proposal has not been finalized and no concrete or official position has been taken, the common sentiment was that Islam should not infiltrate schools.<sup>10</sup> Much of this discourse was sparked by ignorance and fear, as throughout the years of formal education the curriculum does not include education on Islam. Moreover, because of the history lessons on the Ottoman Empire and its invasion and imposition on the Maltese, the proposal was simply categorized as an ‘invasion’. Many sought to conclude that the best way out of this, would be no religion at all.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the number of Syrian and Libyan students in state schools due to the crises in these countries is growing. This has been a shock for educators who have had to adapt to the current situation and a great degree of inter-religious awareness is required.

9. 17th January 2016, Msida, photo by News portal Malta Today

10. James Debono, ‘Malta Today Survey/ Maltese split on teaching Islam in state schools’ Malta Today (April 16, 2017) accessed December 27, 2017, [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/data\\_and\\_surveys/76301/survey\\_\\_maltese\\_split\\_on\\_teaching\\_of\\_islam\\_in\\_state\\_schools#.W10hj63MxE4](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/data_and_surveys/76301/survey__maltese_split_on_teaching_of_islam_in_state_schools#.W10hj63MxE4).

11. Kurt Sansone, ‘Debate on Whether Islam should be taught at schools heats up’ Times of Malta (March 26, 2017), accessed December 28, <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20170326/local/debate-on-whether-islam-should-be-taught-at-secondary-schools-heats-up.643467>.



Figure 2: A post by the Facebook Group Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin on teaching Islam in schools.<sup>12</sup>

## Media

Media on an international level has caused much damage to Muslims. In Malta, there are no particular media outlets which promote Islamophobic content. On the other hand, many of the outlets try to promote a discussion on Islam and taking into account that most of the media personnel are not knowledgeable on the topic, some statements have led to an unbalanced discussion; additionally many statements are difficult to understand and cause misunderstandings.

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

In Malta, physical attacks are not reported with the exception of the statistical study by the FRA, which focused specifically on foreign Muslims in Malta who are from sub-Saharan countries. However, this year there was a brutal attack caught on camera where bouncers assaulted two men who ended up in hospital with grievous injuries.<sup>13</sup> One of the victims was Syrian and the other Jordanian. This case has not been concluded yet, and thus it is not just to conclude that these men were assaulted because they were foreign. Research in 2017 has shown that 7% of the Muslims in Malta have been subject to physical violence and a fourth of Muslims who took part in the study reported experiencing harassment. This study included over 25,500 respondent who were of sub-Saharan African descent.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, a problem was made obvious in the study by the revelation that only 8% of the Muslims in Malta knew of organizations that offer support or advice to victims of discrimination.<sup>15</sup> Many of the attacks are not reported, either because there are no mechanisms in place or because victims of such crimes do not feel that the authorities would be of any help and fear getting into more trouble if they report the incident. Although most respondents from Malta, identified at-

12. 23rd September 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10155844724141661&set=g.374854512664893&ctype=1&theater&ifg=1>

13. 'The Brutal Assault by Two Paceville Bouncers Which Left Men Injured' The Malta Independent Online (July 26, 2017), accessed December 27, 2017, <http://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2017-07-26/local-news/Watch-The-brutal-assault-by-Paceville-bouncers-which-left-two-men-injured-6736177035>.

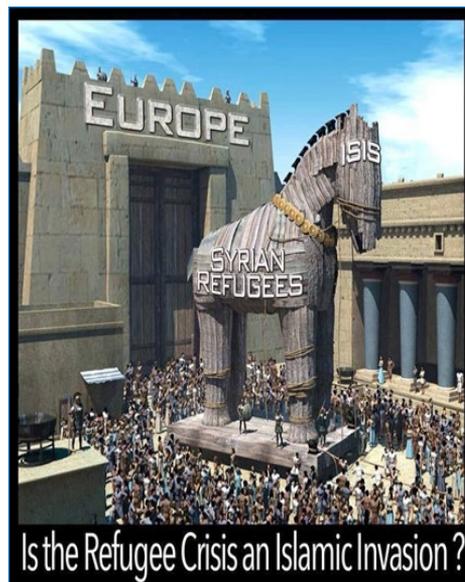
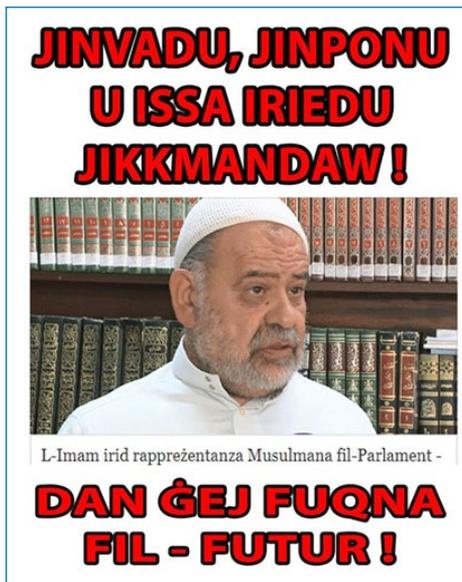
14. FRA, EU-MIDIS II, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, Muslims – Selected findings, 2017

15. Ibid.

tacks based on skin colour or ethnic background, this is mostly because it is more evident than religion.

### Internet

The Internet is the most prevalent space for Islamophobic comments. (Figs. 3 and 4) Social media pages such as that of the Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin<sup>16</sup> are flooded with Islamophobic comments and posters. It is very difficult to monitor these platforms and to hold people responsible for their comments online and for the fake news which is spread. Hate speech is codified under Maltese Criminal Law Article 82A (1)<sup>17</sup> which includes “written or printed material” and on the basis of religion, amongst others. However, case law is sparse on this subject although hate speech is always on the rise. One of the most important campaigns has been the Council of Europe’s “No Hate Speech” Movement. On the website for this campaign the reporting procedures of the respective party countries are included to facilitate reporting. However, Malta’s reporting procedure is not. Several other organizations in Malta such as the People for Change Foundation, have sought to create their own reporting mechanisms; however, they are not very popular with victims of hate speech.<sup>18</sup> There is also another project under the name of C.O.N.T.A.C.T which was set up, but its effectiveness remains to be seen.



Figures 3 and 4: Typical posts on Facebook page of Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin, right 20th July 2017 (“Mocking the Imam for calling for Muslim representation in Parliament”) left 8th January 2018.

16. See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/374854512664893/about/>

17. Criminal Code of the Laws of Malta, Article 82A (1)

18. People for Change Website, Report Racism Malta, accessed December 27, 2017, <http://www.pfcmalta.org/report-racism-malta.html>.

### **Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network**

As outlined in the section on politics the primary foundation of the Islamophobia network is the Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin movement. Another group is Imperium Ewropa, which shares the same far-right ideologies and supports fascism and nationalism. However, in the last three to four years, Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin took the lead with its Facebook page and presence on social media. Although, this might not seem like an extensive network, the geographical size of Malta should also be taken into consideration together with its population. This group has organized protests all across the country. Moreover, Alex Pisani and Henry Battistino, the moderators and leaders of this movement, are responsible for the organization of such events and sharing material, which is then further circulated and shared.

### **Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

A number of organizations exist such as Jesuit Refugee Service, People for Change Foundation, Auditus and Integra Foundation which are taking the lead in countering discrimination. There are no national political or civil society initiatives countering Islamophobia specifically. 'Islamophobia' is non-existent as a concept in Malta, although very visible in the community. This results from the fact that most projects are designed to empower immigrants who usually also have a different ethnic background. Civil society in Malta, just this year piloted a 'Civil Society Network,' which is limited to matters of corruption and rule of law rather than Islamophobia. In conclusion, there are currently no effective initiatives countering Islamophobia directly, yet themes such as hate speech or conferences on the integration of religious minorities do feature in the country - although there is still a very long way to go. The Muslim community in Malta is very fragmented especially after the Arab Spring and although there are recognized organizations such as Ahmadiyya Community and the Islam Centre, there is no organized Muslim community which speaks and acts collectively to counter Islamophobia.

### **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

As evident from the above research, which includes informal interviews with Muslims, newspapers and statistics, Malta is very underdeveloped on this matter and requires research and policy to counter Islamophobia. Muslims in Malta feel the lacuna left by the failure of politicians and equality bodies to address this situation. In the current global anti-Muslim climate, the development of mechanisms to counter hate are crucial. Moreover, adequate screening of social media pages and a safe and user-friendly reporting system are also very important. Creating space for dialogue is essential to counter Islamophobia together with awareness and education about Islam to help civil society identify what is real and what is fake and to overcome the barriers Muslims face on a daily basis.

Moreover, it would also help overcome prejudice and encourage viewing Muslims beyond stereotypes, as individuals.

There is a need to distinguish Islamophobia from other discriminatory ideologies and to map out its seriousness. This will also require an observatory authority that can monitor and record Islamophobic incidents – at the moment, it is very difficult to establish clear figures. A clear policy framework is also important for educators and schools to ensure that there is uniformity and an inclusive environment for students. This can also be extended to all areas - awareness and knowledge of Islam is pivotal for everyone, including journalists, politicians, and civil servants.

## Chronology

- **14.03.2017:** The ECHR rulings on Muslim clothing at work spark discussions in Malta.
- **30.03.2017:** Hungarian PM Orban warns against the ‘invasion of Muslims’ at Malta’s EPP congress in Malta.
- **02.04.2017:** The Patriots hold a protest over the teaching of Islam in church schools.
- **26.07.2017:** Brutal attack in an entertainment site on two foreigners from majority-Muslim countries.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**NETHERLANDS**  
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## Executive Summary

The most significant development in 2017 in the Netherlands was the national elections held on March 15. The various parties' election campaigns were dominated by populist rhetoric. The race was mainly between the extreme right-wing party of Geert Wilders (PVV) and the centre-right party of Mark Rutte (VVD). The left-wing parties were almost voiceless except for Groenlinks who managed to increase its votes. Islamophobic statements by Mark Rutte and other centre-right parties dominated the election campaigns. Many human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and the Netherlands Bar, warned that the election programs of many parties were in violation of the international treaties of human rights and the Dutch law.

In 2017, Islamophobic statements and actions were not only limited to politics, but were present in other areas such as the media, the judiciary, education, and the labor market. The MIND, the Internet complaint line, has published 918 complaints received in 2016. This is an increase of 41% compared to the year before.

Anti-discrimination agencies and projects such as Monitoring Muslim Discrimination lead by Ineke van der Valk also reported an increase in Islamophobia. An undercover study by the PEER in February 2017 shows that many of the temporary employment agencies are involved in racism, especially against Muslims.

Additionally, a study by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights shows that Muslims have been discriminated against in finding work, but that only 12% of Muslims have reported the latest instance they faced discrimination. The most significant positive development of 2017 was the initiative taken by Dutch Muslims and indigenous Dutch people to fight against Islamophobia.

## Samengevat

In dit rapport is Islamofobie in Nederland van het jaar 2017 onderzocht. De belangrijkste ontwikkeling in het jaar 2017 waren de nationale verkiezingen. Verkiezingscampagnes van verschillende partijen werden gedomineerd door Populistische campagnes. De concurrentie was voornamelijk tussen de extreemrechtse partij PVV en de centrumrechtse partij VVD. De linkse partijen waren vrijwel stemloos, behalve GroenLinks die erin slaagde zijn stemmen te verhogen. Veel mensenrechtenorganisaties zoals Amnesty International en de Nederlandse Orde van Advocaten hebben gewaarschuwd voor het verkiezingsprogramma van veel partijen die in strijd zijn met de internationale mensenrechtenverdragen en het Nederlands recht. In 2017 zijn de Islamofobische uitspraken en acties niet beperkt gebleven tot de politiek, maar ook op andere gebieden zoals in de Media, Internet en de arbeidsmarkt lieten ze zich sterk zien.

Antidiscriminatiebureaus en enkele projecten zoals Ineke van der Valk Monitoring van Moslimdiscriminatie meldden dat Islamofobie nog steeds in toename is. Uit een undercover onderzoek van PEER in februari 2017 blijkt dat veel van de uitzendbureaus betrokken zijn bij racisme vooral tegen moslims. Bovendien blijkt uit de studie van het Bureau van de Europese Unie voor de grondrechten dat moslims worden gediscrimineerd bij het vinden van werk terwijl slechts 12% van de moslims het incident van de discriminatie heeft gemeld.

Nederlandse moslims en inheemse Nederlanders zijn dit jaar meer bewust geworden van discriminatie jegens moslims en namen initiatieven om deze te bestrijden.

## Introduction

Discrimination of immigrants with an Islamic background and hate speech against them, as well as the way Dutch society has responded to immigrants both socially and legally, has changed over time. The critiques have not only changed in terms of subject but have also become more strident over time. When in 1990, Hans Janmaat, a Dutch MP at the time, protested against migration with his statement ‘Full is Full.’ Dutch courts convicted him of committing an act of hate speech. He received fines and a conditional prison sentence for incitement to hate and discrimination against foreigners. However, recently Geert Wilders shouted similar inflammatory statements during one of his party meetings. When he asked his followers if they wanted fewer or more Moroccans in the country, the party members’ response was “Fewer, Fewer”, to which Wilders notoriously gave the assurance that when in power, his party would “arrange that.” Crucially, over time it is clear that such hate speech has become normalized. The larger public, however, was not as shocked at Wilder’s hate speech as with the case of Janmaat. The fact that Janmaat was actually persecuted for incitement of hate yet Wilder’s statement led to his being sentenced to a fine of 5,000 euro but to no prison time, clearly demonstrate that despite the harsher nature of the statements against Muslims since 1990, these statements have become ordinary for society as well as politicians.<sup>1</sup>

## Significant Incidents and Developments

On January 24, 2017, a discussion took place in De Balie in Amsterdam with the title “Why do they actually hate us?” (“Waaromhatenzeonseigenlijk”). This discussion took place as an initiative of foundation De StichtingWerkelijkheid in Pesrpectief of former VVD leader Frits Bolkestein, legal philosopher Paul Cliteur (leading candidate of Forum for Democracy, a national conservative political party) and Emeritus Professor Meindert Fennema. The debate was held in order to introduce the release of a book under the same title and took the form of a debate with contributions from various, predominantly right-wing and extreme-right anti-Islam authors. Some of these contributors are known to make little or no distinction between Islam and Islamist extremism. After an introduction, the members started to speak about the ways the number of Muslims in the Netherlands could be reduced to one or two percent of the population, and they spoke openly about deportation as an option to reach that goal. Instead of reflecting on the potentially discriminatory nature of the question, which clearly echoed the pre-Holocaust policies of Germany under Hitler,<sup>2</sup> panel members such as Wim van Rooy and Paul Cliteur philosophized about

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1. Maurits S. Berger, “The Netherlands”, in *The Oxford Handbook of European Islam*, ed. Jocelyne Cesari, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 200.

2. Explained, for example, in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, retrieved from <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005469>.

the legal and constitutional possibilities of a corresponding solution. Paul Cliteur suggested addressing de-Islamization step by step. He stated that, after all, it is not about the fact that Muslims cannot be deported, the point is that one wants to create a situation in which this is 'normal' and is possible. The fact that members of the panel, who were important intellectuals of the Netherlands, did not protest these dehumanizing utterances made the situation more worrying and shocking. Noteworthy were the reactions afterwards. Several newspapers reported on the meeting. There was strong criticism of the proposals by Van Rooy and De Wit (she is a well-known so-called "Islam critic" who during the debate was sitting among the audience and said that reducing Muslims to one or two percent could be a good solution). A few days later, the whole debate was discussed in the City Hall of the municipality of Amsterdam and a councillor of alderman pointed to the discriminatory nature of the statements. The leftist party GroenLinks considered filing a report to the police, but they did not. Deputy Prime Minister Lodewijk Asscher distanced himself on Twitter and called the statements "horrible" and "not normal."

Another incident was the crisis between Turkey and the Netherlands which targeted Muslims with Turkish background. On March 11, the relationship between Turkey and the Netherlands suffered a huge downgrade and since then diplomatic relations have been on the back burner. The consequences of this crisis are still felt in all kinds of areas. People with a Turkish background are constantly approached and even interrogated at school, at work, in port clubs, and during social meetings. Joint activities are cancelled or postponed, retailers are avoided. Many politicians, like Rutte and Wilders, ask the Turkish community of the Netherlands to prove their loyalty to the Netherlands and double nationality is considered disreputable.

The attitude of Turkish-Dutch people on politics in the Netherlands is considered to be as follows: most Turkish-Dutch citizens are positive about Dutch society, but negative about Dutch politicians, in general, and Mark Rutte, in particular. DENK party voters and non-DENK voters look at Dutch politics differently. It is clear that the rise of the DENK party has had a considerable impact on the Turkish community. For example, two-thirds of the Turkish-Dutch think that Dutch politicians do not pay enough attention to the Turkish community, while more than half think that DENK will contribute to the integration of the Turkish-Dutch. What is not a surprise, according to the research agency, is that DENK voters are much more positive in this sense than non-DENK voters.

Another important report which was published before the elections of 2017 was that of the Verwey Jonker Institute, which was carried out on behalf of the Anne Frank Foundation in December 2017.<sup>3</sup> For the year 2016, they reported 364 incidents of Mus-

3. Bas Tierolf/Maaike van Kapel/ Lianne Drost, Zesde rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland, INCIDENTEN, AANGIFTES, VERDACHTEN EN AFHANDELING IN 2016, (Utrecht, Verwey Jonker Instituut, 2017), available at [http://www.annefrank.org/ImageVaultFiles/id\\_19120/cf\\_21/Racisme\\_2016\\_VJI.PDF](http://www.annefrank.org/ImageVaultFiles/id_19120/cf_21/Racisme_2016_VJI.PDF).

lim discrimination in the BVH,<sup>4</sup> a slight decrease compared to 2015. The number of incidents of Muslim discrimination in 2015 was 466, a tripling of the number of incidents compared to 2014 (142 incidents). This was probably a result of the terrorist attacks committed in Europe in 2015 and the unrest surrounding the arrival of large groups of refugees that were predominantly from Islamic countries. Yet, as in 2016, several terrorist attacks were again committed for which the so-called DAESH terror group claimed responsibility, the aforementioned decrease was according to the reporters remarkable. At the same time, the number of incidents is still considerably higher than in 2014. The year 2015 may be called a ‘peak year.’ The researchers’ interpretation of these statistics is remarkable. They argued that the public may be getting used to the fact that attacks (without any support from local Muslims) regularly take place, and as a result it does not lead to increased social tensions. Another explanation given to this decrease was that Muslims who feel Islamophobia on a daily basis do not trust government agencies, or the police.<sup>5</sup> Feeling that they are not taken seriously by the police, they largely avoid taking the necessary steps to register their cases to the authorities. This problem, activists concede, makes it more difficult to propose additional policies to combat Islamophobia.

The *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, Muslims – Selected Findings* shows that especially in the Netherlands, Muslims feel increasingly discriminated. Thirteen percent of Muslims in Netherlands have been discriminated in the past five years because of their religious beliefs. This is higher in comparison with other European countries. As mentioned above, trust in the police is lowest among Dutch Muslims. But despite this, in comparison with other European countries, Dutch Muslims report discrimination more often. A quarter of the incidents are reported in the Netherlands. In no other European country do Muslims feel such a small connection to the country where they live. The average is 4.1 on a scale of five. Dutch Muslims, however, give their feeling of solidarity with the Netherlands a 3.4 on a scale of five. In a press release FRA Director Michael O’Flaherty states, “Our survey results make a mockery of the claim that Muslims aren’t integrated into our societies. On the contrary, we see a trust in democratic institutions that is higher than much of the general population. However, every incident of discrimination and hate crime hampers their inclusion and reduces their chances of finding employment. We risk alienating individuals and their communities, with potentially perilous consequences.”<sup>6</sup>

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4. Data from the incident registration system of the police, the Basic Enforcement Service (BVH).

5. This has been observed in many reports about ethnic profiling. For more information see: Amnesty International, “Gelijkheid onderdruk: de impact van etnisch profileren”, 2013; S. Cankaya, “De controle van marsmannetjes en ander schorriemorrie, Het beslissingsproces tijdens pro-actief politie werk”, AcademiePolitie Amsterdam-Amstelland, 2012; and also a report which is written on behalf of the police to investigate the distrustfulness Muslims feel towards the police in terms of registering their cases: A. Ens, “Discriminatie melden bij de politie?”, Den Haag: Nationale Politie, 2016.

6. Press release of FRA (21-09-2017): <http://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2017/muslims-eu-high-levels-trust-despite-pervasive-discrimination>.

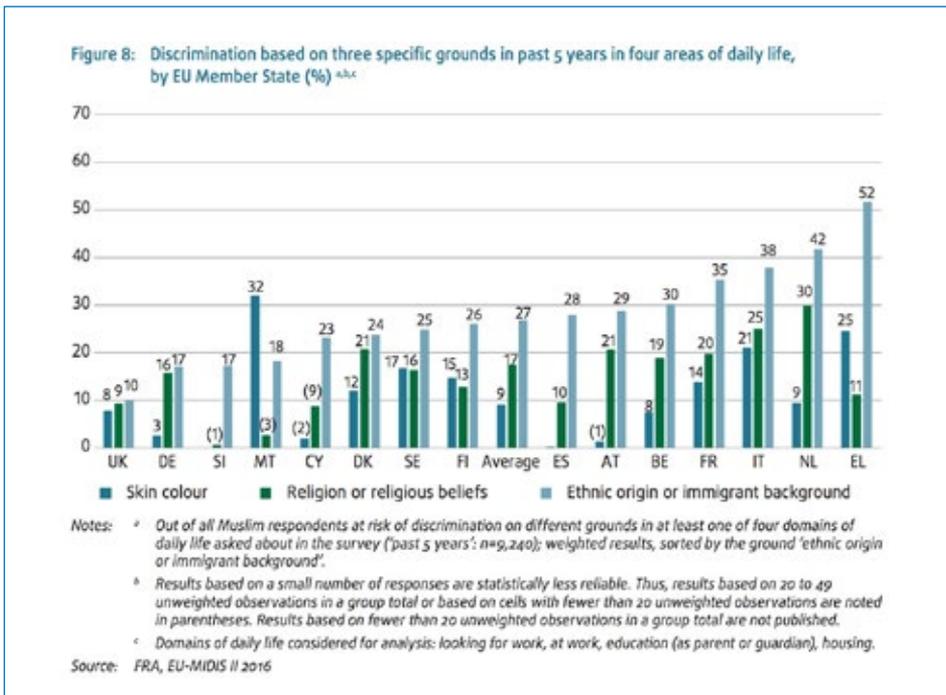


Figure 1: FRA, EU-MIDIS II 2016<sup>8</sup>

Some key findings show that 76 percent of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country where they live. Yet, 31 percent of those seeking employment have been discriminated against in the last five years. Regarding ethnic profiling by police, 42 percent of respondents who had been stopped by the police over the last year said this happened because of their migrant or ethnic minority background.<sup>7</sup>

Another important report published before the elections is one by the SCP's (Social Cultural Planning Office) titled *Kwestiesvoor het kiezen*.<sup>9</sup> In this, the SCP analyzes a number of social issues that are of interest to citizens, and that are expected to play a role in the campaign for the parliamentary elections of 2017 and the subsequent government formation. The report also pays a lot of attention to social contradictions in which Muslims and Islam play an important role.

One important outcome is the worry about the Turkish and Moroccan Dutch, who according to their survey have become more negative about their opportunities and life in the Netherlands. About 40% has "experienced discrimination more often." The manner in which they have been discriminated, however, is not mentioned.

7. Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Muslims Selected findings, Luxembourg: 2017, retrieved January 26, 2018, from <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-muslims-selected-finding>.

8. Ibid, p. 27.

9. SCP: *Kwesties voor het kiezen, Analyses van enkele maatschappelijke thema's voor de Tweede Kamerverkiezingen 2017* (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau Den Haag, February 2017), retrieved February 26, 2018, from [https://www.scp.nl/Nieuws/SCP\\_analyseert\\_maatschappelijke\\_kwesties\\_in\\_aanloop\\_naar\\_de\\_verkiezingen](https://www.scp.nl/Nieuws/SCP_analyseert_maatschappelijke_kwesties_in_aanloop_naar_de_verkiezingen).

Based on this research, the SCP does not assume that views on migrants have become more negative in recent years, but a large group of autochthonous Dutch people feel that the Netherlands will lose its identity. The report states that the great diversity (as in “backgrounds, religious convictions and norms and values”) contributes to this feeling. According to the SCP, the discussion about these issues is intensified because young people from migrant groups claim their place in society more emphatically than before.

Another point was the radicalization of Muslims. The Dutch in question (it is not entirely clear who these Dutch are) are concerned about groups that, according to the SCP, are “at a great distance” from Dutch society - “radicalized and extremist Muslims.” The most significant finding of this report is their advice to the government. The SCP posed the question of whether the government could have a role in reducing social unease and bringing citizens together. They came up with the following suggestion in relation to radicalization: “The government could also make a contribution by promoting the modernization of Islam and supporting liberal Muslims, as a counterweight to radical Islam, which has a strong attraction for young people.” This last point suggests that Dutch policymakers and advisers have considered the modification of the notion of non-interference in doctrines and religious organizations they embraced after 1983. New dynamics have challenged the stabilized secularization policy of the Dutch state that thought that it had made this process of secularization stable. The challenge of Muslims has made them, on occasion, desperate and they have broken their tradition of secularism. This report is a good example of how complicated it has been to deal with challenges. Although, on the other hand, the government has, of course, tried to do so for years. In this respect, the efforts to launch a program at universities to educate imams in the Netherlands, could be mentioned.

The bitter climate formed by politicians to gain more votes during their campaigns made Muslims in the Netherlands worry about their future in the country. This is reflected in reports and newspapers as “Plan B.” Many Muslims with Moroccan and Turkish background think of immigrating to the countries of their origin; this is particularly true of Moroccans due to Wilders’s focus on them. This return process has already started for Muslims with Turkish background. In 2015, about 2,500 or more immigrated to Turkey as opposed to Turks moving to the Netherlands, which was the dominant trend in the past.<sup>10</sup>

As mentioned above, on December 9, 2016, Geert Wilders was found guilty of defaming a group and inciting racial discrimination for leading a chant calling for

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10. Volkskrant: Marokkaanse Nederlanders zoeken uitwijkplan: voor het geval datfrom, retrieved February 26, 2018, from [https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/marokkaanse-nederlanders-zoeken-uitwijkplan-voor-het-geval-dat-a4462031/?utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=shared%20content&utm\\_content=paid&hash=2b88addb432a8a0a6580776428ba9be16822bf7](https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/marokkaanse-nederlanders-zoeken-uitwijkplan-voor-het-geval-dat-a4462031/?utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=shared%20content&utm_content=paid&hash=2b88addb432a8a0a6580776428ba9be16822bf7).

“fewer Moroccans” in the Netherlands. Wilders and his prosecutor appealed against this case. The prosecutor appealed against the decision of the court to not punish Wilders and Wilders appealed against his conviction. On his first pro forma hearing on October 24 his lawyer denied that Wilders’s statements about wanting fewer Moroccans in The Hague and the Netherlands led to actual discrimination against Moroccans. He argued that instead it should be seen as a call for the government to change its policy. During these first pro forma court hearings, Wilders repeated his habit of expressing his doubts about the neutrality of the judge. After another pro-forma court hearing on October 26, 2017, the substantive trial is set to start on May 17 2018, after the municipal elections in March.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The leading development in 2017 in the Netherlands was the Dutch elections. The parliamentary elections were held on March 15. Populism dominated the electoral campaigns of the different parties. The race mostly took place between the far-right party of Geert Wilders (PVV) and the centre-right party of Mark Rutte (VVD). The leftist parties were nearly voiceless.

The campaigns’ rhetoric was centred on the topics of Islam, immigration, and the economy. The main topics were the values and norms in the country. According to the survey of the research agency IPSOS on behalf of the Dutch broadcaster NOS, 86 percent of Dutch citizens “are concerned” about their values and norms and 10 percent were “very concerned.” This is a result of years-long discourse in which Islam and the culture of migrants have been presented as dangers to Dutch society. These worries of Dutch people are used by political parties in their campaigns.

Mark Rutte’s statement to the world during his campaigns was that the Netherlands would stop the racist domino effect of the far right. Instead Rutte and other centre-right parties gave ground with their speeches to racist and Islamophobic statements. The Christian parties focused on the conflicts between Islam and the Judeo-Christian tradition and Rutte’s party (VVD) targeted migrants and minorities with his open letter to newspapers calling them to act “normal” or to leave. The SGP (radical Christian party) published a manifesto titled *Manifest Islam in Nederland* (Declaration Islam in the Netherlands).<sup>11</sup> Their declaration had roots in age-old biases from the Christian tradition towards Islam such as “The love offer of Jesus Christ and Muhammad’s use of violence is as different as night and day.”<sup>12</sup> This Christian

11. SGL, “Manifest Islam in Nederland”, retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://www.sgp.nl/actueel/manifest-islam-in-nederland/6125>.

12. Ibid.

party emphasized the danger of Islam and associated Islam with violence and emphasized that this violence, unfortunately, no longer stops at the gates of Vienna. Islamic violence is entering, according to them, many European cities. The Christian Democrats (CDA) called for the ban of the financing of mosques from abroad and was wary of “radical Islam” in their campaign.

The aforementioned facts demonstrated that not only far-right parties such as the PVV and the FvD used anti-Islam sentiments in their campaigns, but also other parties, like the liberals and moderate Christian parties. Due to their fear of losing votes and their desire to attract voters from the political right, especially from Geert Wilders’s Party for Freedom, they used nearly the same rhetoric as the far-right parties. This harsh climate is criticized by many institutions like Amnesty International and the Netherlands Bar (Nederlandse Orde van Advocaten, NOvA/ Dutch Association of Lawyers) which analyzed the campaign programs of political parties from a juridical perspective. Populism in the Netherlands is going too far, according to Amnesty International. “For example, when Geert Wilders talks about Moroccan scum. But also when the Dutch prime minister writes an open letter calling on migrants to act normal or go away,” stated Amnesty International. These institutions stressed that “stories about blame, hatred and fear globally haven’t been on this level since 1930.” Similarly, the Netherlands Bar announced its concerns about the content of the campaigns. According to their report,<sup>13</sup> published in February, the alarming results of their research showed that an average of 40 percent of the electoral programs directly contradicted the rule of law. In particular, the last five surveys of the extreme right-wing Freedom Party (PVV) violated these principles. The other parties are the Liberal Party (VVD), the Christian Democratic Party (CDA), the Socialist Reform Party (SGP), and the Party for the Netherlands (VNL). In addition, compared to the electoral programs in 2012, the rate of taking security measures which contradict the rules of law was increased by 40 percent. The controversial topics which led the parties to violate the law to the highest degree were immigration, refugees, terrorism, and extremist Islamists.

On March 15, 2017, general elections took place. The People’s Party for Liberty and Democracy (VVD), led by Prime Minister Mark Rutte, gained the highest results although the party suffered a huge loss of votes. The party, which had previously been deputy in the House of Representatives with 150 seats, could now issue 33 deputies (21.3%). The party of Geert Wilders, the Freedom Party (PVV), won 20 seats (13.1%) and followed the VVD. This was a victory for Wilders since his party raised its number of seats from 15 to 20. Following the Liberty Party were the Christian Democratic Party (CDA) with 12.4% and the Democrats 66 (D66) with 12.2%, who managed to get 19 deputies in the parliament. The Green Left (GL) and the So-

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13. ‘Rechtstatelijkheid in verkiezingsprogramma’s’. *De partijprogramma’s voor de verkiezingen 2017 rechtstatelijk?* (14 February 2017), retrieved January 26, 2018, from <https://www.advocatenorde.nl/12308/rapport-rechtsstaat-def>.

cialist Party (SP) received in total 14 seats in the parliament (9.1%). It can be said that the Green Left Party, which won 4 seats benefited from the election. Tunahan Kuzu and Selcuk Ozturk, who were removed from the Labour Party (PvdA) because they did not cast a vote of confidence to the party's integration policy, founded their own pro-diversity party, DENK, in 2015 and gained 3 deputies (2.1%) in this election.

The campaigns held before the elections soon turned into a race between Prime Minister Mark Rutte and Geert Wilders. Wilders managed to put Islam at the centre of the election campaigns. The liberals fervently wanted to attract voters from the political right, especially from Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom (PVV), which according to the polls had the highest votes. The trend of attracting voters from Wilders was also pursued by the Christian Democrats and other Christian parties in the race. This harsh climate of election campaigns will continue in 2018 with the upcoming municipal elections.

### Justice System

After the decision by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on 14 March 2017” to consider the headscarf in the workplace illegal, the National Human Rights Institute of the Netherlands declared that the European Court of Justice's ruling was not a license for employers to refuse or dismiss women with headscarves in the workplace.

On October 20, 2017, the National Human Rights Institute judged that the National Police discriminated against a police officer by not allowing her to wear a headscarf in combination with her uniform. The officer in question, Sarah Izat, was allowed to wear a headscarf while performing her administrative duties, but was not allowed to wear it in combination with her uniform. The police argued that the goal of wearing a uniform is to appear neutral and prevent expression of belief. They felt that wearing a headscarf with the uniform could harm the impartiality of the police and jeopardize the safety of the police officer. They were not able to convince the institute, however.

In this case, according to the institute, there is direct discrimination on the basis of religion; in other words, a person is treated in a different way than another in a comparable situation, on the basis of religion. This is violation of Article 1 of the General Equal Treatment Act (Algemene wet gelijkebehandeling AWGB). The institute's ruling is not binding, but does carry weight politically.<sup>14</sup>

On July 10, 2017, the court of The Hague decided that a school in The Hague has to pay the mother of two pupils compensation because the children missed the school photos. The photos were to be taken on the same day as the celebration of the Islamic sacrificial festival. The judge assigned the woman 500 euro. The children

14. College Rechten van Mens: De Nationale Politie discrimineert een politiemedewerkster door haar te verbieden om haar functie (het beantwoorden van het 0900-servicenummer en het opnemen van 3D-aangiften) uit te oefenen in politie uniform, in combinatie met een hoofddoek, retrieved November 20, 2017, from <https://www.mensenrechten.nl/publicaties/oordelen/2017-135/detail>.

received the compensation because their school, according to the sub-district court judge, made a distinction between pupils and this is not permitted under the General Equal Treatment Act (AWGB).<sup>15</sup>

The director of the indoor children's playground De Ballebak Nederland B.V. asked the National Human Rights Institute to assess whether he would be guilty of discrimination on grounds of religion if he forbade clients from praying at his playgrounds. He also wanted a verdict on whether he could put a sign with the following text: "In our playground we also have freedom of religion, but open confession by specific actions is forbidden by us. You will therefore be denied further access." The institute is of the opinion that the applicant is free to decide for himself what purpose and for what kind of activities he offers his business premises. Equal treatment legislation does not mean that the applicant should be obliged to set up a separate room in which visitors can pray. The institute did, however, point out that visitors are not allowed to be refused access to their playground because of their religion. However, this is not the case here – on principle everyone is welcome. The institute judged that the applicant will not make a prohibited distinction on the grounds of religion if he forbids his visitors to pray at the children's playground.<sup>16</sup>

## Employment

The labour market is still the place where the most instances of discrimination continue to occur. Research by the Social Planning Office (SCP)<sup>17</sup> shows that unemployment is still higher for immigrants in comparison to the indigenous Dutch. Non-Western migrants, and in particular their children born in the Netherlands, have, according to the researchers, become less positive in recent years about their chances and lives in the Netherlands. Especially young people of the second generation are very concerned about their chances in the labour market - and the changing social climate in the Netherlands.

According to an undercover research conducted by the youth action group Doetank PEER in February 2017, many temporary employment agencies are involved in racism. The members of the research group presented themselves as a 'Dutch events company' that was looking for only white temporary employees. The young action group fabricated the fictional company 'Holland Danst.' This events agency was supposedly looking for temporary workers. There were no requirements

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15. See for more information about this case the judgment of the lawsuit: <https://uitspraken.rechtspraak.nl/inziendocument?id=ECLI:NL:RBDHA:2017:7416>.

16. College Rechten van de Mens, De Ballebak Nederland B.V. discrimineert niet als hij bidden in zijn speeltuinen verbiedt, *mensenrechten.nl* retrieved January 20, 2018, from <https://www.mensenrechten.nl/publicaties/oordelen/2017-76/detail>.

17. SCP: Kwesaties voor het kiezen, Den Haag (February 13, 2017), retrieved January 20, 2018, from: [https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle\\_publicaties/Publicaties\\_2017/Kwesaties\\_voor\\_het\\_kiezen?\\_sp=e13f2676-06c7-4ca5-8c6d-ace71233f3d6.1517382442643](https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2017/Kwesaties_voor_het_kiezen?_sp=e13f2676-06c7-4ca5-8c6d-ace71233f3d6.1517382442643).

except that the employees had to be white. “What baffled us the most was the obviousness of the request. Most employment agencies did not have any questions or comments. Some admitted that it was discriminatory and against the law, but then rushed to emphasize that they could nevertheless help us,” says initiator Lyle Muns.<sup>18</sup> About 70% of the temporary employment agencies saw no problem in the racist request. “We did expect that a number of agencies would want to work with us, but that there would be so many, that it would be so easy and open shocked even us. Shameless!” says Muns. As to the reaction of the politicians, mention must be made of the party leader of the Groen Links in Amsterdam, Rutger Groot Wassink, who requested an emergency debate.

Furthermore, a survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows that among European countries, Muslims in the Netherlands feel increasingly discriminated, which is also felt on the labour market. The survey shows that one out of every three Muslim in the last five years felt that they had been discriminated against in finding work, but that only 12% of the Muslims reported the latest case of discrimination.

Yet, it has become routine to read in the papers that someone is refused a job due to her/his religious background. Just as previous research, this study showed that Muslim women who wear headscarves are the majority of victims. In December 2017, a Muslim girl who applied to work at the new McDonald’s branch in Oosterhout, near Nijmegen, was allowed to come to a meeting, was accepted, but on the condition that she takes off her headscarf when she starts work. The new McDonald’s claims it wants to radiate ‘neutrality.’ The burger franchise relies on the ruling by the European Court of Justice of March 2017.<sup>19</sup>

## Education

In the Netherlands, discrimination is often discussed in the guise of segregation. One third of the primary schools in the largest 38 municipalities do not reflect the social structure of the local region. The population of Dutch and immigrant students are not balanced in schools. In this sense, white flight is a developing phenomenon. Parents with Dutch origins occasionally conspicuously select schools with little or no immigrants for their children. This leads to segregation in schools. Sometimes this is not only due to the selection of the parents but primary schools structurally refuse pupils on the basis of their ethnic origin. In many cases this happens with non-transparent, ‘unfair’ admission procedures. Schools fear becoming ‘black’ and that their Cito score (i.e. the assessment to determine which type of secondary school

18. Doetank Peer: EXPOSE THE RACISM: Uitzendbureaus maken zich massaal schuldig aan discriminatie. retrieved February 21, 2018, from <http://doetankpeer.nl/expose-the-racism/>.

19. Omroep Gelderland: Moslima met hoofddoek verontwaardigd: ze mag niet bij McDonald’s 29 December 2017, retrieved January 22, 2018, from, <https://www.omroep gelderland.nl/nieuws/2153420/Moslima-met-hoofddoek-verontwaardigd-ze-mag-niet-bij-McDonald-s-werken>.

a child should go to) will be negatively influenced by the admission of many ethnic minority pupils, sometimes with language and learning disadvantages. As a result, they believe, their schools will end up in a downward spiral and will no longer be attractive to native Dutch parents.

In this sense, a research by the Amsterdam Municipal Research, Information and Statistics Authority of Amsterdam and its nearby area in previous years gives us a good picture of this segregation.<sup>20</sup> They conclude that the segregation phenomenon at schools is at a high level. It is observed that there is still a serious division in the distribution of school types in secondary education in terms of the educational level of parents and the social roots of students. According to the institution, in secondary education, segregation is observed at a higher level than at primary education. One of the main reasons for this distinction is the advice given by the schools and teachers in primary education. While students with highly educated parents are frequently referred to good schools, low-educated and immigrant students are advised to go to lower-level vocational schools.

Another difficulty in education faced by Muslims students is in finding an internship and here, girls wearing headscarves are the major victims. One research carried out by Kennisplatform Integratie&Samenleving in the regions of Utrecht, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, on 120 MBO (Middle Vocational Education) students and education, revealed that 10% of students encountered discrimination in the process of searching for internship. About 33% of the respondents stated that they would not be able to declare that they are discriminated against. Researchers explained this as a two-sided drawback: on the one hand, students and supervisors avoid Dutch companies because of the risk of being rejected and, at the same time, they avoid responding to discriminatory signals. The students who are experiencing an internship problem later experience the same in the process of searching for work.<sup>21</sup>

Another educational problem was the textbooks used in education. It is revealed that some secondary school textbooks, especially those related to humanities, contained prejudiced information on Turks, Muslims and Islam.<sup>22</sup>

Due to the increasing demands of the Muslim population and educational freedom, many Islamic schools have been opened. The Dutch constitution, allows faith-based schools to be founded and they receive government funding. However, non-profit religious organizations are not eligible for funds, other than

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20. Segregatie in het Amsterdamse onderwijs, Gemeente Amsterdam Onderzoek, Informatie en Statistiek, November 2017, retrieved January 22, 2018, from <https://www.ois.amsterdam.nl/nieuwsarchief/2016/segregatie-in-het-amsterdamse-onderwijs>.

21. Eva Klooster/Suzan Kocak/Mehmet Day, *Mbo en de stagemarkt, wat is de rol van discriminatie?* (Utrecht, VJI&KIS, 2016), retrieved February 22, 2018, from: <https://www.kis.nl/sites/default/files/bestanden/Publicaties/mbo-stagemarkt-rol-van-discriminatie.pdf>.

22. Lesboek staat stijf van vooroordelen over moslims, allochtonen, from retrieved January 23, 2018, <https://joop.bnnvara.nl/nieuws/lesboek-staat-stijf-van-vooroordelen-over-moslims-allochtonen>.

for organizing non-religious socio-cultural activities. Religious schools qualify for funding under Article 23. The foundation of the first Islamic primary school was in 1988 and in the following years, new Islamic schools were opened. An apparent increase has been observed in the number of these schools. Their success has been growing in the last years and the government selected some of the Islamic schools for medals of excellence. But their establishment is not always easy. Sometimes they face protest from the neighbourhood and there are municipalities that put obstacles in their way by, for example, not making buildings available to them.<sup>23</sup> Many politicians oppose their existence and see them as a hindrance to integration. In this sense, the Islamic primary school Yunus Emre located in The Hague since 2014 wants to open a school in Zoetermeer. Their request has been refused several times by the municipality of Zoetermeer. But, in 2017, the minister of education obliged the municipality to offer a location to the school. The municipality refused and, despite research to the contrary by the school, the municipality claimed that according to their survey there will not be sufficient interest in Islamic primary schools in their town.<sup>24</sup> This case shows that despite opportunities offered by the law, Muslims face difficulties in the realization of their demands. However, this does not discourage Muslims parents, who increasingly select Islamic schools because of their educational quality.<sup>25</sup>

## Media

The media are focused on polemics and sensation and instead of seeing the whole picture; they focus on their vulgarizing and one-sided view. Most of the time, there is less or no space for counter-narratives by Muslims and Muslims who affirm the image created by politics and media are given space. Terms like “hate preacher,” “Jihad families” and “hate beard” are regularly used to frame Muslims. Since Muslims are usually portrayed in a negative way as violent and terrorists, mosque attacks often take place after terrorist attacks. In this sense, the media play the helping hand of populist politicians such as Wilders and target Muslims in an indirect way. One example of this was the news report on a Flemish school in Belgium where it was claimed that Muslim toddlers made radical statements. According to this report the toddlers quoted Koran verses during the break, called classmates ‘pigs’, and a girl refused to give a boy her hand. A child even expressed death threats. This was reported by the newspaper *Volkskrant* with the headline “Doodsbedreigingen en scheldpartijen door ‘napratende’ islamitischekleuters in Vlaanderen,” (Death Threats and Verbal

23. Islamitische basisschool komt toch in Zoetermeer, retrieved January 23, 2018, from <https://www.ad.nl/zoetermeer/islamitische-basisschool-komt-toch-in-zoetermeer-af6fd42f/>.

24. Islamitische basisschool komt toch in Zoetermeer (December 1, 2017), retrieved January 23, 2018, from <https://www.ad.nl/zoetermeer/islamitische-basisschool-komt-toch-in-zoetermeer-af6fd42f/>.

25. Steeds meer kinderen naar islamitische basisschool, December 1, 2017, from <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/steeds-meer-kinderen-naar-islamitische-basisschool-a76533cf/>.

Abuse by ‘Parroting’ Islamic Pre-schoolers in Flanders).<sup>26</sup> The focus is on parroting here, implying that the children had learned all this from their parents; the article questioned where the children could hear such words. The focus was on their parents who were unfortunately radicalized. Nearly at the same time, Pegida Nederland locked the gate of an Islamic primary school in Leiden in the Netherlands and left a note with a skull. On their first day of school, the students had to leave the building through the backyard door. Pegida’s attack was reported as an “action” by the media. The headline of one prominent newspaper read “Pegida Demands Action at Islamic Primary School in Leiden: ‘New fascism is Undesirable’” (*Pegida eist actie bij islamitische basisschool in Leiden op: ‘Nieuw fascisme is ongewenst’*)<sup>27</sup>. This trivialized the attack by describing it as a peaceful action.

The role of the media is very important in shaping the image of Muslims. This is shown by Verwey Joncker’s research “Anti-Semitism among Young People in the Netherlands - Causes and Trigger Factors,”<sup>28</sup> carried out in 2015. In July 2017, this study was sent back to the House of Representatives. The report determined that young people with few contacts with Muslims base their judgment on Muslims mainly on the media and Internet reports. On average, these young people are less positive about Muslims in the Netherlands than young people who say that they base their judgment on Muslims primarily on their own experiences. Young people who have experiences with Muslims also state that media coverage about Muslims is more negative than their own experiences with Muslims. Most of the time the media reflects the opinion of mainstream politics. After the crisis between Turkey and the Netherlands, the media started to portray a negative picture of Turkish organizations. In a news report titled “Pro-Erdogan Turkish–Dutch Media Funded with Dutch Subsidies”<sup>29</sup> they reported negatively about funds offered by the Dutch government. The timing of this news is remarkable since these funds dated from 2009.

Some news and reports of newspapers do not directly report about Muslims in an Islamophobic way but they emphasize some events or write articles in such a way that they contribute to Islamophobic discourse. In this sense, *De Telegraaf* often writes articles in which attempts are made to confirm stereotypes

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26. “Doodsbedreigingen en scheldpartijen door ‘napratende’ islamitische kleuters in Vlaanderen” (August 22, 2017) from: <https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/doodsbedreigingen-en-scheldpartijen-door-napratende-islamitische-kleuters-in-vlaanderen-a4512454/>. (retrieved January 23, 2018).

27. Pegida eist actie bij islamitische basisschool in Leiden op: ‘Nieuw fascisme is ongewenst’ (August 21, 2017), retrieved January 24, 2018, from: <https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/pegida-eist-actie-bij-islamitische-basisschool-in-leiden-op-nieuw-fascisme-is-ongewenst-a4512289/>.

28. VerweyJoncker’s, “Anti-Semitism among Young People in the Netherlands - Causes and Trigger Factors” (16-06-2015), retrieved January 24, 2018, from <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-sociale-zaken-en-werkgelegenheid/documenten/rapporten/2015/06/16/antisemitisme-onder-jongeren-in-nederland-oorzaken-en-triggerfactoren>.

29. NL Times, “Pro-Erdogan Turkish Dutch Media Funded Dutch Subsidies Report, retrieved January 24, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/03/17/pro-erdogan-turkish-dutch-media-funded-dutch-subsidies-report>.

about Muslims. In January, *De Telegraaf* came under attack because of two headlines about criminal asylum seekers. The Saturday newspaper opened with “Asylum Hopper Invasion” and continued on page four with “Chance-Free Asylum Plague Unhindered.” (Fig. 2) Some compared the word choice to the Nazi era, in which also ‘Jewish plagues’ were used. There was also a call to advertisers to boycott the newspaper. As a reaction, the editorial board of *De Telegraaf* wrote in an commentary that the debate in the Netherlands often deals more with the pitch used for the phenomenon than about the approach to the problems themselves.<sup>30</sup>



Figure 2: Front page reading “Asylum Hopper Invasion” of *De Telegraaf* on January 7, 2017.

Another example was their article about the so-called ‘failed’ integration of Muslims.

According to the report of Kantar Public published on behalf of *De Telegraaf* 65 percent of Dutch people think that the integration of Muslims has failed and will never succeed. *De Telegraaf* presented these views as facts and they focused on terrorist attacks believed to be perpetrated mostly by “home-grown terrorists” which explains, according to them, this huge pessimism of Dutch people towards Muslims.<sup>31</sup> But contrary to their report, the report published by BertelsmannsStiftung<sup>32</sup> in August 2017 showed that Muslims are sufficiently integrated and that Islam is not a hindrance to integration.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Written threats against mosques, which have been regular occurrences in the last years in the Netherlands, continued in 2017. The As-Soennah Mosque in The Hague received a letter in which an anonymous writer threatened mosques or schools with an attack with a truck. The perpetrator begins the letter with “Don’t forget that you’re vulnerable too in Europe.” “With every cowardly attack on our citizens and children, a counter-attack can follow on your innocent visitors of mosques or whatever. A truck that hits a mosque or school! Don’t forget that!” the letter states.

30. De Telegraaf, retrieved January 24, 2018, <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/38082/toonhoogte>.

31. De Telegraaf, “Optimisme is geslonken”, retrieved from <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/328105/optimisme-is-geslonken>.

32. Dirk Halm und Martina Sauer, *Muslimen in Europa integriert, aber nicht akzeptiert?*, August 2017 Bertelsmann Stiftung, Gütersloh. Retrieved January 25, 2018, from [https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BS/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Studie\\_LW\\_Religionsmonitor-2017\\_Muslimen-in-Europa.pdf](https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/fileadmin/files/BS/Publikationen/GrauePublikationen/Studie_LW_Religionsmonitor-2017_Muslimen-in-Europa.pdf).



Figure 3: Threatening letter with its envelope and the toy truck included in the package sent to As-Soannah Mosque in The Hague during the Ramadan 2017.<sup>34</sup>

“So beware.” The envelope also included a toy truck.<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 3)

The police arrested two suspects on March 19 in connection to a video on Facebook showing a young Muslim woman being attacked by two men in Amsterdam Noord. The suspects put the video of their crime on Facebook. The video shows the woman, wearing a

hijab or headscarf, lying on the ground and trying to cover her head with her arms while two men viciously kick and beat her. The men’s faces can be seen on the video. They are in custody on suspicion of public violence.<sup>35</sup>

Fourteen members of anti-Islamic Pegida Nederland held an early Sunday morning protest action against the construction of a mosque, with at least one person accused of dousing the site with pig’s blood. A video that the organization posted on Twitter and Facebook shows a man disguised as a priest planting a wooden cross at the mosque site, and then using a toilet brush to splatter the blood on the cross and around the location.<sup>36</sup>

On August 21, 2017, the front and back doors of the Islamic primary school in Leiden was chained and locked. A note with the threatening text “Dutch people oppose Islamic education” was left, including an image of a skull. The action only became clear when the director read the tweets. With this protest action, the group wanted to show “that the new fascism (Islam) in the Netherlands is undesirable.” According to Pegida, “Islam causes terrible attacks in Europe.” By closing Islamic schools, the problem is tackled at the root, according to the group.<sup>37</sup>

## Internet

In recent years, the Internet became one of the important circles of discriminatory and Islamophobic hate speech. In the Netherlands, discrimination against Muslims has been reported to the Internet complaint lines, such as MIND, as Muslims have of-

33. NL Times, “Threatening Letter Left at Hague Mosque: Don’t Forget You’re Vulnerable Too”, retrieved March 1, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/06/26/threatening-letter-left-hague-mosque-dont-forget-youre-vulnerable>.

34. Ibid.

35. NL Times, “Women in Headscarf Badly Beaten in Facebook Video; Two Arrested”, retrieved February 20, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/03/20/woman-headscarf-badly-beaten-facebook-video-two-arrested>.

36. NL Times, “Anti-Islam Pegida Likened to KKK for Smearing Pig’s Blood at Mosque Site”, November 17, 2017, retrieved February 20, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/11/13/anti-islam-pegida-likened-kkk-smearing-pigs-blood-mosque-site>.

37. Volkskrant: Pegida eist actie bij islamitische basisschool in Leiden op: ‘Nieuw fascisme is ongewenst’, August 21, 2017, retrieved January 26, 2018, from <https://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/pegida-eist-actie-bij-islamitische-basisschool-in-leiden-op-nieuw-fascisme-is-ongewenst-a4512289/>.

ten been the target of discriminatory expressions. The MIND complaint line has received 918 complaints in 2016.<sup>38</sup> This is described by MIND as a record number of reports filed on the Internet, an increase of 41% compared to a year before. Since its

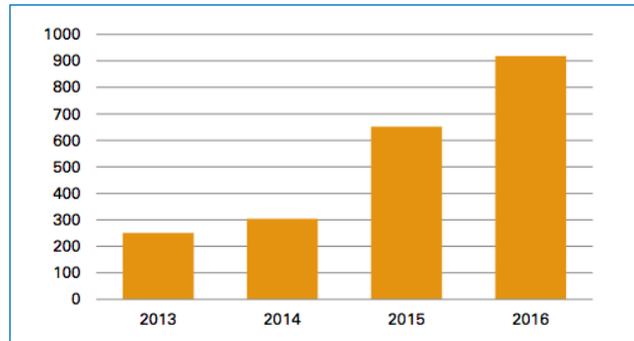


Figure 4: Number of complaints per year. Source: MIND.

establishment in 2013, the number of reports has increased steadily. The reasons they give for this increase is their growing name recognition and visibility; the cooperation with anti-discrimination facilities (ADVs); interest groups and other partners; and the phasing-out of the MDI. Since the establishment of the reporting centre in 2013, the number of reports has increased annually. (Fig. 4) Most of the reports (33 percent) concerned discrimination based on origin.

MIND categorizes reports based on eight grounds of discrimination: origin, religion, anti-Semitism, sexual preference, disability, personal discrimination, and labour market discrimination. One third of the reports is related to discrimination based on origin. MIND also received many reports about expressions of discrimination on the grounds of religion (21%). Almost all reports based on discrimination on religion were related to Islam (185). Only three reports were about Christianity and other religions.<sup>39</sup>

Another important report published in March 2017 was *The Third Monitor of Muslim Discrimination* by Ineke van der Valk. In the second part of the report, an in-depth investigation into the image of Muslims and Islam on two weblogs is presented. Through quantitative and qualitative research, Internet communications on *GeenStijl* and *PowNed* were analyzed since their creation in 2003 and 2013 respectively up to the end of 2015. Van der Valk selected *GeenStijl* and *PowNed* because they are now well-established news media with large visitor numbers. In total, this research concerns 18,000 articles and 260,000 comments about Muslims/Islam. The most remarkable finding is that a relatively small number of contributors set the tone on this site. On *PowNed* the discourse on Muslims/Islam takes a more prominent place than on *GeenStijl*. The image of Muslims/Islam is negative across the board to a great extent on both sites. The subject is often approached from the perspective of Muslims as cultural or political threats, or they are framed as objects of hatred. Marking points in the process

38. MIND, "Meldpunt Internet Discriminatie", *Jaarverslag 2016*, Retrieved April 4, 2017, retrieved January 26, 2018), from: <https://www.mindnederland.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/170404-Jaarverslag-2016-MiND.pdf>.

39. Ibid, pp. 4-12.

of racialization of Muslims that takes place on both blogs often relate to clothing and appearance of both women and men. With this, they aim to isolate Muslims from the rest of society, while their recognisability is enlarged. Commonly used concepts stem directly from the discourse of Geert Wilders, who reaps a lot of sympathy and praise.<sup>40</sup>

### **Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network**

For years and likewise in 2017, PVV leader Geert Wilders is the most prominent figure in the Islamophobia network in the Netherlands. Other Dutch politicians, due to their concern about losing votes in the elections, instead of functioning as role models who emphasize norms and values related to democratic principles, further cultivated Wilders's Islamophobic discourse. Besides Wilders's political party, the Forum for Democracy (FvD) of Thierry Baudet became a serious political factor propagating nationalist, conservative and Eurosceptical views. Baudet often comes under scrutiny for his contacts with alt-right and other extreme right political parties or figures such as Marine Le Pen and Jared Taylor.

Baudet appears to attract a lot of highly educated young people. It seems that he is seen as a decent alternative to Wilders. According to a research,<sup>41</sup> 'civilized', 'intellectual' and 'clear tone' are motives that make PVV voters switch to Thierry Baudet. It gives Baudet the potential to be more attractive to a broader group of voters than Wilders, who produced the following associations in the same study: 'yelling/bellowing/ tone is too loud.' Baudet as the more decent version of Wilders is a frequently heard argument from FvD voters.

Baudet stands for a stricter immigration policy; in his party program, he clearly states that immigration policy must be aimed towards those who are needed in the Netherlands and who (also on the basis of cultural background) can be admitted. He uses subtle references to racism which, as soon as they are better packaged, create fewer problems.<sup>42</sup> He adopts nationalistic views, standing for protecting Dutch values through introducing the "Dutch Values Protection Act." In his party program he states that, due to the arrival of large (Muslim) immigrant groups to the Netherlands, core values of Dutch society have been put under pressure. The other parties, he claims, have ignored this problem for the past three decades, letting it get completely out of hand and allowing all groups in society to confront each other. In the party program, he has included his desire to ban

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40. Ineke van der Valk, *Monitor MoslimDiscriminatie, Derde rapportage*, March 2017, retrieved January 25, 2018, from <http://imes.uva.nl/shared/subsites/institute-for-migration--ethnic-studies/nl/publicaties/derde-monitor-moslimdiscriminatie.html?origin=RwZasFgAS9a74lBjmWuEcQ>.

41. EenVandaag:De aantrekkingskracht van Baudet, 2017, retrieved March 14, 2018, from <https://eenvandaag.avrotros.nl/panels/opiniepanel/alle-uitslagen/item/de-aantrekkingskracht-van-baudet/>.

42. FVD, "Immigratie & Remigratie", retrieved March 14, 2018, from <https://forumvoordemocratie.nl/standpunten/immigratie-remigratie>.

foreign funding of religious schools and institutions. Although not mentioned explicitly, he is referring to Islamic schools and institutions that have often been discussed in this context. Furthermore, the program also clearly states that there will be a ban on the wearing of niqabs, balaclavas and other face-covering clothing in public. It appears that in the future Baudet will play an increasingly prominent role in the Islamophobia network.<sup>43</sup>

Another figure which has to be mentioned here is Pegida Nederland. In October 2015, Pegida Nederland was founded and its prominent leader is Edwin Wagenveld.<sup>44</sup> Pegida organizes protests in the Netherlands several times a year, including in Utrecht, Apeldoorn, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam. They frequently hold demonstrations against the arrival of (Muslim) refugees to the Netherlands, against mosques and Islamic schools. Their demonstrations have increased since 2015.

### **Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia**

Governmental and civil society initiatives to counter islamophobia mentioned in the previous *European Islamophobia Report* are still running. Civil organizations that collect complaints are the Collective against Islamophobia based in Amsterdam; SPIOR; a platform of Islamic organizations and mosques in Rotterdam; Facebook initiative Meld Islamofobie!; the Muslim women's organization Al Nisa; and the Turkish Forum. Other organizations that campaign against Islamophobia are Contact OrgaanMoslims en Overheid (Contact Body Muslims and Government) and EMCEMO. The weblog "RepubliekAllochtonie" is still an important source of information on Islamophobia in the Netherlands. Also the Human Rights Institute College voor het Rechten van de Mens collects complaints and reports about Muslim discrimination. MIND is an important governmental project which each year reports on online discrimination.

A significant civil initiative was taken in February 2017 by the Christen Unie - SGP Maasstad party in Rotterdam. They called on volunteers to form a human chain around the mosque while the noon prayer was taking place. (Fig. 5) "As a symbol that you can live your faith in freedom in Rotterdam and that we will raise the barricades if this freedom is pressured", the initiators said. This was after the Quebec mosque attack when Dutch mosques were afraid of attacks and had decided to close their doors during common prayers.

In a similar spirit, citizens arranged extra security for the Blauwe Mosque in Amsterdam and the Essalam Mosque in Rotterdam during prayers. In Amsterdam, the initiative for extra security was taken by the Security Pact against Discrimination, an organization

43. FVD, "Wet Bescherming Nederlandse Waarden", retrieved March 14, 2018, from <https://forumvoordemocratie.nl/standpunten/wet-bnw>.

44. Pegida Nederland, <http://pegidanederland.com/>.



Figure 5: Human chain around the mosque in Rotterdam by the Christen Unie - SGP Maasstad party in February 2017.

consisting of Muslims, Jews, Christians and a number of organizations. The Security Pact argued, “Let’s prevent fear of the Other prevailing and continue to build mutual trust and invest in structural contact.”<sup>45</sup> This reveals that Dutch citizens are aware of Muslim discrimination and are eager to take initiatives to combat Islamophobia.

In Amsterdam, on September 23, the Islamophobia symposium was held. The event was organized by the NWO-subsidized “Forces that bind and/or divide” research program of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Amsterdam and the Collective against Islamophobia and Discrimination (CTID). One of the central issues of the symposium was how to respond to the different forms of Islamophobia in relation to ideas about secular society, security, the position of women, and the intersection of Islamophobia with other hierarchies such as anti-black racism.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

The year 2017 was a year of elections. The elections dominated political sphere in the Netherlands. Many institutes such as Amnesty International stressed their dissatisfaction about the Dutch elections. They were alarmed by the rise of populism. A remarkable point was that this did not only concern Geert Wilders but also the Dutch prime minister and his open letter calling on migrants to “act normal or go away.” The Netherlands Bar also warned of its concerns about the content of the campaigns. According to the results of their research, an average 40 percent of the electoral programs directly

45. NL News: “Dutch Mosques Targeted in Dozens of Incidents: Counter Terrorism Boss”, February 3, 2017, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/02/03/dutch-mosques-targeted-dozens-incidents-counter-terrorism-boss>, (retrieved January 22, 2018).

46. Derrazi, Saida, Martijn de Koning en AbdouMenehbi. 2017. Een kleine islamofobie reader – verslag van het islamofobie symposium 23 september 2017. Amsterdam: Universiteit van Amsterdam/Collectief tegen Islamofobie en Discriminatie.

contradicted the rule of law. The populist demands of Geert Wilders were also taken up by other parties in fear of losing votes. Certain discriminating views became ordinary. Many surveys reported that Muslims increasingly felt discriminated and not at home. Politicians influence the public opinion on Muslims so in this sense their discriminating views must be punished and not treated as freedom of speech anymore.

At the same time, we also saw attempts from civil society and institutions to increase inclusiveness, such as the recent suggestion by the police organization of Amsterdam that women with headscarves should also be able to work in a police uniform. This was a positive attempt to attract new officers with an ethnic minority background, and thereby increase diversity in the Amsterdam corps. However, this led to a storm of criticism and the National Police Chief Erik Akkerboom decided not to allow it. He said that he completely supports diversity in the Dutch police, but there is currently no support for this measure. This is a two-sided issue: on the one hand, it shows development in inclusiveness and, on the other, it shows us that Dutch society and the government are still not ready to embrace visibly recognizable Muslims. More focus must be made on inclusiveness and acceptance of Muslims in Dutch society in campaigns.

There is still a need for effective sanctions for violations of anti-discrimination legislation. Islamophobic acts and speeches, in specific, must be added to this anti-discrimination legislation. Muslims themselves are not participating enough in decision-making processes. Furthermore, more focus must be put on the acceptance of Muslims instead of their integration by policymakers and on the improvement of the communication between the Muslim community and Dutch society.

Forty percent of Dutch-Turks and Dutch-Moroccans don't feel at home in the Netherlands, according to a study by the social and cultural planning office SCP. They are particularly concerned about their employment prospects in the country and regularly experience discrimination. In this sense policymakers have to take this issue more seriously and combat their discrimination.

There is little attention paid to far-right hate speech by policymakers, and often violence against Muslim or other non-white communities that could also be construed as a form of terrorism is treated as trivial incidents. Even in intelligence reports focusing on threats of violence in Dutch society, the presumption exists that most terrorist attacks are committed by people of a Muslim background.

Although in comparison with other European countries Muslims in the Netherlands report discrimination more often, recent research shows that these numbers are the tip of the iceberg.<sup>47</sup> This has several reasons, but one important reason is that Muslims often have no confidence in the institutions where they file reports. Their belief that little effort is made to combat discrimination, which is increasingly reported and monitored, must be tackled with concrete steps.

47. The expression "tip of the iceberg" is used in the research of Inekke van der Valk, *Derde Monitor Moslim Discriminatie*, University of Amsterdam, 2017.

## Chronology

- **31.01.2017:** Director of Amnesty International Eduard Nazarski said that the Netherlands is climbing in the ranking of unjust countries– a fact that causes concern to the organization.<sup>48</sup>
- **03.02.2017:** A civil initiative was taken by the Christen Unie -SGP Maasstad party in Rotterdam. They called on volunteers to form a human chain around the mosque during the noon prayer.<sup>49</sup>
- **06.02.2017:** Pegida leader Edwin Wagensveld was arrested on Sunday afternoon during a demonstration by the anti-Islam movement in Utrecht. According to the police, he was arrested for unlawful demonstration.<sup>50</sup>
- **06.03.2017:** About 300 Muslims and non-Muslims gathered in the Al Kabir Mosque in Amsterdam on Sunday afternoon to show support for the city’s Muslim community. The organizers wanted to establish a counterpoint to the “hateful stories” spreading about the Islamic community.<sup>51</sup>
- **20.03.2017:** A young Muslim woman was attacked by two men in Amsterdam Noord. Two suspects were arrested in connection with the video on Facebook which showcased the attack.<sup>52</sup>
- **07.04.2017:** The Ulu Mosque in the city of Heemskerk was set on fire by unidentified persons.<sup>53</sup>
- **26.06.2017:** The As-Soannah Mosque in The Hague received a letter in which an anonymous writer threatened mosques and schools with an attack with a truck. “Don’t forget that you’re vulnerable too in Europe,” the letter begins. The envelope also included a toy truck.<sup>54</sup>
- **18.07.2017:** The Selimiye Mosque, which is under construction in the Netherlands, was attacked by a group of Pegida members who left a letter with Islamophobic content.<sup>55</sup>

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48. NL Times, “PM Rutte: Wilders Undermining Dutch Constitution”, retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/01/31/pm-rutte-wilders-undermining-dutch-constitution-amnesty-international>.

49. NL Times, “Dutch Mosques Targeted”, retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/02/03/dutch-mosques-targeted-dozens-incidents-counter-terrorism-boss>.

50. NL Times, “Pegida Leader Arrested”, retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/02/06/pegida-leader-arrested-anti-islam-demonstration-utrecht>.

51. NL Times, “Rally Brings Hundreds Amsterdam Mosque”, retrieved February 26 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/03/06/rally-brings-hundreds-amsterdam-mosque-islamophobia-fight>.

52. NL Times, “Woman Headscarf Badly Beaten”, retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/03/20/woman-headscarf-badly-beaten-facebook-video-two-arrested>.

53. Turkinfo, “Hollanfa da Heemskerk Ulu Cami Kundaklandı”, retrieved February 26, 2018, from <http://www.turkinfo.nl/hollanda-da-heemskerk-ulu-cami-kundaklandi/20162/>.

54. NL Times, “Threatening Letter Left Hague Mosque”, retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/06/26/threatening-letter-left-hague-mosque-dont-forget-youre-vulnerable>.

55. Göç Vakfı, “Pegida’dan Hollandadaki Cami İnşaatına Tehdit Mektubu”, retrieved February 26, 2018, from <http://gocvakfi.org/pegidadan-hollandadaki-cami/>.

- **21.08.2017:** A member of Pegida Nederland chained and locked the front and back doors of the Islamic primary school ErRisèlèh on Stadhouderslaan in Leiden during the night.<sup>56</sup>
- **02.09.2017:** In Venlo, banners were hung on the roof and the minaret of the Tevhid Mosque, under construction and managed by Diyanet, by the far-right ID Verzet which contained Islamophobic slogans.<sup>57</sup>
- **04.09.2017:** In Amsterdam, a banner was hoisted on the building of the Ambassador Cornelius Haga High School (Cornelius was the first ambassador of the Netherlands in the Ottoman Empire), managed by the Amsterdam Islamic Education Association, with mocking and Islamophobic slogans.<sup>58</sup>
- **13.11.2017:** In Enschede, the site of a mosque under construction by the local Turkish population was entered by Islamophobic and xenophobic Pegida members where they subsequently spilled pig blood and shared the incident on Twitter accounts.<sup>59</sup>
- **20.11.2017:** The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights stated that police administration workers can wear a hijab with their uniform.<sup>60</sup>
- **21.12.2017:** The national force confirmed that the Dutch police set aside a ruling from the equal opportunities committee which said a Muslim officer should be able to wear a headscarf while dealing with phone reports from the public.<sup>61</sup>
- **29.12.2017:** Smeray (16) from Lent applied for a job at the new McDonald's in Oosterhout, near Nijmegen. She was allowed to come to a meeting, was found fit, but was told she would have to remove her headscarf in order to start work. The new McDonald's claims it wants to radiate 'neutrality.' The burger franchise relies on a ruling by the European Court of Justice in March 2017. The ruling says that employers may refuse employment to women with headscarves if there is a good reason.<sup>62</sup>

56. NL Times, "Protesters Chain Islamic Primary School", retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/08/21/protesters-chain-islamic-primary-school-leiden>.

57. Milliyet, "Hollanda'da İnşası Süren Camiye", retrieved February 28, 2018, from <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/hollanda-da-insasi-suren-camiye-dunya-2512590/>.

58. AA, "Hollanda'da İslami Kuruluşlara Yönelik Saldırılarda Artış", retrieved February 26, 2018, from <http://aa.com.tr/tr/dunya/hollandada-islami-kuruluslara-yonelik-saldirilarda-artist/903392>.

59. NL Times, "Anti Islam Pegida Likened", retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://nltimes.nl/2017/11/13/anti-islam-pegida-likened-kkk-smearing-pigs-blood-mosque-site>.

60. Dutchnews, "Police Admin Worker can wear Hijab", retrieved February 26, 2018, from <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/11/police-admin-worker-can-wear-hijab-with-a-uniform-says-human-rights-council/>.

61. Dutchnews, "Dutch Policia will set Aside", retrieved February 26, 2018, from <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/12/dutch-police-will-set-aside-headscarf-ruling-in-case-brought-by-muslim-officer>.

62. Omro, "Moslima met hoofddoek", retrieved February 26, 2018, from <https://www.omroep gelderland.nl/nieuws/2153420/Moslima-met-hoofddoek-verontwaardigd-ze-mag-niet-bij-McDonald-s-werken>.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**NORWAY**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive summary

Negative stereotypes of Muslims are widespread; 34.1 per cent of the population in Norway displays marked prejudices against Muslims. The Norwegian population does, however, recognize the problem: over 80 per cent believe negative attitudes towards Muslims to be prevalent. Thirty-six percent of the Muslims minority has “often or sometimes” been given the feeling that they do not belong in Norwegian society; 27 per cent have experienced that people behave negatively towards them when they learn of their religious affiliation; and 14 per cent report that they have been directly subjected to harassment. Physical attacks are rare in Norway, but hate speech against Muslims, most often found in commentaries online and especially in social media, have increased.

The minority population is most vulnerable to hate crime: in 2016, the Oslo Hate Crimes unit registered 175 cases, and ethnicity was the most common cause. In other words, people of colour are predominantly exposed. If the cause was stated as “religion”, there is an assumed connection with Islam.

Established anti-Muslim/Islamic organizations have increased their activity in 2017, and there has been a steady increase in the number of open Facebooks groups for nationalist and right-wing extremists. Further, Norway’s media landscape is seeing an increase in right-wing populist news sources.

The Progress Party’s general election campaign, in autumn 2017, included negative stereotyping of Muslims. The post of minister for immigration and integration is held by the Progress Party, represented by Sylvi Listhaug. She has come up with several statements about Muslims that can be characterised as “rhetoric of fear”: “We are fully aware that there are wolves in sheep’s clothing”;<sup>1</sup> and “Fundamentalists who hate our Norwegian system are coming to exploit the boundless Norwegian naivety”.<sup>2</sup> It is the first time in Norwegian political history that a member of the government uses expressions close to those found in Islamophobic discourses.

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1. ABC Nyheter, “Listhaug foran 500 muslimer: – Vi er fullstendig klar over at det finnes ulver i fåreklær, retrieved December 22, 2017, from <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2017/08/04/195321874/listhaug-foran-500-muslimer-vi-er-fullstendig-klar-over-det-finnes-ulver-i-fareklaer>, posted 08.04. 2017.

2. Aftenposten, “10 sitater som viser at Sylvi Listhaug liker å slå med storslegga”, retrieved December 23, 2017, from <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/bG1A/10-sitater-som-viser-at-Sylvi-Listhaug-liket-a-sla-med-storslegga>.

## Sammendrag

Negative stereotypier om muslimer er utbredt i det norske samfunnet; 34,1 prosent av befolkningen viser utpregede fordommer mot muslimer. Dette gjenkjennes i befolkningens egen vurdering, der over 80 prosent mener at negative holdninger til muslimer er utbredt. Trettiseks prosent i den muslimske minoriteten har «ofte eller noen ganger» blitt gitt følelsen at de ikke hører til det norske samfunnet, 27 prosent har opplevd at personer oppfører seg avvisende mot dem når de får vite om deres religiøse tilhørighet, og 14 prosent har direkte blitt utsatt for trakassering. Fysiske angrep er sjeldne i Norge, men det har vært en kraftig økning i hat-uttrykk rettet mot muslimer, først og fremst på sosiale medier.

Minoritetsbefolkningen er mest utsatt for hatkriminalitet: I 2016 registrerte Oslo Politidistrikt 175 anmeldelser, der etnisitet var den vanligste oppgitte årsaken. Hudfarge er utgangspunktet for de aller fleste saker som anmeldes. I de tilfeller der årsaken til anmeldelsen er registrert som «religion» er det en antatt tilhørighet til islam det gjelder.

Etablerte antimuslimske/anti islamske organisasjoner har økt sin aktivitet gjennom 2017, og det har også vært en økning i antall åpne Facebookgrupper av nasjonalistisk og høyreekstrem karakter. Medielandskapet har også endret seg i form av flere høyrepopulistiske nyhetsmedier på internett, såkalte alternative nyhetskanaler.

Fremskrittspartiets valgkampanje, høst 2017, inneholdt negative uttalelser om islam og muslimer. Partiet har ministerposten for migrasjon og integrering, Sylvi Listhaug, og det er første gang i norsk politisk historie at et medlem av regjeringen kommer med uttalelser som ligger nært påstander som sirkulerer i islamofobe diskurser.

## Introduction

Statistics Norway estimates that around 200,000 inhabitants in Norway are Muslims (4 per cent of the population). Most Muslims still have an immigrant background, i.e. either they or both of their parents were born outside Norway. Norwegian Muslims are a heterogeneous category in terms of country background, religious tradition, and degree of religiosity. The majority comes from Somalia, followed by Pakistan, Iraq, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iran, and Turkey. When it comes to integration in the labour force, the groups have achieved varying levels of success; nonetheless, the integration of Muslims into Norwegian society has generally been successful.

Norway has a coalition government consisting of the liberal Conservative Party (Høyre) and the right-wing populist Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet). The Progress Party is well-known for its anti-immigration policy, especially concerning “Muslim countries”. Since 2015, the post of minister for immigration and integration has been held by the Progress Party, represented by Sylvi Listhaug. During 2017, Listhaug was the most prominent governmental voice concerning the issue of Islam, Muslims, refugees, and immigration. Her rhetoric has been criticized by other members of government, politicians from other parties, journalists as well as public debaters for inciting anti-Muslim sentiments in the population.

Annual population surveys show that the majority is positive to having a multicultural society and to immigrants having the same rights as the rest of the population.<sup>3</sup> However, a new population survey on Islamophobia in Norway shows that negative attitudes towards Muslims are quite prevalent in the population; between one-fifth and one-third score high on the various indices.<sup>4</sup>

There is a general reluctance to use the term “Islamophobia” in Norwegian public and political spheres. Attention has, however, been paid to the phenomenon, though by different names, such as “hate crime against Muslims,” “xenophobia” or “anti-Muslim sentiments”

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Established anti-Muslim/Islamic organizations have increased their activity in 2017. The most active among the more established anti-Muslim organizations are Stop Islamization of Norway, Human Right Service, and Document.no. There has also been a steady increase in the number of open Facebooks groups for nationalist and right-wing extremists. In these Muslims are identified as “the enemy within.” Further, Norway’s media landscape is seeing an increase in right-wing populist news sources.

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3. See the homepage of Integrerings og mangfoldsdirektoratet [www.imdi.no](http://www.imdi.no)

4. Hoffmann, C. and Moe, V. (eds) *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer I Norge 2017*, rapport fra Senter for Studier av Holocaust og livssynsminoriteter, Oslo 2017.

In the autumn of 2017, a broad-based population survey on attitudes towards Muslims was conducted for the first time in Norway.<sup>5</sup> The survey mapped attitudes based on three dimensions: a cognitive dimension (prejudices), an affective dimension (feelings such as sympathy and antipathy), and one that measures degree of social distance (friends or neighbours).

The findings show that negative stereotypes of Muslims are widespread in Norwegian society. As much as 34.1 per cent of the population displays marked prejudices against Muslims. Forty-eight per cent of respondents agree with the statement “Muslims largely have themselves to blame for the increase in anti-Muslim harassment”, and 42 per cent agree with the statement “Muslims do not want to integrate into Norwegian society”; 39 per cent agree with the statement “Muslims pose a threat to Norwegian culture” and 31 per cent with the statement “Muslims want to take over Europe”. A relatively large proportion of respondents also expressed negative feelings towards and wanted social distance from Muslims: 27.8 per cent dislike Muslims, and overall 19.6 per cent would dislike having Muslims as neighbours or in their circle of friends. The incidence of Islamophobic attitudes is higher among men than among women, among older respondents, and among respondents with lower levels of education.

To supplement the attitude survey, the Muslim minority populations were asked about their experiences: thirty-six per cent of Muslims have “often or sometimes” been given the feeling that they do not belong in Norwegian society; 27 per cent have experienced that people behave negatively towards them when they learn of their religious affiliation; and fewer than 14 per cent have been directly subjected to harassment.<sup>6</sup>

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The general election (autumn 2017) resulted in four new years with a coalition government consisting of the liberal Conservative Party and the populist Progress Party. Stereotyping of Muslims played a part in the Progress Party’s election campaign, and they ended up with 15.3 per cent of the vote. The party’s success was due to its focus on immigration as a threat not only to the Norwegian welfare state but also to “our security” and “our values”.<sup>7</sup>

During 2017, the Minister for Immigration and Integration Sylvi Listhaug (Progress Party) made several statements that flirt with a fear of Muslims: “We are

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Interview of Anders Jupskås about the causes for the party’s success, see: <https://forskning.no/moderne-historie-valg-politikk/2015/05/frps-vei-mot-valgtoppen>, published May 25, 2015.

fully aware that there are wolves in sheep's clothing"<sup>8</sup>; and "Fundamentalists who hate our Norwegian system are coming to exploit the boundless Norwegian naivety".<sup>9</sup> Such statements are worth mentioning because it is the first time in Norwegian political history that a member of the government uses expressions so close to those found in Islamophobic discourses.

There were three politically initiated debates in 2017 about regulating Muslim traditions. Sylvi Listhaug suggested a prohibition against hijabs at elementary school (on the grounds that they sexualized young girls) but received no support from the other coalition parties. The government also proposed a national ban on the use of niqab in schools and institutions of higher education, which won broad parliamentary support and was based mainly on references to teaching situations rather than on references to Islam as such. The proposal is currently being circulated for consultation. The Progress Party has also proposed banning the circumcision of baby boys as part of its party political manifesto (but has won no parliamentary support).

The current government has made some efforts against hate speech, such as an action plan against radicalisation and extremism, a political plan against hate speech, and the financing of a centre for research on right-wing extremism at the University of Oslo.<sup>10</sup>

## Justice System

In 2013, the Oslo Police established a Hate Crimes Unit that registers crimes according to the categories "religion", "ethnicity" and "gender". They have both prosecuted and successfully led cases involving hate crimes against Muslims to conviction. A few such cases involving hate speech or discrimination against Muslims were heard in Norwegian courts of law also in 2017. One such case resulted in a man being sentenced to 18 days in jail for hate crimes after spitting on a woman wearing a hijab.<sup>11</sup> In January, a man was found guilty of harassing a ticket controller on a bus, screaming at him "Can't you read, you bloody Muslim terrorist."<sup>12</sup> Another case that was widely covered in the media involved a hairdresser who in 2016 was convicted of discrimination against a customer who entered her salon wearing a hijab. She told

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8. ABC Nyheter, "Listhaug foran 500 muslimer: – Vi er fullstendig klar over at det finnes ulver i fåreklær, retrieved December 22, 2017, from <https://www.abcnyheter.no/nyheter/politikk/2017/08/04/195321874/listhaug-foran-500-muslimer-vi-er-fullstendig-klar-over-det-finnes-ulver-i-fareklaer>, posted 08.04.2017.

9. <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/bG1A/10-sitater-som-viser-at-Sylvi-Listhaug-liket-a-sla-med-storslegga>, <https://www.aftenposten.no/norge/politikk/i/bG1A/10-sitater-som-viser-at-Sylvi-Listhaug-liket-a-sla-med-storslegga>, retrieved on December 12, 2017.

10. Handlingsplan mot radikalisering og voldelig ekstremisme, (Justis og beredskapsdepartementet 2016) og Regjeringens strategi mot hatefulle ytringer 2016–2020.

11. Oslo Politikammer: "Rettspraksis i hatkriminalitet, et utvalg saker fra Tingretten 2015-2017", retrieved January 2018, from <https://politiet.no/contentassets/17e1eed4775047eca71e9535d33c3181/rechtspraksis-i-hatkriminalitet-et-utvalg-saker-fra-oslo-tingrett-20152017.pdf>.

12. Ibid.

the Muslim woman that she would not “touch someone like her”.<sup>13</sup> The hairdresser appealed against the decision, and in January 2017, the court once again convicted her of discrimination against the customer on the grounds of religious identity. In 2016, a nursing home in Stavanger refused to let its employees wear hijabs, a decision that was deemed illegal by the Equality and Discrimination Tribunal in 2017. On February 2, after a double murder of a white woman and a young Muslim boy, a far right-wing politician was convicted for hate crime after commenting on his Facebook page that it did not matter that Hassan was killed as he would become a terrorist anyway but that it was rather sad about the woman.

The Oslo Hate Crimes Unit’s report for 2017 was not available at the time of writing this report, but the number of cases reported during 2016 was three times as high as the 2014 figure.<sup>14</sup> It is reasonable to assume that, similar to previous years, most of the category of “religious” crimes involve Muslims who have been subjected to hate crimes.

### Employment

No statistics for 2017 are available on labour market discrimination targeting Muslims in particular. Previous research has shown that applicants with Pakistani- or Muslim-sounding names are 25 per cent less likely than ‘ethnic’ Norwegian applicants with similar qualifications and work experience to be called in for interviews by Norwegian employers.<sup>15</sup> The Norwegian Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud, reported only one incident in 2017. This involved a woman who had applied for a position as a personal assistant in a municipal institution in Oslo. The day after the interview she received a text message from the institution saying that she could have the job *if* she was comfortable working without a hijab.<sup>16</sup>

### Education

An analysis of the coverage of minorities and immigrants in Norwegian school curricula at various levels has shown that these topics are often presented ethnocentrically.<sup>17</sup> However, the national curriculum explicitly states that it is a goal to teach Norwegian pupils to accept differences and to see diversity as something positive.

The Centre against Racism (Antirasistisk Senter) interviewed more than 500 pupils in 2017 and found that schools are the arena in which children and youth

13. VG, “Hijabkledd kvinne ble kastet ut av frisøren: – Det handler om noe mye større enn meg og henne” retrieved January 4, 2018, from <https://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/religion/hijabkledd-kvinne-ble-kastet-ut-av-frisoeren-det-handler-om-noe-mye-stoerre-enn-meg-og-henne/a/23788718/>.

14. Oslo politikammer (2017): Anmeldt hatkriminalitet 2016.

15. Forskning, “Vanskeligere å få jobbintervju med utenlandsk navn”, retrieved January 4, 2018, from <https://forskning.no/arbeid-ledelse-og-organisasjon/2012/01/vanskeligere-fa-jobbintervju-med-utenlandsk-navn>.

16. Likestilling og diskrimineringsombudet: <http://www.ldo.no/nyheter-og-fag/klagesaker/religion/161071-diskriminering-pa-grunn-av-hijab/>. Posted 06.02.2017, accessed 06.01.2018

17. Døving, Brandal and Plesner (eds) (2017): Nasjonale minoriteter og urfolk i norsk politikk frå 1900 til 2016 Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademiske

mainly experience racism.<sup>18</sup> As many as one in four experienced racism, discrimination or unfair treatment regularly, i.e. two to three times every month or more often, at primary school, and as many as 25.6 per cent in middle school. The report points to the problem of lack of knowledge about new forms of racism among teachers. Many of the experiences described in the report show an overlap between colour-based racism and prejudice against Muslims.

## Media

Norwegian media is in general very critical of Islamophobic statements. Nonetheless, the media seems to possess an unlimited interest in Muslims, and when Islam is in the news it is very often presented as a political problem that needs to be solved; terrorism, radicalisation, refugees or niqab were the main topics in 2017. Interestingly, this fact is reflected in the population survey referred to above. More than one-third of the population considered negative portrayals of Muslims in the media to be the main cause of prejudice and xenophobia against Muslims in the population.<sup>19</sup>

The extent of public debates that arose after the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) launched a series on the general election (*Fatem tar valget*) hosted by a female presenter wearing a hijab is worth mentioning: the news about the hijab-wearing presenter set a record for the number of complaints received by NRK.<sup>20</sup> Several media channels made the complaints a front-page story, generating an increase in Islamophobic comments on social media.

Similar to other European countries, Norway's media landscape is seeing an increase in right-wing populist – sometimes extremist – alternative news sources. The most cited ones are *Document.no*, *Rights.no*, *Frieord.no* and *Resett.no*. These sources usually carry biased stories where Islam or Muslims are concerned.

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

The Norwegian government has launched a strategy against hate speech.<sup>21</sup> In this – as well as in the Norwegian public debate in general – there is a tendency to reduce hate speech to a question of individual behavioural problems (driven by emotions and impulses). This makes it difficult to address the problem as a social and structural one. Hate speech that targets women, however, has attracted more attention as a social problem. It has been recognised as a particularly important problem for women from minority backgrounds, as the harassment often refers to gender *and*

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18. Linløkken & Berglund Steen (2017): "Vi vil ikke leke med deg fordi du er brun": – en undersøkelse av opplevd rasisme blant ungdom. Rapport, Antirasistisk senter, Oslo

19. Hoffmann, C. and Moe, V. (eds): Holdninger til jøder og muslimer I Norge 2017, rapport fra Senter for Studier av Holocaust og livssynsminoriteter.

20. Many of the complaints referred to a previous case about the same channel prohibiting a news presenter from wearing a necklace with a cross.

21. Regjeringens strategi mot hatefulle ytringer 2016 – 2020, rapport utgitt fra barne- og likestillingsdepartementet.

ethnicity, religion or skin colour.<sup>22</sup> Two examples of several young Muslim women active in public debates who have been verbally attacked and harassed several times in 2017 are Sumaya Jirde Ali and Bushra Ishaq.<sup>23</sup>

Fourteen per cent of the Muslim population report that they have been directly subjected to harassment, and 27 per cent have experienced that people behave negatively towards them when they learn of their religious affiliation.<sup>24</sup> Hate speech against Muslims, most often found in commentaries online and especially in social media, is usually characterised by a de-humanising language and claims about Muslims having dishonest motives. Such hatred often contains allegations of conspiracy theories, where Muslims form part of an enemy image threatening the identity of the majority.

The minority population is most vulnerable to hate crime. In 2016, the Oslo Hate Crimes unit registered 175 cases, and ethnicity was the most common cause. In other words, people of colour are predominantly exposed. If the cause was stated as “religion”, there is an assumed connection with Islam.<sup>25</sup> Physical attacks are rare in Norway, but in July an Afghan man was attacked on the subway. His nose was broken and he was called a “bloody foreigner”. A woman wearing a hijab while shopping was spat upon by a man shouting that all Muslims should be slaughtered.<sup>26</sup>

## Internet

Established anti-Muslim/anti-Islamic organisations have used social media for many years, but 2017 saw an increase in the number of openly nationalist Facebook groups *without* a parent organisation. Conspiracy theories constitute an important element of Islamophobia on the Internet. Typical claims selected from such Facebook groups are that Muslims have a built-in desire for occupation; areas in Norway are already ruled by Sharia; Muslims conduct a modern form of warfare by multiplying and using their networks; Muslims pretend to be modern, but hate liberal Norway; Muslims are violent; rape will become an everyday experience if more Muslims are allowed into the country.<sup>27</sup>

22. Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet, CEDAW 2017 Ombudets rapport til FNs kvinnekomité”, retrieved from [http://www.ldo.no/globalassets/brosjyrer-handboker-rapporter/rapporter\\_analyser/rapporter\\_diverse/cedaw2017.pdf](http://www.ldo.no/globalassets/brosjyrer-handboker-rapporter/rapporter_analyser/rapporter_diverse/cedaw2017.pdf).

23. In the book *Skal liksom liksom-passet ditt bety noe?* (2017, MINOTENK), women with minority background tell their stories about verbal attacks.

24. Hoffmann, C. and Moe, V. (eds): *Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge 2017*, rapport fra Senter for Studier av Holocaust og livssynsminoriteter.

25. Oslo politikammer (2017): *Anmeldt hatkriminalitet 2016*.

26. Oslo Politikammer: “Rettspraksis i hatkriminalitet, et utvalg saker fra Tingretten 2015-2017”, retrieved January, 2018, from <https://politiet.no/contentassets/17e1eed4775047eca71e9535d33c3181/rettspraksis-i-hatkriminalitet-utvalg-saker-fra-oslo-tingrett-20152017.pdf>.

27. Døving and Emberland: “Defend Europe & Love Your Folk”. An analysis of conspiracism on social media (forthcoming).

A representative example of a new and active open Facebook group is *Slå ring om Norge* (Protect Norway). It defines itself as a patriotic defender of the nation and portrays Muslims and left-wing politicians as “the enemy within”. The group had 35,502 followers in April 2017.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Central hubs for circulating negative images of Muslims are websites like *document.no*; *rights.no*, operated by Human Rights Service, an organisation led by Hege Storhaug; and *sian.no*, operated by Stop Islamisation of Norway. In addition, several Facebook groups function as active Islamophobia networks. One representative example is *Slå ring om Norge*, that has a clear nationalistic profile. (Fig. 1)



Figure 1: The Facebook profile picture of Slå ring om Norge.<sup>28</sup>

Human Rights Service,<sup>29</sup> well-known for its critique of Islam, crossed a line in the autumn of 2017 when it launched a new project asking readers to submit



Figure 2: The first photo submitted as part of Human Rights Service's documentation project “How Norway has changed”, Autumn 2017<sup>30</sup>

photos documenting “how Norway has changed”. Pictures of Muslims (in black veils, niqabs, etc.) in various public spaces as well as pictures of anti-terror bollards in the streets given the name “Quran-blocks” by the editor (“Koranklokker”), have been published in a series for a long time (Fig. 2). Such a call to document the presence of the minority population drew criticism from the Norwegian public, though not enough to deprive the organisation of state funding.

28. <https://www.facebook.com/slaringomnorge>, accessed 12.12.2017

29. Human Rights Service is led by Hege Storhaug, civil society activist and the author of a self-published polemic book titled *Islam – den ellefte landeplage* (Islam: The Eleventh Plague of the Nation).

30. Human Rights Service, “Koranklokker utenfor Oslo City”, retrieved January 15, 2018, from <https://www.rights.no/2017/10/koranklokker-utenfor-oslo-city/>.

Among the most active organisations is Stop Islamisation of Norway. According to this organisation's website, its purpose is to inform the public about the consequences of the ongoing Islamisation of Norway. For several years now, this organisation has explicitly supported the conspiracy theory of a Muslim "takeover". Its Facebook group has 27,000 members.

### **Civil Society and Political Initiative to Counter Islamophobia**

There are some established organisations that counter Islamophobia; the most prominent are Minotenk, Antirasistisk senter, Senter for sekulær integrering, and Organisasjon for likestilling, integrering og mangfold. In civil society, counter-demonstrations are usually organised whenever Islamophobic organisations set up public stands and demos.<sup>31</sup> As already pointed to, the government has initiated a national strategy against hate speech, an action plan against radicalisation, and financed a centre for research on right-wing extremism.

## **Conclusion and Policy Recommendations**

Negative attitudes towards Muslims are quite prevalent in the Norwegian population; between one-fifth and one-third score high on the various indices. This is reflected in the Norwegian population's own assessment, in which over 80 per cent assess negative attitudes towards Muslims to be highly or quite prevalent.<sup>32</sup> Fourteen per cent of the Muslim population report that they have been directly subjected to harassment, and 27 per cent have experienced that people behave negatively towards them when they learn of their religious affiliation.

Established anti-Muslim/anti-Islamic organisations have increased their activity in 2017. There has also been a steady increase in the number of open Facebook groups for nationalist and right-wing extremists as well as an increase in right-wing populist news sources. For the first time in Norwegian political history, a member of the government, the minister for immigration and integration, openly expressed claims close to those found in Islamophobic discourses. At the same time, the justice system has developed in a positive direction when it comes to monitoring and convicting cases involving hate speech or discrimination against Muslims.

### **Recommendations**

- Establish a national action plan against Islamophobia. This should include plans for research, education and general measures to combat prejudice against Mus-

31. For example, in October, SIAN was met with a locally organised counter-demo in a small town. <https://www.nrk.no/ho/angrep-politiet-under-motdemonstrasjon-1.13723494>

32. Interestingly Muslims view the actual situation less negatively than the population sample, though more than half (52 per cent) share this assessment. Muslims see a negative trend more clearly than the general population. Almost two in three Muslims believe that negative attitudes are today more prevalent than they were five years ago, while only one in three in the general population shares the same view.

lims. Such a plan will clearly signal recognition of the phenomenon and how it is related to racism.

- Highlight diversity in public portrayals of Islam and Muslims. Presentations must avoid group constructions of Muslims. Special assistance should be offered to politicians and journalists.
- Improve methods for monitoring hate crime/discrimination against Muslims.

## Chronology

- **06.01.2017:** The court convicted (for a second time) a hairdresser of discrimination against a customer on the grounds of her Muslim identity.
- **25.01.2017:** A man was found guilty of harassing a ticket controller on a bus for being Muslim.
- **02.02.2017:** A far right-wing politician was convicted of hate crime after commenting on a recent murder of a white woman and a young Muslim boy saying that it did not matter that Hassan was killed as he would become a terrorist anyway.
- **27.06.2017:** The Equality and Discrimination Tribunal stated that an employer had acted against the law when saying to an employer that she could have the job *if* she was comfortable working without a hijab. Also the decision of a nursing home in Stavanger of refusing to let its employees wear hijabs, was deemed illegal by the Equality and Discrimination Tribunal.
- **26.07.2017:** The minister of integration and immigration suggested a prohibition against hijabs at elementary school.
- **10.07.2017:** An Afghan man was physically attacked on the subway.
- **11.09.2017:** The Progress Party, well-known for its anti-immigration policy, especially concerning “Muslim countries” was elected to serve four years in government.
- **01.10.2017:** The Human Rights Service launches a new explicit Islamophobic project asking readers to submit photos documenting “how Norway has changed”. The photos published are clearly anti-Muslim in character.
- **06.12.2017:** A broad population survey was launched showing that negative attitudes towards Muslims are quite prevalent in the Norwegian population and that 36 per cent of Muslims report having had personal experiences of discrimination during the past 12 months.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**POLAND**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

In spite of the insistence of the key political figures in the country that the problems of racism and Islamophobia do not exist in Poland, the frequent reporting on verbal and physical attacks on non-indigenous residents of Poland prove the contrary. To a great extent the 'refugee crisis' continues to occupy the political debate in 2017 and Islam, Muslims and refugees are unscrupulously used as a bogeyman in the run for elections. This will very possibly result in Poland being sued by the European Commission in the European Court of Justice. Furthermore, the current changes to the Polish justice system and prosecutors' decisions to discontinue the investigations into a number of hate crimes against Muslims in Poland, does not give an optimistic prognosis for the equal access to justice in the country in the future. The state-funded media outlets seem to carefully select the guests invited to comment on issues related to Islam and its followers, which results in the strengthening of the stereotypical portrayal of a Muslim as 'violent', 'terrorist', 'Jihadist', 'sexist', 'rapist', 'uncivilised', 'double-faced', and, in general 'a threat' to European and Christian values. While the concerns expressed by Muslims are sometimes heard by the state officials, no significant actions to address such anxieties are being made. Independently of the state institutions, however, civil society actors, including some Christian groups, increasingly react to acts of aggression and discriminations against Muslims in the form of systematic as well as spontaneous, ad-hoc initiatives. The number of hate crime attacks on Muslims is on the rise. Muslims were the largest targeted group representing 20% of all cases. Based on the Ministry of Interior statistics, in 2017<sup>1</sup> there were 664 hate crime proceedings where Muslims had been targeted, and 193 (29%) of those resulted in an indictment.

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1. The cited numbers cover the period January 2017- October 2017 as at the time of writing the report, the full numbers had not yet been released.

## Streszczenie

Pomimo zapewnień ze strony rządu, że problem rasizmu i islamofobii w Polsce nie istnieje, coraz częstsze doniesienia o słownych i fizycznych atakach na osoby wyróżniające się wyglądem świadczą o powadze tego problemu. „Kryzys uchodźczy” w dalszym ciągu zajmuje istotne miejsce w debacie politycznej w 2017 roku, a politycy bez skrupułów posługują się islamem, muzułmanami oraz uchodźcami jako ‘straszakami’ w walce o elektorat. Jest prawdopodobne, że konflikt między Polską a Unią Europejską o nieprzyjęcie uchodźców znajdzie swój finał w Europejskim Trybunale Sprawiedliwości. Obecne zmiany w polskim systemie wymiaru sprawiedliwości, a także decyzje prokuratur o umorzeniu śledztwa w obliczu dużej części doniesień o przestępstwach z nienawiści wobec muzułmanów w Polsce, nie dają optymistycznych prognoz na przyszłość. Reportaże oraz wypowiedzi gości zapraszanych przez stacje telewizji publicznej do komentowania zagadnień związanych z islamem oraz jego wyznawcami, umacniają stereotypowy wizerunek muzułmanina jako ‘terrorysty’, ‘dżihadzisty’, ‘gwałciciela’, człowieka ‘agresywnego’ i ‘niecywilizowanego’, “dwulicowego”, oraz “zagrożenia” dla wartości europejskich i chrześcijańskich. Choć obawy wyrażane przez społeczność muzułmańską docierają do urzędników państwowych, do tej pory żadne skuteczne działania w celu poprawy sytuacji nie zostały podjęte. Niezależnie natomiast od instytucji państwowych, społeczeństwo obywatelskie, w tym niektóre organizacje chrześcijańskie coraz częściej reagują na akty agresji i dyskryminacji wobec muzułmanów w formie działań statutowych organizacji oraz projektów, a także aktów solidarności, np. udziału w manifestacjach. Niniejszy raport ma na celu zwrócenie uwagi na niektóre wydarzenia roku 2017, które w pośredni i bezpośredni sposób wpłynęły na obecną sytuację społeczności muzułmańskich w Polsce. Liczba przestępstw z nienawiści przeciwko muzułmanom rośnie. Muzułmanie byli największą z grup, które doświadczyły takich przestępstw (20% ogółu przestępstw z nienawiści). Według Ministerstwa Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji, w 2017<sup>2</sup> liczba zgłoszonych przestępstw przeciw muzułmanom wyniosła 664, a 193 spraw zakończyło się formalnym dochodzeniem.

2. Podane dane dotyczą okresu styczeń–październik 2017, ponieważ w momencie pisania raportu pełne dane za rok 2017 nie zostały jeszcze opublikowane.

## Introduction

Since the 2016 report on Islamophobia in Poland, the situation has become even more aggravated. Hate crime is on the rise,<sup>3</sup> and the resentment against Muslims and refugees unifies people who normally occupy opposite ends of the political spectrum.<sup>4</sup> The European Commission has announced its intention to sue Poland at the European Court of Justice for refusing to take in asylum seekers.<sup>5</sup> The government formed by Law and Justice politicians has become more entrenched in their actions in regard to the refugee quotas, and their refusal to address racism in their own ranks, the media, and society at large. While racism and Islamophobia exist across Europe, Poland is an example of a country where they are not only permitted, but currently actively fuelled by the government and state institutions, as well as the extreme fringes within the Catholic Church, an important player on the Polish socio-political scene. The ecumenical teachings of John Paul II and Pope Francis (who encouraged Catholics, in a 2017 document, to “welcome, protect, promote, and integrate immigrants, refugees, and human trafficking victims”),<sup>6</sup> have not affected Polish Catholics’ perceptions of Islam.<sup>7</sup> In other words, Islamophobia has entered the Polish mainstream and become a tool of political warfare.<sup>8</sup> With over 50% support,<sup>9</sup> it is likely that the ruling party will remain in power for another term. This means that the situation in Poland regarding Islamophobia and hate crime is likely to deteriorate further. Indeed, this report is a restatement of problems noted last year<sup>10</sup> with the proviso that they have escalated.

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3. Sojda, Aleksandra, “Nawet sto ataków na obcokrajowców dziennie – tak w Polsce kwitnie ksenofobia”, *Polityka* (June 29, 2017) retrieved January 11, 2018 from <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/spoleczenstwo/1710550,1,nawet-sto-atakow-na-obcokrajowcow-dziennie--tak-w-polsce-kwitnie-ksenofobia.read>.

4. Gumowska, Aleksandra, “Raport o uchodźcach: Antymuslim robi się modny”, *Newsweek*, no. 28/2015, retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://www.newsweek.pl/plus/polska/islamofobia-w-polsce-strach-przed-uchodzcami,artykuly,370387,1,z.html>.

5. BBC, “EU to Sue Poland, Hungary and Czechs for Refusing Refugee Quotas”, *BBC NEWS* (December 7, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42270239>.

6. The Vatican Migrants and Refugees Section, “Responding to Refugees and Migrants: Twenty Action Points”, retrieved on January 11, 2018 from [https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/stocktaking\\_holy\\_see.pdf](https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/stocktaking_holy_see.pdf).

7. Makowski, Jarosław, “Jak to możliwe, że w Polsce mamy islamofobię bez muzułmanów?”, *Newsweek* (January 26, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.newsweek.pl/opinie/jak-to-mozliwe-ze-w-polsce-mamy-islamofobie-bez-muzulmanow-,artykuly,404172,1.html>.

8. Matzke, Małgorzata, “„Die Zeit” o Polsce: Islamofobia stała się mainstreamem”, *DW.com* (November 12, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.dw.com/pl/die-zeit-o-polsce-islamofobia-sta-si%C5%82a-si%C4%99-mainstreamem/a-41346351>.

9. Newsweek, “Padł rekord. Już co drugi Polak chce głosować na PiS”, *Newsweek* (December 13, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/polityka/50-proc-poparcia-dla-pis-u-rekordowy-sondaz-faktu-,artykuly,420405,1.html>.

10. Pędziwiatr, Konrad, *Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2016*, in: Enes Bayrakli & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017, retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.islamophobieurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/POLAND.pdf>.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The relationship of the Polish state and the Muslim community under the Law and Justice Party (PiS) government continues to be fraught. The nationwide anti-refugee attitudes, fuelled by the continued refusal of the Polish government to accept refugees from Muslim countries and a backlash by the state-controlled media are decidedly on the rise.<sup>11</sup> These attitudes translate into a fast-growing number of hate crime incidents, including physical and verbal abuse as well as vandalism. In early summer 2017, the leaders of Polish Muslim organisations including the Muslim Association of Poland, the Muslim League of Poland, and the Muslim Students' Society in Poland wrote an open letter to the speaker of the Polish Parliament as well as to the Parliamentary Commission for National and Ethnic Minorities requesting support. There was no immediate response to it. In the letter, the Muslim community warned that misrepresenting Islam in the state media, and the continued anti-refugee campaign is very likely to lead to a rise in physical attacks on Muslims.<sup>12</sup> The government's refusal to address this issue is not surprising as xenophobic rhetoric is part of its political programme. The House of Parliament itself was also a site of both organised and spontaneous Islamophobic incidents: in June, a conference about Islam was organised in the parliament by a ruling party's MP, Tadeusz Dziuba, during which not a single Muslim spoke about the religion - instead, a motley of conservative activists and academics discussed Islam as an intrinsically fundamentalist ideology that presents a danger to Poland. It is impossible to discuss all incidents in detail here due to space limitations; however, they often share a common denominator: they are largely ignored by the ruling party who say that hate crime incidents are rare and do not constitute a serious problem in Poland.<sup>13</sup> However, even cursory research into the situation of Muslims and foreigners in general in Poland belies that claim. In November, again the parliament was a site of an Islamophobic excess whereby an unidentified man wore a T-shirt that read 'Racist. Xenophobe. Patriot. Poland with-

11. Gumowska, Aleksandra, "Raport o uchodźcach: Antymuslim robi się modny", *Newsweek*, no. 28/2015, retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://www.newsweek.pl/plus/polska/islamofobia-w-polsce-strach-przed-uchodzcam,artykuly,370387,1,z.html>.

12. Chołodowski, Maciej, "Polscy muzułmanie czują się zagrożeni. Apelują do polskiego Sejmu", *Wyborcza.pl* (September 17, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/7,35241,22384133,pols-cy-muzulmanie-czuja-sie-zagrozeni-apeluja-do-polskiego.html>.

13. Fejfer, Kamil, "'W 2016 były o trzy przestępstwa z nienawiści mniej niż w 2015'. I trzy razy więcej niż w 2014", *OKO.press* (January 6, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <https://oko.press/2016-byly-o-przestepstwa-nienawisci-niz-2015-razy-wiecej-niz-2014/>; Agerholm, Harriet, "Poland Insists Far-right Marchers Calling for 'Islamic Holocaust' Just Sideshow to 'Great Celebrations of Poles'", (November 14, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/poland-far-right-demonstrations-great-celebration-warsaw-neo-nazis-white-supremacists-a8053516.html>.

out Islam'. Having walked around the building for some time unhampered, he was able to get away without any consequences despite this act being punishable by law.<sup>14</sup> The occasional protests of the opposition who admit that racism in Poland presents a significant challenge are ineffective. The ruling party dismisses such protests as left-wing ideology aimed at undermining the government. As a result, Muslims and other minorities have become a bargaining chip in Polish politics.

## Justice System

The reform of the Polish judiciary system which has recently resulted in unprecedented disciplinary measures by the European Union<sup>15</sup> means that one of the foundations of a democratic state – the separation of powers – is seriously compromised. The judiciary and prosecutors are now controlled by the executive power, that is, the government ministers. This may (and some, like the Centre for Monitoring Racism and Xenophobia, argue it already has<sup>16</sup>) present Muslims living in Poland with a new challenge. As the prosecutor's office has become politicised, hate crimes, normally prosecuted *ex officio* (automatically), are ignored.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, there are signals that the police refuse to take action on hate crime reports.<sup>18</sup>

## Employment

Antidiscrimination employment laws in Poland are largely dictated by EU laws. In March 2017, the European Court of Justice ruled that employers would be able to prohibit the wearing of religious symbols by their employees. This was despite the content of Article 9 (about freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Although the new ruling refers to all religions, the fact that the new ruling was instigated by the appeals against member state courts' rulings regarding complaints by two Muslim women to the European Court of Justice suggests that Muslims may be its intended target. This will not improve the inequalities in the Polish workplace where visible Muslim symbols may trigger Islamophobic discrimination. Anecdotal evidence suggests that for Polish Muslim female converts, even university graduates, client-facing roles are often out of bounds; the most frequently employment undertaken by these Muslim women in the private sec-

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14. Gazeta.pl, "Założył w Sejmie rasistowską koszulkę. Politycy PO chcą kary: To sprawa dla prokuratury", *Gazeta.pl* (November 16, 2017) retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://wiadomosci.gazeta.pl/wiadomosci/7,114884,22656393,zalozyl-w-sejmie-rasistowska-koszulke-politycy-po-chca-kary.html>.

15. BBC, "Poland Judiciary Reforms: EU Takes Disciplinary Measures" (December 20, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42420150/>.

16. Ośrodek Monitorowania Zachowań Rasistowskich i Ksenofobicznych, post from January 6, 2018, retrieved January 11, 2018 from <https://www.facebook.com/osrodek.monitorowania/>.

17. Sikorska, Zofia, "Bilewicz: PO? PIS? Nieważne. Tyle nienawiści nie było w Polsce od dawna", *Krytyka Polityczna.pl* (May 4, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://krytykapolityczna.pl/kraj/bilewicz-mowa-nienawisci/>.

18. Sulowski, Kacper, "Opluta muzułmanka zawiadamia niemiecką policję. Z Warszawy i Berlina płyną gesty solidarności" *Wyborcza.pl* (July 1, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://lublin.wyborcza.pl/lublin/7,48724,22037881,opluta-muzulmanka-zawiadamia-niemiecka-policje-z-warszawy-i.html>.

tor is work at call centres.<sup>19</sup> It appears that a group who are definitely at risk is food outlet workers, for example kebab shop employees, as demonstrated by the attacks listed in the Chronology section.

## Education

In September 2017, qualitative research commissioned by the Commissioner of Human Rights on the attitudes among Polish secondary school students was published. The findings reveal strong anti-refugee, Islamophobic and homophobic prejudice among the majority of the 396 respondents.<sup>20</sup> More specifically, the youth tend to view Muslims as potential terrorists and do not wish to welcome Muslim refugees. This attitude was prevalent among students regardless of age, location, or type of school. Simultaneously, the Ministry of Education has decreed that from September 2017, anti-discrimination programmes in Polish schools will be shut down despite the glaring need for such initiatives as shown by the CHR research. Instead, educational initiatives promoting patriotism and a national and cultural Polish identity have been introduced.<sup>21</sup> This inward trend is amplified by the lack of objectively taught religious education classes in Polish schools as, for example, is typical in the UK state schools (instead, the students usually have a choice of Catholic instruction or ethics classes).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, one can only expect the xenophobic attitudes among Polish students documented by the CHR to intensify.

## Media

The TV channels that remain at the forefront of the production of Islamophobia in Poland are the state-sponsored TVP (Polish Television) and Telewizja Republika - but they are not limited to them. Essentialist descriptions of Islam and Muslims are broadcast on the news, in documentary and investigational series,<sup>23</sup> current affairs programmes, etc. On June 5, on the TVP Info's programme *News* a two-minute report entitled 'Europe in Ramadan' aired, which presented the Islamic holy month as a time of increased terrorist attacks in Europe. In the programme, Wojciech Szewko (PhD) quotes former spokesperson of IS (Islamic State) as a representative of Islam, saying that Ramadan is a

19. Kaleta, Ewa, "‘Odczepcie się od mojej chustki’. Polki w hidżabie" *wp.pl* (December 5, 2015) retrieved January 11, 2018 from <https://kobieta.wp.pl/odczepcie-sie-od-mojej-chustki-polki-w-hidzabie-5982315640255105a>.

20. Gajos-Kaniewska, Dorota, "RPO: młodzież nie chce uchodźców – wyniki badania wśród uczniów szkół średnich" *Rzeczpospolita* (September 6, 2017) retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.rp.pl/Edukacja-i-wychowanie/309069922-RPO-mlodziez-nie-chce-uchodzcow---wyniki-badania-wsrod-uczniow-szkol-srednich.html>.

21. Newsweek, "Patryotyzm – tak, tolerancja – nie. Prawicowa ideologia od września wchodzi do polskich szkół" *Newsweek* (July 7, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <http://www.newsweek.pl/polska/spoleczenstwo/konieczajeciami-antydiskryminacyjnymi-w-szkolach-edukacja-narodowa-wedlug-pis,artykuly,412809,1.html>.

22. Woleński, Jan, "Wszystko, czego nie wiemy o lekcjach religii: Kto i za co właściwie płaci?" *Polityka* (February, 1, 2016), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <https://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/kraj/1649200,1,wszystko-czego-nie-wiemy-o-lekcjach-religii-kto-i-za-co-wlasciwie-placi.read>.

23. For example: TVP Info, "Magazyn Śledczy Anity Gargas", (September 6, 2017), retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://vod.tvp.pl/video/magazyn-sledczy-anity-gargas,06092017,33625209>.



Figure 1: "We hold two books in our hands: first is the Bible about love, second is the Koran about hatred and terror."<sup>27</sup>

month of blessings in which all attacks will be counted a thousand times over, therefore 'smart' Muslims wait to attack during Ramadan.<sup>24</sup> The author of the video goes so far in the manipulation of facts as to include a fragment of a skit from 2015 by Yacine Hasnaoui, a French comedian of Algerian descent, in which he smashes bottles of alcohol in a shop.<sup>25</sup> The author of the report comments on the scene as if it was real and describes it as "a radical protest of an Islam follower as registered in one of the shops in France."<sup>26</sup>

TVP's *After Eight* (*Minęła 20*), a daily, current affairs broadcast, frequently hosts guests known for their Islamophobic opinions. On June 6, 2017, the studio guests were Miriam Shaded, Colonel Piotr Wroński, and historian Jerzy Targalski (PhD). The host began with the question "What is happening now in Europe? Migratory crisis? War on terror? Or maybe war on Islam?" Miriam Shaded immediately responded, "With Islam".<sup>28</sup> Shaded would later add "Muslim kids are taught to hate us, to despise European and Western societies".<sup>29</sup> During the programme the Qur'an was called a "book of hatred and intolerance" (Fig. 1) as well as the "work of Satan".<sup>30</sup> On other occasions the guest was Wojciech Cejrowski, who gave ideas on how to fight Islamic terrorists, that is "to kill them with bullets soaked in swine blood" and then "to desecrate their corpses with it";<sup>31</sup> and Dariusz Oko, a priest and professor, who claimed that Prophet Muhammad practiced "a little holocaust, anywhere Islam entered, there was a violence and rape"<sup>32</sup> (Fig. 2).

24. TVP Info, *Wiadomości*, (June 5, 2017), retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://www.tvp.info/32525749/najciekawsze-materialy/europa-w-czasie-ramadanu/>.

25. Link to the Yacine Hasnaoui YouTube video retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sxUqi2FQKs>.

26. TVP Info, *Wiadomości*, (June 5, 2017), retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://www.tvp.info/32525749/najciekawsze-materialy/europa-w-czasie-ramadanu/>.

27. Screenshot from the TV Info programme *Minęła 20*, retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://vod.tvp.pl/video/minela-dwudziesta,06062017,30794782>.

28. TVP Info, "Minęła 20", (June 6, 2017), retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://vod.tvp.pl/video/minela-dwudziesta,06062017,30794782>.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*

31. TVP Info, "Minęła 20", (October 5, 2017), retrieved on December 30, 2017, from <https://www.tvp.info/34280031/zwloki-trzeba-bezczescic-swinska-krwia-strzelac-maczana-w-niej-kula>.

32. TVP Info, "Minęła 20", (December 26, 2017), retrieved December 30, 2017, from <https://vod.tvp.pl/video/minela-dwudziesta,26122017,35099962>.

In the mood of ‘discovering the truth’ about Islam a conversation took place between Tomasz Terlikowski, the host of the *Clash of Civilizations* programme aired on Telewizja Republika, and his guest, Sandra Salomon, a Palestinian and former Muslim, who explained that she left Islam once she realised that it is “a violent system”.<sup>33</sup>

The open letter, sent in June 2017 by recognised

Polish Muslim associations to the speaker of the Polish Parliament, in which they complained over the misrepresenting and essentialist reporting on Islam and Muslims in Polish state media, was received also by TVP and the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT). While in July, TVP responded that such allegations are unfounded, and that TVP does not hold responsibility for the opinions of the guests invited to the studio, in November, the KRRiT responded to the letter’s authors with a reference to TVP’s position on the issue and confirmed the allegations. Thereafter, no action has been taken to address TVP’s coverage of Muslims.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Despite the unlawful reluctance of prosecutors and the police to pursue hate crime, according to statistics released by the National Prosecutor’s Office, in the first half of 2017, 947 hate crime proceedings were conducted,<sup>35</sup> compared to 863 such proceedings in the first half of 2016. Muslims were the largest targeted group: they constituted 20% of the cases. Based on the Ministry of Interior statistics, in 2017, there were 664 hate crime proceedings where Muslims had been targeted, and 193 (29%) of those resulted in an indictment. There is an agreement among third-sector activists that these numbers are steadily escalating. Meanwhile, the Minister of Justice Mariusz Blaszczak claims that Poland has no problem with hate crime, despite the fact that in 2015 there



Figure 2: “Priest professor D. Oko: Muhammad practices a little Holocaust, anywhere Islam entered, there was a violence and rape.”<sup>34</sup>

33. Telewizja Republika, “Starcie cywilizacji”, (August 28, 2017), retrieved December 30, 2017, from <http://telewizjarepublika.pl/sandra-salomon-to-co-dzije-sie-w-europie-nie-jest-migracja-tylko-inwazja-to-czesc-wiekszego-planu,53136.html>.

34. TVP Info programme *Minęła 20*, retrieved December 30, from <https://www.tvp.info/35362811/ks-prof-d-oko-mahomet-potrafil-jednego-dnia-zrobic-maly-holocaust-wszedzie-gdzie-wchodzil-islam-byla-przemoc-i-gwalt>.

35. Kościński, Paweł, “Coraz więcej przestępstw z nienawiści. Prokuratura Krajowa opublikowała dane”, *Wyborcza.pl*, (January 5, 2018) retrieved January 11, 2018, from <http://wyborcza.pl/7,75398,22861475,coraz-wiecej-przestepstw-z-nienawisci-prokuratura-krajowa-opublikowala.html>.

were three times as many incidents as in 2014.<sup>36</sup> According to Muslim organisations met by the Commissioner of Human Rights in 2016, the scale of the attacks is much larger than the statistics – those should be multiplied by five to gauge the real scale of Islamophobia in Poland, as the victims often do not report attacks.<sup>37</sup>

It appears that the indigenous Polish Muslim population (Tatars) may have less experience of Islamophobia than more recent arrivals who are likely to stand out in terms of looks and dress in Polish urban areas.<sup>38</sup> Some selected attacks are listed in the Chronology section; most never make it to the mainstream media, but the following is an illustrative example. A Muslim student from Germany visiting Poland as part of a school trip to the concentration camp in Majdanek (near Lublin) was spat at by an aggressive male. Throughout the visit, female members of the group, especially those who wore a hijab, were constantly harassed and verbally abused by passers-by in Lublin. Strikingly, the police displayed an odious degree of passivity - a police patrol to whom the group reported the attack ignored the report, and another patrol they approached only reacted with laughter. Eventually the student reported this hate crime to the German police upon her return to Germany.<sup>39</sup>



Figure 3: “Shock! The islamisation has been planned for 17 years! Scandalous documents of UN leak!”<sup>40</sup>

## Internet

The cyberspace is a fertile ground for the hate speech. According to the statistics of the National Prosecutor’s Office for the first half of 2017, 39.5% of all hate crimes in Poland (including crimes against different national, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities) were com-

36. Fejfer, Kamil, “‘W 2016 były o trzy przestępstwa z nienawiści mniej niż w 2015’. I trzy razy więcej niż w 2014”, *OKO.press*, (January 6, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018, from <https://oko.press/2016-byly-o-przestepstwa-nienawisci-niz-2015-razy-wiecej-niz-2014/>.

37. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, “O sytuacji Polskich muzułmanów i muzułmanów w Rzeczypospolitej na spotkaniu Adama Bondara w Biurze RPO”, *bip.rpo.gov.pl*, (June 21, 2016), retrieved January 11, 2018, from <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/o-sytuacji-polskich-muzulmanow-i-muzulmanow-w-rzeczypospolitej-na-spotkaniu-adama-bodnara>.

38. WP Wiadomości “Muzułmanie w Polsce. ‘Zycie tutaj jest dżihadem’”, *WP Wiadomości*, (March 13, 2015), retrieved on January 11, 2018, from <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/muzulmanie-w-polsce-zycie-tutaj-jest-dzihadem-6027728982172289a>.

39. Łamkowski, Grzegorz, “Tylko w WP: Opluta muzułmanka zawiadamia niemiecką policję. Jest sześciu świadków” *WP Wiadomości*, (June 30, 2017), retrieved on January 11, 2018, from <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/tylko-w-wp-opluta-muzulmanka-zawiadamia-niemiecka-policje-jest-szesciu-swiadkow-6139108937754753a>.

40. Screenshot from wRealu24.pl, retrieved December 30, from <https://wrealu24.pl/szok-islamizacja-byla-zaplanowana-juz-17-lat-temu-wyciekly-skandaliczne-dokumenty-onz/>

mitted in cyberspace.<sup>41</sup> Although this figure is lower if compared with the first half of 2016 (49%),<sup>42</sup> according to Hejststop<sup>43</sup> (Hate Stop) the numbers of crimes continuously grow, while the reporting of those to the police has dropped. Hejststop suggests that one of the main reasons for the dropping figures is the Polish government's lack of financial support<sup>44</sup> for the organizations that used to report hate crimes on behalf of the victims. These organizations, therefore, cannot work as efficiently as they were able to in the past.<sup>45</sup>

The role of the language and pictures that circulate in cyberspace can hardly be overestimated in the increase and strengthening of the Islamophobic attitudes among Polish Internet users. The websites known for fake news, such as *wRealu24.pl*, *wpolityce.pl*, *wsieci.pl*, *fronda.pl*, *chnnews.pl*, *ndie.pl*, *polskaligaobrony.org*.

*pl*, and YouTube channels such as Religia Pokoju (Religion of Peace)<sup>47</sup> or Marcin Rola,<sup>48</sup> attract viewers with shouting headlines like “The Real Face of Islam”, “The Hidden Truth Exposed”, “The Real Threat of Shari’ah”, etc., as well as pictures of the beheading of Christians, the beating and raping of girls by violent Muslim men, migrants flooding European streets, etc. (Figs. 3-5)



Figure 4: “Daughter and wife raped in front of his eyes. A Christian man could not handle this.”<sup>46</sup>

41. Prokuratura Krajowa, “Wyciąg ze sprawozdania dot. Spraw o przestępstwa popełnione z pobudek rasistowskich, antysemickich lub ksenofobicznych prowadzonych w I półroczu 2017 roku w jednostkach organizacyjnych prokuratury”, (December 20, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018, from <http://pk.gov.pl/sprawozdania-i-statystyki/wyciag-ze-sprawozdania-dot-spraw-o-przestepstwa-popelnione-z-pobudek-rasistowskich-antysemickich-lub-ksenofobicznych-prowadzonych-w-i-polroczu-2017-roku-w-jednostkach-organizacyjnych-prokuratury.html#.WIMUmt-nHIU>.

42. Prokuratura Krajowa, “Wyciąg ze sprawozdania dotyczącego spraw o przestępstwa popełnione z pobudek rasistowskich, antysemickich lub ksenofobicznych prowadzonych w I półroczu 2016 r.”, (October 14, 2016), retrieved January 7, 2018, from <http://pk.gov.pl/sprawozdania-i-statystyki/wyciag-ze-sprawozdania-dotyczacego-spraw-o-przestepstwa-z-nienawisci-i-2016.html#.WIKB29-nHIU>, retrieved January 7, 2018.

43. More information available at <http://hejststop.pl/>.

44. The financial support ended after April 2016, when the agreements for Norway Grants managed by the Stefan Batory Foundation expired.

45. Hejststop, post from December 7, 2017, retrieved on January 7, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/zobacz-nienawisc/posts/1680183208705546>.

46. Screenshot from *Fronda.pl*, retrieved December 30, from <http://www.fronda.pl/a/zgwalcili-corke-i-zone-na-jego-oczach-chrzescijanin-nie-wytrzymal-1,90562.html>

47. Channel opened on May 24, 2017. Up to January 8, 2018, the channel has posted 256 videos and was viewed 5,511,390 times. Retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTsrpTccVe0uWusYOJN-SXOg/about>.

48. On January 8, 2018, the channel had gathered over 80,200 subscribers. Retrieved on January 8, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjFvWMiZnEtdPAD008RzYPA>.



Figure 5: "Horror! Sweden accepts pedophilia, and all this because of the shariah law"<sup>49</sup>

ers<sup>52</sup> (60,000 on December 30, 2016); while the Polish anti-racist group 'Yes for refugees – No to racism and xenophobia' gathers only 10,673 followers (8,000 in February 2017). While the number of followers of the later increased by 2,673 members, the anti-Muslim groups increased (in the above order) by 28,571 members and 4,482 members during 2017.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The landscape of central figures in the Islamophobia network in Poland have not changed significantly since the 2016 EIR report. The ultra-nationalist movements continue to use refugees and Islam among the major elements of their mobilisation. The Polish National Movement (Ruch Narodowy), the National Radical Camp (Obóz Narodowo Radykalny), and the All-Polish Youth (Młodzież WszechPolska) all took part in the November 11 Independence Day march in Warsaw,<sup>53</sup> where slogans "We don't want Islam, we don't want Muslim terrorists" were shouted.<sup>54</sup> (Fig. 6) Sixty thousand people were reported to have attended this year's march.<sup>55</sup>

49. "Screenshot from Telewizja Republika, retrieved December 30, from <http://telewizjarepublika.pl/zgroza-szwecja-akceptuje-pedofilie-a-wszystko-przez-szarija,45435.html>

50. Pędziwiatr, Konrad, *Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2016*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017, retrieved January 8, 2018 from <http://www.islamophobieurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/POLAND.pdf>.

51. Ndie Facebook page, retrieved January 7, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/ndiepl/>.

52. Stop Islamizacji Europy Facebook page, retrieved January 7, 2018, from <https://www.facebook.com/Stop-islamizacji-Europy-191777667634248/>.

53. Organised by the Independence March Association, <https://marszniepodleglosci.pl/>.

54. TVN24, "Młodzież, którą Pis rozumie. Ekscesy wszechpolaków uchodzą im na sucho", *TVN24*, (November 13, 2017) retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://www.tvn24.pl/wiadomosci-z-kraju,3/separacja-rasowa-nie-pierwszy-incident-w-mlodzi-zy-wszechpolskiej,789812.html>.

55. It is noted, that the march was attended also by non-Polish members of foreign ultra-nationalist groups from Hungary, Sweden, Slovakia, Italy, and others. Retrieved of January 8, 2018, from <https://www.wprost.pl/kraj/10086012/zagraniczne-media-krytycznie-o-marszu-niepodleglosci-to-ze-odbywa-sie-w-akurat-w-warszawie-to-paradoks.html>.

TVP and Television Republic constitute perhaps the most extensive catalogue of media figures in the Islamophobia network in Poland. Guests invited to speak about Islam, Muslims and refugees are individuals known for their anti-Muslim rhetoric. To name a few: Miriam Shaded, the president of Estera Foundation, who recently stated that all Muslims should be registered in special governmental databases;<sup>57</sup> Tomasz Terlikowski,<sup>58</sup> editor and among the hosts of the programme *Clash of Civilizations* on Television Republic, and the author of the book *Caliphate Europe*;<sup>59</sup> Marcin Rola,<sup>60</sup> chief editor of *wRealu24.pl*; Witold Gadowski,<sup>61</sup> an investigative journalist; priest Prof. Dariusz Oko,<sup>62</sup> lecturer at Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow.

The Europe of the Future Association (*euroislam.pl*) remains the most important actor of legitimising Islamophobia by juxtaposing Islam with notions of enlightenment, human rights and democracy. The analyses published on *euroislam.pl* are given a 'scholarly' face by the academic credentials of active members of the network, who are invited to public talks, or to comment on current affairs in mainstream media outlets.

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In 2017, Polish Commissioner of Human Rights, or the Ombudsman, Adam Bodnar continued to raise concerns about the exacerbated situation of Muslims



Figure 6: Muslim refugees depicted as a Trojan horse - Banner at the Polish Independence march on November 11, 2017 in Warsaw.<sup>56</sup>

56. Source: <https://www.tvp.info/34793656/liderzy-ruchu-narodowego-rasizm-jest-nam-obcy-a-sprzeciw-wobec-imi-gracji-jest-nam-bliski>

57. [Polsatnews.pl](http://polsatnews.pl), "Wszystkich muzułmanów należy rejestrować". Miriam Shaded w "Skandalistach" *Polsatnews.pl*, (December 2, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018, from <http://www.polsatnews.pl/wiadomosc/2017-12-02/miriam-shaded-w-skandalistach-w-polsat-news-o-2000/>.

58. Television Republic Channel on YouTube, retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UJLsKF1rL8>.

59. In his book published in 2016, Terlikowski warns about the Islamisation of Europe. The book is sold in the biggest bookstore chain in Poland, Empik.

60. Television Republic Channel on YouTube, retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9YTCOaf7Xp8>.

61. Television Republic Channel on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAivH2MInTQ&t=406s>, retrieved January 8, 2018.

62. In late November, Oko gave a talk titled 'Islam as a Threat to Poland, Europe and Christianity' at a Poznan parish. Retrieved January 7, 2018, from <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,22697553,ksiadz-oko-z-islamofobicznym-wykladem-w-poznanskiej-parafii.html>.

in Poland.<sup>63</sup> On February 28, he met with representatives of Muslims of multiple ethnic and national backgrounds as well as members of various political parties from the left to the far-right.<sup>64</sup> The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the detrimental effects of treating the refugees and Muslims as a bargaining chip to win the electorate.<sup>65</sup> This potentially productive meeting, however, did not appear to offer any significant improvements, and in June, the established Polish Muslim organizations sent the previously mentioned letter to the Polish state representatives. The Commission for National and Ethnic Minorities invited Muslim organizations' delegates to discuss their concerns during the committee's meeting on December 7. While no concrete decisions were made, the committee requested from the Muslim delegation to provide them the data on the hate crimes concerning the Muslim community in Poland.

Civil society has shown more efforts to push back against anti-Muslim and anti-refugee narratives than state-level institutions. The NGOs Never Again<sup>66</sup> (Nigdy Więcej), Hate Stop<sup>67</sup> (Hejtstop), and the Centre for Monitoring Racist and Xenophobic Behaviours<sup>68</sup> (Ośrodek Monitorowania Zachowań Rasistowski i Ksenofobicznych), together with the campaign 'Zero Tolerance'<sup>69</sup> (Zero Tolerancji) by the political party Party Together (Partia Razem), continue their systematic engagement in monitoring online and offline hate crime.

Regarding systematic initiatives, civil society also actively responded to the ongoing Islamophobic events in Poland. In June, almost 300 citizens of the city of Poznan came together in a 'Silent Demonstration' to protest the hate campaign against Poznan's imam Youssef Chadid. Imam Chadid received death threats after a fake video of him was published online, in which he supposedly called for hatred

63. That meeting was preceded with another on February 1, when the Ombudsman hosted a discussion on the report on hate speech and the negative portrayal of Muslims in the Polish press. Retrieved January 7, 2018 from <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/sniadanie-prasowe-na-temat-jezyka-prasowego-opisujacego-spolcznosc-muzulmanska-w-polsce>.

64. Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, "Mowa nienawiści: spotkanie polityków i przedstawicieli środowiska muzułmańskiego w Biurze RPO" *bip.rpo.gov.pl* (February 28, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2017 from <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/mowa-nienawi%C5%9Bci-spotkanie-polityk%C3%B3w-i-przedstawicieli-%C5%9Brodowiska-muzu%C5%82ma%C5%84skiego-w-biurze-rpo>.

65. Responding to Muslims' fear and anxiety about the current anti-Muslim attitudes, Janusz Korwin Mikke, a member of the European Parliament, responded by saying, "To win the election, I have to incite hatred towards refugees". Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, "Mowa nienawiści: spotkanie polityków i przedstawicieli środowiska muzułmańskiego w Biurze RPO" *bip.rpo.gov.pl*, (February 28, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2017, from <https://www.rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/mowa-nienawi%C5%9Bci-spotkanie-polityk%C3%B3w-i-przedstawicieli-%C5%9Brodowiska-muzu%C5%82ma%C5%84skiego-w-biurze-rpo>.

66. More information at <http://www.nigdywiecej.org/brunatna-ksiega>, retrieved January 7, 2018.

67. More information at <http://hejtstop.pl/>, retrieved January 7, 2018.

68. <https://www.facebook.com/osrodek.monitorowania/>, retrieved January 7, 2018.

69. More information at <http://zero-tolerancji.pl/>, retrieved January 7, 2018.

against Christians.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, in response to the attack on the Muslim Cultural Centre in Warsaw,<sup>71</sup> the organisation United against Racism (Zjednoczeni Przeciw Rasizmowi) organized a demonstration in support of Muslims and against racism in Poland in front of the Central Metro Station in Warsaw.<sup>72</sup> Some Christian circles also actively join the counter-Islamophobia initiatives. Branches of the Tygodnik Powszechny Club in Warsaw<sup>73</sup> and Poznan,<sup>74</sup> together with the Catholic Intelligence Club invited representatives of the Muslim League of Poland to talk about Islam, Muslims and refugees at their monthly gatherings; they also organised workshops on how to counter the propaganda in the media.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The Polish government and the state institutions are reluctant to acknowledge and challenge Islamophobia, instead trying to cast Islamophobic acts as hooliganism, ignoring the rise of Islamophobic crime and often fuelling it. Anti-discrimination policies have not been strengthened and those in existence continue to be ignored. Anti-discrimination education programme requirements have been removed from Polish schools. Taking as an example the Independence Day march, which became a platform for Islamophobic messages and hate speech and was also plagued by hate crime in the form of physical and verbal attacks against those who protested it, the response to these punishable acts by the police was at best sluggish, and at worst, non-existent, as there were reports of the police protecting the perpetrators, rather than the targeted groups. Hate crime data continues to be collected by the Ministry of the Interior and Administration (Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji), as well as the National Prosecutor (Prokurator Krajowy), and analysed by the Main Statistics Office (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). As Islamophobic hate crime is not a distinct category, it is difficult to track its rise through official statistics; instead, the records of third-sector organisations supply such data which is unfortunately necessarily fragmentary. However, it appears that both the prosecutors and the police often refuse to

70. [Codziennypoznan.pl](http://www.codziennypoznan.pl), “Cichy protest w obronie poznańskiego imama” *Codziennypoznan.pl*, (July 6, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018, from <http://www.codziennypoznan.pl/artypokul/2017-07-05/cichy-protest-w-obronie-poznanskiego-imama>.

71. Sulowski, Kacper, “Atak na Ośrodek Kultury Muzułmańskiej. Policja szuka sprawców” *Wyborcza.pl*, (November 27, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018, from <http://warszawa.wyborcza.pl/warszawa/7,54420,22702415,atak-na-osrodek-kultury-muzulmanskiej-policja-szuka-sprawcow.html>.

72. Zjednoczeni Przeciw Rasizmowi, Facebook page, note published on November 29, 2017, retrieved January 7, 2018, from [https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=517956095236397&id=162698294095514](https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=517956095236397&id=162698294095514).

73. Klub TP Warszawa, Facebook page, note published on September 18, 2017, retrieved January 7, 2018, from <https://web.facebook.com/KlubTPWarszawa/posts/861724640652253>.

74. Klub TP Poznań, Facebook page, note published on November 13, 2017, retrieved January 7, 2018, from <https://web.facebook.com/TPpoznan/posts/10156046616523900>.

75. Klub TP Warszawa, Facebook page, note published on October 16, 2017, retrieved January 7, 2018, from <https://web.facebook.com/KlubTPWarszawa/posts/875403409284376>.

record and act on reports of hate crimes. In this situation it is understandable that victims of such crime may be reluctant to contact these institutions. Instead, third-sector organisations such as Never Again (Nigdy Więcej) receive such reports in astounding numbers. Right-wing academics and commentators with an anti-Islamic bias are much more likely to be consulted and invited to state initiatives and state-controlled media programmes. Muslims are generally absent from these endeavours and, so, further silenced. Objective voices on the matter are relegated to the ever-shrinking neutral media.

The policy recommendations made by the last report<sup>76</sup> have unfortunately been ignored. In the face of this, we feel the necessity to restate them here.

- 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 utmost 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.

In addition, we suggest an additional recommendation related to the media:

- Media organisations that advocate hate crime, including Islamophobic crime, and engage in hate speech ought to have their public funding cut, if they receive any. This recommendation should be legislated as soon as possible.

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76. Pędziwiatr, Konrad, *Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2016*, in: Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, Istanbul, SETA, 2017, retrieved January 8, 2018 from <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/POLAND.pdf>, p. 438.

## Chronology

- **03.01.2017:** A group of men attacked and severely injured a Pakistani Muslim man in Ozorków. The perpetrators were all imprisoned although they were only sentenced to less than 2 years.<sup>77</sup>
- **08.04.2017:** Three men attacked and severely injured three Pakistani Muslim men who worked in a restaurant in Świdwin.<sup>78</sup>
- **17.04.2017:** Four men attacked the Bangladeshi owner and staff of a kebab restaurant in Łódź. They verbally and physically abused the staff. The police patrol demonstrated indifference to the incident.<sup>79</sup>
- **28.04.2017:** The Prosecutor Office discontinued the inquiry into a public incitement to racial and religious hatred by Justyna Helcyk, a member of the far-right organisation National Radical Camp.<sup>80</sup>
- **16.06.2017:** The Regional Prosecutor's Office discontinued the investigation into the case of disturbing the Friday prayer rites at the Islamic Culture Centre in Katowice on December 30, 2016 by the ONR (National Racial Camp) rally, under the slogan 'Silesians against Islamic terrorism'.
- **19.06.2017:** A pseudo-scientific conference about Islam took place in the Polish Lower House of Parliament (Sejm). Not a single speaker was Muslim, and those who spoke displayed a significant anti-Muslim bias, depicting Islam as barbaric. The conference was organised by a Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) MP Tadeusz Dziuba and Natasza Dembińska-Urbaniak, the chairperson of the Conservative Women's Congress (Kongres Kobiet Konserwatywnych).
- **20.06.2017:** A Law and Justice MP, Jan Mosiński, published an Islamophobic slur about an opposition party politician on his Facebook page.
- **20.06.2017:** An open letter from the representatives of the Muslim community is sent to the speaker of the Polish Parliament. It asks for a response to the increased amount of hate speech in the Polish public space that may lead to physical attacks.
- **21.06.2017:** A Muslim student from Germany visiting Poland as part of a school trip to the concentration camp in Majdanek (near Lublin) was spat at by an aggressive male. A police patrol to whom the group reported the attack ignored the report, and another patrol's only reaction was laughter.
- **01.09.2017:** The commencement of the new academic year saw the erasure of anti-discrimination objectives in the education programme in Polish schools. It

77. *Brown Book* - hate crime monitoring carried out by the Never Again Association (selected incidents from 2017, forthcoming).

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

was replaced by the objective of ‘shaping patriotic and civic attitudes, and national and cultural identity’.

- **08.09.2017:** A Muslim woman was physically and verbally attacked by a man in Warsaw. He pushed and kicked her violently. She was helped by a passer-by and the perpetrator was detained by the police.
- **07.10.2017:** The event ‘Rosary at the borders’ was organised on the day of the anniversary of the Battle of Lepanto (in which the fleet of the Holy League defeated the fleet of the Ottoman Empire in 1571). Approximately one million Poles flocked to the country’s borders, apparently to pray for ‘world peace’ and the help of Virgin Mary in facing modern-day dangers. One of the organisers listed the ‘Islamisation of Europe’ as one of the current challenges.
- **18.10.2017:** A Muslim couple were verbally attacked by a man in a tram in Poznan. The attack was triggered by the fact that the couple were visibly Muslim and spoke German.
- **11.11.2017:** Far-right groups that took part in the Independence Day march in Warsaw carried banners with fascist, anti-Semitic and Islamophobic slogans. The event was reported on widely in international media.
- **27.11.2017:** The premises of the Muslim Cultural Centre in Warsaw were vandalised. The act was recorded on CCTV, and three weeks later the perpetrator was detained by the police who found leaflets propagating hate speech in his flat.
- **19.12.2017:** In a cabinet reshuffle Beata Kempa, known for her anti-refugee attitude, was nominated as the Minister for Humanitarian Assistance and Refugees. In February, she has said, “Everyone who knows Islam well, realises that if we bring here sick [Muslim] children for their treatment, because they spent time with the non-believers, they will not be accepted back into their families.”<sup>81</sup>

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81. Onet Wiadomości, “Beata Kempa: uchodźcom trzeba pomagać mądrze”, *Onet.pl* (February 27, 2017), retrieved January 11, 2018 from <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/beata-kempa-uchodzcom-trzeba-pomagac-madrze/zrxzd3q>.

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## Executive Summary

It is very often argued that Islamophobia does not exist in Portugal. However, Portugal has an old colonial legacy that sets the ground for Islamophobia. Racial discriminatory attacks actually do occur in the country. Due to its colonial past, the authoritarian dictatorship, which lasted almost the entire twentieth century, and the transition period as an aftermath of de-colonialization, a new notion emerged in Portugal: the Portuguese Muslim. The latter emerged as a result of immigration from former colonies; in other words, the “Portuguese Islam” that existed for centuries in overseas colonies began to be transferred to the mainland in order to reconcile the past narrative of the expulsion of Muslims which aimed at the creation a “Catholic Portugal.” The first Portuguese Muslims were mostly black and of Asian origin and their colour was the main identifying factor for being Othered and discriminated against. However, during the so-called “democratization process” and the entry requirements for the European Union, some important steps were taken to accommodate these recent arrivals, who even today remain a marginal phenomenon. Some political, legal, and sociocultural bodies began to be founded in order to support these immigrants and provide them the necessary assistance for their social inclusion. Despite the arguments of Portugal’s *Lusotropicalism* (it is claimed that the Portuguese have an inherent adaptability to the tropical climate and are better colonizers as they lack prejudice) and the narrative of “pluri-religious Portugal” during the “normalization” of the democratization process, there is a deep-seated Islamophobia that emerges any moment a so-called “Muslim threat” appears on the horizon. The invisibility of Muslims due to their small number (currently some 0,6% of the national population) and their silence in political, social, cultural, and public affairs appear to create an image of a well-integrated community. Since most of the members of the local Muslim society are native speakers, educated, and belong to the relatively well-off segment of larger society, they are accepted and considered “good citizens.” Due to lack of data concerning discriminations Muslims face in their everyday lives - for example, the Muslim associations do not keep statistical data on any kind of violations - it would be easy to claim that Portugal is free of Islamophobia. However, Portugal is far from being a paradise for Muslims: people in public who appear to be Muslim are verbally abused, there are acts of vandalism against places of worship (two incidents against the Lisbon mosque in 2015 and February 12, 2017), and Muslims are portrayed by some as threats to society’s secular base. At a political level, the most significant attack in terms of hatred towards Muslims took place in a small village called Mouraria in the country’s midwest when the local Muslim community tried to construct a mosque in 2016. The residents of the town inhospitably resisted the idea by signing petitions claiming that a mosque would harm the ancient cityscape. As a holiday destination with sea resorts in the south, swimwear becomes a subject of humiliation; last year, two British tourists were denied entry to a holiday resort’s swimming pool in Albuferia because of their “burkinis” (July 21, 2017).

## Resumo

Muitas vezes, argumenta-se que a islamofobia não existe em Portugal, no entanto, como em qualquer outro lugar do mundo, ocorrem alguns ataques discriminatórios raciais no país. Devido ao seu passado colonial e à ditadura autoritária que durou quase todo o século XX e ao período de transição após a descolonização surgiu uma nova noção em Portugal: o muçulmano português, como resultado da imigração das antigas colónias, ou seja, o “Islão português” “que existiu durante séculos em colónias ultramarinas começou a ser transferido para o continente, a fim de uma possível reconciliação com a narrativa passada de expulsão de muçulmanos para criar um “Portugal católico”.

Os primeiros muçulmanos portugueses eram na sua maioria de origem negra e asiática e essa era a principal razão para se expor aos ataques raciais no país. No entanto, durante o chamado “processo de democratização” e os requisitos de entrada para a União Europeia, foram tomadas algumas medidas importantes para acomodar esses recém-chegados, ainda hoje um fenómeno marginal.

Alguns órgãos políticos, legais e sócio-culturais começaram a ser fundados para apoiar esses imigrantes e prestar-lhes a assistência necessária para a inclusão social. Apesar dos argumentos do Lusotropicalismo de Portugal e da narrativa do “Portugal pluri-religioso” durante a “normalização” do processo de democratização, houve um sentimento anti-muçulmano profundo que emerge a qualquer momento, uma ameaça chamada muçulmana aparece em o horizonte.

A invisibilidade do número de muçulmanos (atualmente, cerca de 0,6% da população nacional) e seu silêncio em assuntos políticos, sociais, culturais e públicos parecem criar uma imagem de comunidade bem integrada. Como a maioria dos membros da sociedade muçulmana são falantes nativos, educados e relativamente bem desenvolvidos da sociedade em geral, são aceites e considerados bons cidadãos. Devido à falta de dados relativos às discriminações que os muçulmanos enfrentam nas suas vidas quotidianas - por exemplo, as associações muçulmanas não mantêm dados estatísticos sobre qualquer tipo de violação - seria fácil afirmar que Portugal é isento de islamofobia e longe de ser um paraíso para os muçulmanos. Ainda há abusos verbais nas ruas sobre as pessoas que parecem ser muçulmanas, ataques de vandalismo nos locais de culto (dois incidentes na mesquita de Lisboa em 2015 e Fevereiro 12, 2017) e são considerados uma ameaça à base secular de a sociedade. A nível político, o ataque mais significativo em termos de ódio contra os muçulmanos ocorreu em uma pequena aldeia chamada Mouraria, no centro-oeste do país em 2006, quando a comunidade muçulmana local tentou construir uma mesquita. Os moradores da cidade resistiram à ideia assinando petições, alegando que uma mesquita prejudicaria a paisagem antiga da cidade. Como um destino de férias com seu mar resorts no Sul, de fato de banho torna-se um objecto de humilhação; no ano passado, dois turistas britânicos foram negados para entrar na piscina do seu estância de férias em Albufeira por causa de sua “burkinis” (Julho 21, 2017).

## Introduction

Having traditionally been a Catholic country, Portuguese citizens, or rather subjects in the imperial era, were not allowed to have any faith other than Catholicism as recently as 1911, when the first Republican Constitution was issued. António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970), the dictator who ruled Portugal for four decades, signed a concordat<sup>1</sup> with the Vatican that gave the Catholic Church a privileged position in 1940. It was only with the 2001 law on religious freedom<sup>2</sup> (*Lei da Liberdade Religiosa*, Lei n.º 16/2001 de 22 de Junho) that a new concordat<sup>3</sup> became necessary. Signed in 2004, it recognized religious freedom, public expression, and religious education for non-Catholics. However, the best legal standings cannot always guarantee all citizens the necessary liberties or protection - as has been experienced in many countries. For instance, the Catholic Church still enjoys innumerable privileges such as being the only state-recognized religious community, being represented in the media with live coverage of religious ceremonies and festivities, offering the only legal marriage form, having the exclusive right of being present to assist inmates in prisons or patients in hospitals, and having the privilege of tax exemptions. Religious groups other than the Roman Catholics, like Protestants, Buddhists or Muslims, could enjoy some of these privileges on the condition that they form a legal entity and are registered with the Ministry of Justice. It is interesting that a religious community in order to be recognized must prove that it has existed in Portugal for more than 30 years.<sup>4</sup> Portugal is still being monitored particularly by the European Union's bodies on liberties regarding the implementation of these laws concerning liberties and particularly religious freedom.

The Portuguese were ruled by Muslims for five centuries on their own land and later, they began to rule and colonize Muslims in other parts of the world. So, the relationship between the Portuguese and Muslims is not something new; however, during the dictatorship period Muslims and other minorities endured pressures and could not take part in the political and cultural life of the nation. After the 1974 Revolution, the situation was improved due to the normalization in domestic policies and the decolonization process in the overseas territories. The “Retornados” - the population “returned” from their colonial military posts - affected the Muslim presence in Portugal as some Muslim citizens found an opportunity to return to the mainland.<sup>5</sup> This period of transition into a democratic society also witnessed some excellent developments in

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1. Diário da República, retrieved December 28, 2018, from <https://dre.pt/application/file/a/190312>.

2. Diário da República, retrieved December 28, 2018, from <https://dre.pt/web/guest/pesquisa/-/search/362699/details/maximized>.

3. Diário da República, retrieved December 28, 2018, from <http://data.dre.pt/eli/resolassrep/74/2004/11/16/p/dre/pt/html>.

4. Loja, Fernando Soares, “Islam in Portugal”, Shireen T. Hunter (ed.), *Islam, Europe's Second Religion: The New Social Cultural and Political Landscape* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002), pp. 191-203.

5. Vakil, AbdoolKarim, “Do Outro ao Diverso Islão e Muçulmanos em Portugal: história, discursos, identidades”, *Revista Lusófona de Ciência das Religiões*, Vol. 5-6 (17 July 2014), pp. 283-312, 301.

Muslim social life like the establishment of Comunidade Islâmica de Lisboa (Islamic Community of Lisbon - CIL)<sup>6</sup>. In fact, the attempts to found such a center were initiated early on, in 1966, but the centre was officially recognized two years later, in 1968.<sup>7</sup> Formerly, Muslims were allowed to carry out their collective prayers in a part of Palácio de Príncipe Real. However, a space was needed by Muslims and negotiations began with the Portuguese state under the leadership of Suleiman Valy Mamede (1937-1995). The Mozambique-born legal scholar Valy Mamede was an influential person among political circles and was very persuasive in his causes. For instance, despite some resistance from the Lisbon city council at the time, he was able to convince them of the economic benefits of constructing an Islamic centre to the so-called Arab trade of the country's economy. The importance of the centre comes from the fact that it provides speakers who represent the "Muslim voice" in Portugal to the mainstream media. The community's visibility has increased by a recognizable speaker, Sheik David Munir, the imam of the Mesquita de Lisboa (the mosque situated within the estate of the CIL) and the Muslim community is now relatively well represented in the national media. As a sign of goodwill towards religious tolerance some 8,000 to 10,000 non-Muslim school children are brought to the mosque every year for a closer look at Muslim worship and public seminars are organized in which the popular subject of the month is debated on the third Wednesday of each month with an open-door policy.

According to Abdool Vakil, one of the leading figures of Portuguese Muslims, whose family emigrated from Mozambique but is originally from Gujarat, India, Portugal is perhaps the least racist country in Europe.<sup>8</sup> He says, "I have been living in Portugal for more than fifty years and they treat me as a friend. I am not an Other, I am one of them, and even after they learn that I have another religion. I have never felt this thing called Islamophobia."<sup>9</sup> There are various reasons for the relatively better conditions for foreigners in Portuguese society. First of all, it is the last Western

6. See, Yel, Ali Murat, "Portekiz: IV Ülkede İslamiyet", *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 34, pp. 331-332, Istanbul, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 2007.

7. Valy Mamede, Suleiman, *O Islão no Espaço Português*, Braga: Livraria Cruz, 1968 and <http://www.comunidadeislamica.pt/pt/comunidade-islamica/comunidade-islamica-em-portugal/cil-comunidade-islamica-de-lisboa>, retrieved January 08, 2018.

8. There are stories on Portuguese Muslims where they are treated well; for an example, see a recent article in a popular magazine: "São portugueses, são muçulmanos" <https://www.publico.pt/2015/02/08/sociedade/noticia/sao-portugueses-sao-muculmanos-1685260>, retrieved January 10, 2018. Apart from these "nice" stories or myths that claim that Islamophobia does not exist in Portugal, there is an urgent need to question its presence in the country. Marta Araújo does just this in "Vamos falar sobre islamofobia? Quando se fala de islamofobia em Portugal – 'islamofobia?' – parece que nos enganámos no lugar" (December 1, 2017), <https://www.publico.pt/2017/12/01/mundo/opiniao/vamos-falar-sobre-islamofobia-1794482>, retrieved January 10, 2018.

9. "Aqui não há islamofobia. Portugal é um paraíso, devíamos orgulhar-nos" André Carrilho, Almoço com Abdool Vakil, February 11, 2017, <https://www.dn.pt/sociedade/interior/aqui-nao-ha-islamofobia-portugal-e-um-paraiso-deviamos-orgulhar-nos-5661240.html>, retrieved January 10, 2018. "Vivo em Portugal há mais de 50 anos e ali tratam-me como amigo. Não sou o outro, sou o deles, embora saibam que tenho uma religião diferente. Nunca senti isso a que chamam islamofobia." However, during an interview in 2006 (September 20) Abdool Vakil confessed that Islamophobia exists in the media as the Muslim image has been distorted with a culturalist and essentialist attitude (Gaspar dos Santos, Hélia Regina, *Jovens Muçulmanos, Identidades e Escola Pública: um estudo de caso*, unpublished MA thesis [Coimbra 2008], p. 59).

European country to open its borders to immigration despite the fact that it was one of the oldest colonizer countries. One would have expected that the citizens of former colonies like Brazil, Mozambique, Angola, and Guinea-Bissau would have emigrated earlier but the country's economic conditions and the dictatorship did not provide potential immigrants fair prospects.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Today it is estimated that there are more than 50,000 Muslims (including some 7,000 to 8,000 Ismaili, a few hundred Twelver Shiite and some Ahmadi) living in Portugal.<sup>10</sup> There are 34 mosques or prayer places present in the country. Among the shrines, the Mesquita Central de Lisboa attracts the most attention as Portuguese politicians and higher officials visit it from time to time. At the beginning of Ramadan, usually a higher state or a government official is present at the fast-breaking dinner. In 2017, the prime minister sent a warm message through the official website on May 26. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa greeted “our Muslim brothers sincerely” and wished Ramadan would bring peace and encourage respect towards differences.<sup>11</sup>

There are no official reports kept on the Islamophobic incidents in Portugal. In 2009, an exceptional incident occurred when Cardinal Patriarch of Lisbon Dom José Policarpo publicly warned Catholics not to marry Muslims by claiming that there would be “a lot of problems that even Allah would not be able to predict their future.”<sup>12</sup> This was an incident that clearly showed that when there is a perceived threat coming from Muslims, past memories come to the surface easily.<sup>13</sup> Especially in his homily, Cardinal Policarpo portrayed a polarized society of *nós* (us) versus *eles* (them) or more specifically, Western, secular - but at the same time Catholic Portuguese – on the one hand, and, on the other, Muslims, not secular, not Western, and oppressors of women. However, the Muslim reaction remained relatively moderate and even after the cardinal's death the Muslim community expressed their condolences in extremely polite words; the imam of the Lisbon mosque stated that he was a “very friendly and kind person who had supported an open dialogue with other faiths to create a multi-religious and multicultural society.”<sup>14</sup>

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10. <https://www.tsf.pt/vida/interior/comunidade-islamica-em-portugal-completa-45-anos-de-existencia-3523352.html?id=3523352>, retrieved January 12, 2018.

11. Marcelo saúda muçulmanos em Portugal no início do Ramadão num momento de “reconciliação e paz” May 26, 2017 <http://24.sapo.pt/atualidade/artigos/marcelo-sauda-muculmanos-em-portugal-no-inicio-do-ramadao-num-momento-de-reconciliacao-e-paz>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

12. “Casar com muçulmanos pode ser um «monte de sarilhos», diz Dom José Policarpo”, January 14, 2009 <https://www.tsf.pt/vida/interior/casar-com-muculmanos-pode-ser-um-monte-de-sarilhos-diz-dom-jose-policarpo-1071469.html>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

13. Toldy, Teresa “‘Cautela com os amores’: Declarações do Cardeal de Lisboa vistas pela imprensa portuguesa”, *e-cadernos ces*, Vol. 16, 2012, pp. 32-65.

14. “D. José Policarpo deixa ‘boas recordações’ aos muçulmanos” March 13, 2014, <https://sol.sapo.pt/artigo/101253/d-jose-policarpo-deixa-boas-recordacoes-aos-muculmanos>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

The diplomatic attitude of Muslims perhaps contributes to the peaceful co-existence in Portuguese society. Despite the compliant attitude of Muslims their places of worship were vandalized directly after the Charlie Hebdo attacks by extreme far-right groups who sprayed the date “1143” - the date signifying the independence of Portugal – on them as a provocation<sup>15</sup>. Another incident took place two years later and was considered an act of a lone wolf.<sup>16</sup> Yet, the most significant Islamophobic incident took place in the small town of Mouraria - the name of which probably derived from the term *mouro*, Muslim, who historically lived in that part of Lisbon<sup>17</sup> before they were expelled in 1496. In Mouraria, local people vehemently resisted the Muslim community's desire to build a mosque.<sup>18</sup> The opposition went so far as to claim that a new mosque would create something like Molenbeek, Brussels through the ghettoization and eventually the radicalization of the Muslim community.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, locals opposed the construction of a second mosque in the Martim Muniz neighbourhood of Greater Lisbon arguing that public funds should not go to a religious cause that would favour Islam to the detriment of the faith of the country's great majority. According to the public petition website,<sup>20</sup> only 8,278 people signed the petition against the plans to build a new mosque in Lisbon.

Portugal attracts millions of tourists annually. Faro Airport becomes a large hub particularly for British holidaymakers - to the extent that it looks like a British town in summer months. Despite the familiarity between the Portuguese and British, two British tourists were denied entry to the pool of their hotel in Albufeira because of their “burkinis” (July 21, 2017).<sup>21</sup> These tourists were probably not Muslims but the hotel employees rejected their swimsuits on the basis that they were not “acceptable in Portuguese culture.” This was despite the fact that their swimsuits consisted of three-quarter-length leggings and elbow-length sleeves, which were all waterproof and designed for swimming.

15. “Mesquita de Lisboa vandalizada” January 9, 2015, <https://www.publico.pt/2015/01/09/sociedade/noticia/mesquita-de-lisboa-vandalizada-1681707>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

16. “Mesquita de Lisboa vandalizada foi “acto isolado”, diz imã” February 12, 2017 <https://www.publico.pt/2017/02/12/sociedade/noticia/-mesquita-de-lisboa-vandalizada-foi-acto-isolado-diz-ima-1761776>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

17. Bernardo, Isabel Maria Araújo, *Migrantour - Percursos com a | pela Mouraria multicultural*, unpublished MA thesis, 2017, Universidade de Lisboa, Faculdade de Letras <http://hdl.handle.net/10451/27760>, retrieved January 20, 2018.

18. “Petição tenta travar construção de mesquita na Mouraria mas é acusada de islamofobia”, May 25, 2016 <https://www.publico.pt/2016/05/25/local/noticia/peticao-tenta-travar-construcao-de-mesquita-na-mouraria-1733012>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

19. Felipe Pathé Duarte: A Mouraria não pode ficar tipo Molenbeek, em Bruxelas <http://www.jornaldenegocios.pt/weekend/detalhe/felipe-pathe-duarte-a-mouraria-nao-pode-ficar-tipo-molenbeek-em-bruxelas>, retrieved January 27, 2018.

20. “Contra a construção de mais uma mesquita em Lisboa” <http://peticaopublica.com/pview.aspx?pi=PT76702>, retrieved January 10, 2018.

21. “British tourists told to leave pool for wearing burkinis” August 1, 2017, <http://metro.co.uk/2017/08/01/british-tourists-told-to-leave-pool-for-wearing-burkinis-6820403/>, retrieved January 25, 2018.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

Portuguese society, especially in rural areas, is marked by Catholic traditionalism. This is true despite the fact that in the urban centres and large cities this outlook is predominantly disguised. The fact that economic and political centralism characterizes Portuguese society appears to cause Portugal to be less affected by global neoliberalism in terms of the internalization or even the transnationalization of its economy, politics, and culture. Despite a left-wing faction that has grown steadily after the 1974 Revolution and has voiced solidarity with minorities, especially the ones commonly discriminated against in society, the spirit of Salazar, the authoritarian, still remains very much alive in the Portuguese imagination. Similarly, a melancholic feeling (*saudade*) towards the ex-colonies and the glorious Portuguese past continues to exist. The Portuguese people seem to believe that they are still living in a mono-cultural environment as heirs to the great Portuguese empire. Yet, in recent years, they have also begun to accept the fact that the country is becoming a multicultural site - a euphemism to refer to the colonial past - and Muslims, as well as other immigrants, are encouraged to integrate into a postcolonial nation.<sup>22</sup> Despite the fact that the Muslim population has a high economic status, they are mostly native speakers, and they are part of Portuguese social and cultural life, there is still no Muslim representative in the country at any political level. So, Muslims continue to be the subjects of political decisions but have not become policymakers despite the fact that approximately 70% of them are Portuguese citizens who could have an enormous impact on the political elections. Their relatively small number could explain the lack of their representation. Yet, they could be asked to express their opinions on subjects that are significant to them, such as legal changes.

Meanwhile, the ultranationalist political party Partido Nacional Renovador<sup>23</sup> (National Restoration Party) claims it is promoting the interests of the nation above sectarian interests by proclaiming that “Portugal belongs to the Portuguese.” Similar to their counterparts in various other European countries, they oppose immigration as they claim it reduces the chances of employment opportunities for the locals. Although they received only 0.5% of all votes in the last elections of 2015, they tend to increase their votes especially by forming alliances with Movimento de Acção Nacional (National Action Movement) and Aliança Nacional (National Alliance). Similarly, the Cidadania e Democracia Cristã (Citizenship and Christian Democracy

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22. Gaspar dos Santos, 2008, *op.cit.* p. 45.

23. Marchi, Ricardo, “Portugal”, Ralf Melzer and Sebastian Serafin (Eds.) *Right-wing Extremism in Europe: Country Analyses, Counter-Strategies and Labor-Market Oriented Exit Strategies*, (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013, pp. 133-155). Partido Nacional Renovador <http://www.pnr.pt/>, retrieved on January 18, 2018.

Party)<sup>24</sup> with its 0.05% of votes, tries to advocate Roman Catholicism as the state religion although the party administrators have not expressed any negative opinion on members of other faiths.

Perhaps one of the most common problems of the Muslim community in Portugal is that they have not been able to establish an institutional body to provide and check whether food is compatible with (halal) food standards. Most of the Muslims prefer vegetarian food when eating outside of their homes but for domestic consumption they complain that there is not enough halal meat supply. Muslims in Lisbon say that they are allowed to slaughter their animals according to Islamic rules but because of lack of supply from time to time they have had to resort to Jewish kosher butchers or shops. Muslims attending the CIL are aware of recently opened halal restaurants (around 40 including kebab houses) or butchers (currently 4) in their living areas in Greater Lisbon but those who live in small towns like in the Algarve or Alentejo regions in the south, have extreme difficulty in finding halal beef or chicken. Even trying to consult the CIL website to inquire about the names or addresses of halal food suppliers results in a blank page with an inscription “Under Construction.” (<http://www.comunidadeislamica.pt/pt/halal>)

### Justice System

In theory, Portugal legally recognizes minority groups either coming from its former colonies or as a result of recent immigration. There are, as mentioned above, laws and regulations on the rights of ethnic, religious, political or cultural minority groups that protect them against any injustice. Since Muslims have not organized themselves in such a way so as to record such attacks in media, employment, education, or to monitor the physical or verbal abuse of persons and their community centres, the legal system has not processed any criminal cases. At the same time, Muslims do not intervene in the processes of preparation of parliamentary bills or legal documents that concern them. For example, Muslims are satisfied that headscarves are allowed in public places or that their children can receive religious education when a group of 10 pupils has been gathered. Yet, they do not demand, for example, to have holidays on their own religious holidays such as the Ramadan festival.

Portugal is a member country of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) that provides assistance to participating states and NGOs in promoting democracy and human rights. The office has also provided guidance with ways and methods to collect reports on hate crimes, for example. The data that has been submitted to the office is published on the website of the ODIHR and classified according to country, official data and incidents that are reported by other sources, etc. Portugal offered data for the report only in 2014 and according to their official report there were only

24. Cidadania e Democracia Cristã - PPV/CDC <https://portugalprovida.blogspot.com/>, retrieved on January 18, 2018.

21 cases<sup>25</sup> in that year, whereas no data was submitted by other groups such as Muslim associations. According to other official data like the reports by the ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance) and the CICDR (Commission for Equality and against Racial Discrimination) a number of racial discriminations occurred in the country. It should be noted that the CICDR is responsible for producing reports on discriminatory acts on the grounds of race, colour, ethnicity, or nationality.<sup>26</sup>

It is interesting that there are only 60 to 84 reported cases and most of them occur in the areas of employment, public services/security officials, and business. These are followed by the areas that are most expected like media, education, and health. The nationalities of the victims, as was expected, are Brazilians, Angolans, Cabo-Verdeans and then Russian and other East European nationals like nationals of Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, and Bulgaria. Since it is not permitted to determine the ethnic backgrounds of citizens in Portugal, the exact size of different ethnic groups is not available. However, if victims voluntarily pronounce their ethnic or religious affiliations, they can be taken into account in these statistical reports. Therefore, in the CICDR report there is a section on the complaints of victims from different ethnic, cultural or religious categories: blacks and Roma have been exposed to racial attacks most but there are also a very small number of victims who identified themselves as Jews (3.3% in 2013) or Muslims (1.7% in 2013 and 1.2% in 2015) in addition to the new entry of refugees (1.2%) in 2015. What needs to be appreciated in the struggle against racial discrimination is that the complaints could easily be reported to the commission's ergonomic website (<http://www.cicdr.pt/queixa>), yet, the site is monolingual and those victims who cannot speak Portuguese find it difficult to register their complaints. In addition to these international and national institutions monitoring cases of racial discrimination, an autonomous counselling body was established under the Ministry of Justice in 2003. The principal task of this body, Comissão da Liberdade Religiosa (Commission of Religious Liberty), is to provide assistance to the ministry by preparing academic and popular reports on the exercise of religious freedom within Portugal.<sup>27</sup>

## Education

As to the education of Muslim children, they can either receive religious education within the state schools if the number of students reaches 10 (practically, there is no state school in which more than 10 Muslims students are enrolled), or at the private school situated in Palmela (International School of Palmela, <http://cip.edu.pt/>),

25. Hate Crime Reporting, Portugal <http://hatecrime.osce.org/portugal>, retrieved on January 25, 2018.

26. Their latest (2014) reports can be found on their website: <http://www.cicdr.pt/documents/57891/166142/Decis%C3%A3o++PCO+N+2+2014.pdf/28a8011d-8b74-4717-ab6f-c6e39b3da029>, retrieved January 13, 2018. Statistical data on complaints until the year 2015 are available at <http://www.om.acm.gov.pt/documents/58428/207737/Queixas+Discrimina%C3%A7%C3%A3o+Racial+CICDR+entre+2000+e+2015.pdf/3fd45296-2b94-455b-b866-c8dcec14fb77>, retrieved January 13, 2018.

27. [http://www.clr.mj.pt/sections/legislacao/decreto-lei-n-308-2003\\_1/downloadFile/file/DL308\\_de\\_2003.pdf?nocache=1268737957.04](http://www.clr.mj.pt/sections/legislacao/decreto-lei-n-308-2003_1/downloadFile/file/DL308_de_2003.pdf?nocache=1268737957.04), retrieved January 12, 2018.

close to Lisbon. This school provides both secular and religious curricula and upon graduation students can choose to receive further education to become religious instructors or imams in a Muslim country. This private school appears to be the favourite educational institute among the Muslim elite class in Lisbon in addition to 10% non-Muslims due to its higher standards and excellence.

It seems that parents do not complain about the educational services as they feel they can send their children to the courses at religious centres or, as a last resort, they can provide religious training at home. The problem here lies in the fact that the Portuguese state has not provided a higher educational institution to train imams and to offer other religious services. Associação para a Educação Islâmica em Portugal (Association of Islamic Education in Portugal) was established in 1997 to provide mainly a place of prayer (Mesquita Darul Ulum de Odivelas <http://islam.com.pt/sobre/historia-dar-ululoom/>) in addition to some religious, cultural and educational activities in Odivelas, Lisbon. This centre provides a kind of *sufi* training with a traditional orientation.

In a Catholic society like Portugal, religion definitely has a significant part in the educational system as there are numerous institutions that either belong to the Church or are supported by it such as Universidade Católica Portuguesa (UCP).<sup>28</sup> This private university has four campuses in the country (in Lisbon, Porto, Braga, and Viseu) and provides an education with a Catholic vision. It is expected that these institutions would also offer certain courses on Islam with the objective and unbiased intention to present Islam and Muslims to their students and/or to the general public. It can be argued that the best social sciences program available in Portugal is the ISCTE-IUL (Instituto Universitário de Lisboa) where courses on various subjects like anthropology, sociology, history and business are taught. Public events like seminars and conferences take place here, and MA and PhD theses are written at the school. Despite the high standards of these events it seems that prejudice remains in the minds of educated people. The events organized at this institution on Islam and Muslims could not escape a biased perspective; for instance, under the heading of *Islão em Debate* (Debate on Islam) a seminar was offered under the title “Religião e violência no Islão contemporâneo” (Religion and Violence in Contemporary Islam)<sup>29</sup> on February 21, 2017. No matter how the subject was treated, it is obvious that the religion of Islam and violence have been conflated by being presented in the same sentence. The seminar probably attracted a lot of attention as it was repeated on September 29, 2017 within the university premises<sup>30</sup> this time as a café talk. Similarly,

28. Universidade Católica Portuguesa <http://www.ucp.pt/site/custom/template/ucptplportalhome.asp?sspageID=1&lang=1> retrieved January 18, 2018.

29. Islão em Debate – Religião e violência no Islão contemporâneo <http://cei.iscte-iul.pt/eventos/evento/islao-em-debate-religiao-e-violencia-no-islao-contemporaneo/>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

30. Café Ciência – Religião e Violência no Islão Contemporâneo <https://cei.iscte-iul.pt/eventos/evento/cafe-ciencia-religiao-e-violencia-no-islao-contemporaneo/>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

the previous year the same institution organized an event with the title “De Terroristas a Estadistas: O dito Estado Islâmico e o futuro do Médio Oriente”<sup>31</sup> (From Terrorists to Statesmen: The So-Called Islamic State and the Future of the Middle East) on March 9, 2015 - again the negative attitude is clear.

## Media

The public television channels broadcast religious services on Sundays or other holy days of the Catholic Church like on the Our Lady of Fátima Feast Day<sup>32</sup> on May 13. Other communities cannot use such opportunities to reach out to their members and their compatriots. The media outlets argue that the air time of religious groups is determined in accordance to their size. The media coverage of Muslims is restricted to almost once a year at the beginning of the month of Ramadan. Apart from this, the words “Muslim” or “Islam” are used in Portuguese media solely with reference to terrorist attacks in other parts of the world. Sometimes even the state television channel RTP broadcasts programs on Muslims without proper background research such as the claim that there is an increase in the number of people - national or foreign - who support the terrorist organization DAESH.<sup>33</sup> In theory, religious communities have a right to broadcast their own views on the state TV channel of RTP2, however, the presentation time is mostly used by the Catholics, Protestants and other Christian Churches – this is despite the fact that the Catholic Church in Portugal unofficially has an exclusive television channel, 4 - Quatro. Therefore, Muslims try to become more visible in cyberspace like on the websites of the CIL (<http://www.comunidadeislamica.pt/pt/>) and the journal *al-Furqan* (<http://www.alfurqan.pt/>). The lack of visibility of the Muslim community comes from the fact that the country as a whole lacks a clarity on the image of Islam. The country has some classical prejudices vis-à-vis Islam such as that Islam lacks basic rights of expression of thought, incompatibility with democracy or women’s rights. Instead of broadcasting objective and informative programs the media only give space to Muslim leaders to condemn terrorist attacks that happen somewhere else or, on occasion, they interview them on the subject of radicalism. In these instances, the speaker is required to express the opinion that Islam does not support extremism or violence in order to appease masses subscribed to the Portuguese extreme right.

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

The very small religious or ethnic community needs to act more carefully when it comes to being accommodated in a proudly Catholic country in which “o muçulma-

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31. De Terroristas a Estadistas: O dito Estado Islâmico e o futuro do Médio Oriente <https://www.iscte-iul.pt/eventos/801/de-terroristas-estadistas-dito-estado-islamico-futuro-medio-oriente>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

32. Yel, Ali Murat, *Fátima: Portekiz’de bir Hristiyan Hac Merkezinin Kültürel Antropolojik Analizi* (Istanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2006).

33. The video of the program can be viewed on RTP’s website “Cidadãos nacionais e estrangeiros simpatizam com Estado Islâmico” [http://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/cidadaos-nacionais-e-estrangeiros-simpatizam-com-estado-islamico\\_v769655](http://www.rtp.pt/noticias/pais/cidadaos-nacionais-e-estrangeiros-simpatizam-com-estado-islamico_v769655), broadcast on September 26, 2014, retrieved January 18, 2018.

no é o inimigo da cultura cristianizada”<sup>34</sup> (the Muslim is the enemy of Christianized culture). Muslims are considered as coming from a strange culture, a different time (Middle Ages) and another space (outside of Europe). Although there are certainly some incidents of verbal or even physical attacks, Muslims themselves either do not report them or worse, they pretend they do not happen to them. The reports by the CICDR (Commission for Equality and against Racial Discrimination) indicate that there are very few cases of racial or religious discrimination in Portugal which could be the result of the Muslim community’s social, cultural, or economic weakness, or rather their hesitance in involving more in public affairs. Some of the reasons for not reporting to the security officials is having to prove that the attack occurred, persuading the officials on the nature of the attack, or shame to have been a subject of such an attack. In general, there is silence about Muslims in the same way there is a general silence about racism and discrimination.

### Internet

If one carries out a web search on any search engine with keywords like *anti-Islão* (anti-Islam), *racismo* (racism) or *intolerância* (intolerance) the results mostly refer to incidents and opinions that occur in other countries as if such instances, attitudes or mentalities do not exist in Portugal. However, it is also possible, if very rare, that certain zealots consider themselves protectors of Portugal and even of the whole European civilization from the perceived threat of Muslims. For example, a blogger called Gladius is worried about the growth of the Muslim population in Europe and in Portugal<sup>35</sup> strangely dated: “Lues, 22 de Janeiro de 2771 AUC” as there is no Portuguese name of a day like “Lues” or the year “2771” must refer to a fictional utopic future. The author uses the ancient and defamatory term “credo de Mafoma” (faith of Muhammad) to smear Islam, argues that Muslims resist globalization, that they refuse to integrate into host societies, increase crimes, bring the fear of terrorism, and that the Muslim population increases very quickly. Or the publication of provocative articles that incite hatred towards Muslims like the claims that DAESH aims to include the Iberian Peninsula in their ambitious caliphate<sup>36</sup> as if to claim that there is no danger coming from domestic Muslim community but external forces like DAESH would one day come and occupy Portugal.

34. Book review of “António Marujo e José Eduardo Franco (coord.). *Dança dos Demónios. Intolerância em Portugal*. Lisboa: Círculo de Leitores, 2009” Maurício Shigueo Rizzi Ieiri, *Revista Letras Com Vida - Literatura, Cultura e Arte*, pp. 261-264, 2011, p. 262.

35. Crescimento Notório Do Anti-Islamismo Na Europa (April 19, 2010) <http://gladio.blogspot.com.tr/2010/04/crescimento-notorio-do-anti-islamismo.html>, retrieved on January 20, 2018.

36. “O califado no século XXI quer ir de Lisboa ao Paquistão”, August 12, 2014. <http://observador.pt/2014/08/12/um-califado-seculo-xxi/>, retrieved January 18, 2018.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The claim that there is no Islamophobia in Portugal does not have a substantial basis as the concept is relatively new in the Portuguese academic realm of research. The education system, the media, and political and legal institutions need to behave more carefully and take the necessary steps to correct people's misconceptions on Islam and Muslims. Portugal is an intensively Catholic country; Catholicism is a part of Portuguese identity and the collective memory is full of negative narratives, mostly distorted, regarding past events. The small number of Muslims might not cause great problems at the moment but in the future, when the number increases, these bad memories of past centuries will come alive and cause problems that will be greater than those of other European countries.

In the meantime, the Muslim population needs to organize itself in order to confront any possible Islamophobic occurrences by being vigilant and keeping records that can be presented to national and international bodies. The size of the Muslim community or the fact that Muslims remain silent might give the wrong impression that there are no cases of racism or discrimination in Portuguese society but this does not mean that such repulsive incidents do not happen - keeping records is absolutely necessary. The website of the CICDR (Commission for Equality and against Racial Discrimination) is well designed but it is monolingual and at least the section for submitting complaints (<http://www.cicdr.pt/queixa>) needs to be translated into other languages – at the very least into English.

There is a need for more empirical research on contemporary Islam and Muslims living in Portugal and training school teachers to educate pupils in a more respectful manner. Training journalists in printed and visual media to communicate an accurate image of Islam to their audience is also necessary.

People from former colonies who speak Portuguese and are familiar with the culture might not experience difficulties in social inclusion but newcomers, especially from the Middle East or other Asian countries, need more time and patience to acclimatize to this new environment. As a result of not speaking the language properly, life becomes harder in terms of finding employment or requesting their civil rights in public life. Authorities need to provide these immigrants or refugees the means to acquire the necessary skills for integrating into Portuguese society.

## Chronology

- **12.02.2017:** The Central Mosque of Lisbon was vandalized.
- **21.07.2017:** Two Muslim women were not allowed to use a private pool in a holiday resort in Albufeira for their “burkini”-style swimming clothes as it was claimed by the security personnel that they were not acceptable in Portuguese culture.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**ROMANIA**  
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## Executive Summary

Almost 65,000 Muslims live in Romania accounting for 0.34% of the total population. The presence and integration of Muslims in Romania remains, as with immigration as a whole, a marginal issue on the political and public agenda. National and international developments during the last two years have facilitated a growing trend of racism and discrimination in Romania. According to 2016 data, 84.6% of Romanians were against refugees or immigrants settling in Romania while in a 2017 study, 24% of respondents were against Arabs coming to Romania, a 6% increase compared to 2015.

The so-called European refugee crisis and the government's decision to approve the building of a large mosque in Bucharest in 2015 were the most high profile and divisive issues concerning Muslims in the last three years in Romania. Protests against refugees and Muslims were organized by small nationalistic parties during this period and media coverage used stereotypical depictions of Muslims and over-emphasized the "Islamic threat."

During 2017, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant articles and campaigns were registered, especially in nationalist and tabloid media outlets, while activities in cyberspace of anti-Islam activists and sympathizers of extremist political parties continued to spread hate speech towards Muslims.

Hate crimes and cases of incitement of hatred remain underreported. Few official complaints are made compared to the large number of people reportedly experiencing incidents of racial/ethnic or religious discrimination. Moreover, public authorities in Romania don't collect disaggregated data on hate crimes and other type of violence directed at immigrants.

The most significant development affecting Muslims in education during the reporting period is the legislative proposal launched by 26 MPs for banning face covering with any material that prevents physiognomical recognition in educational institutions. At the time of writing this report the proposal was up for review in the Parliament.

During 2017 there were no registered employment-related incidents regarding Muslims. Studies have pointed out, however, that as the population's attitude has become more intolerant towards immigrants, particularly Muslims, immigrants who have cultural and historical ties with Romania are perceived as being favoured in the labour market.

## Sumar

Aproximativ 65.000 de musulmani locuiesc in Romania, reprezentand 0.34% din populatia tarii. La fel ca si in cazul problematiei imigratiei, prezenta si integrarea musulmanilor in Romania continua sa ramana o tema marginala pe agenda politica si publica.

Evenimentele interne si internationale din ultimii doi ani au dus la accentuarea atitudinilor rasiste si a discriminarii in Romania. Potrivit unui studiu din 2016, 84.6% dintre romani s-au declarat a fi impotriva stabilirii refugiatilor sau imigrantilor in Romania, in timp ce datele unui studiu din 2017 au relevat ca 24% dintre respondenti nu ar dori ca arabi sa se stabileasca in Romania, cu 6% mai multi fata de 2015.

Criza europeana a refugiatilor si decizia guvernului Romaniei de a aproba construirea unei moschei de dimensiuni mari in Bucuresti in anul 2015, au reprezentat cele mai importante si divizante teme care au afectat musulmanii in ultimii trei ani in Romania. In aceasta perioada au fost organizate proteste impotriva refugiatilor si musulmanilor de catre partide politice nationaliste, iar mass-media a subliniat cu precadare potentialele efecte negative ale prezentei musulmanilor in Romania in relatarile sale.

In 2017 au fost semnalate articole si campanii media indreptate impotriva musulmanilor si imigrantilor, indeosebi in publicatiile nationaliste si de tip tabloid, in timp ce in spatiul virtual simpatizanti ai partidelor extremiste si activisti anti-Islam au continuat sa raspandeasca un discurs instigator la ura.

Cazurile de infractiuni motivate de ura nu au fost raportate suficient, fiind inregistrate putine plangeri penale comparativ cu numarul persoanelor care au reclamat faptul ca au fost victime ale discriminarii etnice, rasiale sau religioase. Mai mult, Romania nu inregistreaza date dezagregate privind infractiunile motivate de ura sau alte tipuri de acte de violenta indreptate impotriva imigrantilor.

Propunerea legislativa lansata de catre 26 de parlamentari pentru interzicerea acoperirii fetei cu orice fel de material care ar putea impiedica recunoasterea fizionomiei in institutiile educationale, a reprezentat cea mai importanta initiativa din 2017 care are ca tinta musulmanii din Romania. La data scrierii acestui raport, propunerea urmeaza a fi dezbatuta in Parlament. De-a lungul anului nu au fost inregistrate incidente privind musulmanii in domeniul muncii. Diferite studii au indicat insa ca atitudinea populatiei a devenit mai intoleranta fata de imigranti, indesosebi musulmani, iar imigrantii care au legaturi culturale si istorice mai apropiate cu Romania au fost perceputi ca fiind favorizati pe piata muncii.

## Introduction

Romania features mostly as a country of emigration, making immigration a non-issue on the agenda of political parties, which remain silent on the subject. Not being a Schengen member state and being bypassed on the main migration route from Turkey to Central Europe, coupled with poor social services and a low income level, has made Romania an unattractive destination for migrants. This is the main reason for the constantly low number of asylum seekers and third-country nationals. The presence and integration of immigrants in Romanian society remains marginal in the political and public debates.

According to data in the 2011 Census,<sup>1</sup> 86.45% of the population were Eastern Orthodox, 4.6% were Roman Catholic, and 3.19% were Reformed Protestants. Muslims accounted for 0.34% of the population. Islam is one of the 18 registered religious denominations specified in Romanian law.<sup>2</sup> According to the 2011 Census there were 64,337 registered Muslims in Romania, 49,795 of whom were living in urban settlements. The largest Islamic community is that of Turks and Tartars: 20,561 Turks and 14,376 Tartars live in urban areas, and 6,342 Turks and 5,684 Tartars are registered in the villages of southern Romania. Most Muslims are located in the county of Constanta (43,279) and Bucharest (9,037).

Although Muslims represent under 1% of the total population, extensive media reporting during the last two years on the European debate on so-called refugee crisis, the terrorist attacks in European countries, and populist speeches by politicians have shifted the coverage towards underlining the dangers posed by immigrants. The results of a 2016 survey indicated that over 84.6% of respondents were against refugees or immigrants settling in Romania.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, a 2017 survey on the perception of interethnic relations in Romania noted a significant increase in the percentage of Romanians who feel that Arabs should not come to Romania (24% in 2017 vs. 18% in 2015).<sup>4</sup>

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1. National Institute for Statistics, “2011 Census – Religion”, October 2013, retrieved Dec. 10, 2017 from [http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/pliante%20statistice/08-Recensamintele%20despre%20religie\\_n.pdf](http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/pliante%20statistice/08-Recensamintele%20despre%20religie_n.pdf).

2. Law 489/2006 on Religious Freedom and the General Status of Religions, Jan. 8, 2007, retrieved Dec. 1, 2017 from: <https://legeaz.net/monitorul-oficial-201-2014/legea-489-2006-libertatea>.

3. Mirela Bărbulescu, “INSCOP Survey: 84,6% of Romanians Are against Refugees/Immigrants Settling in Romania (Sondaj INSCOP: 84,6% dintre români nu sunt de acord ca refugiații/ imigranții să se stabilească în România)”, *Agerpres*, April 18, 2016, retrieved Dec. 2, 2017 from <https://www.agerpres.ro/social/2016/04/18/sondaj-inscop-84-6-dintre-romani-nu-sunt-de-acord-ca-refugiati-imigrantii-sa-se-stabileasca-in-romania-12-08-39>.

4. Institutul Național pentru Studierea Holocaustului din România “Elie Wiesel”, “Opinion Poll on the Holocaust and Perception of Interethnic Relations in Romania (Sondaj de opinie privind Holocaustul din România și percepția relațiilor interetnice)”, October 2017, retrieved Nov. 11, 2017 from [http://www.inshr-ew.ro/ro/files/Kantar\\_TNS\\_Raport\\_INSHR\\_2017.pdf](http://www.inshr-ew.ro/ro/files/Kantar_TNS_Raport_INSHR_2017.pdf).

## Significant Incidents and Developments

There were no major legal developments affecting the rights of Muslims in 2017. The most significant development was registered in December 2017 when a group of 26 MPs from three parliamentary parties (Partidul Miscarea Populara (Popular Movement Party) - PMP, Partidul Alianta Liberalilor si Democratilor (Aliance of Liberals and Democrats Party) -ALDE and Partidul National Liberal (National Liberal Party) - PNL) initiated a legislative proposal banning face covering with any material that prevents physiognomical recognition in educational institutions for the prevention of violence and terrorism. If the law passes, the *burka*, *niqab* or other clothing used to cover the face for cultural (religious or ethnic) or other reasons, except for medical purposes, will be banned in educational institutions. Whoever does not comply with these rules will not have free access to schools or universities and could be fined up to 50,000 lei (10,000 Euro).<sup>5</sup>

Critics of the proposal have pointed out that there are very few women in Romania who wear such coverings.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the president of the national equality body has stated that “the association of the Islamic veil with terrorism is a proof of hate speech against a minority culture in Romania”.<sup>7</sup>

High level politicians have made discriminatory statements about ethnic minorities for gaining political capital during the reporting period. The national equality body, namely the National Council for Combating Discrimination (NCCD), has been active in addressing high profile discrimination cases and taking public positions against racist and populist conduct, thus significantly increasing its visibility. However, the NCCD so far has not developed an operational mechanism to monitor infringements of the legislation or compliance with its decisions. Hence it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of its mandate and the effectiveness of its sanctions.

5. Chamber of Deputies, “Legislative Proposal for the Modification and Completion of National Education Law nr. 1/2011” (Propunere legislativa pentru modificarea și completarea Legii educației naționale nr.1/2011), Dec. 18, 2017, retrieved Dec. 23, 2017 from [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl\\_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=16761](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=16761).

6. According to Islamic studies expert Alina Isak Alak there are only a handful of women wearing the Islamic veil in Romanian educational institutions. Another expert, Fatma Yılmaz, has pointed out that according to data received from the Ministry of Internal Affairs no person wearing the Islamic veil has been registered while issuing ID documentation. See: Florinela Iosip, “Antiburka Law in Romanian Schools: Measure of Security or Manifestation of Hate towards Islam? (Lege antiburka în școlile din România: măsură pentru siguranță sau o manifestare a urii față de islam?)”, *Adevarul*, Dec. 22, 2017, retrieved Dec. 27, 2017 from [http://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/lege-antiburka-scolile-romania-masura-siguranta-manifestare-urii-fata-islam--1\\_5a3bdf44d7af743f8d957e58/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/lege-antiburka-scolile-romania-masura-siguranta-manifestare-urii-fata-islam--1_5a3bdf44d7af743f8d957e58/index.html).

There were no other figures on women wearing the Islamic veil in Romania in the sources consulted.

7. Florinela Iosip, “Antiburka Law in Romanian Schools: Measure of Security or Manifestation of Hate towards Islam? (Lege antiburka în școlile din România: măsură pentru siguranță sau o manifestare a urii față de islam?)”, *Adevarul*, Dec. 22, 2017, retrieved Dec. 27, 2017 from [http://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/lege-antiburka-scolile-romania-masura-siguranta-manifestare-urii-fata-islam--1\\_5a3bdf44d7af743f8d957e58/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/lege-antiburka-scolile-romania-masura-siguranta-manifestare-urii-fata-islam--1_5a3bdf44d7af743f8d957e58/index.html).

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

Discriminatory statements and negative attitudes towards Muslims were mostly related to discussions about the refugee flow and their integration, and the building of a mosque in Bucharest. This topic decreased in intensity during the reporting period and no new developments have been registered.

During campaigning for local elections in June 2016, leading Bucharest mayoral candidates argued for a referendum on the mosque. Mayor Gabriela Firea of the Social Democratic Party (*Partidul Social Democrat*, PSD), who won the elections, supported a referendum.<sup>8</sup> Politicians, including former President Traian Basescu, criticized the government's decision to allocate an 11,000-square-meter piece of land in Bucharest to the Muslim community for the construction of a mosque. The former president called the mosque "a risk to national security," also stating that the number of Muslims in Bucharest did not justify the mosque, and that "part of the Islamization of Europe is building mosques everywhere."<sup>9</sup> Nationalist organizations like the New Right (*Noua Dreapta*) sponsored street protests that were low in turnout and impact.

### Justice System

Based on the sources consulted, no information on racially motivated violence and incidents directed at Muslims could be found during the reporting period. Representatives of NGOs who were interviewed mentioned that public authorities in Romania don't collect disaggregated data on hate crimes and other type of violence directed at Muslims. The last report by the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) also raised concerns about Romania's data collection activity when it comes to hate crimes. Of all the EU member states, Romania was the only one which does not collect data according to the alleged motivation of the crime (sex/gender, ethnic affiliation, sexual orientation, disability, etc.).

The absence of information on hate crimes must be seen from the point of view of the authorities' obligations towards the victims of such crimes, and from the perspec-

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8. Euractiv, "Firea: Mosque in Bucharest Only After Local Referendum/Orban: I Won't Authorize Ponta's Mosque" (Firea: Moschee în București doar după un referendum local/Orban: Nu voi autoriza moscheea lui Ponta), *Euractiv*, March 25, 2016, retrieved Nov. 23, 2017 from <http://www.euractiv.ro/politic-intern/firea-despre-construirea-unei-moschei-la-bucuresti-doar-dupa-un-referendum-local-3920>.

9. Gandul, "Basescu Doesn't Want a Mosque in Bucharest and Sends Iohannis to Become a Mufti at Sibiu. 'Romania Must Remain Christian'" (Bănescu nu vrea moschee la București și-l trimite pe Iohannis să se facă muftiu la Sibiu. „România trebuie să rămână creștină”), *Gandul*, Feb. 26, 2016, retrieved Nov. 26, 2017 from <http://www.gandul.info/politica/basescu-nu-vrea-moschee-la-bucuresti-si-l-trimite-pe-iohannis-sa-se-faca-muftiu-la-sibiu-romania-trebuie-sa-ramana-crestina-15154001>.

tive of combating the phenomenon as such.<sup>10</sup> The absence of any data collection on hate crimes on the part of the Romanian

justice systems reflects the lack of

interest for the phenomena. Although reports on the activity of the police, prosecution and courts are published each year, these documents do not include data on hate crimes.<sup>11</sup>

The OSCE ODIHR's (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) reporting on hate crime in Romania also illustrates the shortage of data.<sup>12</sup> (Fig. 1) No information is available for 2017 while the only incident recorded against Muslims was the March 2016 assault on two young Muslim women in Bucharest for wearing the *hijab*. (See Physical and Verbal Attacks section for details).

## Employment

Migrant workers in Romania have different experiences when it comes to abuse, exploitation and differential treatment. Several have reported illegal behavior related to individual employment contracts (not having a contract, having fewer working hours registered in the contracts or lower payment recorded in the contract, not being paid for overtime work or delays in receiving their salary) or cases of exploitation (for instance, having to work for longer than 12 hours per day with no weekly rest days). Job scarcity, low wages, lack of language proficiency, and lack of recognized academic degrees and other certifications often result in unemployment or employment without a legal contract and its related benefits and protections.

As the population's attitude has become more intolerant towards immigrants, particularly Muslims, NGOs have pointed out that immigrants with more cultural and historical affinities with Romania (such as those coming from Moldova) are viewed as being more privileged than other groups in the labour market. This is also true for more educated immigrants and those who speak English.

Year	Hate crimes recorded by police	Prosecuted	Sentenced
2016	10	21	50
2015	15	24	59
2014	25	20	Not available
2013	Not available	4	Not available
2012	Not available	Not available	Not available

Figure 1: OSCE ODIHR data on hate crimes.

10. EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, *Making Hate Crime Visible in the European Union: Acknowledging Victims' Rights*, 2012, p. 8, retrieved Dec. 2, 2017 from [http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2012\\_hate-crime.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2012_hate-crime.pdf).

11. The lack of data collection was also highlighted by the Center for Legal Resources in its report 'Combating Guide for Hate Crimes Practitioners and Decision-makers' (2015). The report is available at <http://www.crj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Combating-hate-crimes.-Guide-for-practitioners-and-decision-makers.pdf>.

12. Data on Romania's hate crime reporting to the OSCE ODIHR is available at <http://hatecrime.osce.org/romania> (retrieved Dec. 15, 2017).

A recent study on discrimination of immigrants in Romania which interviewed 30 third-country nationals pointed out that some racist or xenophobic attitudes, especially towards individuals with a different skin colour or those coming from the Middle East, can result in limiting the immigrants' access to certain professions.<sup>13</sup> Also, interviewed persons who had or have small businesses (especially Arabs) complained about being a preferred target for controls by the Financial Guard.<sup>14</sup> Given the low number of immigrants interviewed and the lack of comprehensive data and studies on exploitation of migrant workers in Romania, we should be careful in drawing conclusions.

## Education

Discrimination in educational institutions is rarely observed due to the small number of Muslims. However, incidents were recorded when certain university lecturers inappropriately commented on Islam-related matters.

In October 2017, a professor of Political Science at the University of Bucharest was accused of discrimination after asking a Muslim student not to wear the Islamic veil during class. The professor has stated that he is determined to collect 100,000 signatures for a legislative initiative that will ban the symbols of any religion in public institutions.<sup>15</sup> The Turkish minority representative in Parliament, Husein Ibraim, has filed a complaint against the professor at the National Council for Combating Discrimination. In December 2017, a legislative proposal for banning face covering with any material that prevents physiognomical recognition in educational institutions was launched by 26 MPs.

## Media

Although events related to the so-called migration and refugee crisis are often portrayed in the Romanian media as distant and foreign to Romanian society, terrorist attacks in European countries and populist politicians' speeches have shifted the coverage towards underlining the dangers posed by the so-called refugee crisis.<sup>16</sup>

The media discourses in Romania, just as in many other Western media, over-emphasize the "Islamic threat" by perpetuating the idea of the imminent "Muslim invasion" and its "dangerous impact" on the European Union.

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13. Luciana Lazarescu (et al.), *Discrimination, Abuse and Exploitation: Immigrants' Access to Civil Rights* (Intre discriminare, abuz si exploatare. Accesul imigrantilor la drepturi civile), October 2015, p. 52, retrieved Nov. 11, 2017 from [http://sar.org.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DIM\\_Raport-cercetare\\_final\\_26\\_10\\_15.pdf](http://sar.org.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DIM_Raport-cercetare_final_26_10_15.pdf).

14. Luciana Lazarescu (et. al.), *The Impact of Immigration upon the Romanian Labour Market* (Impactul Imigratiei asupra Pietei Muncii din Romania), 2016, p. 100, retrieved Nov. 15, 2017 from [http://eminet.cdcdi.ro/sites/default/files/arfs/EMINET\\_Raport%20Impactul%20migratiei%20pe%20piata%20muncii.pdf](http://eminet.cdcdi.ro/sites/default/files/arfs/EMINET_Raport%20Impactul%20migratiei%20pe%20piata%20muncii.pdf).

15. Stirile ProTv, "University Professor Accused of Discrimination of a Muslim Student" (Profesor de la Universitate, acuzat de discriminare la adresa unei studente musulmane), *Stirile ProTv*, Nov. 2, 2017, retrieved Dec. 12, 2017 from <http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/un-profesor-de-la-universitatea-bucurec-ti-e-acuzat-de-discriminare-la-adresa-unei-studente-musulmane-ce-i-a-cerut.html>.

16. This is especially true for the position of former President of Romania Traian Basescu.

Once the so-called refugee crisis decreased in intensity, the attention of the media shifted to other subjects, mainly oriented on internal affairs. Contrary to the media coverage in 2015, in 2017 only a small number of media outlets continued to report on immigration issues.

During the year, the well-known newspaper *Evenimentul Zilei* and some obscure and nationalistic publications were particularly active in using stereotypes, bombastic headlines and factual misrepresentations of Muslims for gaining online exposure and traffic. Below are a number of headlines that illustrate this kind of approach.

- Headline in *Evenimentul Zilei*, Nov. 1, 2017: “It’s done! Muslim Refugees Are Coming to Romania! We Have All the Details Unknown to Romanians.” (E gata! Vin refugiații musulmani în România! Avem toate detaliile neștiute de români) (Fig. 2)<sup>17</sup>,
- Headline in *Evenimentul Zilei*, April 6, 2017: “The criminal Illusion of the 21st Century: Islam Can Be Integrated in Western Society... We Are at War.” (Iluzia criminala a secolului XXI: ca Islamul poate fi integrat in societatea occidentala...suntem in razboi) (Fig. 3)<sup>18</sup>
- Headline in *Evenimentul Zilei*, August 16, 2017: “The Invasion of Immigrants: Muslims Are Storming Romania’s Borders”



Figure 2: “It’s done! Muslim Refugees Are Coming to Romania! We Have All the Details Unknown to Romanians.” (E gata! Vin refugiații musulmani în România! Avem toate detaliile neștiute de români)



Figure 3: “The criminal Illusion of the 21st Century: Islam Can Be Integrated in Western Society... We Are at War.” (Iluzia criminala a secolului XXI: ca Islamul poate fi integrat in societatea occidentala... suntem in razboi)

17. Evenimentul Zilei, “It’s done! Muslim Refugees Are Coming to Romania! We Have All the Details Unknown to Romanians.” (E gata! Vin refugiații musulmani în România! Avem toate detaliile neștiute de români), Nov. 1, 2017, retrieved Dec. 27, 2017 from <http://evz.ro/romania-se-pregateste-sa-preia-refugiati-sirieni-din-turcia.html>

18. Evenimentul Zilei, “The criminal Illusion of the 21st Century: Islam Can Be Integrated in Western Society... We Are at War.” (Iluzia criminala a secolului XXI: ca Islamul poate fi integrat in societatea occidentala...suntem in razboi), April 6, 2017, retrieved Dec. 27, 2017 from <http://evz.ro/iluzia-criminala-a-secolului-xxi-ca-islamul-poate-fi-integrat.html>



Figure 4: “The Invasion of Immigrants: Muslims Are Storming Romania’s Borders” (Invazia imigrantilor: musulmanii iau cu asalt frontierele Romaniei)

(Invazia imigrantilor: musulmanii iau cu asalt frontierele Romaniei).(Fig. 4)<sup>19</sup>

This type of reporting hasn’t been widespread, as most popular publications used a balanced discourse in reporting issues regarding Muslims and immigrants, and no other major media campaigns targeting Muslims have been registered during the reporting period.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Due to the small number of Muslims living in Romania and immigration being a marginal issue on the political agenda, there have been no attacks registered against Muslims during the reporting period. Manifestations of intolerance and hate speech targeting Muslims have been registered mainly in relation with the so-called refugee crisis in Europe and against a 2015 decision made by the Romanian government to offer the Great Mufti’s Office of the Muslim Community in Romania land to build a mosque in Bucharest, which would supposedly be the biggest in the European Union.<sup>20</sup>

Protests against this decision started in July 2015, when over 100 people attended a meeting in University Square in Bucharest. The event manifested a strong nationalist and traditionalist character; many participants carried Romanian flags and some of them were dressed in traditional Romanian costumes.<sup>21</sup> The organizers of this first protest, who also created a Facebook page dedicated to the cause, with over 20,000 subscribers, continued to organize a series of protests and actions against the construction of the mosque, which included bringing living pigs and

19. Evenimentul Zilei, August 16, 2017: “The Invasion of Immigrants: Muslims Are Storming Romania’s Borders” (Invazia imigrantilor: musulmanii iau cu asalt frontierele Romaniei), retrieved Dec. 28, 2017 from <http://evz.ro/invazia-imigrantilor.html>

20. Several media outlets have pointed out that the construction project indicates that the Bucharest mosque will be biggest in the European Union, and second in size only to the Blue Mosque of Istanbul. Stirile ProTV, “How the Biggest Mosque in Europe Could Be Constructed in Bucharest. The Controversial Proposition of the Candidates to the Mayor’s Office” (Cum ar putea fi construita la Bucuresti cea mai mare moschee din Europa. Propunerea controversata a candidaturilor la primarie), Stirile ProTV, March 28, 2016, retrieved Feb. 4, 2018 from <http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/construirea-la-bucuresti-a-celei-mai-mari-moschei-din-europa-crestina-a-ajuns-subiect-in-campania-pentru-primaria-capitaliei.html>.

21. Andra Dolana, “Anti-Mosque Protest in the Capital ‘The Romanian Nation Is Not a Turkish Province’” (Protest anti-moschee în Capitală: “Neamul românesc nu e pașalâc turcesc”), *Romania Libera*, July 20, 2015, retrieved Dec. 14, 2017 from <http://www.romanialibera.ro/actualitate/eveniment/protest-anti-moschee-in-capitala---neamul-romanesc-nu-e-pasalac-turcesc--386469>.

burying the carcasses of pigs in the land dedicated to its construction, which aimed to offend Muslim tradition.<sup>22</sup>

The building of the mosque has received significant media coverage during the last two years and has remained the most polarizing issue regarding Muslims in Romania. In October 2017, five members of *Noua Dreapta* (The New Right) started singing the Romanian national anthem, and shouting “No mosque should be built on Romanian lands” and “Prayers in Arabic language used by Muslim terrorists shan’t be used in a cultural institution” during the opening season performance of *The Armed Man - A Mass For Peace* at the Opera House in Cluj Napoca.<sup>23</sup> The perpetrators were evacuated and fined by the police.

Another incident involving Muslims that received significant coverage was the physical assault suffered by two Muslim women in Bucharest for wearing the *hijab*. In March 2016, three men and two women physically assaulted two young Muslim women in Bucharest for wearing the *hijab*. The attackers tore the victims’ veils, pulled their hair, and caused them minor injuries. The victims didn’t require medical assistance and didn’t press charges. Members of the Muslim and Orthodox communities, including the chairman of the Islamic Cultural Centre, condemned the attacks. Although the victims didn’t press charges, the prosecutors opened an investigation and at the end of the year, the case was still ongoing. At the time of writing this report, there haven’t been any developments in the case.<sup>24</sup>

## Internet

Romania has its own radical groups openly inciting discrimination against Muslims, especially in the context of the so-called refugee crisis and terrorist attacks in Europe during the last three years. Most anti-Islamist activists are closely linked to extremist, nationalistic movements and parties such as the New Right (*Noua Dreapta*) and the United Romania Party (PRU). During the so-called European refugee crisis of 2015 some of these anti-Islamist activists created a Facebook page titled “No to the Islamization of Romania”<sup>25</sup> where violent messages are constantly promoted. These include “An Islamist would cut a Christian throat out of conviction” or “The cancer of Islam is spreading in Europe and will swallow Romania.” The page has more than 66,000 followers.

22. Gandul, “Extreme Gesture against the Building of the Mega Mosque in Bucharest” (Gest extrem împotriva construirii mega-moscheii din București), *Gandul*, Aug. 25, 2015, retrieved Dec. 14, 2017 from <http://www.gandul.info/stiri/gest-extrem-impotriva-construirii-mega-moscheii-din-bucuresti-14687901>.

23. Remus Florescu, “Security Forces Intervened at an Opera Show in Cluj. Five Supporters of the New Right Have Made a Circus” („Mascații” au intervenit la un spectacol al Operei din Cluj. Cinci simpatizanți ai Noii Drepte au făcut circ), *Adevarul*, Oct. 1, 2017, retrieved Dec. 16, 2017 from [http://adevarul.ro/locale/cluj-napoca/video-trupele-mascati-intervenit-spectacol-operei-cluj-simpatizantii-noii-drepte-facut-circ-1\\_59d14aa05ab6550cb8b70397/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/locale/cluj-napoca/video-trupele-mascati-intervenit-spectacol-operei-cluj-simpatizantii-noii-drepte-facut-circ-1_59d14aa05ab6550cb8b70397/index.html).

24. Digi 24, “Investigation Started after the Assault on Two Young Women from Syria in Bucharest” (Ancheta după agresiunea în capitala două tinere din Siria), *Digi 24*, April 1, 2016, retrieved Nov. 17, 2017 from <http://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/justitie/ancheta-dupa-agresiunea-in-capitala-a-doua-tinere-din-siria-502387>.

25. The page can be consulted at <https://www.facebook.com/Spunenuislamizarii/> (retrieved Dec. 23, 2017).



Figure 5: "Today Romania paid for the expansion of radical Islam in Europe with another victim. Andreea Cristea, injured in the latest terrorist attack in London has died at 31. Romanian citizens will continue to be victims of terrorist attacks, but on Romanian territory this will not happen. Actions against the Islamization of Romania will be started this month. No Islamic elements will be allowed to enter Romania, safeguarded by policies that have nothing Romanian in them. Let's see who will oppose us."



Figure 6: What does Islam offer? (Ce ofera Islamul?)

the "We don't want a mega-mosque in Bucharest" page posted a racist image following the question "What does Islam offer?" (Fig. 6)

Online publications don't pay special attention to supervising the interaction between readers or to promoting balanced debates and pertinent opinions, and, therefore, discriminatory statements or manifestations of hate speech are not sanc-

The debate on the building of a mosque in Bucharest has prompted a group of anti-Islamist activists to create a Facebook page titled "We don't want a mega-mosque in Bucharest"<sup>26</sup> that has attracted around 23,000 followers. The administrators of the page have also launched a petition against the building of the mosque and post Islamophobic content regularly.

In April 2017, in the aftermath of the London terrorist attacks of March 2017, where Romanian victims were registered, a post on the Facebook page "No to the Islamization of Romania" stated, "Today Romania paid for the expansion of radical Islam in Europe with another victim. Andreea Cristea, injured in the latest terrorist attack in London has died at 31. Romanian citizens will continue to be victims of terrorist attacks, but on Romanian territory this will not happen. Actions against the Islamization of Romania will be started this month. No Islamic elements will be allowed to enter Romania, safeguarded by policies that have nothing Romanian in them. Let's see who will oppose us." (Fig. 5)

In October 2017, the "We don't

26. The page can be consulted at <https://www.facebook.com/NuVremMegaMoscheeInBucuresti/> (retrieved Dec. 23, 2017).

tioned. Moreover, there is a generalized lack of interest by professionals and the industry in undertaking and imposing minimum ethical and professional standards.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Small, recently emerging nationalistic parties like United Romania Party (PRU) and the New Right (*Noua Dreapta*) are trying to gain public exposure and political support by adopting a strong stance on immigration and xenophobic rhetoric. Both have been active in orchestrating regular protests against receiving refugees in Romania or in opposing the building of a mosque in Bucharest.

MP Bogdan Diaconu, the founder of nationalistic United Romania Party (*Partidul Romania Unita*), has been very vocal in expressing his opposition to refugee quotas and Muslims. While running for mayor of Bucharest in the 2016 local elections, Diaconu stated that his main priority is stopping the construction of the mosque and making sure that “no Muslim migrant would step foot in Bucharest during his mandate.”<sup>27</sup> He received 1.4% of votes in the local elections.

Both the United Romania Party (PRU) and the New Right (*Noua Dreapta*) have failed so far to mobilize sufficient people to support their demands, and haven't received enough votes to meet the electoral threshold necessary to be represented in the parliament.

Former President of Romania Traian Basescu has reinvented himself as a Eurosceptic and a person intolerant towards migrants in his new role as president of the People's Movement Party (PMP). The PMP received 4.30% of votes in the last parliamentary elections and has been the main initiator of the legislative proposal to ban face covering in educational institutions. (See Significant Incidents and Developments section)

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In the period July 2014 - April 2017, the Median Research Centre ran a project involving, among others, moderating online comments inciting hatred or non-observance of certain rights. The Less Hate, More Speech project examined the role political elites and mass media play - intentionally or unintentionally - in reducing or promoting anti-democratic and intolerant discourse among citizens.<sup>28</sup>

In 2017, a group of eleven Romanian NGOs active in the field of migration, human rights and public policies started a new partnership within the recently launched Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees.<sup>29</sup> The newly established

27. Mediafax, “Bogdan Diaconu Announced His Candidacy for Mayor of Bucharest: ‘No Muslim Migrant Will Step Foot in Bucharest’” (Bogdan Diaconu și-a depus candidatura la Primăria Capitalei: “Nu va călca picior de migrant musulman în București”), *Mediafax*, April 18, 2016, retrieved Dec. 14, 2017 from <http://www.mediafax.ro/politic/bogdan-diaconu-si-a-depus-candidatura-la-primaria-capitalei-nu-va-calca-picior-de-migrant-musulman-in-bucuresti-15264485>.

28. More information on the project is available at <http://lesshate.openpolitics.ro/en/> (retrieved Dec. 6, 2017).

29. Research and Information Center on Immigrant Integration, “The Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees Has Been Established” (“S-a constituit Coaliția pentru Drepturile Migranților și Refugiaților”), *Research and Information Center on Immigrant Integration*, April 17, 2017 retrieved Nov. 30, 2017 from <http://www.cdcdi.ro/media/s-a-constituit-coalitia-pentru-drepturile-migranților-si-refugiaților-formata-din-organizatii-neguvernementale-din-domeniul-migratiei-drepturilor-omului-si-politicilor-publice>.

coalition aims to improve the access of third-country nationals to basic services and ameliorate the public perception on migrants and refugees.

Free and adequate legal representation and assistance is available through NGO-implemented projects to victims of hate crime and discrimination. The Pro Bono Network for Human Rights, is a pro bono clearinghouse which specializes in human rights, whose purpose is to facilitate the access to justice of vulnerable groups (including asylum seekers and refugees) in Romania.<sup>30</sup>

The Anti-Discrimination Coalition, a platform of human rights NGOs<sup>31</sup> advocating and litigating to eliminate all forms of discrimination against any social group, has been active since 2000, when NGOs with anti-discrimination experience jointly supported the adoption of the Anti-Discrimination Law. So far, the coalition has carried out numerous lobby and advocacy actions that have made a major contribution to improving the anti-discrimination legislative framework in Romania; has supported strategic cases of discrimination before the NCCD and in the courts; sent open letters, position papers and memoirs; and organized protests and public campaigns for the defence of human rights in Romania.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The presence of Muslims in Romania remains a marginal issue on the political and public agenda. Although no major internal developments affecting Muslims have been registered during the reporting period, stereotypical portrayal of Muslims in the media and populist speeches by politicians, have facilitated a growing trend of manifestations of intolerance and hate speech towards Muslims, as reflected in public discourse and opinion polls.

Small emerging nationalistic and populist parties have used Islamophobic discourse for electoral purposes. Their impact has been so far minimal but this type of political agenda could gain traction in the future, as reflected by the so called “anti-*burka*” legislative proposal launched in December 2017 to ban headscarves in educational institutions.

No significant incidents involving Muslims have been registered during the reporting period. The national equality body, the NCCD, has been active in addressing high profile cases of discrimination but few official complaints have been made compared to the large number of people reportedly experiencing incidents of racial/ethnic or religious discrimination. Devising special measures to assist specific

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30. More information on the activity of the Pro Bono Network for Human Rights is available at <http://actedo.org/the-pro-bono-network-for-human-rights-2015-activity-report/> (retrieved Nov. 20, 2017).

31. The ten members of the coalition are Asociația ACCEPT; Asociația pentru Apărarea Drepturilor Omului în România - Comitetul Helsinki (APADOR-CH); Asociația ActiveWatch; Centrul Euroregional pentru Inițiative Publice (ECPI); Centrul de Dezvoltare Curriculară și Studii de Gen – FILIA; Institutul pentru Politici Publice (IPP); Romani CRISS - Centrul Romilor pentru Intervenție Socială și Studii; Fundația Centrul Parteneriat pentru Egalitate; Centrul European pentru drepturile Copiilor cu Dizabilități (CEDCD); Centrul pentru Inovare Publică (CIP); Societatea Academică din România (SAR); and Liga Pro Europa.

minority groups and collecting disaggregated data on ethnicity in different areas, should be addressed by the authorities.

Based on the findings of this report following recommendations are, therefore, put forward :

- Organize pre-departure programs through partnership agreements between Romania and the migrants' countries of origin in order to provide information on Romanian labour legislation, relevant institutions and mechanisms to notify and sanction cases of abuse, exploitation and discrimination.
- Authorities should devise a comprehensive data collection system on the application of criminal law provisions against racism and racial discrimination. Such a system should record the number of investigations opened by the police, the cases referred to the prosecutor, the number of cases pending before court, and their final decisions, broken down per reference year and per relevant criminal law provision.
- Introducing measures to prevent and combat discrimination among immigrants in the national strategies for immigration and discrimination, such as information campaigns and raising awareness on discrimination and the remedies available when facing discrimination.
- Initiating a collaboration between competent authorities in the field of immigration, labour and institutions combating discrimination, in order to elaborate integrated public policies.
- Sign cooperation protocols and set up efficient case referral mechanisms between state institutions and NGOs.
- Implement a long-term monitoring mechanism to prevent ethnic and Islamophobic hatred in mass media and cyberspace.
- Improve mechanisms for recognizing, recording and sanctioning hate speech.
- Political parties and politicians should strengthen initiatives for cooperation with the Muslim community in Romania and raise awareness of successful cases of Muslim integration.

## Chronology

- **30.03.2017:** Two teenage Muslim women wearing headscarves were subjected to insults and assaulted, with the assailants attempting to rip off their veils.<sup>32</sup>
- **06.04.2017:** An Islamophobic headline is published in the newspaper *Evenimentul Zilei*: "The criminal Illusion of the 21st Century: Islam Can Be Integrated in Western Society... We Are at War." (*Iluzia criminala a secolului XXI: ca*

32. Digi 24, "Investigation started after the assault on two young women from Syria in Bucharest" (Ancheta dupa agresarea in capitala doua tinere din Siria), *Digi 24*, 04.01.2016, retrieved at 11.17.2017 at: <http://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/justitie/ancheta-dupa-agresarea-in-capitala-a-doua-tinere-din-siria-502387>

- Islamul poate fi integrat in societatea occidentala...suntem in razboi).<sup>33</sup>
- **16.08.2017:** An Islamophobic headline is published in the newspaper *Evenimentul Zilei*: “The Invasion of Immigrants: Muslims Are Storming Romania’s Borders” (Invazia imigrantilor: musulmanii iau cu asalt frontierele Romaniei).<sup>34</sup>
  - **11.10.2017:** A professor of Political Science at the University of Bucharest was accused of discrimination after asking a Muslim student not to wear the Islamic veil during class.<sup>35</sup>
  - **01.10.2017:** Five members of *Noua Dreapta* (The New Right) started singing the Romanian national anthem and shouting “No mosque should be built on Romanian lands” and “Prayers in Arabic language used by Muslim terrorists shan’t be used in a cultural institution” during the opening season performance of *The Armed Man - A Mass For Peace* at the Opera House in Cluj Napoca.<sup>36</sup>
  - **01.11.2017:** An islamophobic headline is published the newspaper *Evenimentul Zilei*: “It’s done! Muslim Refugees Are Coming to Romania! We Have All the Details Unknown to Romanians.” (E gata! Vin refugiații musulmani în România! Avem toate detaliile neștiute de români) (Fig. 2)<sup>37</sup>
  - **18.12.2017:** Twenty-six MPs launched a legislative proposal for banning face covering with any material that prevents physiognomical recognition in educational institutions.<sup>38</sup>

33. *Evenimentul Zilei*, “The criminal Illusion of the 21st Century: Islam Can Be Integrated in Western Society... We Are at War.” (Iluzia criminala a secolului XXI: ca Islamul poate fi integrat in societatea occidentala...suntem in razboi), April 6, 2017, retrieved Dec. 27, 2017 from <http://evz.ro/iluzia-criminala-a-secolului-xxi-ca-islamul-poate-fi-integrat.html>

34. *Evenimentul Zilei*, August 16, 2017: “The Invasion of Immigrants: Muslims Are Storming Romania’s Borders” (Invazia imigrantilor: musulmanii iau cu asalt frontierele Romaniei), retrieved Dec. 28, 2017 from <http://evz.ro/invazia-imigrantilor.html>

35. *Stirile ProTv*, “University Professor Accused of Discrimination of a Muslim Student” (Profesor de la Universitate, acuzat de discriminare la adresa unei studente musulmane), *Stirile ProTv*, Nov. 2, 2017, retrieved Dec. 12, 2017 from <http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/un-profesor-de-la-universitatea-bucurec-ti-e-acuzat-de-discriminare-la-adresa-unei-studente-musulmane-ce-i-a-cerut.html>.

36. Remus Florescu, “Security Forces Intervened at an Opera Show in Cluj. Five Supporters of the New Right Have Made a Circus” („Mascații” au intervenit la un spectacol al Operei din Cluj. Cinci simpatizanți ai Noii Drepte au făcut circ), *Adevarul*, Oct. 1, 2017, retrieved Dec. 16, 2017 from [http://adevarul.ro/locale/cluj-napoca/video-trupele-masca-ti-intervenit-spectacol-operei-cluj-simpatizantii-noii-drepte-facut-circ-1\\_59d14aa05ab6550cb8b70397/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/locale/cluj-napoca/video-trupele-masca-ti-intervenit-spectacol-operei-cluj-simpatizantii-noii-drepte-facut-circ-1_59d14aa05ab6550cb8b70397/index.html).

37. *Evenimentul Zilei*, “It’s done! Muslim Refugees Are Coming to Romania! We Have All the Details Unknown to Romanians.” (E gata! Vin refugiații musulmani în România! Avem toate detaliile neștiute de români), Nov. 1, 2017, retrieved Dec. 27, 2017 from <http://evz.ro/romania-se-pregateste-sa-preia-refugiati-sirieni-din-turcia.html>

38. Chamber of Deputies, “Legislative Proposal for the Modification and Completion of National Education Law nr. 1/2011” (Propunere legislativa pentru modificarea și completarea Legii educației naționale nr.1/2011), Dec. 18, 2017, retrieved Dec. 23, 2017 from [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl\\_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=16761](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck.proiect?cam=2&idp=16761).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
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## Executive Summary

While government agencies have yet to present precise anti-Muslim hate crime statistics for 2017, the last report from September 2017, put forward by the Commission on Monitoring of Conflict Situations in Inter-Ethnic Relations of the Council of the President, confirms the general trend of the past three years, which points to the continuous decrease of Islamophobic attitudes in Russian society. According to this report, Islamophobia decreased by 10% in 2016, compared to 2015. Furthermore, Russia allegedly showed the “the smallest number of Islamophobic incidents of the ten most important European countries,” including Great Britain, Hungary, Germany, Italy, Poland, and Ukraine.<sup>1</sup>

In its recent poll on xenophobia, published in July 2017, the Levada Center supports the claim of decreased animosity towards people of particular confessions. Twenty-three percent of respondents have a very positive or positive attitude towards people of other confessions (4% very positive, 19% positive), while 17% have a critical or very bad attitude towards people of other confessions (14% critical, 3% very bad). Fifty-eight percent affirmed to be neutral towards people of other confessions.<sup>2</sup>

Alexander Verkhovski, director of the analytical center Sova, indicates that there are not sufficient qualitative surveys that allow a thorough analysis of public attitude towards Islam and Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Only a small number of civil rights organizations specifically monitor cases of Islamophobia. The fact that some institutes providing existing statistics have a proximity to governmental structures, calls for a cautious and critical usage of their data. Some cases of violence or discrimination are assessed as xenophobic, migrantophobic, or fall under the section of hooliganism, hence preventing a thorough understanding of Islamophobia in Russia.

It should not be overlooked that the Russian government engages in a more conscious religious politics, and has enforced agencies as well as passed new regulations aimed at tackling Islamophobia. A number of committees and councils stand at the junction of dialogue between the state and Islamic institutions, as well as of inter-religious exchange.

Nonetheless, the Russian Orthodox Church continues to be not only a partner, but equally a competitor that perceives demands of Muslims for equal treatment of religions based on the secular nature of the Russian constitution, as a threat to its privileged position, which it justifies by historical and cultural specifics.

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1. Anton Belizki, “Rosiyane stali luce otosnitza k migrantam”, *Kommersant* (Sept. 19, 2017), from <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3415324>.

2. Karina Pipija, “Ksenofobija v 2017 godu”, *Levada Center* (Aug. 23, 2017), from <https://www.levada.ru/2017/08/23/16486/>.

3. Valeryi Gannenko, “Krimnash protiv ksenofobii. Kak rossija stanovitza terpimee Evropi”, *Sobesednik* (Sept. 20, 2017), from <https://sobesednik.ru/obshchestvo/krymnash-protiv-ksenofobii-kak-rossiya-stanovitsya-terpimee-evropy>.

The Muslim community itself remains in a state of fragmentation. On the one hand, are the structures of the so-called “traditional Islam.” All-Russian Muslim Spiritual boards are the privileged associates and mediators between the government and the Muslim population. They return the favor of government support, with loyalty and moderate statements in instances of Islamophobia. On the other hand, there exists a multifaceted array of diverse Islamic communities that are excluded from governmental protection, as they do not fall under the definition of “traditional Islam.” Their theological positions cover all the range of Islamic exegesis: from Sufi split-offs over ethno-religious Islam, to Salafi and Wahabi stances. They do not have widely audible advocates and thus often become the primary victims of the law enforcements’ partially opaque measures against extremism and terrorism.

## Краткое описание

Хотя подробные данные об исламофобии в 2017 году ещё не представлены государственными органами, последний отчёт сентября 2017го года, представленный комиссией по мониторингу и разрешению конфликтных ситуаций в сфере межнациональных отношений Совета при Президенте РФ по межнациональным отношениям, подтверждает общий тренд последних трёх дней, который указывает на спад исламофобских настроений в российском обществе. Согласно отчёту, уровень исламофобии снизился в 2016 году на 10% по сравнению с предыдущим годом. Более того, утверждается что в России «самый низкий уровень исламофобии среди десяти наиболее значимых европейских стран», включая Великобританию, Венгрию, Германию, Италию, Польшу и Украину.

В последнем опросе о ксенофобии, опубликованном в июле 2017, Левада-центр подкрепляет утверждение о понизившейся враждебности против людей других конфессии. 23% опрошенных проявляют очень положительное или положительное отношение к людям отличной конфессии (4% очень положительное, 19% положительное), в то время как 17% настороженно или очень плохо относятся к людям других конфессии (14% настороженно, 3% очень плохо). 58% респондентов отметили, что относятся к людям других конфессий равнодушно.

Александр Верховский, директор аналитического центра Сова, указывает на отсутствие достаточно качественных исследований, которые бы позволили провести глубокий анализ общественного мнения по отношению к исламу и мусульман. Лишь небольшое число общественных организаций и институтов специализируются на мониторинге случаев исламофобии. Некоторые институты, предоставляющие статистические данные, имеют определённую близость к государственными структурами, что, следовательно, требует более осторожного и критического подхода в использовании подобных данных. Некоторые случаи насилия и дискриминации оцениваются как проявление ксенофобии и мигрантофобии, или подпадают под категорию хулиганства, что препятствует комплексному пониманию исламофобии в России.

Нельзя отрицать тот факт, что российское правительство задействовано в более осознанной религиозной политике – предоставило новые полномочия уже существующим ведомствам, а также привело в исполнение новые нормативно-правовые акты с целью борьбы против исламофобии. Ряд комитетов и советов являются узловым пунктом диалога между государством и исламскими институтами, а также в области межрелигиозного обмена.

Тем не менее, Русская Православная Церковь продолжает быть не только партнёром, но и конкурентом, который воспринимает требования мусульман соблюдать равенство религий согласно светскому характеру российской Конституции как угрозу её привилегированной позиции, которую РПЦ обосно-

вызывает исторической и культурной спецификой. Сама мусульманская община продолжает находиться в состоянии раздробленности. С одной стороны, существуют структуры так называемого «традиционного Ислама». Всероссийские духовные управления мусульман являются привилегированными партнёрами и посредниками между государством и мусульманским населением. В ответ на государственную поддержку они проявляют лояльность и выступают с умеренными заявлениями в отношении исламофобских происшествий.

С другой стороны, существует многообразие исламских движений, которые не располагают защитой со стороны государства и не приравниваются к «традиционному» Исламу. Их теологические воззрения включают весь диапазон исламской экзегезы - от различных ответвлений суфизма и этнократического толкования ислама до салафизма и ваххабизма. Из-за отсутствия структур, которые широко отстаивают их интересы в обществе, они часто становятся главными потерпевшими из-за нетранспарентности проводимых силовыми структурами контрэкстремистских и контртеррористических мер.

## Introduction

In 2017, the Muslim community was particularly engaged in debating its freedom of religious expression in public spaces, after a school prohibited its students from wearing the hijab. The federal government mostly restrained itself from participating in the debate, and delegated the issue to the regional governments.

Lawsuits and legal claims over mosques (or buildings formally functioning as mosques), are common. Often, regional administrations succumb to the pressure of the local Russian Orthodox Church, which tries to prevent the expansion of mosques or other Islamic institutions.

On the local and regional level, cases of possible Islamophobia are not sufficiently circumvented. In some cases, it can be assumed that regional governments are not only inapt or unwilling to comply with their obligation, but that elements of the state security may be in complicity with the harassment, intimidation and assassination of Muslim activists. Likewise, the anti-terrorist and anti-extremist operations in the North Caucasus often come along with collective stigmatization of Islamic communities as extremist and unsupported accusations of terrorism.

The Yarov Bill, as well as a number of other amendments to existing legislation, equipped the federal service for media supervision with a new authority to counter extremism. While it allowed the blocking of numerous Internet sites propagating nationalism and religious intolerance, the laws equally resulted in the persecution of Islamic organizations and structures which civil activists and human right organizations claim have wrongly be labeled “extremist.”

Ostensibly as a consequence of more rigid interpretation of the penal code, mass media have noticeably ceased to exploit Islamophobic and xenophobic fear, as in previous years. The case of Ilias Nikitin, who was wrongly suspected of being affiliated to the terrorist bombing in a Saint Petersburg metro station, was, however, a showcase for mass Islamophobic hysteria, triggered and maintained in the course of several days by the media.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

#### Mosque Controversies

A constant apple of discord between administrative authorities and the Muslim communities is the construction of mosques as well as other institutions connected to Muslim life. Often the local Russian Orthodox Church as well as nationalist forces publicly criticize or deploy their political leverage to prevent the regional administration from issuing planning permissions.

Such was the case with the commercial complex Muslim City, planned by the Spiritual Board of the Muslims in Bashkortostan.<sup>5</sup> In September 2017, the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Bashkortostan filed a complaint against the municipality of Ufa for its alleged inaction to find a solution for completing the project construction, which was halted in 2016.<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 1)

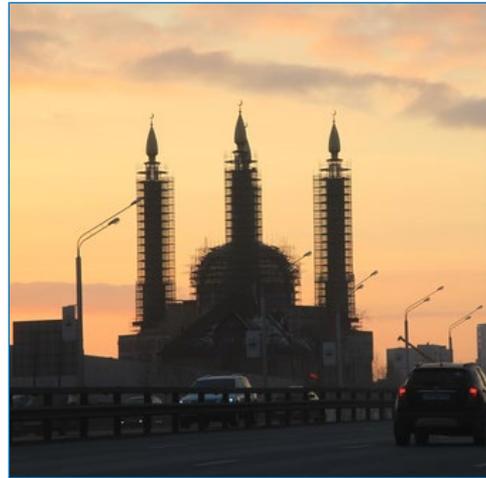


Figure 1: Construction site of the Muslim City complex in Ufa, Republic of Bashkortostan.<sup>4</sup>

On August 3, 2017, the Muslim community of Kaliningrad wrote a letter of complaint to the president and the governor of Kaliningrad, demanding mediation in the conflict with the city administration, which had demolished the local mosque in 2014.<sup>7</sup> In December 2017, the Kaliningrad community was granted the usage of a former museum building for the duration of one year - a short-term solution which did not change the precarious situation of the Muslims of Kaliningrad.

In Stavropol, the Muslim community has been denied the right to reclaim the historical mosque, which was closed during Soviet times, and which, since 1987, has been used as an art gallery. The municipality states that the building's sacral character was changed in Soviet times, and thus the Muslim community has no right to restore the building to its previous religious function. In February 2017, Albir Krganov, head of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Russia and mufti of Moscow, drew a connection between the issue of the historical mosque of Stavropol and the prominent and contested return of the St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg to the Russian Orthodox Church's administration.<sup>8</sup> He stated that just as he supports the legal ownership of the cathedral by the Russian Orthodox Church, the Stavropol mosque should equally be returned to its legal owners.<sup>9</sup>

4. Source: Oleg Yarovikov, RBK, Aug. 29, 2016.

5. Egor Belov, "Merija ufy otklonjaet proekt zastrojki 'muslim siti' posle pis'ma RPC", *RBK* (Aug. 18, 2017), from <https://ufa.rbc.ru/ufo/18/08/2016/57b56f2f9a79473ff23010ae>.

6. Bulat Bashirov, "K 'Muslim-siti' podkljuchili prokuraturu", *Kommersant* (Sept. 13, 2017), from <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3409217>.

7. "Musul'mane obratilis' k Putinu po povodu situacii s mechet'ju v Kaliningrade", *Novyj Kaliningrad* (Aug. 3, 2017), from <https://www.newkaliningrad.ru/news/briefs/politics/14411151-musulmane-obratilis-k-putinu-po-povodu-situatsii-so-stroitelstvom-mecheti-v-kaliningrade.html>.

8. "Vopros o peredache Isaakievskogo sobora RPC reshen", *Itar-Tass* (Jan. 10, 2017), from <http://tass.ru/obschestvo/3930570>.

9. "Muftij Moskvy podderzhal peredachu Isaakievskogo sobora Cerkvi", *Interfax* (Feb. 2, 2017), from <http://www.interfax-religion.ru/?act=news&cdiv=66069>.

## Debates over Hijabs in Public Schools

The legislation is not clear on the implications of the secular nature of education in Russia. Whether it means that religious symbols are generally not allowed in schools, or whether the law is to be understood solely in the sense that religious education does not fall under the field of activity of public schools, is an issue of debate.<sup>10</sup> While the question of wearing the hijab and other religious symbols in public space has not been an issue as polarizing as in many countries of the EU, an incident in December 2016 triggered an emotional debate that continues to date. After the social media circulated pictures of students wearing hijabs and posing with weapons within the school building of the village of Belozer'e in the Republic of Mordovia, the school director categorically prohibited the wearing of the religious garment.<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 2) In 2015, the village already attained a disputable fame for supposedly being a cluster of Wahhabism, with a disproportionately high amount of people joining DAESH and other terrorist organizations in Syria.<sup>12</sup> The school administration justified its decision as a “preventative measure” against extremism in the eve of the FIFA World Championship in 2018.



Figure 2: The photograph is allegedly of a student in the village school in Belozer'e in the Republic of Mordovia displaying a weapon.<sup>13</sup>

The Russian minister of education and science, Olga Vasilevna, publicly supported the decision in January 2017, thereby sparking a public debate. While Vasilevna underlined that she expressed her personal opinion, she wrongly referred to the Constitutional Court which she claims supported the prohibition of the hijab in 2013 and 2015. In truth, the public display of religious symbols is not clearly regulated. The right to wear ethnoculturally specific symbols is, however, protected by law. Thus, the discussion evolves around the evaluation of diverging court cases, the delimitation line of a headscarf and a hijab, as well as the question of the extent to which a religious symbol is distinct from an ethnocultural identity. Several decisions of the Federal High Court of Justice have left these questions open. While in 2003 the court ruled in favor of the hijab, it supported the decision of the Stavropol Region to prohibit the wearing of religious

10. Anastasija Tishhenkoš “Strasti po hidzhabu”, *Radio Svoboda* (Feb. 1, 2017), from <https://ru.krymr.com/a/28269896.html>.

11. Gennadij Zubov, Igor' Vetrov, “Uvidim v hidzhabe – uvolim iz shkoly”, *Gazeta* (Jan. 20, 2017), from <https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2017/01/20/10484681.shtml>.

12. Vladislav Mal'cev, “Mordovskij 'halifat'”, *Nezavisimaja gazeta religii* (Apr. 1, 2015), from [http://www.ng.ru/ng\\_religii/2015-04-01/2\\_halifat.html](http://www.ng.ru/ng_religii/2015-04-01/2_halifat.html).

13. Source: Jan. 20, 2017, [livejournal.com](http://livejournal.com)

attributes by school students in 2013 and 2015.<sup>14</sup> In the course of the heated public and strongly mediatized debate, the head of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, spoke out against Vasilevna for having trespassed her competence and obtruding her personal opinion upon millions.<sup>15</sup> On March 31, 2017, the Chechen parliament responded to the ongoing debate by approving the wearing of the hijab in schools of the republic.<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 3)



Figure 3: "We love the hijab". Manifestation in support of the hijab in Ufa, Bashkortostan.<sup>17</sup>

Since Russian media affiliated to the state often decry Islamophobia in Europe and portray it as a negative example, against the background of which the interreligious relations in Russia appear all in all harmonious,<sup>18</sup> the rising controversy around the hijab thwarted this narrative. Leading political figures as well as grand muftis of the national Muslim spiritual boards remained strikingly inconspicuous. In 2013, President Putin rejected the hijab as not belonging to the tradition of Russian Muslims.<sup>19</sup> Yet, in 2017, the press-secretary of the president, Dmitri Peskov, made it clear that the Kremlin did not intend to intervene in the polemics and said that there can be no standard position on the issue. Apart from this, he repeated the obvious dilemma that while acknowledging the multi-ethnic and pluri-religious nature of Russia, it is equally a secular state.<sup>20</sup> The head of the Commission on Migration Policy and Human Rights in the sphere of multiethnic relations, Bobrov, reaffirmed that the issue of religious symbols in educational establishments falls under the jurisdiction of the federal districts.<sup>21</sup>

14. Anastasija Mihajlova, "Verhovnyj sud Rossii priznal zakonnym zapret na noshenie hidzhabov v shkole", *RBC* (Feb. 11, 2015), from <https://www.rbc.ru/society/11/02/2015/54db1b9b9a79474d5bb8d028>.

15. "Kadyrov posporil s Vasil'evoj o hidzhabah v školah", *Lenta* (Jan. 25, 2017), from <https://lenta.ru/news/2017/01/25/kadyrov/>.

16. Zalina But , "Parlament Chechni prinjal zakon o prave škol'nic nosit' hidzhab", *Parlamentskaja Gazeta* (Mar. 31, 2017), from <https://www.pnp.ru/social/2017/03/31/parlament-chechni-prinyal-zakon-o-prave-shkolnic-nosit-khidzhab.html>.

17. Source: *Golos Islama*, Feb. 1, 2017

18. Nadezhda Alekseeva, "Ataka na hidzhaby: kak demokraticeskaja Evropa nastupaet na svobodu sovesti musul'manok", *Russia Today* (Mar. 15, 2017), from <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/368196-hidzhab-musul-manki-zapret-rabotodateli-evrosoyuz>.

19. "Putin pro hidzhaby i islamizaciju (Prjamaja linija 2013)", *You Tube* (Apr. 25, 2013), from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-QKEPMq0mY>.

20. "V Kremlje otreagirovali na razreshenie hidzhabov v chechenskih školah", *RIA Novosti* (Mar. 31, 2017), from <https://ria.ru/society/20170331/1491193225.html>.

21. "V SPCh predlozhili razreshit' regionam samim reshat' vopros o noshenii hidzhabov v školah", *Interfax* (Apr. 1, 2017), from <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/556360>.

## Justice System

### Yarov Law Controversy

In July 2016, the contentious Yarov Bill entered into force. The bill intends to strengthen Russian anti-terrorist efforts. It enlarges the competence of the security service, establishes new requirements for Internet providers, and facilitates the monitoring of religious organizations. The bill allows the confiscation and prohibition of religious literature deemed promotional of terrorism. According to the new law, missionary activism and public performance of religious rituals is only granted to members of registered religious organizations. Missionary activists operating outside of registered religious structures run the risk of being persecuted.<sup>22</sup> According to Forum 18 News Agency, by August 2017, over 193 individuals and religious communities were brought to court under the new anti-missionary law.<sup>23</sup>

The Russian Muslim community is divided over the new law. Some spiritual leaders, like the grand mufti of the Saratov Oblast, Mukkadan Bibrasov, were critical of the fact that the law was ratified without integrating the expertise of religious scholars.<sup>24</sup> The grand mufti of Tatarstan, Kamil Samigulin, decried the law as violating the rights of the Muslim community.<sup>25</sup> The majority of North Caucasian muftiates, by contrast, have supported the new law. The grand mufti of Dagestan, Akhmad Hadzhi Abdullaev, expressed his hope that the new law improves the regulation of religious practice, and protects traditional Islam from radicalism as well as the misleading and arbitrary interpretations of self-proclaimed religious leaders.<sup>26</sup>

A petition against the Yarov Bill gathered more than 100,000 subscribers within a month. It was forwarded to a governmental commission, but rejected on January 2017.<sup>27</sup> On October 2017, in a common effort, representatives of the Muslim spiritual board, the Russian Orthodox Church, the Evangelical Christian congregation and the Hare Krishna movement, drew a proposal for amendments to the law and forwarded it to representatives of the Public

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22. Elena Muhametshina, "Ogranichenija na missionerskiju dejatel'nost' osporeny v KS", *Vedomosti* (May 25, 2017), from <https://www.vedomosti.ru/politics/articles/2017/05/26/691567-ogranicheniya-missionerskuyu-deyatelnost>.

23. Victoria Arnold, "Russia: 'Anti-Missionary Punishments Full Listing'", *Forum 18 News Service* (Aug. 9, 2017), from [http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2306](http://www.forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2306).

24. "Saratovskij muftij vystupil protiv 'zakona Jarovoj' o missionerah", *SarBK* (June 30, 2016), from <https://news.sarbc.ru/main/2016/06/30/184803.html>.

25. "Kamil' hazrat Samigullin schitaet 'zakon Jarovoj' ushhemleniem prav musul'man", *Tatar-Inform* (June 29, 2016), from <http://www.tatar-inform.ru/news/2016/06/29/510333/>.

26. Shamil Abdullaev, "Muftij Dagestana prokomentiroval 'antiterroristicheskij paket Jarovoj'", *Kavkaz Sevodya* (July 3, 2016), from <https://kavtoday.ru/16844>.

27. "Eksperty pravitel'stva poschitali nedopustimoj otmenu 'zakona Jarovoj'", *Interfax* (Jan. 19, 2017), from <http://www.interfax.ru/russia/546099>.

Chamber of the Russian Federation and the Council of the President of the Russian Federation.<sup>28</sup>

### Hizb ut-Tahrir

In June,<sup>29</sup> August<sup>30</sup> and December 2017,<sup>31</sup> fourteen members of the Hizb ut-Tahrir (prohibited in Russia since 2003) were sentenced to between 11 and 18 years in prison. The radical Islamist party repudiates secular governments, strives for the abolishment of non-Muslim political entities and declares the establishment of a Caliphate as its primary goal. It is prohibited in several countries of the EU, such as Germany, while operating freely in countries like Great Britain or Sweden. Despite its members adhering to a radical fundamentalist Islam, and the ideology of Hizb ut-Tahrir being essentially anti-constitutional in terms of denying the legitimacy of secular statehood, some human right groups question the legitimacy of branding the organization as terrorist. Hizb ut-Tahrir requires of its members to refrain from political participation, invocation of violence or active propaganda as a means to achieve the envisioned Caliphate.<sup>32</sup> Experts from the civil rights society Memorial, the analytical center Sova, and the Committee for Civic Assistance have criticized the lack of distinction between extremism and terrorism within the Russian judiciary system, and condemn the application of the anti-terrorist criminal code, which results in higher sentences for the individuals.<sup>33</sup> (Fig. 4)



Figure 4: Member of Hizb ut-Tahrir tried in court in Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan.<sup>34</sup>

28. Roman Lunkin, "Missija vozmozhna. Sozdana rabochaja grupa po vneseniju izmenenij v Zakon Jarovoj v sfere regulirovanija missionerskoj dejatel'nosti", *Slavic Center for Law and Justice* (Oct. 3, 2017), from [http://www.sclj.ru/news/detail.php?SECTION\\_ID=484&ELEMENT\\_ID=7687](http://www.sclj.ru/news/detail.php?SECTION_ID=484&ELEMENT_ID=7687).

29. "Uchastniki "Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami" poluchili ot 15 do 18 let kolonii", *Russian Agency of Legal and Judiciary Information* (June 15, 2017), from [http://www.rapsinews.ru/moscourts\\_news/20170615/278955958.html](http://www.rapsinews.ru/moscourts_news/20170615/278955958.html).

30. "VS priznal zakonnyj prigovor organizatoram jachejki "Hizb ut-Tahrir" v Kazani", *Russian Agency of Legal and Judiciary Information* (Aug. 9, 2017), from [http://www.rapsinews.ru/judicial\\_news/20170809/279694780.html](http://www.rapsinews.ru/judicial_news/20170809/279694780.html).

31. "Vnesen prigovor po delu «Hizb ut-Tahrir» v Bashkirii", *Sova Center* (Dec. 20, 2017), from <http://www.sova-center.ru/religion/news/extremism/counter-extremism/2017/12/d38530/>.

32. While it has not been proven to have participated in terrorism, Hizb ut-Tahrir has been actively supporting violent resistance against President Bashar-al Assad in Syria, and as recently as September 2017, warned Syrian Islamist factions from engaging in any kind of truce, collaboration or peace treaty with any of the secular forces on the ground. cf. <http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.info/en/index.php/leaflet/syria/14067.html>.

33. "Memorial' priznal politzakljuchennymi vosem' podsudimyh po delu 'Hizb ut-Tahrir' v Kazani", *Memorial Civil Rights Society* (Nov. 16, 2017), from <https://memohrc.org/ru/news/memorial-priznal-politzakljuchennymi-vosem-podsudimyh-po-delu-hizb-ut-tahrir-v-kazani>.

34. Source: Itar-Tass

## Tabligh Jamaat

In December 2017, the Russian Security Service arrested 69 members of the Tabligh Jamaat movement (prohibited in Russia since 2009).<sup>35</sup> (Fig. 5) The radical Islamic organization with an emphasis on missionary work is often suspected of indirect links to terrorist organizations. In 2003, the FBI stated that Al Qaida was using Tabligh Jamaat for recruitment.<sup>36</sup> The group has been linked to two of the terrorists of the July 7 London bombings in 2005.<sup>37</sup> However, the analytical center Sova<sup>38</sup> and



Figure 5: Members of Tabligh Jamaat arrested in Moscow, Nov. 14, 2017.<sup>40</sup>

the organization Human Rights Without Frontiers<sup>39</sup> consider the persecution of Tabligh Jamaat members under the current anti-extremist legislation as unlawful, because its members have not engaged in a call for violence or unconstitutional behavior.

## Nurculuk Movement

Another group of individuals brought to trial under the anti-extremist legislation, were found in possession of the texts of the Turkish theologian Said Nursi. In 2002 and 2003, the Nursi movement was accused of espionage for Pan-Turkic nationalist groups.<sup>41</sup> In 2008, the Federal High Court of Justice declared the Nursi movement an extremist organization, and prohibited its activity in Russia.<sup>42</sup> In March 2017, five individuals possessing literature of Said Nursi, received suspended sentences from

35. "FSB zaderzhala v Moskve 69 chlenov "Tabligi Dzhamaat", *Interfax* (Nov. 14, 2017), from <http://www.interfax.ru/moscow/587306>.

36. Susan Sachs, "A Muslim Missionary Group Draws New Scrutiny in U.S.", *The New York Times* (July 14, 2003), from <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/14/us/a-muslim-missionary-group-draws-new-scrutiny-in-us.html>.

37. Sandra Laville, "Suspects Linked to Hardline Islamic Group", *The Guardian* (Aug. 18, 2016), from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/aug/18/terrorism.world>.

38. "FSB soobshhila o razgrome moskovskoj jachejki "Tabligi Dzhamaat", *Sova Center* (Dec. 22, 2016), from <http://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/news/persecution/2016/12/d36065/>.

39. "Russia/European Court: Ban of Muslim movement Tabligh Jamaat", *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (Oct. 16, 2017), from <http://hrwf.eu/russia/european-court-ban-of-muslim-movement-tabligh-jamaat/>.

40. Source: video of the Federal Security Service

41. Irina Borogan, "'Nurdzhular' ili posledovateli Saida Nursi", *Agentura.Ru* (Apr. 10, 2008), from <http://studies.agentura.ru/to/nursi/>.

42. "Verhovnyj sud RF zapretil 'Nurdzhular' kak jekstremistskuju organizaciju", *Sova Center* (Apr. 10, 2008), from <http://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/news/persecution/2008/04/d13081/>.

one year and ten months to four years.<sup>43</sup> Human rights groups criticized the fact that the Russian courts deduced membership in the prohibited organization based on the confiscated literature.

On August 31, 2017, the European Court on Human Rights received a lawsuit filed by eight organizations termed terrorist or extremist by a Russian court decision, among which was Tabligh Jamaat.<sup>44</sup>

### Debate on “Extremist Literature”

That the possession of literature labeled extremist is sufficient for an individual to be tried in court under the anti-extremism law is sparking outrage within certain parts of the Muslim community. In 2013, a court in Novorossiysk outlawed a religious text by proclaiming it extremist,<sup>45</sup> which led to a common effort by coalitions of the Muslim media, political leaders and religious authorities to address the federal government. As a consequence, the decision of the court was retracted. In 2015, Ildar Nurimanov, the chief of staff of the Spiritual Board of the Muslims of Russia, warned the Duma in the annual session on the rights of Muslims in Russia, that the “festivity of prohibitions” against sacred texts of Islam ran the risk of sparking tension in the Russian Muslim community.<sup>46</sup> Judging theological literature should not be conducted by governmental officers, as this contradicts the separation of state and religion.

Given that judicial officers are no experts in theological subtleties, spiritual boards have repeatedly demanded the inclusion of their proper exegeses of religious literature. Since a well-known case in 2015, when Ramzan Kadyrov threatened a prosecutor of the South Sakhalin court for having prohibited an Islamic book, whereupon the court repealed its previous verdict, there have been numerous examples of courts withdrawing their previous decisions under the vehement opposition of an increasingly politically pro-active Muslim community. Nonetheless, by 2017, the Federal List of Extremist Materials has exceeded 4,000 entries, and the issue of religious literature remains an area of conflict between governmental agencies and parts of the Muslim community.

### Persecution of “Non-Traditional” Islam in the North Caucasus

Security agencies in some North Caucasian republics, a region which is witnessing a growing Islamism, take rigorous actions against Salafi structures, while other

43. “V Ufe vnesen prigovor po delu posledovatelej Saida Nursi”, *Sova Center* (Mar. 22, 2017), from <http://www.sova-center.ru/misuse/news/persecution/2017/03/d36644/>.

44. “Russia/European Court: Ban of Muslim movement Tabligh Jamaat”, *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (Oct. 16, 2017), from <http://hrwf.eu/russiaeuropean-court-ban-of-muslim-movement-tabligh-jamaat/>.

45. Alissa de Carbonnel, “Russian Muslim Clerics Warn of Unrest over Ban of Translation”, *Reuters* (Sept. 20, 2013), from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-koran-idUSBRE98J0YW20130920>.

46. “Ildar Nurimanov vystupil na zasedanii Komiteta GD po delam obshchestvennykh ob”edinenij i religioznykh organizacij”, *Press Office of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation* (Dec. 3, 2015), from <http://dumrf.ru/common/event/10073>.

republics engage in a dialogue between Sufi and Salafi groups. Between May and December 2017, Salafi communities (or communities sometimes wrongly labeled as such) have witnessed a rise in persecution by security forces in Dagestan. Several Salafi mosques have been closed<sup>47</sup> and individuals detained after prayer.<sup>48</sup> Especially after terrorist attacks, ordinary Muslims complain about collective stigmatization, as well as the arbitrariness of police control and profiling - simply wearing religious garments or donning a beard attracts police attention.<sup>49</sup>

## The Law against the Offense of Feelings of Believers and Its Consequences

Since its implementation in 2013, the law against the offense of feelings of believers<sup>50</sup> has diminished hate crimes against religions and arguably contributed to the decline of blunt Islamophobia in the media. The first verdict was in 2014 against a person who posted torrents of hatred aimed against Muslims on the social network *Vkontakte*. However, the law has been criticized by jurists and political activists as impeding the rights of freedom of conscience, freedom of thought and the freedom of speech, guaranteed in the Russian constitution. The overzealous application of the law, according to Russian deputy Oleg Smolin, who brought a modification proposal to the State Duma, jeopardizes with the rights of atheist, anti-clerical, and anti-religious positions.<sup>51</sup> In the Tomsk region, a music festival of tribal and neo-pagan music was prohibited as it was said to contradict the traditions of the local Muslim population.<sup>52</sup> As the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) points out, the definition of “propaganda of exclusivity, superiority or inferiority of a person on the basis of their religious affiliation or attitude towards religion” as extremism allows for the suppression of any open critical discourse on religion.<sup>53</sup>

On the one hand, the law is intended to defend religious communities, but it equally provides religious communities with the judicial tool to interfere with secular cultural life, as evidenced in the reported cases of prohibitions of concerts, exhibitions, theater plays, and movie premiers. More importantly, it prevents public discourse on

47. “Dagestan: privokzal’ naja mechet’ v poselke Shamhal snova zakryta”, *Memorial Civil Rights Society* (May 18, 2017), from <https://memohrc.org/ru/news/dagestan-privokzalnaya-mechet-v-poselke-shamhal-snova-zakryta>.

48. “Ochevidcy soobshhili o zaderzhanii prihozhan mahachkalinskoj mecheti”, *Kavkazskij Uzel* (July 13, 2017), from <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/305977/>.

49. Dmitrij Sidorov, “Ne vse govoryat, chto nado vzryvat’”, *Lenta* (Apr. 11, 2017), from <https://lenta.ru/articles/2017/04/11/muslims/>.

50. “Prezident zashhitil chuvstva verujushhh”, *Rossijskaja Gazeta* (June 30, 2013) from <https://rg.ru/2013/06/30/chuvstva-anons.html>.

51. “Gosdume predlozhili utochnit’ zakon ob oskorblenii chuvstv verujushhh”, *RBK* (Oct. 5, 2017), from <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/59d653679a79472a18e82287>.

52. “Zapreshhen muzykal’nyj festival’ okolo musul’nskogo sela pod Tomskom”, *Islam Today* (June 19, 2014), from <https://islam-today.ru/novosti/2014/06/19/zapreshen-muzykalnyj-festival-okolo-musulmanskogo-sela-pod-tomskom/>.

53. Maria Kravchenko, “Inventing Extremists. The Impact of Russian Anti-Extremism Policies on Freedom of Religion or Belief”. *USCIRF* (January 2018), from <http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Inventing%20Extremists.pdf>.

issues of religion in general, and consequently allows the concealment of critical issues relevant to religious communities. A survey aimed at evaluating the impact of the law on the work of editorial departments on federal TV stations, radio stations, Internet portals and print media, showed that new directives recommended the reduction, or entirely prohibited the usage of words “God,” “Allah,” or “atheist.”<sup>54</sup> From the outset, many media ventures stopped broaching the issue of religion, except on occasions of Russian Orthodox or Muslim holidays. In the end, a law meant to protect religious beliefs, became an obstacle to the proper understanding and portraying of religious life, as well as divergent attitudes towards religion in society. A hostile atmosphere hindering open debates on religion, in turn, prevents the thorough understanding of the magnitude of persisting prejudices, including Islamophobia.

## Employment

While Paragraph 3 of the Russian labor legislation prohibits the limitation of labor rights on the basis of gender, race, religion, nationality, origin or membership in social groups, in practice it is very difficult to prove discrimination in court. The law in place demands verifiability that an employer has violated labor rights on grounds of discrimination.<sup>55</sup> Self-evidently, no employer explains a wage cut or a notice of termination of a working contract based on personal prejudices of any kind. Given the difficulty of proving discrimination in court, there are no reliable statistics on discrimination provably motivated by Islamophobia. Complicating the issue of statistically evaluating discrimination, is the challenge of accurately classifying and distinguishing discrimination caused by xenophobic, migrantophobic, or Islamophobic bias.

The program *Ne Molči* (Don't Be Silent), broadcasted by Alif.tv, a nationwide Muslim TV station which started transmitting in June 2016,<sup>56</sup> broaches issues of discrimination of Muslim citizens on the basis of origin or religion. It portrays individual cases of xenophobia, migrantophobia and Islamophobia in public places such as airports,<sup>57</sup> by police officers,<sup>58</sup> or in the labor market.<sup>59</sup> (Fig. 6)

54. E. O. Onegin, “Ogranichenie svobody slova v sredstvakh massovoj informacii kak posledstvie prinjatija zakona o ‘zashite chustv verujushchikh’”, *Zdravomyslije* (Oct. 23, 2015), from <http://zdravomyslie.info/article/articles/405-ogranichenie-svobody-slova-v-sredstvakh-massovoj-informatsii-kak-posledstvie-prinyatiya-zakona-o-zashchite-chustv-veruyushchikh>.

55. Svetlana Ivanova, “Diskriminacija na rabote: bor'ba za ravenstvo ili vosstanovlenie narushennyh prav”, *Zakon.ru* (June 4, 2017), from [https://zakon.ru/blog/2017/6/4/diskriminacija\\_na\\_rabote\\_borba\\_za\\_ravenstvo\\_ili\\_vosstanovlenie\\_narushennyh\\_prav](https://zakon.ru/blog/2017/6/4/diskriminacija_na_rabote_borba_za_ravenstvo_ili_vosstanovlenie_narushennyh_prav).

56. Guzel' Muhametshina, “Ot slov k delu: v Rossii vse-taki zarabotal islamskij telekanal”, *Info Islam* (June 22, 2016), from [http://www.info-islam.ru/publ/stati/statji/musulmane\\_veshhajut\\_v\\_tv\\_pervyj\\_opyt\\_islamskogo\\_televidenija/5-1-0-40153](http://www.info-islam.ru/publ/stati/statji/musulmane_veshhajut_v_tv_pervyj_opyt_islamskogo_televidenija/5-1-0-40153).

57. “Musul'man unizhajut v aeroportah. Ne molchi!”, *Alif TV* (Aug. 10, 2017), from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wj-XitWSVVo>.

58. “Policija Moskvyy vedet ohotu na migrantov. Ne molchi!”, *Alif TV* (Feb. 28, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VB2N3VFeFuc>.

59. “«Kavkazcam tut ne mesto». Diskriminacija na rabote. Ne molchi!”, *Alif TV* (May 3, 2017), from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cicqWxpl0ew>.



Figure 6: "Caucasians unwanted. Discrimination at work. Don't keep silent!"<sup>60</sup>

## Education

Frequently, Muslim students in schools of higher education reported internal directives that prohibited religious dress codes or the right to perform obligatory prayers. In a publication of the online portal *Moslenta*, the dean for foreign students of the First Moscow State Medical

University explains that the university falls under the jurisdiction of the law on education, which he claims prohibits the performance of religious rites in public.<sup>61</sup> According to Marat Ashimov, the lawyer representing the hijab-wearing students in the aforementioned case of the school in Beloz'er'e, the administration of the Republic of Mordovia systematically discriminates against Muslims who publicly wear religious attributes. He spoke of an internal document within the Mordovian State Pedagogical Institute which instructs teachers to deny admission to exams to students wearing headscarves.<sup>62</sup> However, no proof supporting the claim was provided.

## Media

Apart from the media witch hunt of Ilias Nikitin, there have been no blatant expressions of Islamophobia on the part of public media outlets. To the contrary, Muslim life in Russia has received noticeably greater media coverage than in previous years. National TV regularly transmits events of inter-religious dialogue between the Russian Orthodox Church and the national Muslim spiritual boards, as well as the wishes of the president and the leaders of traditional religious congregations on Muslim holidays.<sup>63</sup> However, this outward manifestation of multi-religiosity with the purpose of strengthening social cohesion does not include broaching critical issues truly important to the Russian Muslim communities, such as debates over the construction of mosques, cases of discrimination in the public sphere, the labor market, as well as allegations of arbitrariness by security forces against Muslims. Hence, media outlets that disseminate cases of discrimination of Muslims remain mostly Muslim-owned media with high diffusion rates, such websites as *islamnews.ru*, *islamonline.ru*, *info-islam*, *Alif-tv*, etc.

60. Source: Alif.tv

61. Jana Kremnjova, "Rabota pod prikrytiem", *Moslenta* (Jan. 11, 2018), from <https://moslenta.ru/city/musulmanki.htm>.

62. "V Mordovii studentki MGPI zayavljajut o zaprete na platki", *Radio Free Europe* (Jan. 24, 2017), from <https://www.idelreal.org/a/28254523.html>.

63. "Putin pozdravil musul'man v Rossii s prazdnikom Kurban-bajram", *RIA Novosti* (Sept. 25, 2017), from <https://ria.ru/religion/20170901/1501529152.html>.

## The Case of Ilias Nikitin

The case of Ilias Nikitin stands as an exemplary instance of social mass hysteria, triggered by a terrorist attack and culminating in Islamophobic resentments. A few hours after a terrorist attack on a Saint Petersburg metro station on April 3, 2017, a media agency published the picture of a security camera that showed a bearded man in a *taqiyya* (head cap) entering the metro. Mass media quickly disseminated the picture identifying the man as the primary suspect. Yet, even after Ilias Nikitin saw himself in the media and immediately presented himself to the closest police station to forestall any future allegations, the media (most actively *lifenevs.ru*) continued to diffuse the false story, live broadcasting every step of the “suicide bomber in a cap.”<sup>64</sup> (Fig. 7) When Nikitin boarded a plane from Saint Petersburg to Moscow, agitated passengers forced the crew to escort him off the plane. Furthermore, Nikitin lost his job in his hometown, Nizhnevartovsk, apparently under the pressure of the municipal commission of enquiry.<sup>65</sup> A positive aspect in this case has been the resonance of civic society decrying the blatant injustice disseminated by the media. A petition demanding the reparation of Nikitin’s damaged reputation, and apologizing in the name of the citizens, was signed by over 6,411 people.<sup>66</sup> The absurd story was intensely covered by other media, and may be an indicator of a changing sensitivity to the danger posed by Islamophobia.<sup>67</sup>



Figure 7: Ilias Nikitin, showed by Ren. tv as the primary suspect of the St. Petersburg terrorist attacks of 2017, personally presenting himself to a police station.<sup>68</sup>

## Anti-Islam Critique and Islamophobia in Liberal Media

On March 26, 2017, an investigative video report on the corruption of Vice-President Dmitry Medvedev,<sup>69</sup> released by opposition politician and blogger Alexey Navalny,

64. Marina Davydova , “‘Smertnika v shapochke’ iz Peterburga snjali s samoljota vo Vnukovo”, *Lifenevs* (Apr. 4, 2017), from [https://life.ru/t/%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8/993921/smiertnika\\_v\\_shapochkie\\_iz\\_pietierburgha\\_sniali\\_s\\_samoljota\\_vo\\_vnukovo](https://life.ru/t/%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82%D0%B8/993921/smiertnika_v_shapochkie_iz_pietierburgha_sniali_s_samoljota_vo_vnukovo).

65. Iljas Nikitin, “Ja lishilsja raboty”, *Islamnews.ru* from <https://www.islamnews.ru/news-iljas-nikitin-ja-lishilsja-raboty/>

66. “Sozdana peticija v podderzhku prinjatogo za peterburgskogo terrorista borodacha”, *Lenta* (Apr. 7, 2017), from <https://lenta.ru/news/2017/04/07/petition/>.

67. “Maksim Shevchenko — o religioznoj vrazhde v Rossii”, *Pravda* (Apr. 19, 2017), from [https://www.pravda.ru/faitn/religions/islam/19-04-2017/1331071-islamophobia\\_shevchenko-0/](https://www.pravda.ru/faitn/religions/islam/19-04-2017/1331071-islamophobia_shevchenko-0/).

68. Source: business gazeta

69. “On vam ne Dimon”, YouTube (Mar. 2, 2017), from [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=%D0%BE%D0%BD+%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BC+%D0%BD%D0%B5+%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%D0%BE%D0%BD+%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BC+%D0%BD%D0%B5+%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD).

triggered the largest mass protest since the Bolotnaya protests in 2011.<sup>70</sup> Strikingly, despite a small number of participants in the Republics of Tatarstan and Dagestan, the national popular Muslim media, on the whole, ignored the protests, concluding that the movement does not represent the interests of Muslims. This made apparent that even Muslim opposition leaders and civil activists have difficulties associating themselves with a protest movement whose leader continuously resorts to migrant-phobic, Islamophobic and Caucasophobic stereotypes to mobilize public support.<sup>71</sup>

Navalny repeatedly rejected Northern Caucasus as part of the Russian Federation, and called it instead a territory in turmoil, controlled by a lawless fusion of criminal bands, whose citizens should be denied the right of free mobility within the Russian Federation. In 2011, he participated in a rally of Russian nationalists under the slogan “Enough feeding the Caucasus.”<sup>72</sup> After the terrorist attacks in Paris 2015, he posted the article “Where Is the Orgy of Tolerance Taking Place?” where he decries the unchecked migration of “young Muslim men,” draws a connection between the rising Muslim population and the threat of Islamism, and opposes the rising

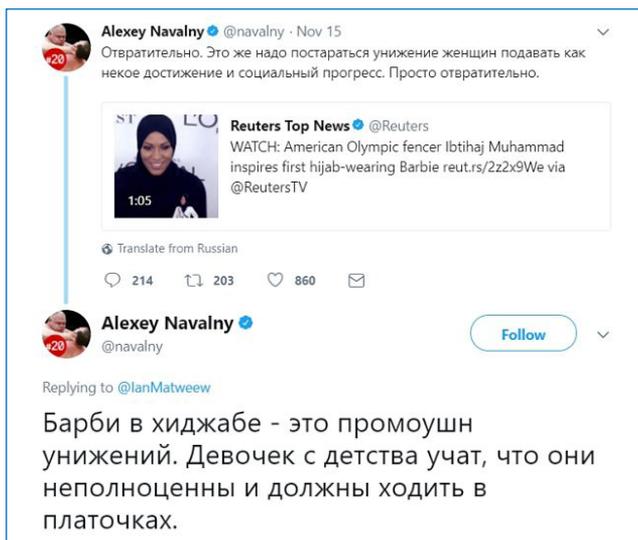


Figure 8: Alexander Navalny's tweet on the launch of a hijab-wearing Barbie doll.<sup>75</sup>

numbers of mosque constructions in Russia.<sup>73</sup> In November 2017, as a reaction to the launching of a toy product (Barbie doll), inspired by the first hijab-wearing U.S. Olympian Ibtihaj Muhammad, Navalny tweeted, “[It is a] promotion of humiliation. Girls are taught since childhood that they are not fully equal and should wear a headscarf.”<sup>74</sup> (Fig. 8)

70. “Joint motion for a resolution on Russia, the arrest of Alexei Navalny and other protestors (2017/2646(RSP))”, European Parliament (Apr. 5, 2017), from <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P8-RC-2017-0245&format=XML&language=EN>.

71. Rais Sulejmanov, “Pochemu rossijskie musul'mane ne otreagirovali na mitingi Naval'nogo: mnenie”, *EurAsia Daily* (Mar. 28, 2017), from <https://leadaily.com/ru/news/2017/03/28/pochemu-rossijskie-musulmane-ne-otreagirovali-na-mitingi-navalnogo-mnenie>.

72. “Hvatit Kormit” Kavkaz! A. Navaln'ny (Miting), YouTube (Oct. 24, 2011), from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=1&v=V8AtH44\\_39c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=V8AtH44_39c).

73. Alexey Navalny, “Gde prohodit 'orgija tolerantnosti?'” (Nov. 16, 2015), from <https://navalny.com/p/4547/>

74. Alexey Navalny, Twitter (Nov. 15, 2017), from <https://twitter.com/navalny/status/930736680461590528>.

75. Source: Twitter

Some Russian liberals stand out for their opinion that Islam is an ultraconservative social threat in an already increasingly illiberal society. This fundamental skepticism towards the admission of religiosity into politics prevented the integration of the political agenda of moderate Muslim opposition groups during the Bolotnaya Square protests in 2011.

Yulija Latynina, for instance, a prominent and reputable liberal journalist, imperceptibly warns society of the monotheistic nature of Islam, which she claims makes it per definition an intolerant and totalitarian religion.<sup>76</sup> She decries the government's blind eye to the gradual Islamization of parts of Russia (particularly referring to the republics in North Caucasus) and the consequences she estimates to come with it.

To draw a demarcation line between critique of Islam, the analysis of political processes within the Muslim community, and the dispersion of Islamophobic prejudices, is difficult. The presumption that Muslims naturally oppose processes of liberalization and democratization in Russia, are, however, positions frequently expressed by analysts<sup>77</sup> hence reinforcing a stereotype of the incapability of political Islam and modernist-reformist political movements.

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

### Unsolved Assassinations of Imams in the Stavropol Region

To date, five assassinations of imams that took place in the Stavropol region between 2012 and 2016, have remained unresolved.<sup>78</sup> In 2016, Imam Ravil Kaybaliev was killed,<sup>79</sup> continuing the tragic list of murders in the region.<sup>80</sup> Kaybaliev was a fervent critic of the Yarov Bill, and the prohibition of the hijab by the Stavropol administration. While some media highlighted his engagement in civil society, other media outlets focused on the imam's alleged closeness to the local Salafi community.<sup>81</sup> The spiritual leaders killed in the last three years shared a reputation for being involved in civic activism and open resistance to the prohibition of the hijab in the Stavropol region. The ineffectual investigations by the commissions of inquiry nourish the allegation of government-critical Muslim media, such as *Kavkazkiuzel.com*, that the federal government is not interested in solving the cases. Some family members of

76. Yulija Latynina, "Bruno na vas net", *Novaja Gazeta* (May 27, 2017) from <https://www.novayagazeta.ru/articles/2017/05/27/72598-yulija-latynina-bruno-na-vas-net>.

77. "Dejatel'no kul'tury podderzhali poziciju Putina po Ukraine i Krymu", *Kavpolit* (Mar. 12, 2014), from <http://kavpolit.com/articles/edinaja-oppozitsija-ne-po-kavkazski-16016/>.

78. Renata Shabanova, Masha Tvardovskaja, "Idet ohota na imamov", *Kavpolit* (Aug. 20, 2015), from [http://kavpolit.com/articles/idet\\_ohota\\_na\\_imamov-19245/](http://kavpolit.com/articles/idet_ohota_na_imamov-19245/).

79. Magomed Tuiev, "Na Stavropol'e ubit zamestitel' imama Ravil' Kajbaliev", *Kavkazki Uzeli* (Sept. 26, 2016), from <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/289955/>

80. Kurman Ismailov (2012), Manzur Adzhigisiev (2013), the disappearance of Shamil Khubiev (lost since 2014), and Zamirbek Makhmudov (2015).

81. "Ubityj na Stavropol'e zamestitel' imama byl salafitskim propovednikom", *EurAsia Daily* (Sept. 27, 2016), from <https://eadaily.com/ru/news/2016/09/27/ubityj-na-stavropole-zamestitel-imama-by-salafitskim-propovednikom>.

the victims recalled prior harassment by the security forces.<sup>82</sup> The anti-government media agency *Onkavkaz.com* interprets the local administration's alleged inaction as a coordinated cover-up policy of the Stavropol administration. The investigative news portal argues that the local administration prevents the investigations of the "death squads," which *Onkavkaz* incriminates in the recent assassinations, and which it links to the regional security services.<sup>83</sup> There is no proof of these allegations.

## Internet

In 2017, the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media blocked a number of internet sites propagating nationalism and religious intolerance. Among them were *Pravi Vzgliad*, *Russki Sektor*, and *Pravi Sektor*. The Federal Service equally blocked the widely popular website *Sputnik i Pogrom*, which had an average of 1.4 million monthly visitors (June 2017).<sup>84</sup> The radical right is undergoing a profound crisis, and as a result of internal conflicts and increased fragmentations, it is no longer as publicly perceivable as in previous years.<sup>85</sup> The decrease of nationalist and Islamophobic rhetoric in the public discourse and the hindered accession to social media to articulate nationalist and Islamophobic standpoints will arguably have positive consequences in the long run.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There are no nameable figures that put Islamophobia in the center of their political or publishing activity, as is the case in some countries of the EU, or within the Alt-Right movement of the United States. Some prominent figures, such as nationalist Aleksandr Potkin<sup>86</sup> or the Russian Orthodox priest Daniil Sisoev<sup>87</sup> have concentrated on Islamophobic writings. However, while Sisoev reaches a limited audience of radical Christians, Potkin, as many other nationalist leaders, has recently concentrated his attention on the Ukraine crisis, which has divided the Russian nationalist movement. The legislative restriction, on the one hand, and new topics perceived as more pressing than the "threat of Islam," have resulted in Islamophobia persisting, but have not allowed room for prominent public figures, willing or capable of mobilizing large popular support, to systematically exploit the topic.

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82. Magomed Tuayev, "Policejskie proveli obysk v dome zamestitelja imama sela Kara-Tjube na Stavropol'e", *Kavkazskiy Uzel* (Oct. 15, 2015), from <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/270652/>.

83. Aslan Bzarov, "Zhestoko ubit za zashhitu hidzhaba. Ocherednoj imam rasstreljan neizvestnymi na Stavropol'e", *Onkavkaz* (Sept. 27, 2016), from <https://onkavkaz.com/news/1271-zhestoko-ubit-za-zaschitu-hidzhaba-ocherednoi-imam-rasstreljan-neizvestnymi-na-stavropole.html>.

84. Ivan Tjzhlov, Aleksandr Chernyh, Vladislav Novyj, "Sajt 'Sputnik i pogrom' zablockirovan za nacionalizm i ekstremizm", *Kommersant* (July 6, 2017), from <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3344370>.

85. New Times. "Za russkih i naval' nogo", *New Times* (Nov. 4, 2017), from <https://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/125657/>.

86. Aleksandr Belov, "Pozdraviv s Uraza-bajramom, Putin pokazal, s kem budet stroit' Rossiju", *Aleksandr Belov Blog* (July 28, 2014), from <http://alexandrbelov.com/tag/islam>.

87. "Svjashhennik Daniil Sysoev - velikomuchenik za pravdu ob islame", Advokat Ezhov Anton Valentinovich, from <http://антонежов.рф/stati/svyashchennik-daniil-sysoev---velikomuchenik-za-pravdu-ob-islame.html>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The general tendency points to an amelioration of the situation of Russian Muslims, and the growing acceptance of Islam as being an integral pillar of Russian society, history and identity. Recent sociological surveys and research studies affirm a decline in xenophobia and Islamophobia in the past years. Strict law enforcement has equally, arguably to the expense of freedom of expression, reduced the margin of tolerance for critique against “traditional” religions, including Islam. Openly racist, xenophobic or Islamophobic Internet sites have been blocked, and the media has become more cautious in reproducing xenophobic and Islamophobic stereotypes. At the same time, Islamic communities that are not considered “traditional,” are stigmatized as extremist, and their members thrown under the bus of the justice system. Strong xenophobic and migrantophobic dispositions prevail in society, although they have apparently diminished in number. However, the relatively small number of NGOs continuously monitoring Islamophobic incidents, the difficulty to prove discrimination on the basis of Islamophobia in court, and a lack of interest by the national media to investigate such cases, may result in hostility towards Islam being more common on the ground than it is perceivable or retraceable.

- Recommendations for media: The media’s increasingly cautious approach towards Islam is the first step in the right direction of confining Islamophobic stereotypes from entering the public sphere. However, it is not sufficient to contain the dispersion of such images, in the attempt to fulfill governmental requirements of duplicating a narrative of Russian multi-ethnicity and pluri-religiosity. Mass me-



Figure 9: President Vladimir Putin greeting Grand Mufti Gaynutdin and Grand Mufti Tazhuddin, heads of Russia’s two main spiritual boards of Muslims, together with other spiritual leaders of Russia’s traditional religions, on the holiday of National Unity, 2017.<sup>88</sup>

88. Source: DUM RF

dia should not be engaged in concealing xenophobia and Islamophobia, but in actively broaching the issue and sensitizing the population. One of Russia's biggest media holdings belongs to Alisher Usmanov, yet, despite being Muslim, he avoids positioning himself clearly on topics troubling Muslim society, or using his media empire in raising awareness of the topics relevant to Russia's Muslim community. With some exceptions, there is an apparent lack of perceivable Muslim experts of diverse political stances in mass media, who can represent the Muslim community instead of letting non-Muslims speak on their behalf. A pleasant process in this regard is the growing Muslim media landscape. From the newly established national Alif.tv station, over to the large media holding 'Islam' by Ayna Gamzatova, to digital news agencies (e.g. *islam-today.ru*, *islamreview.ru*, *islamrf.ru*, *as-salam.ru*, *islamonline.ru*, and others), these media agencies are proof of a growingly politicized Muslim community that is eager to make itself heard.

- Recommendations for Muslim advocacy: The multitude of Muslim spiritual boards mirror the ethnocultural specifics of the many forms of Islam in Russia, and are equally a reflection of the complex federative nature of the state. While this diversity is most desirable, there are equally several All-Russian Muslim spiritual boards that claim to speak on the behalf of the entire Muslim population. The main umbrella organizations, namely, the Russian Council of Mufties/Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Russian Federation, the Central Muslim Spiritual Board of Russia, and, as of 2017, the Russian Association of Islamic Accord, assemble various regional spiritual boards around each other, with constantly changing coalitions. This status quo of permanent rivalry is unhelpful for the establishment of a strong advocate of Muslim rights in public and vis-à-vis the government. It is recommended that these spiritual boards speak with one voice, or delegate the right to do so, on behalf of Russian Muslims on issues that concern the entire Russian *ummah*.
- Recommendations for issues of discrimination: It is recommended to add amendments to the paragraph on discrimination, with the purpose of facilitating the pressing of criminal charges in court. Furthermore, it is important to delimitate xenophobia, migrantophobia and Islamophobia from one another. It is not always clear whether the difficulty of drawing a demarcation between different hate crime categories is motivated by consciously wanting to obscure Islamophobia, or by the definitional and judicial difficulties in the nature of the matter.
- Recommendations for anti-extremist legislation: The problematic definition of what is extremist gives the organs of law enforcement a flexible legal tool to sanction people or organizations for adhering to "non-traditional" religions. The process by which print and audiovisual material are put on the federal list of banned materials remains intransparent and reflects, for the most part, arbitrary court decisions that take into account the recommendation of "experts" and prosecutors without pro-

found religious education. To make persecution of extremist literature more sanctified and comprehensive to the Muslim population, it is recommended to create a nexus between secular legislative structures and religious authorities who by virtue of their theological expertise could reduce the danger of misjudgment.

## Chronology

- **24.01.2017:** Russian minister of education publicly supports the decision of a school administration to prohibit the hijab at public schools, thereby unleashing a public debate.
- **02.02.2017:** Albir Krganov supports the claim of the Russian Orthodox Church on St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg, and draws a connection between the issue and the demand to return the historical mosque of Stavropol to the Muslim community.
- **31.03.2017:** Chechen parliament approves the wearing of hijabs at schools.
- **03.04.2017:** Ilias Nikitin is falsely portrayed by the media as the principal suspect after a terrorist bombing in St. Petersburg. The media witch hunt lasts days, stirring Islamophobic prejudices.
- **03.08.2017:** The Muslim community of Kalinigrad writes a letter of complaint to President Putin and the governor of Kaliningrad, demanding mediation in the conflict with the municipality over the construction of a mosque. In December, the community is given a provisional building at their disposal for the duration of a year.
- **31.08.2017:** The European Court for Human Rights receives a lawsuit by eight religious organizations who have been labeled extremist by Russian court decisions.
- **13.09.2017:** Complaint of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Bashkortostan against the municipality of Ufa for retaining and not resolving the discordance regarding the Muslim-City complex.
- **15.11.2017:** Anti-corruption activist and opposition leader Alexey Navalny tweets against a hijab-wearing Barbie doll, denouncing the hijab as a symbol of female oppression.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
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## Executive Summary

In 2017, from the socioeconomic aspect, there was no improvement in the general situation of ethnic minorities, which include those professing the Islamic confession, such as Bosniak, Albanian, Roma, Gorani, Egyptian, and others. What is particularly alarming is the aggressive revival of political parties, organizations and individuals that were active protagonists, ideological torchbearers and staunch supporters of the Serbian expansionist political agenda in the 1990s, who are responsible for the ethnic cleansing of Muslims that took place in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. In that context, we presently see that the National Parliament is absolutely dominated by political parties well-known for their long-time ultranationalist standpoints, which often manifests in a radical anti-Muslim stance. Likewise, in the Serbian government there are ministers, such as Aleksandar Vulin, Minister of Defense, and Nebojša Stefanović, Minister of the Interior, who often make statements which incite ethnic and hence religious hostilities both in the country and the region. In such a socio-political atmosphere, on several occasions we saw hate speech disseminated by media outlets either close to the ruling party or controlled by clero-nationalist organizations. Moreover, we are seeing a growing trend of such contents in cyberspace as well. This has a huge potential to significantly impact the youth who are predominantly turning to the Internet as a source of information. Warmongering and hate speech increased after actions taken by Bakir Izetbegović, Bosniak member of the tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovar leader Hashim Thaçi and Ramush Haradinaj, as well as the pronouncements and verdicts of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague. Likewise, in the entire public sphere, ranging from education to media, there is still a strong feeling of anti-Turkism which is spread through media writing about alleged Turkish expansionist plans in its foreign policy. In 2017, the verdict delivered against Ratko Mladić, who was convicted of war crimes and genocide in Srebrenica, and the tearing down of the mosque in the Zemun Polje neighbourhood, in Belgrade, which was carried out just before the month of Ramadan, were significant events.

## Izvršni rezime

U društveno-političkoj sferi tokom 2017. godine nije došlo do poboljšanja položaja nacionalnih zajednica koje su ujedno i islamske veroispovesti poput: Bošnjaka, Albanaca, Roma, Goranaca, Aškalija, Egipćana, i drugih. Ono što izuzetno zabrinjava jeste snažan povratak na scenu političkih partija, organizacija i pojedinaca koji su bili aktivni protagonisti, ili su pak idejno-vrednosni nastavljači, srbijanske ekspanzionističke političke ideologije iz 90tih godina koja je odgovorna za sprovođenje etničkog čišćenja nad muslimanima u Bosni i Hercegovini i na Kosovu. U tom kontekstu u republičkom parlamentu svedočimo apsolutnu dominaciju partija koje su poznate po dugogodišnjim ultra nacionalističkim stavovima, koji se neretko manifestuju i putem snažnih anti-muslimanskih narativa. Isto tako, i u samoj vladi pojedini ministri - poput Aleksandra Vulina ministra obrane i Nebojše Stefanovića ministra unutrašnjih poslova - često daju izjave koje potpiruju etničke, a samim time i verske, netrpeljivosti u državi i regionu. Usled takve društveno-političke klime u više navrata smo bili svedoci snažnog govora mržnje medijskih kuća koje su bliske vladajućoj koaliciji, ili su pak pod kontrolom klero-nacionalističkih organizacija. Takođe, ono što postaje sveprisutniji trend, jeste da je navedeni sadržaj u konstantnom porastu i u online sferi usled čega ima značajan potencijal da izvrši snažan uticaj na mlade koji se zarad informisanja prvenstveno koriste internetom. Govor mržnje i ratnohuškački narativi se po pravilu javljaju kao reakcija na delovanje Bakira Izetbegovića bošnjačkog člana Predsedništva Bosne i Hercegovine i kosovskih lidera Hašima Tačija i Ramuša Haradinaja, kao i na rad Haškog tribunala. Takođe, u svim sferama, od edukativne do medijske, i dalje je prisutna konstantna "turkofobija" koja se afirmiše putem pisanja o ekspanzionističkim namerama turske spoljne politike.

U izveštaju ćemo se osvrnuti i na presudu Ratku Mladiću koji je proglašen krivim za genocid u Srebrenici, kao i na rušenje džamije u Beogradu u naselju Zemun polje koje se desilo uoči početka Ramazanskog posta.

## Introduction

When speaking about the Balkans, religion is a central mark in racism due to the fact that ethnicities and religions have always been closely connected. Over time, prejudices against religion have evolved and turned into ethnically - or racially-based hatred. Only in such context can we comprehend the attitude taken by the Serbian government and institutional and systematic discrimination carried out in Serbia against ethnic minorities such as Bosniaks, Albanians and Roma, who also profess the Islamic religion.

In 2017, relations between Serbian and Kosovar state officials were characterized by a constantly heated atmosphere. There were also several conflicts which marked the relation between the Serbian government and Bakir Izetbegović, Bosniak member of the tripartite Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In such circumstances, the Serbian media often created an atmosphere of total psychosis, insinuating a possibility of more armed conflicts. Bearing in mind the Muslim legacy from the wars in the 1990s throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Sanjak region and Preshevo Valley, we can easily imagine what kind of pressure and insecurity the Muslims have to face in Serbia these days. In early 2017, the investigative journalism website Cenzolovka ([www.cenzolovka.rs](http://www.cenzolovka.rs)) published an analysis of the front pages of the Serbian daily papers. Some of the headlines were “Dečane Monastery Assaulted by ISIS”; “Wahhabists before the Gates of Belgrade”; “Islamists Aiming to Slaughter Serbian Priests”; “Shqiptars Are Preparing a Serbian Massacre”; “If You Want a War in Bosnia, That’s What You’re Going to Have”; “(Bosniaks) Want War and to Cut Serbian Throats”; and many more.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the openly warmongering discourse, nationally oriented media and ones under Russian influence regularly publish anti-Turkish articles about a neo-Ottoman threat, while emphasizing that Turkey is actively backing and supporting Kosovo in its struggle to gain full membership in international organizations.<sup>2</sup> If we bear in mind that the Serbian nationalist ideology has an extremely negative opinion about the historic period of Ottoman rule, and takes an aggressive stance on *poturice*, that is, Southern Slavs who converted to Islam, such discourse in the media always heats up the atmosphere, incites hostilities and calls for ethnic and religious distance from the Serbian Muslims. What’s more, there were two very important incidents that took place in 2017, namely, Ratko Mladić’s guilty verdict before the ICTY, and the demolition of a mosque in Belgrade on the eve of the month of Ramadan.

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1. Cenzolovka web-site, “Naslovnice dnevnih novina u Srbiji: horor, strah, užas, kraj...”, *cenzolovka.rs*, (January 26, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from <https://www.cenzolovka.rs/scena/naslovnice-dnevnih-novina-u-srbiji-horor-strah-uzas-kraj/>.

2. Kurir daily, “Neoosmanizam se ponovo vraća na Balkan: Turska lobira protiv Srbije zbog prijema KiM u UN-ESKO”, *kurir.rs* (February 24, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/2700529/neoosmanizam-se-ponovo-vraca-na-balkan-turska-lobira-protiv-srbije-zbog-prijema-kim-u-unesco>.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

In the political arena, what should be alarming is the fact that we are seeing a total revival of political parties and forces from the 1990s. All the parties that used to be the most important players on the socio-political stage in the period of aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Kosovo conflict are presently the strongest political parties in Serbia. This fact led to a reaffirmation of nationalist pretensions, as well as hate speech against Muslims in the public sphere. Likewise, with tacit approval from the ruling power structures, there are several extremist clero-nationalist organizations and groups that are active in the political and public sphere, such as *Obraz*,<sup>3</sup> *Zavetnici*,<sup>4</sup> *Serbian Popular Movement Naši*,<sup>5</sup> *Serbian Popular Movement 1389*,<sup>6</sup> as well as the parliamentary party *Serbian Movement Dveri*.<sup>7</sup> All aforementioned movements and organizations espouse a strong anti-Muslim narrative based on the idea that the Ottoman Turks are the archetypal Other, while Balkan Muslims stand for traitors of their forefathers' faith, which is the reason they were subsequently ethnically cleansed on several occasions in the 20th century. In general, these organizations and groups not only deny the crimes committed during the 1990s, but even go as far as to glorify such acts. As a result of the re-establishment of such a political environment, the Serbian Muslims, who mostly come from ethnic minorities such as Bosniaks and Albanians, are seen as potential enemies. In such a context, it should be pointed out that Serbia still hasn't managed to assume the responsibility for the genocide committed in Srebrenica, nor for the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians and the Bosniaks in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is absolutely necessary for the Serbian political leadership to unequivocally acknowledge and admit that the crimes perpetrated against Bosniaks in Srebrenica constitute genocide, as pointed out in the *Final Report on Serbia* by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).<sup>8 9</sup>

In 2017, there were a series of particular incidents which put a constant strain on the relation between Kosovo and Serbia, such as the arrest of Ramush Haradinaj

3. Available at <http://www.obraz.rs>.

4. Available at <http://zavetnici.rs>.

5. Available at <https://nasisrbija.org>.

6. Available at <http://www.snp1389.rs>.

7. Available at <https://dveri.rs>.

8. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "Final Report on Serbia (Fifth Monitoring Cycle)", *ljudskaprava.gov.rs*, retrieved January 17, 2018, from [http://www.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/sites/default/files/prilog\\_fajl/finalni\\_izvestaj\\_ekri\\_o\\_srbiji.pdf](http://www.ljudskaprava.gov.rs/sites/default/files/prilog_fajl/finalni_izvestaj_ekri_o_srbiji.pdf).

9. The English version of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance's "Report on Serbia (Fifth Monitoring Cycle)" is available at <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Serbia/SRB-CbC-V-2017-021-ENG.pdf>.

in France on the warrant for his arrest issued by the Republic of Serbia,<sup>10</sup> followed by the French government's decision to refuse to extradite Haradinaj to Serbia,<sup>11</sup> as well as a provocation by the Serbian regime in the form of the train labelled "Kosovo Is Serbia," whose interior was painted with Christian Orthodox images, which was supposed to travel on the Belgrade-Kosovska Mitrovica railway line.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, without any doubt, the most significant cause for deterioration in official relations were the parliamentary elections in Kosovo that were held in June 2017. The elections were won by Ramush Haradinaj, who has been accused by the Serbian authorities of committing war crimes against Serbian populations in the early 1990s.<sup>13</sup> Strained political relations between Kosovo and Serbia have a huge impact on the process of integration of Albanians living in Serbia. In the territory of Preshevo, Bujanovac and the Medvedja region, the Albanian population has been entirely ghettoized. They suffer systematic discrimination, with the aim of putting them in a hopeless situation and forcing them to emigrate. Because Albanians in Serbia are in such a position, the Mayor of Bujanovac Shaip Kamberi openly asked for help from Prishtina and Tirana, in order to prevent the ethnic cleansing that Serbia is presently carrying out by means other than arms. In his words, the ethnic cleansing of Albanians has been almost fully carried out in Medvedja, while the ethnic structure of the population in Bujanovac has been disrupted due to "difficulties that the Albanians face in education, as well as the overall bad economic situation."<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, the atmosphere was heated and harsh, and tactless political statements were exchanged between Sarajevo and Belgrade. The cause for such behaviour was found in statements made by Bakir Izetbegović, who said that with the aim of defending the integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina he was ready even to wage another war,<sup>15</sup> and also expressed his opinion that Bosnia and Herzegovina should recognize the independent Kosovo. Likewise, there was a series of extremely harsh statements

10. Informer daily, "UHAPŠEN HARADINAJ! Francuska policija privela bivšeg vođu OVK po poternici Srbije!" , *informer.rs* (January 4, 2017), retrieved January 16, 2018, from <http://informer.rs/vesti/politika/308742/uhapsen-haradinaj-francuska-policija-privela-bivseg-vodju-ovk-po-poternici-srbije>.

11. Informer, "NEMA PRAVDE! Odbijen zahtev Srbije - ZLOČINAC RAMUŠ HARADINAJ NA SLOBODI!!", *informer.rs*, (April 27, 2017), retrieved January 16, 2018, from <http://informer.rs/vesti/politika/327731/nema-pravde-odbijen-zahtev-srbije-zlocinac-ramus-haradinaj-na-slobodi>.

12. B92 website, "Vučić: Nećete me ubediti da su Gavrilo Princip i voz krivi", *b92.net*, (January 15, 2017), retrieved January 16, 2018, from [https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2017&mm=01&dd=15&nav\\_category=11&nav\\_id=1220559](https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2017&mm=01&dd=15&nav_category=11&nav_id=1220559).

13. Informer, "Srbima nudi četiri ministarstva,a šiptarima milion evra? Ramuš Haradinaj tvrdi da ima većinu za vladu u Prištini!", *informer.rs* (July 7, 2017), retrieved July 16, 2018, from <http://informer.rs/vesti/politika/338975/srbima-nudi-cetiri-ministarstva-a-siptarima-milione-evra-ramus-haradinaj-tvrdi-da-ima-vecinu-za-vladu-u-pristini>.

14. Bujanovačke daily, "Kamberi: diskriminacija Albanaca, tražimo pomoć Prištine i Tirane", *bujanovacke.co.rs* (June 25, 2017), retrieved January 16, 2018, from <http://bujanovacke.co.rs/2017/06/25/kamberi-diskriminacija-albanaca-u-preseskoj-dolini/>.

15. Politika daily, "Bakir Izetbegović opet kaže da je spreman za rat", *politika.rs* (November 19, 2017), retrieved January 17, 2018, from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/392876/Bakir-Izetbegovic-opet-kaze-da-je-spreman-za-rat>.

following the acquittal of Naser Orić before the State Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who was accused of committing war crimes against Serbian prisoners of war in 1992 in the Srebrenica vicinity.

Likewise, the Roma population in Serbia is living in extremely difficult conditions. At its 72nd plenary session, the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated that while according to data collected from the 2011 Census of Population there are 147,604 Roma living in Serbia, in reality their number is much higher, and this figure is actually approximately 600,000.<sup>16</sup> The reason for such a huge discrepancy is the fact that many Roma settlements have not been listed on the census, because according to data from the ECRI, as much as 72% of those settlements are still improvised informal housings and makeshift settlements.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the ECRI assessed that the Serbian government must invest much more in the process of Roma integration and the strengthening of their capacities. It concluded that it's not that there are no strategies and action plans in various areas and fields, but rather that the problem is that they are not implemented and followed. The commission also pointed out that the violence against the Roma is a lasting problem, and the police are often not open to hear complaints, especially when they come from members of the Roma population.<sup>19</sup>

## Justice System

In the legal system, what is most alarming is the process of rehabilitation of the leading people from the Chetniks' movement and a number of other individuals who were at the head of the Serbian collaborationist government during World War II. This process goes hand in hand with the aforementioned process of reaffirmation of the Serbian nationalist ideology. In 2017, the Higher Court in Valjevo rehabilitated Nikola Kalabić, Commander of the Oplenac Corps of the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland. It is believed that Kalabić was responsible for many assassinations and killings of both civilians and members of the Partisan movement, as well as Roma. The historian Milan Radanović cites a report from 1943 that was dispatched by Kalabić to Dragoljub Draža Mihajlović as evidence which makes manifest his position during World War II. It states, "In Kopljari, 24 active communists were captured while sleeping and slaughtered, among them 20 Gypsies, who confessed they were so-called *drygulchers*, who do their jobs at home by day, and go into clandestine ac-

16. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "Final Report on Serbia".

17. With regard to this census, it is important to point out that previous reports which tackled the issue of Islamophobia in Serbia failed to mention that the 2011 Census of Population was boycotted by Albanians from Preshevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja region, as well as a significant number of Bosniaks who followed former Sandžak Mufti Muamer Zukorlić's call for a boycott. The Albanian boycott has significant political implications, given that in many cases, the Serbian authorities take advantage of the fact that in the Preshevo Valley only 5,809 Albanians were listed on the census, although their number is much higher, as testified by the fact that 61,647 people were listed in the 2002 Census.

18. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "Final Report on Serbia".

19. Ibid.

tions at night. I slaughtered them all.”<sup>20</sup> This case of legal rehabilitation was only the latest in a series of similar court decisions, the most glaring of which was the rehabilitation of Dragoljub Draža Mihajlović, leader of the Chetniks’ movement, back in 2015. The consequences that such court decisions might have were also highlighted by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its report, which emphasized that the rehabilitation of those who were responsible for mass killings and deportation of Bosniaks, Albanians and Roma during World War II cannot possibly result in a feeling of security among the aforementioned ethnic minorities and general stability in the region.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to the problems regarding cases of legal rehabilitation, the ECRI in its report also highlighted that the process of legal trials and the sentencing of those indicted for war crimes and genocide committed in the 1990s is progressing very slowly, while persons who are high-ranking officials are not tried at all for war crimes. Likewise, in its opinion, the document on genocide denial is rather restrictive in its definition.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Serbian Muslims still live in insecurity and fear that there might be a new wave of hate crimes. In the stated report, the ECRI also underlined that the implementation of laws prohibiting hate speech is ineffective and no measures are taken against racist and hooligan groups, while according to the presently applicable Serbian laws the incitement of hate against groups living outside of Serbia is not punishable.

In addition to the ECRI report, two other significant and comprehensive surveys were carried out. These surveys about the wars in the 1990s, which were published in August and December respectively, clearly showed the extent of unawareness and lack of information among citizens about crimes committed during the wars in the 1990s, as well as the inefficiency of the Serbian public authorities in prosecuting those who are responsible. Upon the request of daily *Danas*, Demostat Research and Publishing Centre conducted a survey in August entitled *Awareness of Serbian Citizens about the Wars in the 1990s, War Crimes and Trials of Those Indicted for War Crimes*, while in December the Humanitarian Law Centre published its research entitled *Initial Report on the Implementation of the National Strategy for War Crimes Prosecution*.<sup>23</sup>

Without any doubt, the most important event in 2017 was the sentencing of the former Commander of the Chief of Staff of the Army of Republic of Srpska Ratko Mladić for the genocide committed in the Srebrenica area by the International

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20. Insajder, “Istoričar Milan Radanović za Insajder: Kontinuitet skandaloznih presuda o rehabilitaciji”, *insajder.net* (May 28, 2017) retrieved January 17, 2018 from <https://insajder.net/sr/sajt/tema/4929/>.

21. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), “Final Report on Serbia”.

22. Ibid.

23. Research is available at [http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Istrazivanje\\_javnog\\_mnjenja\\_Sudjenja\\_za\\_ratne\\_zlocine\\_Demostat\\_logo\\_EU\\_i\\_Svajcarska\\_ambasada.pdf](http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Istrazivanje_javnog_mnjenja_Sudjenja_za_ratne_zlocine_Demostat_logo_EU_i_Svajcarska_ambasada.pdf) i [http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Izvestaj\\_Strategija\\_I.pdf](http://www.hlc-rdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Izvestaj_Strategija_I.pdf).

Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). Mladić was sentenced to life in prison for genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of laws and customs of war perpetrated by the Serbian forces during the armed conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, the reactions coming from the Serbian public authorities, but also from the opposition parties, were inappropriate, to say the least. They emphasized the fact that according to this verdict, the Serbian state has been amnestied for the crimes committed in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. There was no one to comment on the verdict itself passed against Ratko Mladić. All political parties save the Liberal Democratic Party gave neutral or ambivalent press releases. On the other hand, the media hailed it as a victory, so to say, for righting the wrong and the “injustice that the Hague Tribunal has been doing to the Serbian state all these years.” Needless to say, politicians coming from the extreme right-wing of the political spectrum went even further in their statements glorifying the achievements of Ratko Mladić. For instance, the leader of the parliamentary Serbian Movement Dveri, Boško Obradović, stated that “for him, Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić are Serbian heroes, and should be on the front pages of every school history textbook.”<sup>24</sup> Likewise, as an open supporter and advocate of war policies in the 1990s, the Serbian Orthodox Church remained firm in its position. Among other comments, the Serbian Patriarch Irinej said that the verdict against Ratko Mladić was the result of “powerful rulers of the world doing their devilish deeds, while we suffer the consequences.”<sup>25</sup> The reactions of all aforementioned protagonists in the socio-political sphere and the way in which the media reported the conviction should come as no surprise as they are a consequence of the fact highlighted at the very beginning of this report, namely that there is a systematic reaffirmation of the Serbian nationalist ideology which, starting in the 19th century until the present day, has been promoting strong expansionist ideas and narratives of confrontation with other nationalities in the Balkans.

## Employment

With regard to employment, ethnic minorities have been persistently facing problems for many decades. According to data published in 2015 by the Serbian public authorities, the unemployment rate is 17.7%. However, although no official information is available, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated that according to their knowledge, in the regions with predominantly Muslim population, such as Sandžak and the Preshevo Valley, the unemployment rate is as high as 70%. Moreover, there is not a single member from the Roma ethnic minority in major bodies in public administration and services, which also

24. Boško Obradović's statement is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQ18CdffKS8>.

25. B92, “Patrijarh Irinej: Presuda Mladiću je delo đavola”, *b92.net*, retrieved January 17, 2018 from [https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2017&mm=11&dd=24&nav\\_category=11&nav\\_id=1328837](https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2017&mm=11&dd=24&nav_category=11&nav_id=1328837)

have very low level of representation of members of other Muslim minorities.<sup>26</sup> In addition, at the press conference entitled “Roma Women in Serbia – Achievements, Challenges and Perspectives,” which took place in Belgrade, it was emphasized that there is enormous discrimination against Roma women, who live in extremely difficult conditions. On that occasion, Deputy Protector of Citizens Gordana Stevanović particularly shed light on and stressed that field work, carried out in Roma makeshift settlements, show that Roma women do not trust the state and its system, which makes the process of their integration even more difficult.<sup>27</sup>

## Education

In the field of education, Muslim ethnic minorities face significant problems. Bosniak and Albanian communities constantly deal with problems regarding textbooks for primary and secondary schools in their native languages. In addition, there are significant problems when forming classes at schools in cases when the entire education is carried out in Bosnian and Albanian languages. Furthermore, Islamic religious education in schools is another issue which is a huge problem that persists ever since it was introduced back in 2001. According to statements made by representatives of the Islamic Community of Serbia, there is systematic discrimination against Muslims, as well as an entire range of practices which hinder and obstruct the implementation of the law on religious education for Muslim children.<sup>28</sup> However, it is the members of the Roma population who face the greatest problems of all. According to data provided by the ECRI, only 6% of Roma children enrol in preschool and nursery schools, while 46% of them complete mandatory primary school education, and a meager 13% attend secondary schools, with boys twice as many as girls.

Also worth mentioning is the long-standing problem of the distorted representation of the Ottoman period and the depiction of the basics of Islamic faith and culture in general in history textbooks for elementary schools in the Serbian language.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, in the context of education, we should pay attention to another incident. The case in question was a lecture given at the Military Academy in Belgrade by Vladimir Lazarević, retired colonel general of the Third Corps of the Yugoslav Army and former commander of the Prishtina Corps, who was convicted of war crimes before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). This incident provoked strong reactions from Federica Mogherini, high representative of

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26. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), “Final Report on Serbia”.

27. N1 Serbia TV channel, “Položaj Romkinja u Srbiji se popravlja, ali ima još posla” *rs.n1info.com*, retrieved January 17, 2018 from <http://rs.n1info.com/a241375/Vesti/Vesti/Polozaj-Romkinja-u-Srbiji.html>.

28. For more information about Islamic religious education in Serbia see: Ivan Ejub Kostić, “Serbia” Scharbrodt, O. (ed.) *Year of Muslims in Europe, Volume 8* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 603.

29. Internet bilten, “Vidovdanska etika poturčenjaci i milosnice. Veliki narativ Srbije u udžbeniku istorije Radoša Ljušica”, *interbilten.com* (September 18, 2017) retrieved January 17, 2018 from <http://www.internetbilten.com/istrazivanje/item/48-vidovdanska-etika-poturcenjaci-i-milosnice-veliki-narativ-srbije-u-udzbeniku-istorije-radosa-ljusica.html>.

the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, as well as non-governmental organizations and several opposition leaders who stated that it is unacceptable that a man convicted of war crimes gives lectures to future soldiers.<sup>30</sup>

## Media

There is no doubt that Serbian media are the biggest generator of hate speech and the source that motivates hate toward the other. The best evidence for this can be found in the aforementioned research carried out by Cenzolovka, a website dedicated to investigative journalism, which was already mentioned in the introductory part of this report. Those headlines speak for themselves and bear sufficient testimony to the creation of an atmosphere of hate. The tabloid *Informer* is the newspaper that definitely has the leading role in the creation of such an atmosphere, but also many other daily newspapers do the same. Regarding the *Informer*, the tabloid is considered to be a pro-government newspaper that is an additional reason to worry and fear.

Examples of front pages of daily newspapers in Serbia can be found in Figures 1-6.



Figure 1: The *Informer* states, "ISIS Is Planning Attacks on Serbian Monasteries."<sup>31</sup>



Figure 2: The *Informer*: "Bakir Wants to Slaughter Again."<sup>32</sup>

30. Politika, "EU protiv toga da general Lazarević predaje na Vojnoj akademiji", *politika.rs* (October 30, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/391678/EU-protiv-toga-da-general-Lazarevic-predaje-na-Vojnoj-akdemiji>.

31. Telegraf, „NASLOVNE STRANE DANAŠNJIH NOVINA: Prelistavanje štampe za 5. januar 2017. godine”, *Telegraf*, retrieved January 5, 2017, from <http://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/2548081-naslovne-strane-sutrasnjih-novina-prelistavanje-stampe-za-5-januar-2017-godine>.

32. N1, „Naslovnice medija u Srbiji u znaku Izetbegovića (FOTO)”, *N1*, retrieved November 14, 2017, from <http://ba.n1info.com/a226588/Svijet/Regija/Naslovnice-medija-u-Srbiji-u-znaku-Izetbegovica-FOTO.html>.



Figure 3: The daily Kurir: "Bakir Spat on the dill with Serbia; 300 Jihadists Came Back to the Region."<sup>33</sup>



Figure 4: Informer: "Erdoğan Is Preparing Rama and Thaci for War!"<sup>34</sup>



Figure 5: Srpski Telegraf: "Erdoğan Is Giving Airplanes to Thaci to Exterminate Serbs."<sup>35</sup>



Figure 6: Informer: "(Ramush Haradinaj) We Will Slaughter Serbian Children."<sup>36</sup>

33. Bportal, „Skandal Izetbegovicu Interesi bih Vazniji od Srbije”, *Bportal*, retrieved December 7, 2017, from <http://bportal.ba/skandal-izetbegovicu-interesi-bih-vazniji-od-srbije/>.

34. BKTV, „Naslovne strane dnevnih listova: Prelistavanje štampe za 26. april 2017. godine!”, *BKTV*, retrieved April 26, 2017, from <http://www.bktvnews.com/info/drustvo/naslovne-strane-dnevnih-listova-prelistavanje-stampe-za-26-april-2017-godine/105415>.

35. SD, „Pogledajte šta ćete danas čitati u dnevnoj štampi!”, *SD*, retrieved from February 20, 2017, from <https://www.srbijadanas.com/vesti/info/pogledajte-sta-cete-sutra-citati-u-dnevnoj-stampi-2017-02-09>.

36. “SAMO U INFORMERU! STRAVIČNE PRETNJE KLANA HARADINAJ: Klacemo srpsku decu!”, *Informer*, retrieved May 11, 2017, from <http://informer.rs/vesti/srbija/329978/samo-u-informeru-stravicne-pretnje-klana-haradinaj-klacemo-srpsku-decu>.

In its report, the ECRI also highlighted this problem, pointing this out as one of its key findings.<sup>37</sup> Hate speech observable in public discourse is blatant and primarily directed against minority groups, resorting to ultranationalist commonplaces, which, in turn, result in pervasive fear and the feeling among Serbian Muslims that they are being discriminated against. Hate speech also leads to the growing insecurity in the entire region. The ECRI also stated that the hate speech which is presently evident in the media brings back memories of the discourse used on the eve of the wars in the 1990s, which paved the way for subsequent ethnic cleansings and genocide.<sup>38</sup> The best evidence for this can be found in public surveys which for many years now show that there is a large ethnic distance separating Serbian Muslims from the dominant majority population. However, apart from such openly warmongering discourse, there is another issue that is blatantly apparent in the media: the strong feeling of anti-Turkism. (Figs. 4 and 5) Nationally oriented media and those under Russian influence, such as *Sputnik* and *Vostok*, have the leading role in the circulation of such contents and regularly publish anti-Turkish articles about the supposed neo-Ottoman threat.<sup>39</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Without any doubt, the most significant incident that happened in 2017 was the demolition of the mosque in the Zemun Polje neighborhood in Belgrade, which took place during Jumu'ah, just before the Ramadan fasting period. The mosque was torn down by fully armed members of the Special Operations Unit of the Serbian Police Forces.<sup>40</sup> What's more, the mosque in Zemun Polje is a congregational place mostly for members of the Roma and Ashkali population, who are the most vulnerable communities. However, they had still managed to gather funds on their own to build a mosque in their neighborhood. As the reason for the destruction of the mosque, the city authorities stated that it lacked the necessary building permission. However, further investigation revealed that the vast majority of the existing buildings in Zemun Polje lack building permissions, a fact that makes it evident that the city authorities have double standards. In this context, it is important to emphasize that, as pointed out by the Belgrade Mufti Mustafa Jusufspahić, the Islamic Community of Serbia has not been given a single permission to construct its buildings (not only mosques) in the past 47

37. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "Final Report on Serbia".

38. Ibid.

39. Kurir, "Neoosmanizam se ponovo vraća na Balkan: Turska lobira protiv Srbije zbog prijema KiM u UNESKO", *kurir.rs* (February 24, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/2700529/neoosmanizam-se-ponovo-vraca-na-balkan-turska-lobira-protiv-srbije-zbog-prijema-kim-u-unesko>.

40. A video of the demolition of the mosque in Zemun Polje is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ameWxggjGZo>.

years.<sup>41</sup> In addition to the destruction of the mosque, there was another incident, the latest in a long series of disturbances provoked by football hooligans at stadium terraces. On July 11, the day of the annual commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, Belgrade's football club Partizan played a qualifier for the UEFA Champions League against FC Budućnost from Podgorica, Montenegro. During the match, FC Partizan fans, dubbed *Grobari* (Gravediggers), cheered in support of General Ratko Mladić, who was convicted of the genocide committed against the Bosniak population in Srebrenica. In a similar vein, Partizan fans also called the opponent players by derogatory names, calling them *Shqiptars*.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in the football match that Novi Pazar FC played against Budućnost FC from Dobanovci, currently in the second tier of Serbia's football league, home fans cheered in approval of the genocide perpetrated in Srebrenica.

There were two other incidents worth mentioning. The first relates to racist graffiti in the city of Kragujevac targeting Romas. "A knife in the neck of Romas," was written.<sup>43</sup> The second incident occurred in the city of Niš during the screening of the documentary movie *Albanke su naše sestre* (Albanian Women Are Our Sisters).<sup>44</sup>

## Internet

At the moment, the Internet is the sphere where hate speech is most prominently displayed. In recent years, we have seen a plethora of websites, Facebook pages and YouTube channels such as Nationalist,<sup>45</sup> Patriot,<sup>46</sup> Vidovdan,<sup>47</sup> Serbian Honour,<sup>48</sup> Balkan Info<sup>49</sup> and many more that are popping up and spreading hate and hostility against Muslims. In addition to the aforementioned websites, there are media outlets, which are openly funded by Russia, such as Sputnik<sup>50</sup> and Vostok,<sup>51</sup> which constantly and conspicuously publish articles that only exacerbate the Kosovo-Serbia conflict and stir up the irredentist plans of the Bosnian Serbs.

41. A statement of the Belgrade Mufti Mustafa Jusufspahić is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eb4ZRJhDens>

42. Info-ks website, "Beograd: Grobari skandirali Ratku Mladiću, a podgoričanima vikali "Šiptari"" , *info-ks.net* (July 12, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from <http://www.info-ks.net/vijesti/regija/80343/beograd-grobari-skandirali-ratku-mladicu-a-podgoricanima-vikali-siptari-video>.

43. Danas, "Osudili rasističke grafite", *danas.rs*, (November 13, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from [http://www.danas.rs/drustvo.55.html?news\\_id=362091&title=Osudili+rasisti%c4%8dke+grafite](http://www.danas.rs/drustvo.55.html?news_id=362091&title=Osudili+rasisti%c4%8dke+grafite).

44. Blic, "Incident na projekciji filma „Albanke su naše sestre“", *blic.rs*, (June 22, 2017), retrieved January 14, 2018, from <https://www.blic.rs/vesti/srbija/incident-na-projekciji-filma-albanke-su-nase-sestre-u-nisu/4kw1lxh>.

45. Available at <http://www.nacionalist.rs>.

46. Available at <http://patriot.rs>.

47. Available at <https://www.vidovdan.org>.

48. Available at <https://www.facebook.com/SrpskaCast.rs/>.

49. Balkan Info's official YouTube channel has 70,000 subscribers. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLG5Qu54Q7gywaCeDs5etuQ>

50. Available at <http://sputnik.rs>.

51. Available at <http://www.vostok.rs>.

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The ruling coalition should be considered the most responsible for Serbia's current situation. Apart from the fact that it does little to suppress hate speech, it is evident that the pro-regime media, as well as ultranationalist groups and organizations with which the ruling political parties share close ties, such as the 1389 Movement, the Serbian Popular Movement Naši, Obraz and many others, enjoy tacit support and approval by the government to carry out their actions which spread and incite national, ethnic and religious hostilities and hatred.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In Serbia there are no NGOs or any initiatives dedicated to the suppression and monitoring of hate and hostilities against Muslims.<sup>52</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

We are currently witnessing a process of reaffirmation of all the parties and personalities that, over the past thirty years, have been either ideologues or executors of the Serbian policies directly responsible for the wars in the 1990s. In such an atmosphere, the conditions of the Muslim population are far from satisfactory. It is therefore only natural to ask what Serbian Muslims can expect in the future and how will the general political situation be reflected onto their position. We can say that, following the October 5 overthrow of Milošević's regime and the ensuing democratic changes from 2000, what we are now seeing is a sort of counter-revolution. The progress made in the socio-political sphere and in the field of adoption of various sets of laws that went in conjunction with Serbia's process of European integration is now increasingly questioned and remains a moot point. The existing laws are most often not implemented, while Muslims, in particular Albanians, still feel as second-class citizens. However, as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated in its report, it is the Roma who are in the worst position. The Roma population has to cope with extreme poverty, low level of education, and deep-rooted prejudices against them.<sup>53</sup> Systematic, institutional discrimination against Bosniaks, Albanians and Roma which goes hand in hand with the revival of

52. In this report we didn't deal with the problem of the Islamic Community because of the limited space. The problem of the Islamic Community is an extremely serious legal issue which has lasted for decades now. The government is exploiting the division inside the Islamic Community. One of the main reasons for this is that as long as the Islamic Community is divided the government doesn't have to follow through with the restitution of the Islamic Communities' properties.

53. We don't have the exact percentage of Roma who are Muslim. There are opinions that have more than half of the Roma population professing to the Islamic religion. Unfortunately, as was stated at the beginning of the report, the problem with the Roma population is that they mainly live in informal settlements. In most cases, they don't own personal documents and therefore it is impossible to identify the exact number of Roma living in Serbia. The last census in 2011 showed that 147,604 Roma are living in Serbia. In reality, their number is much higher - approximately 600,000.

far-right forces and warmongering media reporting packed with hate speech surely cannot lead to any improvement.

At this moment, any specific recommendations must be focused on the strengthening of the civil society and civic initiatives which could provide counter-narratives to the exclusivist and nationalist mainstream policies in Serbia. Furthermore, steps should be taken in order to establish non-governmental organizations and initiatives that would specialize on Islamophobia issues so as to monitor and provide concrete support and answers to hate speech and biased policies directed against Muslims.

Likewise, it is of equal importance to help in the establishment of alternative media sources of information. In the first place, this goes for the online sphere, as the latest surveys show that more than 90% of young people have accounts on social networks and they use the Internet to inform themselves on socio-political questions.

## Chronology

- **14.01.2017:** Provocation by the Serbian regime in the form of the train labelled “Kosovo Is Serbia,” whose interior was painted with Christian Orthodox images, which was supposed to travel on the Belgrade-Kosovska Mitrovica railway line.
- **26.05.2017:** Demolition of the mosque in the Zemun Polje neighbourhood in Belgrade.
- **22.11.2017:** Ratko Mladić sentenced for the genocide committed in the Srebrenica area. Mladić was sentenced to life in prison for genocide, crimes against humanity and violations of laws and customs of war perpetrated by the Serbian forces during the armed conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**SLOVAKIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

In 2017, expressions of Islamophobia were transferred from social networks directly to the Slovak Parliament. At the turn of 2016/2017, a law was negotiated, which effectively prevents the registration of new churches and religious communities in Slovakia. Meanwhile, broadcasters of Islamophobic views receive more media space, mainly because of the repeated terrorist activities in Europe, but they are also greatly helped by the fact that right-wing extremists have entered parliament for the first time since 1989. The Islamophobic narrative was part of most of the discussions in the parliament, which concerned the Registration Act and discussions on banning the building of mosques in Slovakia, but also in topics related to migration or the future of the European Union.

Many politicians (the ruling coalition and a large part of the opposition) who gave voice to Islamophobic narratives were active in media communication, communication with voters on social networks, and were also vocal during the election campaign before the regional self-government (VÚC) elections. Most politicians in Slovakia are still ignoring the fact that Muslims are citizens of the Slovak Republic and that they have the same rights and obligations - usually they are irresponsibly associated with terrorism, migration, and are labeled as a security threat to Slovakia. Among the manifestations of Islamophobia in Slovakia in 2017 were also the activities of minority Christian organizations (Lev XIII Institute, Magnificat, etc.) that spread myths about the Islam or repeatedly called for the ban on mosques and burkas. The trend of discrimination against Muslims in Slovakia has also been noticed by the U.S. Department of State, which in a report on religious freedom in the world stated that there is a disparity in the approach to religious rights in Slovakia.

A positive change is that the President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska stood up for Muslims in his New Year's speech. However, the presence of positive attitudes towards Muslims is still marginal.

## Zhrnutie

Verejné prejavy islamofóbie sa v rokoch 2016 a 2017 preniesli zo sociálnych sietí na pôdu slovenského parlamentu, v ktorom sa na prelome rokov 2016/2017 prerokovával zákon, ktorý fakticky znemožnil registráciu nových cirkví a náboženských spoločností na Slovensku. Šíritelia islamofóbných názorov dostávajú väčší mediálny priestor, najmä kvôli opakovaným aktivitám teroristov v Európe, no výrazne im v tom pomáha tiež fakt, že sa do parlamentu, po prvýkrát od roku 1989, dostali pravicoví extrémisti. Islamofóbný naratív bol v parlamente súčasťou väčšiny diskusií, ktoré sa týkali zákona o registrácii, resp. diskusie o zákaze výstavby mešít na Slovensku, ale aj tém zameraných na migráciu či budúcnosť Európskej únie.

Mnohí politici (vládnej koalície a veľkej časti opozície) islamofóbný naratív využívali aj v mediálnej komunikácii, v komunikácií s voličmi na sociálnych sieťach a tiež počas volebnej kampane pred voľbami do regionálnych samospráv (VÚC). Väčšina politikov na Slovensku ešte stále ignoruje fakt, že muslimovia sú občanmi Slovenskej republiky, že majú rovnaké práva a povinnosti; zvyčajne ich nezodpovedne spájajú s terorizmom, migráciou a označujú ich za bezpečnostnú hrozbu pre Slovensko. Súčasťou prejavov islamofóbie na Slovensku v roku 2017 boli aj aktivity minoritných kresťanských organizácií (Inštitút Leva XIII, Magnificat a pod.), ktoré šíрили mýty o islame, či opakovane vyzývali k zákazu mešít a buriek. Trend diskriminácie moslimov na Slovensku si všimlo aj Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí USA, ktoré v správe o náboženskej slobode vo svete konštatovalo, že na Slovensku existuje nerovnosť v prístupe k náboženským právam.

Pozitívnu zmenou je to, že sa moslimov na Slovensku vo svojom novoročnom príhovore zastal prezident republiky Andrej Kiska. Počet pozitívnych postojov k moslimom je však stále marginálny.

## Introduction

The turn of 2016 and 2017 saw the culmination of the parliamentary debate on draft law No. 308/1991 Coll. This draft law has toughened the registration of churches and religious communities and was submitted by members of the government of the Slovak National Party (SNS). The President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska refused to sign it.<sup>1</sup> In consonance with the parliamentary anti-Islamic debate, were certain publications in media and the content of similarly focused websites and groups with extremist references on social networks.

At the beginning of 2017, the president of the Slovak Republic stood up for Muslims in his New Year's speech, and also the Minister of the Interior of the Slovak Republic Kaliňák expressed his positive support for cooperation with the Muslim community.<sup>2</sup> However, this has not prevented the re-ratification of legislation that has deepened the unequal position of Muslims in Slovak society. In February 2017, an opposition MP Milan Krajniak (We Are Family) submitted a draft of amendments to laws which wanted to ban the construction of mosques in Slovakia.<sup>3</sup> Although the NR SR (Národná rada Slovenskej republiky – National Council of the Slovak Republic) did not approve the drafts, there still were some voices present in parliament propagating Islamophobic narratives.

Between February and August 2017, some extremist organizations organized public screenings of films and debates primarily focused on the Islamization of Europe and Slovakia.<sup>4</sup>

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Important events in the context of Islamophobic activities in Slovakia included the parliamentary debate on the change of the law on the registration of churches and religious communities in Slovakia; the parliamentary debate on the proposal to ban the building of mosques in Slovakia; the activities of extremist organizations disseminating negative narratives about Islam and Muslims; and the electoral campaign before the election of regional self-governments.

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1. ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Andrej Kiska: Taký vysoký počet osôb na registráciu cirkvi miery proti ľudskej dôstojnosti", *IslamOnline.sk*, (December 21, 2016), retrieved January 6, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2016/12/andrej-kiska-tak-vysoky-pocet-osob-na-registraciu-cirkvi-mieri-proti-ludskej-dostojnosti/>.

2. ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Prezident vnovoročnom prejave hovoril o nenávisti na internete. Zastal sa muslimov i Rómov", *IslamOnline.sk*, (January 1, 2017), retrieved January 6, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/01/prezident-v-novorocnom-prejave-hovoril-o-nenavisti-na-internete-zastal-sa-muslimov-i-romov/>.

3. Eugen Korda, "Milan Krajniak chce zakázať výstavbu mešit", *.tyždeň*, (February 28, 2017), retrieved January 6, 2018, from <https://www.tyzden.sk/politika/37448/milan-krajniak-chce-zakazat-stavbu-mesit/>.

4. ISLAMONLINE.sk, "Farnosťi po celom Slovensku zaplavili knihy vykresľujúce proroka Muhammada ako predchodcu antikrista", *IslamOnline.sk*, (August 8, 2017) retrieved January 6, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/08/farnos-ti-po-celom-slovensku-zaplavili-knihy-vykreslujuce-proroka-muhammada-ako-predchodcu-antikrista/>.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

At the beginning of 2017, there were some echoes of parliamentary debate on an amendment to Act No.308/1991 Coll. about the freedom of religious belief and the status of churches and religious communities. In this parliamentary debate, many dishonoring sentences against Muslims were uttered. They were present in the speeches of both deputies of the extremist party K-LSNS and deputies of the political party We Are Family – Boris Kollar (SR-BK). Some of these sentences were examined by the Mandate and Immunity Parliamentary Committee, which in December 2016 decided to punish deputies Mazurek and Mizik (K-LSNS). They were supposed to apologize for their words about Islam and Muslims in the next parliamentary meeting in January 2017. Stanislav Mizik had claimed that Islam is the “satanic-pedophile work of the Devil,” while Milan Mazurek had stated that Islam is a “cruel, disgusting and anti-human system.”<sup>5</sup> Instead of apologizing, these two deputies have continued to spread Islamophobic narratives. They have claimed, “Islam is permitting pedophilia, bestiality, even necrophilia...Islam is nothing more than the work of the Devil” (Mazurek).<sup>6</sup> Jaromir Ciznar, general prosecutor of the Slovak Republic, has taken note of these expressions of the deputies of the K-LSNS and proposed to revoke their parliamentary immunity. He also proposed the dissolution of the political party Kotleba – LS NS; at the moment this is being decided at the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic.<sup>7</sup>

Another political party that spread Islamophobia in Slovakia was party We Are Family – Boris Kollar. In February 2017, its deputy Milan Krajniak submitted to parliament a bill of amendments aimed at banning the building of mosques in Slovakia. Krajniak’s “Law on Mosque Ban” was supposed to be an amendment to two laws: Act No. 50/1976 Coll. (the so-called ‘Building Act’) and Act No. 308/1991 Coll., which advocates the freedom of religious belief and the status of churches and religious communities. In the law on building, he proposed to incorporate a condition that would permit the building of a religious building only if the applicant provides evidence that the church or religious community is registered under Act No. 308/1991 Coll. In the act on the status of religious societies, he proposed to change

5. AKTUALITY.sk, “Poslanci Matovič, Mazurek a Mizik sa za hanlivé výroky neospravedlnili”, *aktuality.sk*, (February 1, 2017), retrieved January 6, 2018, from <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/411638/poslanci-matovic-mazurek-a-mizik-sa-za-hanlive-vyroky-neospravedlnili/>.

6. Video of parliament session. Speech by MP Mazurek (February 1, 2017) retrieved January 6, 2018 available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRW-W-Eav6M>.

7. AKTUALITY.sk, “Čižnár: Extrémistickým prejavom v NRSR zabráni zrušenie imunity”, *aktuality.sk*, (February 1, 2017) retrieved January 6, 2018, from <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/411743/ciznar-extremistickym-prejavom-v-nrsr-zabrani-zrusenie-imunity/>.

the registration procedure so that newly registered religious communities first need the opinion of the Slovak Information Service (SIS) in order to determine whether they pose a security risk to the country.<sup>8</sup>

On Wednesday, April 5, 2017, the “Draft of Milan Krajniak” (SR-BK) passed the parliament’s deliberations. It aims to legally prohibit the building of religious buildings by unregistered churches and religious communities.

The Chairman of K-LSNS Marian Kotleba made the following observations on the to the law of amendment: “It doesn’t solve the main cause, because there are Zionistic politicians, many of them raised in synagogues, who have brought here those Muslims, who promote multicultural politics of open borders and refuse to admit, that the only thing, that can help us, is restoration of the country borders of the member states of the European Union, Slovakia being one of the first ones.”<sup>9</sup> The only positive feature of the whole process was that only 11 members voted for the proposal, 48 against, and unconventionally, more than a half of deputies, 77, abstained.<sup>10</sup>

The issue of the threat of the Islamization of Slovakia appeared again with the election campaign for regional governments. In Banska Bystrica, the candidate of SaS Martin Klus was given special attention by the right wing.<sup>11</sup> He was accused of alleged support for the Islamization of Slovakia, as he stood up for Muslims living in Slovakia during parliamentary debates. In Zilina, a former deputy for SMER-SD and an independent candidate ran his campaign on the promise of the protection of the region from migrants (especially Muslims).<sup>12</sup> In Nitra, the K-LSNS candidate tried to appeal to those who believe the region needs to be protected from Muslims, who, in this case, included Syrian Christians from Iraq.

## Justice System

Since 2017, legislation in Slovakia has been tightened since the NR SR approved the amendment to Act No. 308/1991 Coll. Within its framework: (a) the number of signatures necessary for the registration of churches and religious communities

8. ISLAMONLINE.sk, “Strana Borisa Kollára predloží návrh na zákaz stavby mešít.”, *IslamOnline.sk*, (February 28, 2017) retrieved January 6, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/02/strana-borila-kollara-predlozi-navrh-na-zakaz-stavby-mesit-oznamil-to-dnes-ich-posledny-kriziak/>.

9. ISLAMONLINE.sk, “Od volieb v parlamente hanobili muslimov a islám už štyrikrát. Naposledy včera”, *IslamOnline.sk*, (April 6, 2017) retrieved January 7, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/04/od-volieb-v-parlamente-hanobili-muslimov-a-islam-uz-styrikrat-naposledy-vcera/>.

10. Result of the vote on the proposal of MP Krajniak according to the page of the National Council of the Slovak Republic available at <http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=schodze/hlasovanie/hlasklub&ID=38580>.

11. Vladimír Šnidl, “Kotlebovci vtahujú do župných volieb migrantov, z Klusa urobili hovorcu islamu”, *dennikn.sk*, (July 12, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018, from <https://dennikn.sk/820573/kotlebovci-vtahuju-do-zupnych-volieb-migrantov-z-klusa-vyrobili-hovorcu-islam/>.

12. Pavol Konštiak, “Kandidát na župana chce bojovať proti migrantom: V našej župe ich nechceme!” *Plus 1 deň*, (August 30, 2017), retrieved January 7, 2018, from <https://www1.pluska.sk/Regiony/Stredne-Slovensko/Kandidat-na-zupana-chce-bojovat-proti-migrantom-V-nasej-zupe-ich-nehceme>.

in Slovakia has increased from originally 20,000 to 50,000; (b) the condition has been confirmed that the signatories must be citizens of the Slovak Republic who are members of a church or a religious community; (c) signatories must confirm their signature by submitting their personal data. These conditions of registration are discriminatory because of all 18 registered churches and religious societies in the Slovak Republic, only four churches and religious communities currently fulfill these requirements. Out of 18, thirteen fail to fill the original registration requirement, i.e. 20,000 believers.<sup>13</sup>

## Employment

We have not recorded any significant Islamophobic instances that could be labeled as discriminatory in the context of employment of Muslims in Slovak workplaces in 2017.

## Education

As a part of standard teaching in most Slovak schools, insufficient space is provided to clarify the contribution of Muslim civilization to modern medicine, natural science, or philosophy. There is no mention of the contribution of Arabic travel books to the reconstruction of the history of Central and Eastern Europe in the early middle Ages. In Slovakia, we do not even teach anything about the Muslim communities of early Hungary (for example, around Nitra) or the contributions of the Tatars, who settled in the territory of today's Poland, Lithuania and Belarus, to the Polish army and society.<sup>14</sup> All this creates a space for the rooting and growth of Islamophobia in Slovak and Central European societies.

In the context of the phenomenon of Islamophobia in Slovakia, the most significant problem is the lack of access for young people to education about the historical presence of Muslims in Slovakia and their contribution to our present. An example of this could be the teaching of the Ottoman presence in Hungary, which in the history or literature classes is primarily presented in a negative narrative. In the (extremely brief) presentation of this period, only works of Romantic writers from the late 18th and 19th centuries are used, with no analysis of the historical contemporary context, whether the political chaos of the 16th and 17th centuries or the formation period, definition and justification of the modern concept of the Slovak nation. There is hardly any reference to the contribution of the Ottoman government to the organization of either the military or state administration, international trade, the significant improvement in urban sanitation, or the enrichment of the Slovak language with terms such as *boot*, *cap* and *scarf*. In schools, practically no reference

13. Act No. 308/1991 Coll., current text retrieved January 8, 2018 from <http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1991-308>.

14. Michal Holeščák, "Moslimskí Lipkovia bojovali za kresťanov", *historyweb.sk*, (October 19, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://historyweb.dennikn.sk/clanky/detail/moslimski-lipkovia-bojovali-za-krestanov#.Wn7Jvp3OXIU>; Jaroslav Drobný, "Ako uhorskí Saracéni študovali v Jeruzaleme", *historyweb.sk*, (April 20, 2015), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://historyweb.dennikn.sk/clanky/detail/ako-uhorski-saraceni-studovali-v-jeruzaleme#.Wn7LqJ3OXIU>.

is made to preserve Ottoman monuments in Central Europe, their architectural or functional value, and also their tourist attractiveness. Most schools do not make regular excursions to these places. Very rarely do Slovak students know or meet with representatives of the Slovak Muslim community. They do not know their habits, their interests, problems and everyday life.<sup>15</sup>

The good news is that in the academic year 2017/2018, a new study program called “The World Religions” was opened at the University of the Third Age (UTA) of the Comenius University in Bratislava. Students have an enormous interest in this program and they are very active and responsive. Years before, the themes of Islam had been lectured at UTA as part of the study program “History of Religions 1-3”.<sup>16</sup>

**Media**

The most frequent medium for informing the public in Slovakia about the Islam and Muslims is the use of inappropriate images accompanying published texts. The second negative phenomenon in the context of most Slovak media, which contributed to the spread of Islamophobic attitudes in 2017, is the tabloid-like manner of presenting news. Most of the information on Islam provided to the Slovak readers concerns terrorism, political violence, civil wars, migratory threats, or even unverified reports of religiously motivated attacks in Muslim countries. Thus, stylized media coverage of Islamic and Muslim themes continues to support the public fear of Islam.<sup>17</sup> Islamophobic stereo-

types have appeared more or less in all media. More often it was in the so-called tabloid media (*Nový Čas*, *Plus 1 Deň*, *TV JoJ* and *Markiza*) which have published only negative reports on Islam and Muslims. (Figs. 1-3) The most prominent Islamophobic stereotypes are spread through the media of political parties (Kotleba - LS NS/ Naše Slovensko) or various communities that consider themselves to be Christian.



Figure 1: Headline of the newspaper Our Slovakia published by the People’s Party Our Slovakia (Kotleba). It reads, “We Reject Muslim Migrants” (October, 2017)<sup>18</sup>

15. Radoslav Štefančík, Jozef Lenč, *Mladí migranti v slovenskej spoločnosti. Medzinárodná migrácia, moslimovia, štát a verejná mienka* (Brno, Tribun EU, 2012), pp. 104-12.1

16. *University of the Thrid Age*, Comenius University in Bratislava, <https://cdv.uniba.sk/utv/vzdelavanie/>

17. Marián Déd, “Mediálny obraz islamského náboženstva”, *mediasres.cz*, (October 9, 2016) retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://www.mediasres.cz/politika/3006-marian-ded-medialny-obraz-islamskeho-nabozenstva.htm>.

18. Source: <http://www.naseslovensko.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/noviny-lsns-2017-10.pdf> retrieved January 8, 2018

The latest phenomenon regarding the rise of Islamophobia in Slovak society in recent years is the repeated misuse of Islamic terminology in the news and commentaries of Slovak journalists. In this regard, the problem is primarily with the words Islam and Islamism, and jihad and jihadism. In the first case (Islam and Islamism), these notions are used interchangeably and often the term “Islamic” is used for both acts and deeds which are in conflict with Islam. In this manner the social image is being created, that for instance, raping is a part of Islamic behavior, that the reluctance to adhere to (Western) social is a religious praxis, etc. The problem is also that the representatives of the Slovak Muslim community are sometimes referred to in the media as Islamists.<sup>21</sup>

In the second case (jihad and jihadism), the term jihad, which has a very important place in Islam and is an everyday part of the life of Muslims, is associated with a strongly negative



Figure 2: Several articles from the Plus 1 Deň. Reports from Slovak media showing a negative image of Islam and Muslims. “Holy war in sight? In Europe imminent, conflict, will attack Muslims?” “Approaching the end bloodshed?” “France at attention!” (January – April 2017)<sup>19</sup>



Figure 3: Headline of an article from Nový Čas entitled “Scientists Beating the Alarm: If the Refugees Run Here to Europe, There Will Soon Be 75 Million Muslims!” (December 1, 2017)<sup>20</sup>

19. Source: <https://www1.pluska.sk/search?q=islam&cp=2> retrieved January 8, 2018

20. Source: <https://www.cas.sk/clanok/626952/vedci-biju-na-poplach-ak-sem-budu-prudit-uteccenci-v-europe-bude-onedlho-zit-75-milionov-moslimov> retrieved January 8, 2018,

21. Juraj Skačan, “Kritická analýza mediálneho diskurzu: islam, džihád a islamofóbia,” *Philosophica Critica* 3/2017 (2017) retrieved January 8, 2018, from [http://philosophicacritica.ukf.sk/uploads/1/3/9/8/13980582/ska%C4%8Can\\_j\\_kritick%C3%A1\\_anal%C3%BDza\\_medi%C3%A1neho\\_diskurzu.\\_islam\\_d%C5%BEih%C3%A1d\\_a\\_islamof%C3%B3bia.pdf](http://philosophicacritica.ukf.sk/uploads/1/3/9/8/13980582/ska%C4%8Can_j_kritick%C3%A1_anal%C3%BDza_medi%C3%A1neho_diskurzu._islam_d%C5%BEih%C3%A1d_a_islamof%C3%B3bia.pdf).

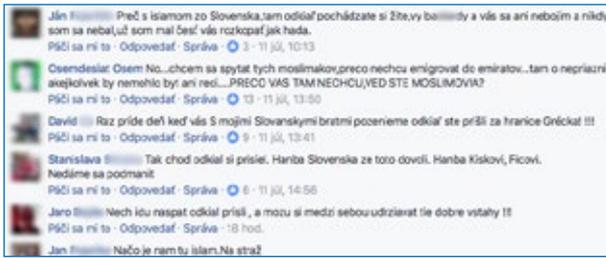


Figure 4: The reactions on social networks reveal Islamophobic expressions - Ján: “Down with Islam from Slovakia, where do you come from bastards!”; David: “The day comes when we will take you back to where you came from.”; Jan: “Why is Islam here?”<sup>25</sup> (July 14, 2017)

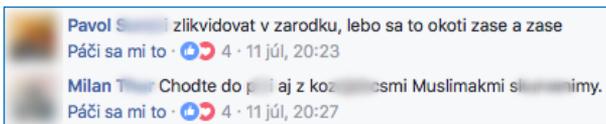


Figure 5: Further Islamophobic reactions on social networks. Pavol: “Destroy it in the embryo, because it will grow again...” (July 14, 2017)<sup>26</sup>

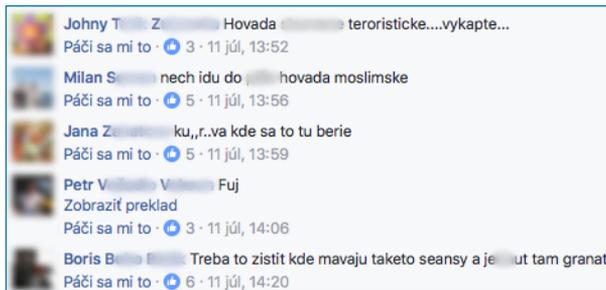


Figure 6: Offensive attacks on the president of the Islamic Foundation in social networks after a public iftar in June 2017 - Boris: “have to find out where they have these seances and throw a grenade there,” and many more. (July 14, 2017)<sup>27</sup>

behavior. Most often it is associated with terrorism - in fact all Slovak media use the word ‘jihad’ as a synonym for ‘terrorism,’ and ‘jihadists’ as a synonym for ‘terrorists.’ This creates a societal image that all Muslims who act as jihadists are terrorists, and that terrorism in the form of jihad is a part of Islam.<sup>22</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

We have noticed some verbal attacks on representatives of the Muslim community in Slovakia. Of these, the largest number was registered after the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia published a report (and videos) from the common *iftar* (the supper which follows the breaking of the daily fast during Ramadan) organized for both Muslims and non-Muslims

in Slovakia. The reactions on social networks reveal Islamophobic expressions. (Figs. 4-6) In addition to these, verbal attacks on some diplomats from foreign embassies - mostly women in hijabs – were also recorded.<sup>23</sup> Some Muslims have also complained that they have been the victims of stalking, as the result of the campaign against the burkini which was encouraged by some websites.<sup>24</sup>

22. Jozef Lenč, Salah Mehager, “Mýty o islame očami dvoch moslimov”, *aktuality.sk*, (November 3, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/535612/myty-o-islame-ocami-dvoch-moslimov-nazor/>

23. Information from an interview with Islamic Foundation staff and the IslamOnline.sk website (December, 2017).

24. Ibid.

25. Source: <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/07/fanusikovia-kotlebu-zdielali-prihovor-predsedu-islamskej-nadacie-m-s-hasnu-vyhrazaju-sa-mu-smrtou/>, ) retrieved January 8, 2018

26. Source: <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/07/fanusikovia-kotlebu-zdielali-prihovor-predsedu-islamskej-nadacie-m-s-hasnu-vyhrazaju-sa-mu-smrtou/>, retrieved January 8, 2018

27. Source: [http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/07/fanusikovia-kotlebu-zdielali-prihovor-predsedu-islamskej-nadacie-m-s-hasnu-vyhrazaju-sa-mu-smrtou](http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/07/fanusikovia-kotlebu-zdielali-prihovor-predsedu-islamskej-nadacie-m-s-hasnu-vyhrazaju-sa-mu-smrtou/), retrieved January 8, /

## Internet

In addition to the prementioned conspiracy media websites (Main News,<sup>28</sup> Conservative Newspapers, Parliamentary Letters,<sup>29</sup> Meantime, Conservative Selection, and Earth and Age),<sup>30</sup> the most active websites in spreading Islamophobia in Slovakia were the webpages of extremist political parties, movements and organizations. The most significant were the webpages of the political party Kotleba - The People's Party Our Slovakia<sup>31</sup> and partially We Are Family - Boris Kollar.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the webpages of the Slovak Movement for Revival, the Leo XIII Institute<sup>33</sup> and Magnificat Slovakia also spread Islamophobic content.<sup>34</sup>

The last two distributed leaflets in churches all over Slovakia propagating a book describing the Prophet Muhammad “as a hellish creature and the sacred book of Islam as a set of obscenities and hatred.”<sup>35</sup> They also organized screenings of a film about the battle of Vienna, which included discussions with representatives of the K-LSNS extremist party.<sup>36</sup>

## Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In connection with the tightening of the legislation limiting the rights of Muslims in Slovakia, it is a de facto truth that every political party voted for the amendment to Act No. 308/1991 Coll. for the freedom of religious belief that made impossible for the Muslim community to become officially registered in Slovakia. The SMER-SD, SNS, MOST-HID, Kotleba – LSNS and We Are Family – Boris Kollar voted for this amendment. The last two parties, for the most part, and the Slovak National Party (SNS) were active in spreading of Islamophobia both in parliamentary debates and

28. *Hlavné správy – Konzervatívny denník*, negative articles about Islam, retrieved February 8, 2018, from <https://www.hlavnespravysk/vyhľadavanie?h=islam>.

29. *Parlamentné listy*, negative articles about Islam, retrieved February 8, 2018 from <http://www.parlamentnelisty.sk/search.aspx?search=islam>.

30. *Zem a Vek*, negative articles about Islam, retrieved February 8, 2018, from [http://zemavek.k/?s=islam&caTHczbAnwNjyBDU=AJO2yR5IYzN%40p0v&NM0VrRZloQm=Qok\\*pNOq8S9&SrkiqPaNZFWQY=%5DFGOaPgWisxj&cyILGDjtFzYMOkP=njXVxRO25ye7Yc](http://zemavek.k/?s=islam&caTHczbAnwNjyBDU=AJO2yR5IYzN%40p0v&NM0VrRZloQm=Qok*pNOq8S9&SrkiqPaNZFWQY=%5DFGOaPgWisxj&cyILGDjtFzYMOkP=njXVxRO25ye7Yc).

31. Website of the political party Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia, retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://www.naseslovensko.net/>.

32. Website of the political movement We Are Family – Boris Kollar, retrieved February 11, 2018, from <https://hnutie-smerodina.sk/>.

33. Website of the Orthodox Catholic Institute of Leo XIII, retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://www.instituteofleoxiii.org/>.

34. Website of the Orthodox Catholic Institute Magnificat Slovakia, retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://www.magnificat.sk/>.

35. ISLAMONLINE.sk, “Farnosti po celom Slovensku zaplavili knihy vykresľujúce proroka Muhammada ako predchodcu antikrista”, *IslamOnline.sk*. (August 8, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/08/farnosti-po-celom-slovensku-zaplavili-knihy-vykreslujuce-proroka-muhammada-ako-predchodcu-antikrista/>.

36. Samuel Gdovin, “Kotlebovcom zrušili premietanie historického filmu o bitke s Turkami pri Viedni”, *hlavnespravysk*, (March 5, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.hlavnespravysk/kotlebovcom-zrusili-premietanie-historickeho-filmu-o-bitke-s-turkami-pri-viedni/919964>.

in connection to their performance in the media before and after the ratification of the amendment of the law.<sup>37</sup>

Among Slovak politicians there were some who individually spread Islamophobic speech. Andrej Danko (SNS) has repeatedly presented his negative attitude towards Muslims, mosques and his desire to prohibit the burka in Slovakia.<sup>38</sup> The president of the government of the Slovak Republic Robert Fico has repeatedly said that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia,”<sup>39</sup> while the president of the party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) and a deputy of European Parliament Richard Sulik claimed that “Islam is incompatible with democracy”<sup>40</sup> and also shared and wrote several articles, commentaries and blogs with Islamophobic content.<sup>41</sup>

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

During the parliamentary debate on the amendment of Act No. 308/1991 Coll. and the proposals by Krajniak (We Are Family – Boris Kollar), some deputies from the opposition spoke up for the Slovak Muslim community. In particular, Ondrej Dostal and Martin Klus (both SaS), read the standpoint of the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia in the plenum of the NR SR. In this manner, for the first time in the history of Slovakia the “voice” of Slovak Muslims was heard in the parliament.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, the deputies of the Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO) Marek Krajci, Jan Budaj and Igor Matovic stated, “If we want to speak of Slovakia as a Christian country, and if we want to speak of political parties, that are Christian, if we want to say, that we are Christians, so we have to be an example of Christian life in the first place; not an example of hatred or to be spreaders of hatred towards people who think or believe differently.”<sup>43</sup>

In terms of civic society, the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia is the most active in the fight against Islamophobia; it conducts monitoring of Islamophobic manifes-

37. ISLAMONLINE.sk, “Jeden a pol roka islamofóbie na Slovensku”, *IslamOnline.sk*, (September 29, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/09/jeden-a-pol-roka-islamofobie-na-slovensku/>.

38. Radovan Krčmárik, “Danko vedie križiacku výpravu proti islamu”, *aktualne.sk*, (October 15, 2016), retrieved January 9, 2018 from <https://aktualne.centrum.sk/slovensko/politika/kriziacka-vyprava-proti-islam-danko-chcesprisnit-registraciu-cirkvi.html>.

39. Juraj Koník, “Premiér Fico je opäť svetový, prerazil výroky o moslimoch, ktorých k nám nepusti”, *denník N*, (January 8, 2016) retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://dennikn.sk/338314/premier-fico-opat-svetovy-prerazil-vyroky-moslimoch-ktorych-nam-nepusti/>.

40. Katarína Ragáčová, Roman Cuprik, “Sulík: Islam nie je kompatibilný s našou kultúrou rovnako ako nacizmus”, *SME*, (August 19, 2016), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20246047/sulik-islam-nie-je-kompatibilny-s-nasou-kulturou-rovnako-ako-nacizmus.html>.

41. Martin M. Šimečka, “Richard Sulík: Áno, som slovenský nacionalista”, *denník N*, (February 21, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://dennikn.sk/688253/richard-sulik-sas-som-slovensky-nacionalista-rozhovor/>.

42. Speech by MP Klus, who read the statement of the Islamic Foundation about the draft law on “Prohibition of building mosques”. Available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdpTM0pylMA>.

43. ISLAMONLINE.sk, “Matovič: Kresťanská krajina nemôže byť krajina plná nenávisťi voči iným ľuďom”, *IslamOnline.sk*, (April 6, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/04/matovic-krestanska-krajina-nemoze-byt-krajina-plna-nenavisti-voci-inym-ludom/>.

tations and participates in projects of interfaith dialogue.<sup>44</sup> The Forum of Religions of the World (Mario Nicolini),<sup>45</sup> the Center for Research on Ethnicity and Culture (Elena Gallova Kriglerova), the Open Society Foundation (Jan Orlovsky), and the League for Human Rights (Zuzana Stevulova) are also active.

In the media space, the following individuals are active: Andrej Ban, a photographer and publicist; journalists from *Denník N*, *SME* and *Pravda*; and members of the editorial office *IslamOnline.sk*. Some religious organizations, a Jewish religious community and teachers at some elementary and secondary schools are also helping to mitigate Islamophobia, and they also provide space for getting to know Islam and Muslims in Slovakia as part of the curriculum.<sup>46</sup>

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia in Slovakia in 2017, as opposed to the previous years, has not shown increasing tendencies. While in 2015 and 2016 the number of cases of open hate against Muslims, direct physical attacks on Muslims and Muslim women and the so-called “Muslim card” became relevant, as well as in the elections to the NR SR in March 2016, the trend stabilized in 2017. Although there has been no reduction in public expressions of Islamophobia and a law was passed in the parliament confirming the unequal status of Muslims in Slovakia, we did not record any significant attacks on Muslims and no significant protests against Muslims, as was the case in 2015 and 2016. The biggest problem with Islamophobia in Slovakia is that its narrative has been definitively moved from social networks to parliament. It has become a part of politics and the de facto political communication of all political parties (coalition and opposition).<sup>47</sup> It also continues to influence elections and is also a part of electoral campaigns. An unpleasant finding is that the Islamophobic content is both consciously and unconsciously present in all Slovak media (conspiracy, tabloid and mainstream).

The most pressing challenge for the next period will be spreading awareness that Islamophobia is as dangerous for Slovak society and democracy as any form of xenophobia. Society - politicians, media, and teachers - should be aware that the destruction of democracy and the rise of totalitarianism in the 1930s were caused by anti-Semitism, which manifested itself with the same accompanying phenomena as Islamophobia does today in Slovakia.

44. Monitoring of Islamophobia in Slovakia and the Czech Republic by Islamic Foundation, retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/t/islamofobia/>.

45. Website of the Forum of the World's Religions Slovakia, retrieved February 11, 2018, from <http://fwr.sk/>.

46. ISLAMONLINE.sk, “Rabín, kňaz a imám cestujú po slovenských školách a hovoria so žiakmi o tolerancii”, (January 3, 2018), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/01/rabin-knaz-a-imam-cestuju-po-slovenskych-skolach-a-hovoria-so-ziakmi-o-tolerancii/>.

47. ISLAMONLINE.sk, “Jeden a pol roka islamofóbie na Slovensku”, *IslamOnline.sk*, (September 29, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://www.islamonline.sk/2017/09/jeden-a-pol-roka-islamofobie-na-slovensku/>

## Chronology

- **01.01.2017:** President Andrej Kiska stood up for Muslims in his New Year's speech, when he said, "Claiming that every Roma is a scrounger or that every Muslim is a potential terrorist is stupid and untrue. Every evil and every misfortune that people can make, begins with the word. The word has tremendous power, and the word of hatred has been the beginning of the greatest tragedies of humanity."
- **24.01.2017:** The first of a series of screenings on the Battle of Vienna accompanied by lectures by K-LSNS politicians on the Islamization of Slovakia (activities were held irregularly throughout the year).
- **31.01.2017:** Negotiations on the amendment to Act No.308/1991 Coll. on freedom of religious belief, which has the president return it unsigned, and in which deputies endorsed the clause making 50,000 member signatures needed for the registration of churches and religious societies - in this manner, they ruled out any real possibility of registering Islam in Slovakia.
- **28.02.2017:** MP of NR SR Milan Krajniak (We Are Family – Boris Kollar) presented proposals for changes in the law<sup>48</sup> that would actually ban the building of mosques in Slovakia (the law was not ratified).
- **28.02.2017:** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic sent a statement to the ambassadors of Muslim countries in Slovakia. It distanced itself from the dishonor and the burning of the Qur'an, which was committed by a woman citizen of the Slovak Republic.
- **01.03.2017:** Slovak courts for the first time ruled on the custody of a person who publicly denounced the Qur'an, and published threats against Muslims on social networks.
- **08.08.2017:** Catholic parishes all over Slovakia received books with Islamophobic content in which the Prophet Muhammad is portrayed as Antichrist. The book was distributed by Lev XIII Institute. The Conference of Bishops of Slovakia dissociated itself from this event.
- **27.08.2017:** The report of the U.S. Department of State for religious freedom is published, which has again noted that the Slovak Republic does not guarantee equality of all religions.
- **12.09.2017:** The *New York Times* published an article describing the rise of Islamophobia and verbal attacks on Muslims in Slovak bathing towns.
- **24.10.2017:** The first major discussion of representatives of the three Abrahamic religions in the capital city of Bratislava.
- **18.12.2017:** Slovak Academy of Sciences published the results of a survey according to which up to 54% of Slovaks would not want a Muslim as their neighbor.

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48. In this case, it is a proposal that changed one law. However, in Slovakia it is possible that in the amendment to one law proposals for changes to other laws are included. So this proposal was *de jure* to amend a number of laws.

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**SLOVENIA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## The Author

**Ana Frank** received her PhD at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana in 2013. She worked as a researcher at the Peace Institute, a renowned NGO in Ljubljana, Slovenia, from 2007 to 2014. Between 2005 and 2007, she was a visiting student in Turkey at the University of Istanbul and Ankara University. She complemented her studies at the University of Lodz, Poland, and Florida International University, USA. In 2012–2013, she conducted a research at Sabanci University in Istanbul for her PhD thesis entitled ‘The Influence of the Europeanisation Context on Religious Discourses in Gender Equality and Intimate Citizenship Policies in Turkey.’ At the Peace Institute she worked on several European projects. Her fields of research and academic interest are international relations, policy analysis, political studies, gender studies, religious studies, cultural studies, Orientalism and postcolonial studies, discourse analysis, nationalism, discrimination, Europeanisation, Turkey, and Islam. In 2014, her book *Feminism and Islam: Turkish Women between the Orient and the West* (Slovenian and English language editions) was published by the Peace Institute. She continues to publish her work in international journals.

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## Executive Summary

In Slovenia right-wing politicians and radical groups, who are very active on social media and through the organization of public events and protests, overtly and explicitly display Islamophobic discourses. They continuously warn against the threat of Islamization and for this reason they object to Islamic cultural activities, the construction of the first and only mosque in Slovenia and the name “Mosque Street,” halal food practices, multicultural dialogue, and the acceptance of refugees, who became inextricably linked to Islam and Muslim identity.

Although breaching the Slovenian Constitution and international legal standards, the Aliens Act was amended (also with the support of the left-wing Modern Centre Party) and now allows for emergency measures denying entry and protection to refugees. The asylum seeker Ahmad Shamieh was about to be deported to Croatia after living in Slovenia for a year but eventually public protests prevented the deportation.

In 2017, persistent problems faced by the Muslim community living in Slovenia continue to present serious obstacles in performing their rights (especially in the employment and education areas) including access to halal food, Islamic holidays, spiritual care and place for worship, circumcision of boys, and Muslim head covering of women. Therefore, we recommend policy changes in five main areas: politics, media, employment, education, and management of refugees. Namely,

- Awareness raising and education about the dangers of hate speech, xenophobia and (neo) racism in the media and on the Internet, as well as in politics.
- Monitoring and collection of information about discrimination based on religious grounds in the employment area as well as implementing and facilitating options for halal dietary regimes at workplaces, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, state institutions, etc.
- Update of textbooks and school curricula regarding Islamic history; education about Islam, and diverse Islamic practices and traditions on an institutional level including political institutions as well as employment and educational organizations.
- The development of integration programs and the facilitation of the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Slovenian society.

## Povzetek

V Sloveniji politiki desnice in radikalne skupine, ki so zelo aktivne na socialnih omrežjih in preko javnih prireditev in shodov, odkrito in izrecno prikazujejo islamofobične diskurze. Nenehno opozarjajo na grožnjo islamizacije in zato nasprotujejo islamskim kulturnim dejavnostim, gradnji prve in edine mošeje v Sloveniji in imenu "Đamijska ulica", HALAL prehrabeni praksi, multikulturnemu dialogu in sprejemanju beguncev, ki so postali neločljivo povezani z islamom in muslimansko identiteto. Kljub kršitvi slovenske Ustave in mednarodnih pravnih standardov je bila sprejeta sprememba Zakona o tujcih (tudi ob podpori leve SMC) in sedaj omogoča nujne ukrepe, ki zavračajo vstop in zaščito beguncev. Prosilca za azil Ahmad Shamieh se je po letu dni prebivanja v Sloveniji soočil z deportacijo na Hrvaško, ki pa so jo javni protesti preprečili. V letu 2017 so še vedno prisotni problemi muslimanske skupnosti živeče v Sloveniji, saj se še naprej srečujejo z ovirami pri izvajanju njihovih verskih pravic (zlasti na področju zaposlovanja in izobraževanja), vključno z dostopom do HALAL hrane, islamskih praznikov, duhovne oskrbe in kraja čaščenja, obrezovanja dečkov in muslimanskega pokrivanja žensk. Zato priporočamo spremembe politik na petih glavnih področjih: politika, mediji, zaposlovanje, izobraževanje in upravljanje beguncev:

- Ozaveščanje in izobraževanje o nevarnostih sovražnega govora, ksenofobije in (neo)rasizma v medijih ter na spletu in v politiki.
- Spremljanje in zbiranje informacij o diskriminaciji na podlagi verskih razlogov na področju zaposlovanja ter omogočanje HALAL prehranskega režima na delovnih mestih, v šolah, vrtcih, bolnišnicah, državnih institucijah itd.
- Posodobitev učbenikov in učnih načrtov o islamski zgodovini; izobraževanje o islamu, raznolikih islamskih praksah in tradicijah na institucionalni ravni, vključno s političnimi institucijami ter zaposlitvenimi in izobraževalnimi organizacijami.
- Razviti integracijske programe in olajšati vključevanje beguncev in prosilcev za azil v slovensko družbo.

## Introduction

In November 2017, Slovenia witnessed the presidential elections, where the previous President Borut Pahor won the second mandate for 5 years. The elections were a disappointment for the right-wing political parties, since their candidates all received very little support. However, a surprise was the 2,2% of votes for the candidate of the group Zedinjena Slovenija (United Slovenia), who is known for his patriotic and nationalistic opinions and activities. The electoral participation in the first and second round was the lowest until now (44% and 42% respectively).

After a series of unsuccessful attempts to resolve the dispute over their land and maritime boundary, Slovenia and Croatia signed an arbitration agreement in 2009 establishing an arbitral tribunal tasked to determine the border. On June 26, 2017, the arbitral tribunal rendered its final decision, which was very welcomed by Slovenia.

Slovenia was still affected by the so-called refugee crisis and this was evident in the Amendment to the Aliens Act, which denies entry to refugees and provides measures for their deportation if they have already entered the country. The initiators and supporters of the Amended Act were the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) and the left-wing Modern Centre Party (SMC) whose majority even supported the proposed right-wing complements. The Amended Act is a breach of the Slovenian Constitution, international legal order and human rights standards. By its very broad definition of “changed circumstances” it enables the state to close the borders for asylum seekers and limits their access to international protection. An absolute majority (46 parliamentary votes) is sufficient to reach a decision on the closure of the border, and not two-thirds of votes as it was initially proposed by the government as a “guardian” against abuse. For these reasons many legal experts, politicians (some from the SMC party) and activists reacted very harshly to this amendment; however, it was voted in the parliament with 47 votes in favour and 18 against.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

In 2017, the main issue regarding Islam and Muslims in Slovenia revolved around the name of the street in Ljubljana where the newly constructed Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) is based. The IRCC construction consisted of an architectural and urban infrastructural adaptation, which included a newly constructed street leading to the centre. For this purpose, suggestions for the street’s name were collected and the municipality decided on the name “Mosque Street” (*Damijska ulica*). The name itself raised objections in politics and media, especially from right-wing parties and newspapers.

Among other things, although not directly connected to Muslims living in Slovenia, the Amendments to Aliens Act, which denies protection to refugees, on the symbolic level steered the debate about threats from Muslim countries. The amendments to the Aliens Act were problematic from the human and asylum rights point of view since in its latest form it allows for special emergency measures denying entry to people arriving at the borders and automatically expelling migrants and refugees who have entered Slovenia irregularly. Thus, migrants are bereft of proper assessment of their asylum claims or the risks to which they would be exposed upon return. Slovenia has also witnessed a deportation to Croatia of a Syrian family with a baby born in Slovenia, after a year and a half of living in Slovenia. Another deportation of Syrian Ahmad Shamieh was stopped due to the strong engagement of human right activists.

On the Internet and especially in social media, radical groups and their Islamophobic discourses persist. Especially active is the group Generation Identity Slovenia, a Slovenian form of the Europe-wide activities of the group Generation Identity. In their Facebook posts they warn against the threat of Islamization in Slovenia which is going on, on their opinion, through entry and acceptance of refugees, Islamic cultural activities, halal food practices and certificates, and multicultural dialogue.

## Politics

In 2017, the construction of the Islamic Religious and Cultural Centre (IRCC) has been slowly finalized. The IRCC construction consisted of an architectural and urban infrastructural adaptation, which also included a newly constructed street leading to the centre. (Fig. 1) For this purpose, suggestions for the street's name were collected and the Municipality of Ljubljana during the session on September 25 decided to name the street "Mosque Street" (*Đamijska ulica*) with 24 votes for and 9 votes against. The name itself raised objections in politics and media, especially the right-wing parties (SDS, Nsi) and newspapers (*Demokracija*, *Reporter*, *Nova 24*).

Right-wing actors and media have also expressed outrage upon the statement of Nevzet Porić, the secretary of the Islamic Community, who expressed gratitude to the Ljubljana Mayor Zoran Janković after the decision to name the street "Mosque Street," but who also noted that "Muslims will remember those who were against the construction of the mosque." Right-wing politicians and groups perceived this statement as a direct threat by Slovenian Muslims against the Slovene population.<sup>1</sup>

1. "Tajnik islamske skupnosti Porić grozil v mestnem svetu: Zapomnili si bomo vse, ki so proti izgradnji džamije!" (The Secretary of the Islamic Community Porić Threatened the City Council: "We Will Remember All Who Were against the Construction of the Mosque!"), Nova 24 TV, 26.9.2017, retrieved November 22, 2017 from <http://nova24tv.si/slovenija/politika/tajnik-islamske-skupnosti-poric-grozil-v-mestnem-svetu-zapomnili-si-bomo-vse-ki-so-proti-izgradnji-dzamiije/>.



Figure 1: The newly constructed mosque and the street before it, Mosque Street, in Ljubljana.<sup>2</sup>

A round table was organized in November 2017 about safety issues in Slovenia and Europe.<sup>3</sup> Two members of the SDP party, Dr Vinko Gorenak and Branko Grims, MA, were the main speakers. They spoke about the threat of terrorist attacks in con-

nection with radical Islam. Grims stated, “The door to radical Islam, which is slowly penetrating through legal channels, opened very carefully with migrants who came legally and stayed here.” He explained that “[a]bove all, the main thing that threatens Slovenia as a national state and the EU as a community, is the link between the political left and radical Islam.” He further emphasized that “the silent, yet apparent invasion and the Islamization of Europe is taking place, and causes radical changes in the old continent.” The speakers explicitly connected the so-called refugee crisis with Islamization and presented terrorism as a threat to European and Slovenian territories and nations.

## Justice System

Although at first sight not directly connected to Muslims in Slovenia, the Amendments to Aliens Act enacted in 2017, which denies protection to refugees, on the symbolic level steered the debate about threats from Muslim countries. The amendments to the Aliens Act were problematic from the human rights and asylum rights point of view since in the latest form it allows for special emergency measures denying entry to people arriving at the borders and the automatic expulsion of migrants and refugees who have entered Slovenia irregularly. Thus migrants are bereft of proper assessment of their asylum claims or the risks to which they would be exposed upon return. The amended act was, however, very welcomed by right-wing groups and political parties. Their xenophobic and populist discourse created a link between refugees, Muslim faith and the recent terrorist attacks in Europe. People who were

2. Delo, retrieved November 22, 2017 from [http://www.delo.si/assets/media/picture/20170905/670x420\\_SI\\_dopisnistvo\\_\\_djvu\\_255202\\_hires.jpeg0.jpeg?rev=1](http://www.delo.si/assets/media/picture/20170905/670x420_SI_dopisnistvo__djvu_255202_hires.jpeg0.jpeg?rev=1).

3. Jure Ferjan, “Gorenak in Grims opozarjata: 20 terorističnih napadov v 20 dneh! Naveza med levičarstvom in radikalnim islamom je lahko usodna in tudi bo” (Gorenak and Grims Warn: 20 Terrorist Attacks in 20 Days! The Tension between Political Left and Radical Islam Can Be Fatal and It Will Be So), Nova 24 TV, 26.11.2017, retrieved November 22, 2017 from <http://nova24tv.si/slovenija/video-gorenak-in-grims-opozarjata-20-teroristicnih-napadov-v-20-dneh-naveza-med-levicarstvom-in-radikalnim-islamom-je-lahko-usodna-in-tudi-bo/>.

against the amendments were labelled by right-wing SDP party member Dr Vinko Gorenak as “extortionists, hypocrites, and threats.”<sup>4</sup>

The ban on slaughtering animals without stunning was adopted by the National Assembly in 2013. Article 25 of the Animal Protection Act requires that the animal be stunned before slaughter. Until then, ritual slaughter was possible, but it was necessary to obtain permission. Now, the permit is no longer possible. This prohibition was already resisted by both the Muslim and Jewish communities living in Slovenia. Their representatives are since then convinced that the state, by prohibiting ritual slaughtering without stunning, violates the right to religious freedom. Both the Jewish and the Islamic faith require that the animal be slaughtered when conscious, that is, it must not be stunned in order to ensure its proper bleeding. The Slovenian Veterinarian Association insisted that slaughtering without stunning animals caused additional suffering, which is why the aforementioned amendment to the law on the protection of animals was adopted.<sup>5</sup> In October 2017, Dr Andraž Teršek, professor of Constitutional Law, published the legal text of the initiative, which was filed in 2014 by the Slovenian Muslim Community,<sup>6</sup> to assess the constitutionality of the law to the Constitutional Court and proposed the possibility that animals be slaughtered without stunning. They both claim that Muslim’s human rights have been violated and that the law violates Article 7 (equality and freedom of religious communities) and Article 41 (freedom of conscience) of the constitution; and in connection with the articles 7 and 41 also Article 1 (principle of democracy), Article 2 (principle of the rule of law) and Article 14 (equality before the law). Since the Muslim community is a national organization representing Slovenian citizens of the religion of Islam, to whom the constitution guarantees the practice and confession of faith (which involves ritual slaughter), they claim that the Animal Protection Act directly interferes with the constitutional rights and freedoms of Slovene Muslims and members of the Slovenian Muslim Community.<sup>7</sup> The Constitutional Court of Slovenia has yet to decide on the proposal to repeal Article 25 of the Animal Protection Act. The right-wing media and

4. He first published a text on his blog (<http://www.vinkogorenak.net/2017/01/22/zakon-o-tujcich-izsiljevalci-hinavci-realisti-cincarji-in-odlocna-zenska/>, 22.1.2017.) His text was also published as a column on Nova 24 TV: “Zakon o tujcich – izsiljevalci, hinavci, realisti, cincarji in odločna ženska” (The Aliens Act - Extortionists, Hypocrites, Realists, Cynics and a Determined Woman), 25.1.2017, retrieved November 22, 2017 from <http://nova24tv.si/kolumna/lzakon-o-tujcich-izsiljevalci-hinavci-realisti-cincarji-in-odlocna-zenska/>.

5. Obredni zakol na ustavnem sodišču (Ritual Slaughter at the Constitutional Court), Delo, 26.9.2014, retrieved November 22, 2017 from <https://www.dnevnik.si/1042682492>.

6. In Slovenia there are two officially registered Islamic Communities: the Slovenian Muslim Community (Slovenska Muslimanska Skupnost) led by the former Slovenian Mufti Osman Đogić, and the Islamic Community in Slovenia (Islamska skupnost v Sloveniji) led by Secretary General Nevzet Porić. The main reason for their ideological split was the intention of Mufti Osman Đogić to establish an independent and autonomous Slovenian Muslim community, not attached and subject to the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A group under his leadership thus split from the Islamic Community in Slovenia and established its own community in 2006.

7. Dr Andraž Teršek, “Vprašanje ustavnosti 25. člena Zakona o zaščiti živali” (The question of constitutionality of the Art. 25 of the Animal Protection Act), 5.10.2017, Pravna praksa (Legal Practice) No. 38.

parties reacted to this initiative and claimed that animal rights should be protected from this cruel Islamic practice: “For Muslims it is necessary to slaughter their animals in the way prescribed by Islam, that is, in a cruel manner with bleeding.”<sup>8</sup> Opponents of this practice claim that although in most European countries this kind of slaughter is permitted, there are more and more calls for its ban, since “Europe does not share anything with this Islamic tradition.”

## Employment

The problems for Muslims in the employment area continue to persist due to the lack of any legal framework (except for the religious rights as protected nominally by the constitution) guaranteeing the actual performance of their religious rights in the workplace, among which are the time and place for worship, possibilities of consuming halal food, celebration of Islamic holidays (only Christian holidays are celebrated as official holidays), and the possibility to wear religious clothing such as headscarves. From research and interviews it is evident that potential female workers are even afraid of demanding these rights since they fear losing the job or not even being employed.<sup>9</sup> Women either choose not to cover themselves or not to work (many indeed cannot find work because they wear headscarves).

Muslims have also been trying to be granted the right of religious spiritual care in the Slovenian Armed Forces, police, hospitals, prisons, etc. which is officially available for Roman Catholic members but not for the members of the Islamic faith. In January 2017, the Council for Dialogue on Religious Freedom of the government of the Republic of Slovenia<sup>10</sup> (Svet vlade Republike Slovenije za dialog o verski svobodi) met in its regular session and upon the initiative of the Islamic Community debated on the issue of the religious spiritual care of Muslims in the army and police forces, as well as in hospitals and prisons. These issues are not systematically organized, imams and pious members of the community usually do not have any special place available for ritual practices and the problem continues to persist.

8. A. L., “Bo ustavno sodišče dovolilo obredno klanje živali, po tem ko so druge evropske države to začele prepovedovati?” (Will the Constitutional Court Permit the Ritual Slaughter of Animals After Other European Countries Have Started to Ban It?), Nova 24 TV, 20.10.2017, retrieved November 22, 2017 from <http://nova24tv.si/slovenija/bo-ustavno-sodisce-dovolilo-obredno-klanje-zivali-po-tem-ko-so-druge-evropske-drzave-to-zacele-prepovedovati/>.

9. Veronika Bajt, “The Muslim Other in Slovenia: Intersections of a Religious and Ethnic Minority. In: GÓRAK-SOSNOWSKA, Katarzyna (ed.), Muslims in Poland and Eastern Europe: Widening the European Discourse on Islam. Warszawa: Faculty of Oriental Studies, 2011, pp. 307-326; Maja Pucelj, Ne(uspešna) integracija pripadnikov islamske vere v neislamske države: magistrsko delo (Un(successful) Integration of Members of Islamic Faith into Non-Islamic Countries, Master’s thesis), Kranj: FDŠ, 2014; Maja Pucelj, Nivo uspešnosti integracije priseljencev islamske veroizpovedi v zahodne države (The Level of Success of Integration of Immigrants of Islamic Religion in Western Countries), Ljubljana: Vega, 2016; Anja Zalta, Dr. Anja Zalta: Merilo emancipacije muslimank v Sloveniji je izobraževanje (Dr. Anja Zalta: The Measure of Emancipation of Muslim Women in Slovenia Is Education), program NA GLAS, RTVSLO, 26. 03. 2016, retrieved December 1, 2017 from <https://www.rtvsl.si/slovenija/dr-anja-zalta-merilo-emancipacije-muslimank-v-sloveniji-je-izobrazevanje/387397>.

10. Council for Dialogue on Religious Freedom, retrieved November 22, 2017 from [http://www.mk.gov.si/filadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/verske\\_skupnosti/Svet\\_vlade\\_za\\_dialog\\_o\\_verski\\_svbodih/Zapisnik2sejeSVRSdvs.pdf](http://www.mk.gov.si/filadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/verske_skupnosti/Svet_vlade_za_dialog_o_verski_svbodih/Zapisnik2sejeSVRSdvs.pdf).

In the October session<sup>11</sup> of the council, they discussed the question of circumcising Muslim boys in accordance to religious requirements and the possibility of performing this surgery in state hospitals, since the surgery is not allowed on the grounds of religious belief. Instead, parents make individual and private arrangements for the surgery either in private clinics or abroad. Some state hospitals, however, make it possible to perform the surgery (upon agreement); the Islamic community, however, states that they cannot demand this surgery because of religious belief and that the price for the operation (550€) is for many families a huge expense. Furthermore, the Islamic community expressed concern over the Ombudsman's statement from 2012 that circumcision other than for medical reasons is a crime representing a "[p]hysical intervention to the integrity of the child merely because of the desire of its legal representatives or caregivers and therefore means an inadmissible interference on a child's body. In our conviction, it represents a criminal behavior."<sup>12</sup> The Islamic community strongly opposes such an interpretation, which ignores religious practice and Muslim rights.

## Education

As mentioned in the previous report on Slovenia,<sup>13</sup> the main issue with the curricula is the stereotypical representation of Muslims through images of Turkish/Ottoman expansion and intrusions. No change has been undertaken yet on this issue by the relevant school authorities, i.e. the ministries. No suggestion at the institutional level has been made to change and update the curricula.

In schools and preschool day-care centres, Muslim parents have no legal or administrative possibilities to arrange for halal food for their children. The arrangement can be made only upon individual agreement between parents and school authorities, which oftentimes are not keen to change dietary regimes for some children who would eat halal food. Parents most of the time have tried to arrange a medical report stating that their child does not eat pork or is allergic to pork meat; however, many doctors/paediatricians do not write this type of reports (anymore). Some school authorities only accept medical reports from specialists, who usually do not issue such reports when no medical reasons are present. Parents, thus, compromise either by not putting their children in public schools, or, if an individual agreement is reached, by accepting their children not being given pork. However, since halal dietary practice consists of more than just not eating pork, children

11. Council for Dialogue on Religious Freedom, retrieved November 22, 2017 from [http://www.mk.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/verske\\_skupnosti/Svet\\_vlade\\_za\\_dialog\\_o\\_verski\\_svobodi/3sejaSvetaGradivo.pdf](http://www.mk.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/verske_skupnosti/Svet_vlade_za_dialog_o_verski_svobodi/3sejaSvetaGradivo.pdf).

12. Varuh človekovih pravic: Obrezovanje fantkov iz nemedicinskih razlogov je kršitev otrokovih pravic (Ombudsman: Circumcision of Boys for Non-Medical Reasons Is a Violation of the Rights of the Child), 3.2.2012, retrieved November 22, 2017 from <http://www.varuh-rs.si/medijsko-sredisce/aktualni-primeri/novice/detajl/obrezovanje-fantkov-iz-nemedicinskih-razlogov-je-krsitev-otrokovih-pravic>.

13. For detailed explanation refer to the Anja Zalta, "Islamophobia in Slovenia: National Report 2016", in: Enes Bayraktı & Farid Hafez, European Islamophobia Report 2016 Istanbul, SETA, 2017.



Figure 2: Muslim women depicted in the newspaper *Nova 24TV*.<sup>14</sup>

have no other dietary options (elements of pork in other processed foods, the slaughter method is usually not halal, etc.).

### Media

Media houses connected to the right-wing and conservative parties (*Demokracija*, *Nova 24TV*, and *Reporter*) regularly publish Islamophobic material. (Fig. 2) In 2017, most of the themes revolved around the acceptance of refugees being allocated to Slovenia according to the EU

refugee quotas. They constantly blame the parliamentary left-wing Modern Centre Party for accepting Muslim refugees into Slovenia.

*Nova 24TV* has published news about Islamic terrorists disguised as refugees with explicit hate speech; some examples follow.

Obviously, we do not have enough terrorists, rapists and other criminals in Europe. It seems that leading politicians want to bring even more. Only this can explain their desire for the ever-increasing inclusion of migrants and Muslims in European countries; and they bring with them much more than just a hungry mouth. They do not respect our laws, but we are talking about tolerance and equality, while most of them don't even understand the meaning of these words.<sup>15</sup>

In the following extract a very open Islamophobic discourse dividing “us” and “them” is employed to introduce fear of Islam among Slovenian people.

Not only are they responsible for rapes and terrorist attacks, they also bring Islam to our places. This is itself a violent and aggressive culture, which teaches its members from the time they are born that they must rule the world. It teaches that they should not choose the means and should not look at the consequences. They are taught to be more important than all the rest, while the rest should fear them. In their opinion, women live only to serve and provide sexual services. Consequently, if they do not want to, they simply rape them and do not feel regret for their actions. They want to subordinate and convert everyone to Islam - if they do not succeed, they kill them.<sup>16</sup>

14. Retrieved 12 February 2018 from <http://nova24tv.si/svet/levicarske-dobre-vile-muslimanom-odpirajo-vrata-evropa-pa-hudiceva-semena-se-kar-zaliva/>.

15. A. L., “Levičarske dobre vile muslimanom odpirajo vrata, Evropa pa hudiceva semena še kar zaliva” (The Left Good Fairies Open the Doors of Europe to Muslims, and Europe Still Waters the Devil Seeds), *Nova 24 TV*, 13.9.2017; retrieved November 22, 2017 from <http://nova24tv.si/svet/levicarske-dobre-vile-muslimanom-odpirajo-vrata-evropa-pa-hudiceva-semena-se-kar-zaliva/>.

16. *Ibid.*

They also raise irrational fear for the future of nations in Europe and blame Muslims for being categorically different from European people and invert the discourse on racism.

Will Europe really be filled with millions of such criminals? What will happen in this case? Let's bring the Muslims to our country and open the doors to them, and we'll see. What can a million members of a brutal parasitic culture do to us, who hates us and do not want to integrate? If we do not accept them, we are called racists. In reality, the reason that many do not want to accept them is not that they are different. It's in their beliefs and actions. We would not accept "our" people if they behaved badly, so we lock up the criminals, don't we?<sup>17</sup>

Similarly Marko Osolnik, MA, a diplomat, analyst and publicist in *Reporter* explains Islam in an extremely racist and xenophobic way. He states,

Muslimness, however, remains largely the same today as in its bloody history - limited, impatient and aggressively expansionist. In fact, Islam is not only a religion, but a de facto mostly totalitarian religious and political ideology that tends to subjugate the whole of mankind... In addition, it is necessary to add that the very word Islam in Arabic means subordination or surrender. Contrary to Christianity, Islam actually does not know (and does not recognize) concepts, such as free will, a personal, loving relationship between God and a believer, forgiveness, etc. No, a man must - willingly or not - just blindly and unconditionally submit to Allah or his representatives on Earth. ... Hatred, intolerance and violence against "unbelievers" that is to say to all non-Muslims, are commanded in Islam.<sup>18</sup>

In January 2017, the newspaper *Demokracija*<sup>19</sup> presented the translation of Nabeel Qureshi's book *Answering Jihad, A Better Way Forward* into Slovenian (*Razumeti islam in džihad*, 2016). (Fig. 3) However, the Slovenian Islamic Community and its secretary Nevzet Porić do not recommend reading the book as a work of serious literature, or out of interest in learning about Islam and the concept of jihad. Porić expressed surprise that a Catholic publishing house (Family-Družina) among so many books about Islam chose to translate and publish this book, which is, in his opinion, hostile to Islam and is contrary to Pope Francis's call for tolerance and dialogue between religions.<sup>20</sup>

17. Ibid.

18. Mario Osolnik, "Islam že skoraj 1400 let uničuje civilizacije in teži k podjarmljenju celotnega človeštva" (For Almost 1400 Years Islam Destroys Civilizations and Seeks to Subjugate All of Mankind), *Reporter*, 25.7.2017, retrieved November 22, 2017 from <http://reporter.si/clanek/svet/islam-ze-skoraj-1400-let-unicuje-civilizacije-525189>.

19. Bogdan Sajovic, "V reviji Demokracija preberite: Razumeti islam in džihad!" (Read in the Magazine Democracy: Understanding Islam and Jihad!), *Demokracija*, 13.2.2017, retrieved November 27, 2017 from <http://www.demokracija.si/fokus/v-revijji-demokracija-preberite-razumeti-islam-in-dzihad.html>.

20. Drago K. Ocvirk, "Razumeti islam in džihad" (To Understand Islam and Jihad), *Časnik*, 24.11.2017, retrieved November 27, 2017 from <http://www.casnik.si/index.php/2017/01/31/razumeti-islam-in-dzihad/>.

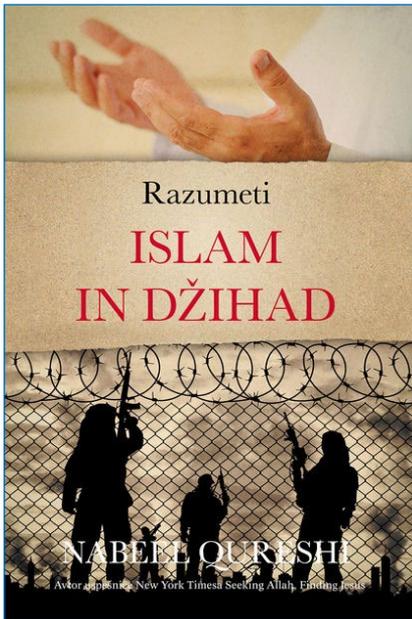


Figure 3: *Answering Jihad, A Better Way Forward* by Nabeel Qureshi translated into the Slovenian language (*Razumeti islam in džihad*, 2016) by the Catholic publishing house Family-Družina.<sup>21</sup>

Drago K. Ocvirk, the translator of the aforementioned book, in an interview with the newspaper *Demokracija* stated that there are “two types of religious rejection of the humanistic critique of Islam, whether it comes from inside or from outside, and it is also encountered in Slovenia. An apologetic, defensive posture is widespread. In this case, even a bona fide criticism of Islam is stigmatized as weak-minded and Islamophobic. For example, Navzet Porić, secretary general of the Islamic Community, proclaimed Nabeel Qureshi, the author of the book, as a former Ahmadinean Muslim, stating that he ‘is an unimportant person who became mister ‘somebody’ because he wrote something negative about Islam.’”<sup>22</sup> Ocvirk continued,

The second rejection of the humanistic critique of Islam is a doctrinal one. This is based

on the basic assumption of the predominant religious groups in Islam that from the human, that is, humanistic point of view, it is not possible to criticize Allah’s and Mohammed’s words - Koran and Hadiths. Man must unconditionally submit to it, for Allah knows better than man, what he demands from him.<sup>23</sup>

According to Ocvirk an example is the initiative of the Slovene Muslim Community to repeal a law prohibiting the slaughter of animals without stunning and consequently preventing Islamic ritual slaughter to the Constitutional Court.

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2017, no specific physical or verbal attack were recorded. However, a recent insinuation by a member of the Slovenian Democratic Party Grims against the Syrian refugee Ahmad Shamieh who faced the threat of deportation can be considered as a form of a verbal attack. He stated, “Ahmad left three or five children and a wife in the middle of the war in Damascus. But he himself, forgive my expression, took his ass to a better place.”

There were, however, many physical protests against migrants from Muslim countries and protests against the settlement of refugees in some local commu-

21. Retrieved November 27, 2017 from [http://kleklovaknjigarna.wixsite.com/kleklova-knjigarna-1/\\_p/prd1/4599606661/product/razumeti-islam-in-d%C5%Beihad](http://kleklovaknjigarna.wixsite.com/kleklova-knjigarna-1/_p/prd1/4599606661/product/razumeti-islam-in-d%C5%Beihad).

22. Dr. Drago K. Ocvirk, “Dr. Drago K. Ocvirk: Humanistična kritika znotraj islama” (Dr. Drago Ocvirk: Humanistic Critique within Islam), *Demokracija*, 29.10.2017, retrieved November 27, 2017 from <http://demokracija.si/fokus/dr-drago-ocvirk-humanisticna-kritika-znotraj-islama.html>.

23. Ibid.

nities. (Figs. 4, 5) They usually directly related refugees and migrants with Muslims and, therefore, often the messages at these protests contained Islamophobic material.

## Internet

On the Internet, social media (especially Facebook groups, but also some forums and blogs) remain the most active virtual arena for Islamophobic discourses.

Especially active is the group *Generation Identity Slovenia* (Generacija Identitete Slovenija),<sup>26</sup> a Slovenian version of the group *Generation Identity*, which is active across Europe. In their Facebook posts they



Figure 5: The call for a protest by the group the Uprising of Slovenians, stating: "The uprising of a nation, against the government and against the settlement of migrants".<sup>25</sup>

warn against the threat of the Islamization of Slovenia which is going on, on their opinion, through the entry and acceptance of refugees, Islamic cultural activities, acceptance of halal food practices and certificates, and multicultural dialogue. They publish posts with events presented in such a manner as to feed hate against Muslims. Thus, they strengthen the feeling of threat from Muslims in Slovenia, Europe and across the world by constantly reminding of the Islamic attacks performed by radical groups and by keeping alive the memory of Turkish invasions and the defence of Slovenian territories in the 17th century. They also warn about supposed attacks performed by Muslims in Slovenia.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, they took active action to support the decision to deport Ahmad Shamieh to Croatia, thus representing a counter action to all those who protested against the decision and the foreseen deportation. They also support activities against and call for boycott of companies that issue halal certificates and employ



Figure 4: Protest in front of the parliament. The message states, "We have enough of communists, we don't want more Islamists."<sup>24</sup>

24. Jože Biščak, "Raziskava: Evropejci večinsko proti migrantom iz muslimanskih držav" (Research: Europeans Mostly against Migrants from Muslim Countries), Reporter, 9.2.2017, retrieved November 27, 2017 from <http://reporter.si/clanek/svet/raziskava-evropejci-vecinsko-proti-migrantom-iz-muslimanskih-drzav-496077>.

25. Upor Slovencev, retrieved 27 November 2017 from <https://uporslovencev.wordpress.com/2017/03/08/protest-vstaja-naroda/>.

26. Generacija Identitete, retrieved November 27, 2017 from <https://www.facebook.com/GeneracijaIdentiteteSLO/>.

27. Upor Slovencev, "Muslims in Slovenia", retrieved November 27, 2017 from <https://uporslovencev.wordpress.com/2017/02/21/muslimani-v-sloveniji/>.

workers who perform halal slaughter. Generation Identity is also very critical of the Roman Catholic Church as being too loose in their stance against Islam.<sup>28</sup>

Another group called the Uprising of Slovenians – Resistance to the Government and the Settlement of Illegal Economic Immigrants (Upor slovencev – upor proti vladi in naseljevanju nezakonitih ekonomskih priseljencev)<sup>29</sup> warns against the entrance of sharia laws in Slovenia and acted against the acceptance of Ahmad Shamieh,<sup>30</sup> blaming him of not being a refugee but an illegal economic migrant who should be deported. They also warn against halal food claiming that the money from halal certificates ends up in the pockets of radical Muslims and terrorists in Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Furthermore, they argue that halal destroys local economy and tradition of meat production causing local workers to lose their jobs in favour of workers performing halal slaughter.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

On the political level, parties that openly express Islamophobic ideas belong to the right-wing conservative political specter. These are the parliamentary yet oppositional Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska demokratska stranka), New Slovenia (Nova Slovenija), and the Slovenian National Party (Slovenska nacionalna stranka), which is not in parliament. These parties have also established their own media that spread the same ideological messages and regularly broadcast xenophobic discourses, namely *Demokracija*, *Reporter*, and *Nova 24 TV*.

Most of the actors/groups that spread xenophobic discourse and hate speech directed against Muslims were established on social media networks such as Facebook during the mass transition of refugees across Slovenia in 2015. However, although the mass transition of refugees across Slovenia has ended, these groups are still active and gain new followers. They spread Islamophobic material and focus particularly on stories of refugees who are allocated to Slovenia according to the refugee quota system. Some of these pages are *Generation Identity Slovenia* (Generacija identitete Slovenija); *Radical Ljubljana* (Radikalna Ljubljana); *Stop islamizaciji Slovenije* (Stop the Islamisation of Slovenia); *Slovenija Secure Borders* (Slovenija Zavaruj Meje); and *We Slovenians are against Multiculture* (Slovinci smo proti Multikulturi). The group *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), while previously active, seems not to exist anymore on Facebook.

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28. Kristina Božič, "Preprosti odgovori na vse za vse" (Simple Answers to Everything for Everybody), *Dnevnik*, 8.7.2017, pp. 6-9.

29. Upor Slovencev: "Resnica o Halalu" (The Truth about Halal), retrieved November 27, 2017 from <https://upor-slovencev.wordpress.com/2017/04/03/resnica-o-halalu/>.

30. Upor Slovencev, retrieved November 27, 2017 from <https://www.facebook.com/Upor-Slovencev-402752850091638/>.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

There are several non-governmental organizations in Slovenia that deal with issues of discrimination and xenophobia and promote equal treatment and human rights. They have been very active during the so-called refugee crisis and continue to participate in activities for the inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in Slovenian political and social life. NGOs that are active, among others, in initiatives to counter Islamophobia are the Peace Institute (Mirovni inštitut); Slovene Philanthropy (Slovenska filantropija); Amnesty International; Društvo UP Jesenice/Society UP Jesenice; ROG Factory (Tovarna ROG); SLOGA - Slovenian Global Action; PIC - Legal Informational Centre. The Islamic community in Slovenia and the Slovenian Muslim Community are also active in this field.

There are also some ad hoc groups and initiatives on the Internet (Facebook) that are being established to counter Islamophobia and to address specific issues and events. For example, the Facebook group *against the extreme neo-Nazi-fascist group Radical Ljubljana* (Proti skrajni neonacifašistični skupini Radikalna Ljubljana). Another initiative was organized to support the Syrian refugee Ahmad Shamieh; it was titled *Ahmad has to stay* (Ahmad mora ostati). The case of Ahmad Shamieh started when after a year and a half of living in Slovenia (and actively engaging in public social life, learning Slovene, and establishing friendship connections), Shamieh faced deportation to Croatia according to the decision of the Interior Ministry to not accept his asylum request and the assertion that Croatia was responsible for his status. A huge public campaign (<http://danesjenovdan.si/ahmad/>) *Ahmad has to stay* directed at the Slovene Parliament took place in November to prevent his deportation. (Fig. 6) Under this initiative a petition was signed by many human rights activists as well as visible academics, artists and sportsmen. Prime Minister Miro Cerar (Modern Centre Party) interfered and stopped the deportation. Consequently, this caused a political turmoil and in November 2017 the right-wing oppositional Slovene Democratic Party pressed charges against the prime minister at the Constitutional Court accusing him of abusing his political position. However, many have commented that this charge is a form of pressure on the government to intensify its strict policy towards asylum seekers.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 6: The profile for the huge public campaign *Ahmad has to stay* directed at the Slovene Parliament which took place in November to prevent Ahmad Shamieh's deportation.<sup>32</sup>

31. Majda Vukelić, "Ustavna obtožba zoper Mira Cerarja nima možnosti za uspeh" (The Constitutional Charges against Miro Cerar Have No Chance of Succeeding), Delo, 09.01.2018, retrieved January 9, 2018 from <http://www.delo.si/novice/politika/ustavna-obtozba-zoper-mira-cerarja-nima-moznosti-za-uspeh.html>.

32. Retrieved 27 November 2017 from <http://danesjenovdan.si/ahmad/>.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2017, Islamophobic discourses took place mostly in media and on the Internet. They targeted refugees and asylum seekers, thus inextricably linking refugees with Muslim identity, which strengthens negative feelings about Muslims who are already living in Slovenia. The problem of hate speech and Islamophobia is widespread also in politics and this precise fact fuels stronger xenophobic and racist discourses among the general public, since such discourses have become widely tolerated. Since 2015 the so-called refugee crisis has strengthened Islamophobia and given rise to specific events that mirror the general atmosphere. Examples of this attitude in 2017 are the Amendments to the Aliens Act and deportations of Syrian refugees as well as protests against the settlement of refugees in Slovenia. The construction of the only mosque in Slovenia and the Islamic Cultural Centre, which was completed in 2017, was again a target of Islamophobic attitudes. Muslims living in Slovenia continue to experience difficulties in the fulfilment of their constitutional rights in all areas of political and social life. They often encounter difficulties and rejections in gaining employment while working Muslims cannot practice their religious requirements. In educational institutions, the stereotypical presentation of Islam and Muslims persists, and Muslim pupils have limited possibilities to fully live and practise their religious requirements.

Taking into account the events and status quo of the problems regarding Islamophobia, we therefore give the following policy recommendations:

- The raising of awareness about the dangers of hate speech, various forms of xenophobia and (neo)racism; especially in the media and on the Internet, as well as in politics.
- The need to accept a speech code for public officials such as parliament members, who often initiate and therefore spread hate speech, xenophobic and racist ideas.
- The monitoring and collection of information about discrimination based on religious grounds in the employment area.
- Implementing and facilitating options for halal dietary regimes at workplaces, schools, kindergartens, hospitals, state institutions, etc.
- The update of textbooks and school curricula regarding Islamic history, targeting pupils as well as teachers.
- The education about Islam, diverse Islamic practices and traditions on a institutional level including top range political institutions such as parliament, the government, ministries and local administration, as well as employment and educational organizations.
- Facilitate spiritual care for the Islamic faith in the armed forces, police forces, prisons, and hospitals.
- Support university and academic research about Islamophobia in politics and among the general public.

- Support the establishment of Islamic studies at universities.
- The education of people working in the media about the importance of how their messages are understood, and education about Islam for media workers.
- Facilitating visibility and participation of Muslims in political, economic, social and cultural life.
- Establishing media for Muslims created by Muslims.
- The development of integration programs, the facilitation of the integration and the monitoring of the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Slovenian society.

## Chronology

- **20.01.2017:** Proposal and discussion by the government about Islamic spiritual care in the army, police forces, hospitals, and prisons.
- **25.01.2017:** Presentation of the newly translated book about Islam and Jihad *To Understand Islam and Jihad* that was not received well by the Islamic Community.
- **25.09.2017:** Polemics about the name “Mosque Street.”
- **05.10.2017:** Publication of the proposal to the Constitutional Court to repeal the ban on the stunning of animals before being slaughtered.
- **05.10.2017:** Discussion at the Government Council about the right to perform surgery for the circumcision of Muslim boys.
- **13.11.2017:** Protests against (and for) the deportation of refugee/asylum seeker Ahmad Shamieh.
- **23.11.2017:** Round table organized by members of the Slovenian Democratic Party about security issues and threats of Islamic terrorist attacks in Slovenia and Europe.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**SPAIN**  
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## Executive Summary

The year 2017 will be remembered in Spain in relation to Islamophobia for two facts: one is the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Cooperation Agreements of 1992 signed between the Islamic communities and the Spanish state that guaranteed Muslims basic rights in a country in which the majority of citizens are Christians (68.4%)<sup>1</sup>, and the other is the terrorist attack the city of Barcelona experienced on August 17, with the result of 15 people being killed and hundreds of injured citizens. These two events are meaningful and quite representative of the two kinds of Islamophobia present in Spain nowadays: the institutional Islamophobia rooted in the decisions taken (or not taken) by the state and their implementation (or lack thereof), and the citizen Islamophobia practiced by individual citizens on a daily basis. In relation to the first point, over two decades after the Agreements of 1992, basic rights such as access to religious education or the possibility of burying the Muslim dead in an Islamic cemetery have not been put into practice in most of the Spanish regions although small steps are being taken in this sense. In relation to the citizen Islamophobia, the terrorist attack in Barcelona definitely triggered an uncontrolled chain of reactions among certain sectors and groups of Spanish society. The aftermath of that day brought about what the association Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia (Citizen Platform against Islamophobia) described as a ‘brutal wave’ of Islamophobic attacks.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the expected patterns of behaviour after any terrorist attack occurred, i.e., vandalism of mosques, Islamophobic writings on Islamic centres, and isolated attacks on individuals, to mention but a few. The main Islamophobic activity observed those days was the frightening rise of the so-called cyber-Islamophobia both in intensity, number, speed of production and impact. In the first week of March, the aforementioned organization Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia launched their annual report<sup>3</sup> and their conclusions were similar to the ones presented in this report. They state that all 546 attacks they registered (recorded both online and offline) in 2017 are just the ‘tip of the iceberg’ since the figures correspond only to the incidents reported by the victims or the incidents found (and verified) in the news. As mentioned above, Islamophobia in Spain has moved ‘from the streets to the web’ though as, they highlight, mosques and Islamic centres continue to be the main targets of physical acts of vandalism, Catalonia being the autonomous community with the largest number of Islamophobic incidents (almost double those of the second autonomous community, Andalusia). Gender Islamophobia continues to grow; Muslim women are the most targeted group to suffer individual attacks on the streets (21 per cent of the attacks were addressed to Muslim women).

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1. Data from the Institute of Sociological Investigations up to February 2017. [http://datos.cis.es/pdf/Es3168mar\\_A.pdf](http://datos.cis.es/pdf/Es3168mar_A.pdf)

2. Elsa García de Blas, “La islamofobia se desata en las redes y llega a la calle tras los atentados,” *El País* (August 23, 2017), retrieved November 21, 2017 from [https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/08/22/actualidad/1503428186\\_516127.html](https://politica.elpais.com/politica/2017/08/22/actualidad/1503428186_516127.html)

3. Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia, “Informe anual Islamofobia en España 2017”, (March 4, 2018), retrieved March 10, 2018 from <http://pccislamofobia.org/informes/informe-sobre-la-islamofobia-en-espana-2017/>.

## Resumen Ejecutivo

El año 2017 será recordado en España en relación con la Islamofobia por dos hechos: uno es la celebración del 25 aniversario de los Acuerdos de Cooperación de 1992 firmados entre las comunidades islámicas y el estado español que garantizaban a los musulmanes los derechos básicos en un país en el que la mayoría de habitantes son cristianos (68.4%), y el otro es el ataque terrorista que sufrió la ciudad de Barcelona el 17 de agosto con el resultado de 15 muertos y cientos de heridos. Estos dos hechos son significativos y bastante representativos de los dos tipos de Islamofobia presentes en España en la actualidad: la Islamofobia institucional enraizada en las decisiones tomadas (o no tomadas) por el estado y la puesta en práctica (o no) de las mismas y la Islamofobia ciudadana ejercitada por ciudadanos individuales en el día a día. En relación al primer punto, todavía dos décadas tras la firma de los Acuerdos de Cooperación de 1992, derechos tan básicos como el acceso a una educación religiosa o la posibilidad de enterrar a los muertos musulmanes en un cementerio islámico no son implementados completamente en la mayoría de regiones españolas aunque se están dando pequeños pasos en este sentido. En relación con la Islamofobia ciudadana, el atentado de Barcelona provocó una serie de reacciones en cadena por parte de ciertos sectores o grupos de la sociedad española

La resaca de aquel día fue lo que la asociación Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia describió como “una brutal ola” de ataques islamóforos. A los ya desafortunadamente esperados y frecuentes patrones de comportamiento después de cualquier ataque terrorista, *i.e.*, actos vandálicos contra las mezquitas, pintadas islamóforas en centros islámicos o ataques aislados contra individuos musulmanes entre otros, la mayor actividad islamófoba en esos días fue el incremento de la llamada ciberislamofobia tanto en intensidad, número, velocidad de producción e impacto. Durante la primera semana de marzo, la ya mencionada organización “Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia” presentó su informe anual con conclusiones similares a las que expone este trabajo. En su informe de 2017, hacen referencia a 546 ataques (tanto online como offline) lo que sólo constituye “la punta del iceberg” ya que las cifras se corresponden con los incidentes denunciados por las víctimas o los que han sido mencionados (y verificados) en los medios de comunicación. De manera general, y como se ha dicho anteriormente, la Islamofobia en España se ha desplazado “desde la calle hasta la red” aunque enfatizan que las mezquitas y los centros islámicos siguen siendo el objetivo principal de los actos vandálicos destacando Cataluña como la comunidad autónoma con el mayor número de incidentes registrados (casi el doble que la segunda comunidad autónoma, Andalucía) y las mujeres musulmanas continúan siendo el grupo más propicio a sufrir ataques individuales (21% del número total de ataques fueron dirigidos a ellas).

## Introduction

According to the 2016 annual report *Demographic Study of the Muslim Community (Estudio Demográfico de la Comunidad Musulmana)*<sup>4</sup> carried out by the Union of Islamic Communities of Spain (Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España, UCIDE), there are 1,919,141 Muslim citizens in Spain; 804,017 are Spanish Muslims, whereas the remaining 1,115,124 are immigrants, Morocco being the most common country of origin. Catalonia and Andalusia are the preferred Spanish Muslim settlements followed by Madrid and Valencia.

With the presence of Muslims in Spain, Islamophobia is increasing and reaching new peaks every year. A report carried out by the NGO Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia stated that in 2016,<sup>5</sup> the Islamophobic incidents they monitored and reported doubled compared to the previous year. The NGO considers there is an “institutional involvement” since the report of the Ministry of Interior did not mention any Islamophobic attack despite being the most frequent practice of intolerance in the country and especially alarming in social media. Andalusia, Catalonia and Valencia were the regions with more Islamophobic incidents according to this study.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

Two main events were the protagonists of 2017 in Spain: one was the terrorist attack that shook Barcelona on August 17, and the second was ‘the Catalan issue’, that is, the referendum held to test the opinion of Catalans about their wish to be independent from the rest of the country and the elections for the Catalan parliament that followed.

In the afternoon of August 17, a white van drove into the crowds at Las Ramblas, the most popular street in Barcelona.<sup>6</sup> In the peak of the summer holidays, the action caused citizens of 24 countries to be killed. The previous night, in Barcelona, in the small town of Alcanar, an explosion occurred destroying the building and killing two members of the terrorist cell that the following day killed 16 people and left more than 130 injured both in Barcelona and Cambrils. The entire attack – in Barcelona, Cambrils and Alcanar - was qualified by the president of the Spanish government, Mariano Rajoy, as a ‘jihadist attack’ since DAESH quickly claimed the responsibility of it.<sup>7</sup>

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4. Unión de Comunidades Islámicas de España (2016) “Estudio demográfico de la población musulmana,” [ucide.org/es/observatorio-andalusi](http://observatorio-andalusi.org/es/observatorio-andalusi) [online] retrieved November 6, 2017 from <http://observatorio.hispanomuslim.es/estademograf.pdf>.

5. EFE Press Agency, “Los incidentes de islamofobia se duplicaron en España el año pasado,” *20 minutos* (April 25, 2017), retrieved November 7, 2017 from <http://www.20minutos.es/noticia/3020802/0/incidentes-islamofobia-duplican-espana-2016/>.

6. Helena Horton, “Everything We Know about the Barcelona Terror Attack,” *The Telegraph* (August 18, 2017,) retrieved January 12, 2018 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/08/17/everything-know-barcelona-terror-attack/>

7. Will Worley, “ISIS Claims Barcelona Attack That Killed at Least a Dozen People in City Centre,” *The Independent* (August 17, 2017), retrieved January 13, 2018 from <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/isis-barcelona-attack-latest-news-updates-terrorist-islamic-state-daesh-claims-a7899201.html>

During the last months of the year (October-December), Catalonia experienced very troubled times. The autonomous community held a referendum on the citizens' will to separate from the rest of the country. This led to the birth of the Republic of Catalonia and their unilateral declaration of independence. At the end of October, the president of the Catalan parliament, Carles Puigdemont, fled to Belgium escaping the Spanish Justice that issued a formal warrant of arrest against him for rebellion, sedition and embezzlement; to this day, he remains in Belgium.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The year started with a polemic, Islamophobic tweet by Esperanza Aguirre (former president of Madrid and of the Senate as well as former minister of culture during Aznar's government) on January 2 about the celebrations of the surrender of Granada. Aguirre tweeted that January 2 is a glorious day for the Spanish women who otherwise would not enjoy any freedom under the rule of Islam.<sup>8</sup> Among other politicians who made Islamophobic statements or remarks, it is relevant to remember the words of the Secretary of State for the Defence<sup>9</sup> Agustín Conde, who claimed one of the targets of the army was "to prevent his daughter from wearing a burqa". He also emphasised the need to strengthen the army to face 'external threats'. José Manuel Calzada, provincial director of the Ministry of Education in Melilla, was also polemic when he blamed Islam for the terrorist attack in Barcelona, which DAESH quickly claimed responsibility for, in a tweet that ended with the hashtag #StopIslam.

The annual report on Islamophobia by the Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia (Citizen Platform against Islamophobia) stated that 29% of the identified perpetrators of Islamophobic incidents (both online and offline) were involved or related to extreme right political parties and organizations.

However, the political area which featured Muslims as protagonists was the Catalan elections. The elections in Catalonia (with 170,000 Muslim voters) and the problems of separatism that followed as a consequence put Muslims in the limelight since the so-called "Muslim vote" was the object of desire of all the political parties and all of them included in their lists an average of 12 Muslim candidates. Accord-

8. Editorial team, "Esperanza Aguirre, sobre la Toma de Granada: "Es un día de gloria para las españolas. Con el Islam no tendríamos libertad," *El Diario* (January 2, 2017), retrieved October 24, 2017 from [http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Esperanza-Aguirre-Toma-Granada-Islam\\_0\\_597390772.html](http://www.eldiario.es/politica/Esperanza-Aguirre-Toma-Granada-Islam_0_597390772.html)

9. Press Agencies, "El secretario de Estado de Defensa: 'Las Fuerzas Armadas están para que a mi hija no le ponga un burka nadie,'" *El Diario.es*, (March 30 2017), retrieved September 12, 2017 from [http://www.eldiario.es/politica/secretario-Defensa-Fuerzas-Armadas-burka\\_0\\_627838461.html?utm\\_source=divr.it&utm\\_medium=twitter](http://www.eldiario.es/politica/secretario-Defensa-Fuerzas-Armadas-burka_0_627838461.html?utm_source=divr.it&utm_medium=twitter).

ing to Prof. Moreras, the so-called “Muslim vote” is a fiction, due to, among other reasons, the heterogeneity of the Muslim community.<sup>10</sup>

## Justice System

In 2017, 95% of Islamic communities lack a cemetery. Muslims started an active campaign to claim their right to have a cemetery in some provinces such as in Alicante,<sup>11</sup> Badajoz,<sup>12</sup> and La Rioja.<sup>13</sup> Other cemeteries have been abandoned by the administration and need restoration or to be expanded as is the case of La Rioja or Son Valentí.

Another aspect related to Islamophobia and justice is the amount of actions (talks, workshops, seminars, etc.) in 2017 aiming to raise awareness in citizens about reporting hate crimes. An average of 2 out of 10 criminal offences are taken to court while, for instance, the local police of Palma de Mallorca had to take part in 22 cases in the first two months of 2017<sup>14</sup> - data that gives us the real dimension of the problem.

The organization Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia states that all 546 attacks they registered (recorded both online and offline) in 2017 are just the “tip of the iceberg” since the figures correspond to the incidents reported by the victims or the incidents found (and verified) in the news.

Plenty of measures, however, have been taken to foster reporting any hate crime both from government institutions such as security forces (national and local police) and from civil society.<sup>15</sup>

## Employment

Probably the hot topic related to Islamophobia and employment in Spain this year was the controversy regarding the autonomy of companies to forbid their female employees from wearing a headscarf. In March 2017, the European Court of Justice

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10. David Dusster, “Las voces emergentes de los musulmanes,” *La Vanguardia* (December 15, 2017), retrieved December 27, 2017 from <http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20171215/433628283753/musulmanes-catalunya-representacion-elecciones-21-d.html>.

11. J. Hernández, “La comunidad islámica pide una sala para musulmanes en el cementerio,” *Diario Información* (May 5, 2017), retrieved November 29, 2017 from <http://www.diarioinformacion.com/alicante/2017/05/04/comunidad-islamica-pide-sala-musulmanes/1890067.html>.

12. Editorial team, “Piden espacio en el nuevo cementerio de Badajoz para enterramientos musulmanes,” *El Diario Extremadura* (November 1, 2017), retrieved December 18, 2017 from [http://www.eldiario.es/eldiarioex/badajoz/Piden-cementerio-Badajoz-enterramientos-musulmanes\\_0\\_703430091.html](http://www.eldiario.es/eldiarioex/badajoz/Piden-cementerio-Badajoz-enterramientos-musulmanes_0_703430091.html).

13. Editorial team, “El cementerio musulmán de Logroño necesita cuidados y una ampliación,” *Rioja 2*, (November 13, 2017), retrieved December 7, 2017 from <https://www.rioja2.com/n-114813-3-el-cementerio-musulman-de-logrono-necesita-cuidados-y-una-ampliacion/>

14. Maitane Moreno and Juan Antonio Bauzá, “Sólo dos de cada diez casos de delitos de odio acaba en los tribunales,” *Cadena Ser* (March 22, 2017) retrieved November 8, 2017 from [http://cadenaser.com/emisora/2017/03/22/radio\\_mallorca/1490190440\\_470468.html](http://cadenaser.com/emisora/2017/03/22/radio_mallorca/1490190440_470468.html).

15. EFE Press Agency, “Castellón instruye a 500 policías en delitos de odio y violencia de género,” *El Mundo* (February 1, 2017), retrieved October 27, 2017 from <http://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/castellon/2017/02/01/5891f52b22601d5d428b4581.html> and

ruled that the prohibition on the outfit is not a direct discrimination towards the employee although it gives every country the possibility to interpret in which cases the prohibition is discriminatory in the private sector.<sup>16</sup>

In this sense, a courthouse in Palma de Mallorca supported Ana Saidi Rodríguez, who was dismissed and sued her company, Acciona, because she was told not to wear the headscarf while she was working at a desk at the airport of Palma.<sup>17</sup>

Another problem Muslims incur is the high rate of unemployment. The president of the organisation Islamic Volunteerism of Social Action VIAS (Voluntariado Islámico de Acción Social) reported that the biggest unemployment rate can be found among Muslims in the city of Melilla, which has more than 44,000 Muslim citizens.<sup>18</sup> In this vein, the candidate for the Catalan parliament for the ERC, Najat Driouech, stated that unemployment is Muslims' main problem in Spain since the extent of prejudices towards Muslims prevent employers from hiring them.<sup>19</sup>

## Education

The main problem in the education sector in 2017 was that 95% of Muslim students lack religion classes in state schools<sup>20</sup> despite the Agreements of 1992.<sup>21</sup>

The census of Muslim students in Spain in 2016 was 290,110. However, the demand for Islamic education is only covered in the autonomous communities of Andalusia, Aragon, Basque Country, Canary Islands and in Ceuta and Melilla, leaving the greater part of the country unassisted. The number of teachers of Islamic religion in 2016 was 55, eight more than in 2015 and still very insufficient to cover all the demands and needs of Muslims students. In the autonomous community of Castilla-León more than 260 individual demands<sup>22</sup> were registered.

16. Álvaro Sánchez, "La justicia europea avala que las empresas prohíban el velo en el trabajo," *El País* (March 14, 2017), retrieved December 2, 2017 from [https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/03/14/actualidad/1489478861\\_793428.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2017/03/14/actualidad/1489478861_793428.html).

17. Edu Colom, "Un juzgado reconoce el derecho a usar velo islámico en el trabajo," *El Mundo* (February 13, 2017), retrieved October 27, 2017 from <http://www.elmundo.es/baleares/2017/02/13/58a1b563ca474154638b460b.html>.

18. Data from the demographic study on the Muslim population by the Observatorio Andalús: <http://ucide.org/sites/default/files/revistas/estademograf16.pdf>

19. David Dusster, "Las voces emergentes de los musulmanes," *La Vanguardia* (December 15, 2017), retrieved December 27, 2017 from <http://www.lavanguardia.com/politica/20171215/433628283753/musulmanes-catalunya-representacion-elecciones-21-d.html>.

20. <http://observatorio.hispanomuslim.es/estademograf.pdf>

21. Laura Galaup, "La asignatura Religión musulmana, ausente de los colegios pese a que la ley la garantiza," *El Diario* (March 26, 2017), retrieved November 27, 2017 from [http://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/religion\\_islamica-educacion\\_primaria\\_0\\_625387962.html](http://www.eldiario.es/sociedad/religion_islamica-educacion_primaria_0_625387962.html).

22. C.B.E, "Hay jóvenes que han acogido al Islam sin tener bases verdaderas," *El Norte de Castilla* (July 11, 2017), retrieved November 17, 2017 from <http://www.elnortedecastilla.es/segovia/jovenes-acogido-islam-20170711134626-nt.html>.

In other communities, the implementation of the teaching of Islamic religion will commence in the next academic year 2018-9; this is the case for Extremadura,<sup>23</sup> La Rioja,<sup>24</sup> Segovia and its province, and Valencia.<sup>25</sup>

Aside from the important problem of the absence of the subject of Islamic religion in schools, there were also other Islamophobic incidents in 2017. There was the case of a student of the Autonomous University of Madrid, who was forbidden to sit an exam for wearing a headscarf which caused the massive reaction of all her classmates who attended the class wearing headscarves too, in solidarity with their Muslim classmate.<sup>26</sup> Another case of Islamophobia was solved in court in 2017, when the Supreme Court in Galicia supported the dismissal of a cooking teacher who humiliated a Muslim student by forcing him to drink alcohol.<sup>27</sup>

## Media

In Spain, 2017 was an important year for starting the battle against Islamophobia in the media since the ‘Observatorio de la islamofobia en los medios’<sup>28</sup> (Observatory on



Figure 1: An article of Islamophobic news analysed by the Observatory of Islamophobia in the Media. It states: “The PP (Popular Party) Member Who “Fished”, “Terrorists” for Jihad”. The pun and the photo makes reference to the fact he was a fish-seller.<sup>29</sup>

Islamophobia in the Media) was founded in March of this year. The Observatorio is an organisation that focuses on the coverage of all news concerning Muslims and Islam in the six main Spanish newspapers: *El País*, *La Razón*, *El Mundo*, *La Vanguardia*, *Eldiario.es* and *20 minuto*. It classifies the articles according to the

23. EFE Agency Press, “Los colegios extremeños impartirán religión islámica el próximo curso,” *El Periódico de Extremadura* (October 25, 2017), retrieved December 1, 2017 from [http://www.elperiodicoextremadura.com/noticias/extremadura/colegios-extremenos-impartiran-religion-islamica-proximo-curso\\_1048526.html](http://www.elperiodicoextremadura.com/noticias/extremadura/colegios-extremenos-impartiran-religion-islamica-proximo-curso_1048526.html)

24. EFE Press Agency, “La educación pública riojana impartirá clases de Religión Islámica el próximo curso,” *La Rioja. Com* (November 5, 2017), retrieved December 3, 2017 from <http://www.larioja.com/la-rioja/educacion-publica-riojana-20171103172316-nt.html>.

25. Editorial team, “Algunos colegios de Valencia enseñarán el Islam el próximo curso,” Antena 3 TV (October 21, 2017), retrieved December 2, 2017 from [http://www.antena3.com/noticias/sociedad/algunos-colegios-valencia-ensenaran-islam-proximo-curso\\_2017102059e9d6170cf2fc58b5e7ea.html](http://www.antena3.com/noticias/sociedad/algunos-colegios-valencia-ensenaran-islam-proximo-curso_2017102059e9d6170cf2fc58b5e7ea.html).

26. Paula Cantó, “Feminismo: Impiden a una alumna examinarse con hiyab en la Autónoma y toda su clase se pone velo,” *El confidencial* (November 8, 2017), retrieved December 13, 2017 from [https://www.elconfidencial.com/amp/alma-corazon-vida/2017-11-08/redes-sociales-viral-velo-uam-hiyab-profesor\\_14734771](https://www.elconfidencial.com/amp/alma-corazon-vida/2017-11-08/redes-sociales-viral-velo-uam-hiyab-profesor_14734771).

27. Alberto Pozas, “Despedida una profesora que humilló a un estudiante musulmán dándole alcohol,” *Cadena Ser* (June 3, 2017), retrieved October 2, 2017 from [http://cadenaser.com/ser/2017/06/01/tribunales/1496343058\\_451458.html](http://cadenaser.com/ser/2017/06/01/tribunales/1496343058_451458.html)

28. <http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/>

29. Bittán Montagut, “El militante del PP que pescaba ‘terroristas’ para la yihad,” *El Mundo* (September 11, 2017), retrieved November 27, 2017 from <http://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2017/09/11/59b58fb5e5fdea72548b461c.html>

content in three main categories: containing active Islamophobia, containing passive Islamophobia, and no Islamophobia. Figures 1 and 2 are samples of news analysed and found to be containing active Islamophobia.



Figure 2: Article analysed by the Observatory on Islamophobia. It reads: 'Female Teachers Wearing Hijabs and Other Ridiculous Things'.<sup>30</sup>

In September, the organisation launched the statistics of the results of the year's first semester in which they concluded that 66% of the news about Islam was Islamophobic. Also, they wrote a special report on the press coverage of the terrorist attack of August 17 and concluded that in 56% of cases there was active or passive Islamophobia.

The organisation Melilla Acoge offers workshops to educate professionals working in the centres for immigrants in discarding any negative stereotypes of diversity and multicultural societies which could affect immigrants.<sup>31</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Physical and verbal attacks have been constant in last year; the latter, as I will explain, is especially true on the Internet. Physical attacks have targeted both mosques and Muslims. The terrorist attack in Barcelona on August 17 triggered the reaction of fascists who wrote threatening messages against Islam and Muslims<sup>32</sup> on the walls of mosques; among others, in Montblanc, Fuenlabrada, Sevilla and Granada. (Figures 3 and 4) Other mosques were attacked in different moments of the



Figure 3: Graffiti on a mosque in Sevilla after the terrorist attack in Barcelona: 'Assassins! You are going to pay for this!' and 'Moor that prays, machete to his head! Stop Islam!'

30. Arturo Pérez-Reverte, "Maestras con hijab y otros disparates", *XL Semanal* (March 5, 2017), retrieved November 27, 2017 from <http://www.xlsemanal.com/firmas/20170305/perez-reverte-maestras-hiyab-otros-disparates.html>.

31. Irene Quirante, "El CETI y el Virgen del Carmen se convierten en 'espacios sin rumores,'" *El Faro de Melilla* (October 18, 2017), retrieved November 27, 2017 from <https://elfarodemelilla.es/2017/10/18/ceti-virgen-del-carmen-se-convierten-espacios-sin-rumores/>

32. Alba Aragón, "Las mezquitas, blanco de ataques islamófobos tras el atentado de Barcelona," *Cadena Ser* (August 20, 2017), retrieved November 27, 2017 from [http://cadenaser.com/ser/2017/08/19/sociedad/1503156666\\_447678.html](http://cadenaser.com/ser/2017/08/19/sociedad/1503156666_447678.html)



Figure 4: Graffiti on the mosque in Montblanc (Tarragona): 'You are going to die, fucking Moors'.

year, such as the one in Viladecans (Barcelona)<sup>33</sup> or Bermeo.<sup>34</sup>

Mosques were also 'attacked' not physically but threatened to be closed like the one in Las Margaritas (Getafe), while a campaign was organised by an extremist fascist group against the mosque of Sant Feliu.<sup>35</sup>

Muslims were also the victims of violence. A Moroccan citizen reported that he was beat-

en a day after the terrorist attack in Barcelona<sup>36</sup> and a pregnant Muslim woman in Málaga was hit.<sup>37</sup> Muslims in Inca (Mallorca) were scared after a jihadist planned to stab random citizens in the street so that they could be also potential victims for the terrorist.<sup>38</sup> Passengers on the metro in Madrid kicked out a neo-Nazi who insulted a Moroccan couple<sup>39</sup> In Granada, two Muslim women were expelled from a public swimming pool for wearing burkinis in a clear case of gendered Islamophobia.<sup>40</sup>

As we mentioned briefly in the executive summary, Muslim women continue to constitute the main group of victims of physical and verbal attacks in the streets as they are the preferred target by Islamophobes. The incidents related to gender Islamophobia make up 21% of the entire number of attacks reported according to the annual report on Islamophobia launched by Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamophobia.

33. Editorial team, "Prenden fuego a un coche y dejan una pintada en la mezquita de Viladecans," *Catalunya Press* (March 26, 2017), retrieved November 11, 2017 from <http://www.catalunyapress.es/texto-diario/mostrar/7069371/prenden-fuego-coche-dejan-pintada-mezquita-viladecans>.

34. EFE Press Agency, "SOS Racismo denuncia un ataque 'islamófobo' contra una mezquita en Bermeo," *ABC* (November 17, 2017), retrieved December 3, 2017 from <http://agencias.abc.es/agencias/noticia.asp?noticia=2665420>.

35. Editorial team, "Tensión en Sant Feliu entre opositores a una mezquita y antifascistas," *El Español* (July 8, 2017), retrieved October 28, 2017 from [https://cronicaglobal.elespanol.com/vida/tension-sant-feliu-mezquita-antifascistas\\_76399\\_102.html](https://cronicaglobal.elespanol.com/vida/tension-sant-feliu-mezquita-antifascistas_76399_102.html).

36. Editorial team, "Un marroquí denuncia que le pegaron una paliza en Palma un día después de los atentados," *Diario de Mallorca* (September 9, 2017), retrieved December 5, 2017 from <http://www.diariodemallorca.es/sucesos/2017/09/08/marroqui-denuncia-le-pegaron-paliza/1246098.html>.

37. Suzanne Zaura, "Cuatro individuos atacan a una embarazada musulmana en Málaga," *Correo Madrid* (July 16, 2017), retrieved September 16, 2017 from <http://www.correomadrid.com/2017/07/cuatro-individuos-atacan-una-musulmana-embarazada/>.

38. Enrique Fueris, "Los musulmanes de Inca también tienen miedo," *El Mundo* (July 1, 2017), retrieved November 16 2017, from <http://www.elmundo.es/baleares/2017/07/01/5956aa1b22601d29748b4630.html>.

39. Gabriela Sánchez, "Viajeros del metro de Madrid echan del tren al autor de una agresión racista a una pareja," *El Diario* (September 7, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2017 from [http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/ataque-xenofobo-metro-Madrid\\_0\\_684182259.amp.html](http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/ataque-xenofobo-metro-Madrid_0_684182259.amp.html).

40. Editorial team, "Expulsan de una piscina de Granada a dos usuarias por llevar un bañador de cuerpo completo," *Ideal* (November 6, 2017) retrieved December 2, 2017 from <http://www.ideal.es/granada/expulsan-piscina-granada-20171106180712-nt.html>

The verbal attacks on Muslims were examined in the section on politics and will be analysed in detail in the following section on the Internet.

## Internet

My analysis of cyber-Islamophobia consists of the detailed examination of 250 tweets from 2017 - a corpus large enough to draw some representative conclusions concerning trends of thought and discursive patterns. Similarly, to last year, most of the Islamophobic tweets were sent through “impersonal accounts” in the sense that the handle-names could not be easily linked to an identifiable individual but rather comprised a nickname or the name of an organisation as we will see in the section below.

The most frequent hashtags associated with Islamophobic tweets were *#stopislamización* (*#stopislamization*); *#stopinvasión* (*#stopinvasion*); and *#stopinmigrantes*. Curiously, in a great number of tweets, the government party, the Partido Popular (People’s Party), is accused of encouraging and fostering the massive entry of Muslims into Spain and of giving them all the benefits that only Spanish people should enjoy (see the ‘Islamisation’ of Spain). (Fig. 5)



Figure 5: Collage representing the alleged excessive leniency of the Spanish government towards Islam and Muslims. @conelmazo\_dando, Twitter, 29/11/2017.

Another nuance that is more present this year than in 2016 is the stronger presence of certain political parties on Twitter, mainly Vox, Democracia Nacional (National Democracy) and Falange whose presence spread across many social media platforms (primarily Twitter and Facebook).

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There are several social media accounts whose main (sometimes exclusive) objective is to spread hate and aversion towards Muslims. Here, I will merely refer to accounts that are not ascribed to any individual with a proper name and surname (keeping in mind that these might be fake) but whose handle names are either impersonal (referring to concepts) or referring to associations - all of them, however, explicitly mention their rejection of Islam and Muslims. The following are a sample: Observa Islamofilia (Observe Islamophilia), Lucha Nacional (National Fight), No Islam España (No Islam Spain), Hispano Ignoto (Unknown Hispano), An Islamophobe, Generación Identitaria (Identitarian Generation), D. Pelayo vuelve (Don Pelayo comes back), Crusaders, Pasión por España (Passion for Spain), and Alt-Right España.

The iconography of the profiles of all the Islamophobes share common elements: Spanish flags (this year we have found more flags with the constitutional shield than pre-constitutional flags); and the same kind of thread of adjectives in the biography of the users: conservative, patriot, Spanish (meaning a strong supporter of a united Spain in which any idea of nationalism, let alone separatism, is completely rejected) and Catholic (sometimes, just Christian). In many cases, they also make reference to their support of the Spanish army. Not frequent but occasional are the references to the *Reconquista* period (to Don Pelayo, for instance) in which the Christian troops took over Muslim Spain. (Fig. 6)



Figure 6: A selection of photos used in the social-media profiles of Islamophobes.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Civil society in Spain has been very dynamic in taking charge of the battle against this multifaceted problem which, we must not forget, should be tackled by the government rather than by private organisations.

The measures taken by civil society can be said to have focused on five fields:

- a. Internet campaigns to report abuses suffered by the Muslim community.
- b. Campaigns to spread information on Islam and the importance of Muslim culture in our history and cultural heritage.<sup>41</sup>
- c. Activities to educate the younger generations, for example in high schools, and acquaint them with Islam either through talks or workshops or via competitions such as comics or graffiti.<sup>42</sup>
- d. Academic events like seminars, workshops, conferences or talks<sup>43</sup> to discuss certain aspects of Islamophobia and deepen the knowledge of the real nature of Islam.<sup>44</sup>
- e. Instruction and training of security forces<sup>45</sup> and citizens<sup>46</sup> to teach them how to tackle hate crimes.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report has summarised the main aspects concerning Islamophobia in Spain during 2017 at institutional, social, discursive and interpersonal level. The phenomenon of Islamophobia in Spain has been gradually increasing in the last few years to the point of reaching almost 500 incidents in 2016. The year 2017, as we saw in the former sections of this report, will be remembered in the history of Spain for the brutal terrorist attack in Barcelona on August 17.

Cyber-Islamophobia is, by far, the area in which the Muslim community is easily verbally attacked, slandered, insulted and despised. The minimal cost and easy access of Islamophobes to computers makes cyber-Islamophobia a real threat to Muslims. Though the legislation on hate speech has toughened by both the main media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as by the Spanish law, the administration continues not implementing some of the measures signed in the Cooperation Agreements of 1992, like access to Islamic education for Muslim children, the opening of Muslim cemeteries and the provision of Muslim imams to Muslim prisoners and members of the Armed Forces.

41. <http://cihispanoarabe.org/news/iniciativa-cihar-el-legado-andalusi-eje-madrid-toledo/>

42. Graffiti contest NO hate: <http://www.nohate.es/iniciativas/concurso-graffiti-nohate-festival-omariskino/>.

43. Talk at the University of Granada 'Islam: Culture of Peace and No Violence' by Amaruch Mohamedi Amaruch.

44. 'Women against Islamophobia' is a project launched by the organization SOS racism and taking place in Guipúzcoa to favour the process of integration of migrant Muslim women through education, empowerment and participation.

45. Efe Agency Press, "Castellón instruye a 500 policías en delitos de odio y violencia de género," *El Mundo* (February 1, 2017), retrieved November 24, 2017 from <http://www.elmundo.es/comunidad-valenciana/castellon/2017/02/01/5891f52b22601d5d428b4581.html>.

46. <http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/2017/10/26/esta-ilustradora-ha-creado-una-guia-muestra-presencias-actos-islamofobia/>

Civil society has taken the lead in many areas to prevent Islamophobia from growing and spreading mainly based on the destruction of deeply rooted stereotypes, through seminars, workshops and the spread of knowledge - the aforementioned areas, however, are beyond their reach. A democratic government in a state ruled by law should not allow organisations to take over the tasks of its elected politicians.

A more fluid dialogue between the Muslim community, civil society and institutions is required. The future is, as always, the new generations. Programmes about otherness, inclusiveness and minorities should be included in the syllabus of schools and in the faculties of education to create citizens free from any prejudice against Islam and Muslims. Also, the government should pay attention to the numerous and justified demands made by the Muslim community.

The media has taken the first steps to detect, highlight and deal with Islamophobic language and information thanks to the Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los Medios - one of the big steps taken in the last year- but we need more time to see if their recommendations will be put into practice.

## Chronology

- **02.01.2017:** Esperanza Aguirre posts an Islamophobic tweet on the anniversary of the surrender of Granada.
- **06.01.2017:** The Bishop of Córdoba claims the Great Mosque is ‘just Byzantine art’ and ‘the Moors merely paid for the construction work’.<sup>47</sup>
- **07.03.2017:** The Mosque el Saadah of Sabadell reports Islamophobic graffiti that states ‘Death to Islam’.
- **22.03.2017:** Official presentation of the Observatory on Islamophobia in the Media, a project led by the European Institute of the Mediterranean (IEMed) and the Al Fanar Foundation.<sup>48</sup>
- **26.03.2017:** Vandal acts in Viladecans (Barcelona) - a car is set on fire and an Islamophobic message is written on the mosque.<sup>49</sup>
- **28.03.2017:** The Honorary Commissary of Police Francisco Marhuenda makes extremely hateful comments about Muslims and the cultural association Intercul-

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47. Manuel J. Albert, “El obispo cree que la Mezquita es arte bizantino y que ‘los moros’ sólo pagaron por las obras,” *Cordópolis* (January 15, 2017), retrieved November 12, 2017 from <http://cordopolis.es/2017/01/15/el-obispo-cree-que-la-mezquita-es-arte-bizantino-y-que-los-moros-solo-pagaron-las-obras/>.

48. Editorial team, “Nace el Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los medios,” *La Vanguardia* (March 21, 2017), retrieved November 19, 2017 from <http://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20170321/421067227284/nace-el-observatorio-de-la-islamofobia-en-los-medios.html>.

49. Editorial team, “Prenden fuego a un coche y dejan una pintada en la mezquita de Viladecans,” *Catalunya Press* (March 26, 2017), retrieved November 11, 2017 from <http://www.catalunypress.es/texto-diario/mostrat/706937/prenden-fuego-coche-dejan-pintada-mezquita-viladecans>.

- tura (Interculture) demands the government revoke his title and bans him from all future events.<sup>50</sup>
- **31.03.2017:** The defence state secretary and the former mayor of Toledo make Islamophobic statements.
  - **21.05.2017:** A citizen from Lloret de Mar (Gerona) starts a campaign on *change.org* looking for support to close the frontier in Cádiz and forbid the entry of Muslims into Spain.<sup>51</sup>
  - **03.06.2017:** The Supreme Court in Galicia supports the dismissal of a cooking teacher who humiliated a Muslim student by forcing him to drink alcohol.
  - **17.06.2017:** Muslims in La Rioja complain about the fact that their kids cannot study Islam in school.
  - **01.07.2017:** Muslims in Inca (Mallorca) are scared after a self-proclaimed jihadist planned to stab random citizens in the street making them potential victims too.<sup>52</sup>
  - **04.07.2017:** The Guardia Civil tries to find out who is behind the distribution of anti-Muslim pamphlets.<sup>53</sup>
  - **07.07.2017:** Tense argument in Mallorca between a Muslim woman rebuking another woman for wearing shorts. The incident appeared in almost all the media with no mention of the mental deficiency of the attacker.<sup>54</sup>
  - **11.07.2017:** Campaign organised by an extremist fascist group against the mosque of Sant Feliu.<sup>55</sup>
  - **12.07.2017:** The closing of the mosque in Las Margaritas (Getafe) is stopped by a social movement against this measure.<sup>56</sup>
  - **17.07.2017:** Attack on Muslim pregnant woman in Málaga.<sup>57</sup>

50. Editorial team, "Intercultura pide que retiren a Marhuenda el cargo de comisario de Honor de la policía," *El Faro de Melilla* (March 27, 2017), retrieved November 26, 2017 from <https://elfarodemelilla.es/2017/03/27/intercultura-pide-retiren-marhuenda-cargo-comisario-honor-la-policia/>.

51. Editorial team, "Pide firmas para 'cerrar la frontera de Cádiz' e impedir la entrada de musulmanes," *Cádiz Directo* (May 15, 2017), retrieved October 27, 2017 from <https://www.cadizdirecto.com/pide-firmas-cerrar-la-frontera-cadiz-e-impedir-la-entrada-musulmanes/>.

52. Enrique Fueris, "Los musulmanes de Inca también tienen miedo," *El Mundo* (July 1, 2017), retrieved November 16 2017, from <http://www.elmundo.es/baleares/2017/07/01/5956aa1b22601d29748b4630.html>.

53. Lucila Rodríguez-Alarcón, "La valla que no sirve para nada," *El País* (July 4, 2017), retrieved October 30 2017 from [https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/07/04/3500\\_millones/1499156523\\_691286.amp.html](https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/07/04/3500_millones/1499156523_691286.amp.html).

54. Editorial team, "Tensa discusión en Mallorca de una musulmana contra una joven por llevar shorts," *La Vanguardia* (July 7, 2017), retrieved October 16, 2017 from <http://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/20170707/423948007884/youtube-discusion-musulmana-mallorca-estudiantes-shorts.html>.

55. Editorial team, "Tensión en Sant Feliu entre opositores a una mezquita y antifascistas," *El Español* (July 8, 2017), retrieved October 28, 2017 from [https://cronicaglobal.lespanol.com/vida/tension-sant-feliu-mezquita-antifascistas\\_76399\\_102.html](https://cronicaglobal.lespanol.com/vida/tension-sant-feliu-mezquita-antifascistas_76399_102.html).

56. Raquel González, "Se paraliza el cierre de la mezquita de las Margaritas," *Getafe Capital*, (July 12, 2017), retrieved November 2, 2017 from <http://www.getafecapital.com/2017/07/se-paraliza-cierre-la-mezquita-la-alhondiga>.

57. Suzanne Zaura, "Cuatro individuos atacan a una embarazada musulmana en Málaga," *Correo Madrid* (July 16, 2017), retrieved September 16, 2017 from <http://www.correomadrid.com/2017/07/cuatro-individuos-atacan-una-musulmana-embarazada/>.

- **25.07.2017:** Throughout the night, firefighters in Ceuta extinguish several fires in the thalweg close to the Muslim cemetery.<sup>58</sup>
- **12.08.2017:** The president of the NGO VIAS (Voluntariado Islámico de Acción Social) reports that the highest rate of unemployment in Melilla affects the Muslim community.<sup>59</sup>
- **17.08.2017:** The Muslim cemetery in Son Valentí is vandalised – it is abandoned by the government.<sup>60</sup>
- **17.08.2017:** Terrorist attack in Barcelona. Manifesto of the organisation Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia (Citizen Platform against Islamophobia) speaks out against the attack.<sup>61</sup>
- **20.08.2017:** Islamophobic messages written on the mosque of Seville.<sup>62</sup>
- **20.08.2017:** The Socialist Party demands the expulsion of Calzada because of the publication of an Islamophobic tweet.
- **25.08.2017:** The people of Madrid will lead the popular prosecution in the case of the Islamophobic attack suffered by a Muslim woman in Usera.<sup>63</sup>
- **06.09.2017:** Passengers in the metro in Madrid remove a neo-Nazi who insulted a Moroccan couple<sup>64</sup>
- **16.09.2017:** The group Medina belonging to the Socialist Party (PSOE) expresses their solidarity with Abderrahim Quadrassi, a citizen whose photo was published on the front cover of a paper in Mallorca instead of an arrested terrorist.

58. Patricia Harpigny, “Los bomberos extinguen durante toda la noche varios fuegos en la vaguada del cementerio musulmán,” *Ceuta Actualidad*, (July 25, 2017), retrieved October 13, 2017 from <https://www.ceutaactualidad.com/articulo/sucesos-tribunales/bomberos-extinguen-toda-noche-varios-fuegos-vaguada-cementerio-musulman/20170725080241046496.html>.

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64. Gabriela Sánchez, “Viajeros del metro de Madrid echan del tren al autor de una agresión racista a una pareja,” *El Diario* (September 7, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2017 from [http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/ataque-xenofobo-metro-Madrid\\_0\\_684182259.amp.html](http://www.eldiario.es/desalambre/ataque-xenofobo-metro-Madrid_0_684182259.amp.html).

- **08.09.2017:** A Moroccan citizen reports he was beaten a day after the terrorist attack in Barcelona.<sup>65</sup>
- **28.09.2017:** In a meeting, the citizens of Alhama (Murcia) demand the town hall stops the construction of a mosque in las Filipinas.<sup>66</sup>
- **11.10.2017:** Police dismisses the serious problem of Islamophobia in Palma.<sup>67</sup>
- **14.10.2017:** A Spanish citizen is taken to court on charges of racism after stabbing a Moroccan man.<sup>68</sup>
- **15.10.2017:** Possible scam regarding fake halal label is exposed in several places in Seville.<sup>69</sup>
- **06.11.2017:** Two Muslim women expelled from a public swimming pool for wearing burkinis in Granada.<sup>70</sup>
- **06.11.2017:** Two women complain about random security checks at Bilbao Airport for wearing the hijab.<sup>71</sup>
- **07.11.2017:** Research demanded about the death and alleged rape of 20 Nigerian girls.<sup>72</sup>
- **08.11.2017:** Solidarity against intolerance - the whole class of the University Autónoma in Madrid wear a hijab as a response to a classmate being forbidden to sit an exam for wearing a hijab.<sup>73</sup>

65. Editorial team, "Un marroquí denuncia que le pegaron una paliza en Palma un día después de los atentados," *Diario de Mallorca* (September 9, 2017), retrieved December 5, 2017 from <http://www.diariodemallorca.es/sucesos/2017/09/08/marroqui-denuncia-le-pegaron-paliza/1246098.html>.

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68. Àngel Juanpere, "Juzgado por apuñalar por racismo a un marroquí en Reus," *Diari de Tarragona* (October 13, 2017), retrieved November 28, 2017 from <https://www.diaridetarragona.com/amp/reus/Juzgado-por-apuñalar-por-racismo-a-un-marroqui-en-Reus--20171013-0003.html>.

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71. Adrián Mateos, "Denuncian islamofobia en el aeropuerto de Bilbao por un control 'aleatorio' a dos jóvenes con hijab," *ABC País Vasco* (November 6, 2017), retrieved December 10, 2017 from [http://www.abc.es/espana/pais-vasco/abci-denuncian-islamofobia-aeropuerto-bilbao-control-aleatorio-jovenes-hiyab-201711061422\\_noticia.html](http://www.abc.es/espana/pais-vasco/abci-denuncian-islamofobia-aeropuerto-bilbao-control-aleatorio-jovenes-hiyab-201711061422_noticia.html).

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73. Paula Cantó, "Feminismo: Impiden a una alumna examinarse con hijab en la Autónoma y toda su clase se pone velo," *El confidencial* (November 8, 2017), retrieved December 13, 2017 from [https://www.elconfidencial.com/amp/alma-corazon-vida/2017-11-08/redes-sociales-viral-velo-uam-hiyab-profesor\\_1473477/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/amp/alma-corazon-vida/2017-11-08/redes-sociales-viral-velo-uam-hiyab-profesor_1473477/).

- **08.11.2017:** 1,800 Muslim students have the right to be taught about Islam but have no teacher.<sup>74</sup>
- **13.11.2017:** The local Muslim cemetery of La Rioja is in need of restoration and an expansion.<sup>75</sup>
- **17.11.2017:** Attack on a mosque in Bermeo.<sup>76</sup>
- **17.11.2017:** Racism and fascism expressed in online conversations by the local police of Madrid.<sup>77</sup>
- **12.12.2017:** Two men sentenced to one-year imprisonment for attacking a pregnant woman who was wearing a niqab in Ciutat Vella last August.<sup>78</sup>
- **18.12.2017:** Neo-Nazis who kicked a Muslim woman are sentenced by a court to attend a course against Islamophobia.<sup>79</sup>

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74. Editorial team, “Más de 1800 alumnos musulmanes tienen derecho en Galicia a recibir religión islámica pero no tienen profesor,” *La opinión Coruña* (November 12, 2017), retrieved December 4, 2017 from <http://www.laopinion-coruna.es/galicia/2017/11/12/1800-alumnos-musulmanes-derecho-galicia/1234980.html>

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ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**SWEDEN**  
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## Executive Summary

Fake news produced by the transatlantic Islamophobic networks portraying Sweden as a multicultural dystopia with Sharia controlled no-go zones and Muslim rape jihad against white Swedish women reached new heights as it was picked up by U.S. President Donald Trump in an effort to defend his Muslim Ban. Alternative facts played a role in Swedish politics, too. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) published an unsubstantiated report on an alleged Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish a totalitarian Islamic State in Sweden, naming a series of organizations and Muslim leaders as agents of the evil cabal. The Administrative Court of Appeal later dismissed the report as of “highly limited” value.

Migration and integration remained the main issues concerning in public opinion, propelling the rise of the once marginal anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats to become the third or second largest party in opinion polls, pushing most other parties to adjust their policies towards a more exclusionary and culturalist position. Hate crimes remain at relatively high levels. According to a study on self-reported victims of hate crime, published in 2017, some 145,000 individuals had been exposed to 225,000 hate crimes with racist or xenophobic motives, and 47,000 individuals had been exposed to 81,000 hate crimes with “anti-religious,” including Islamophobic, motives. In 2017, three mosques were set aflame, and scores of Islamic association facilities were vandalized. Constantly under threat, Islamic congregations are targeted by insurance companies specializing in offering high-risk enterprises insurance at high premium/high deductible terms.

In January 2017, the government launched the *National Plan to Combat Racism*, which acknowledges Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed, and the Discrimination Act was amended to require enterprises and schools to adopt “active measures” to prevent discrimination and secure equal rights and opportunities within their organizations. However, this did not prevent the Equality Ombudsman from following the EU Court of Justice in ruling that company policies banning the Islamic headscarf are not discriminatory. The decision sparked protests in the emerging Muslim civil rights movement, which for the first time participated in May 1 rallies to defend Muslim women’s labour rights.

## Svensk Sammanfattning

Falska nyheter producerade i de antimuslimska nätverken där Sverige framställs som en multikulturell dystopi med shariakontrollerade no-go zoner och jihad i form av muslimska gruppvåldtäkter av vita svenska kvinnor, slog igenom på hög nivå när de plockades upp av president Donald Trump i ett försök att försvara sitt muslimska inreseförbud. Alternativa fakta influerade också svensk politik. Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap (MSB) publicerade en osaklig och icke underbyggd rapport som påstod att det Muslimska brödraskapet konspirerar för att omvandla Sverige till en totalitär islamisk stat och pekade ut namngivna organisationer och personer som den illasinnade sammansvärjningens agenter. Författningsdomstolen avfärdade senare rapportens bevisvärde som "högst begränsat".

Migration och integration förblev enligt väljaropinionen det viktigaste politikområdet vilket bidrog till att Sverigedemokraterna, landet mest explicit antimuslimska riksdagsparti, etablerade sig som Sveriges tredje eller näst största parti i återkommande opinionsmätningar. Det i sin tur föranledde de flesta andra partier att anamma en mer exkluderande monokulturell agenda. Hatbrott med islamofobiska motiv låg kvar på relativt höga nivåer. Tre moskéer utsattes för brandattentat och flera muslimska föreningslokaler vandaliserades. Islamiska föreningar befinner sig under ständigt hot vilket öppnade en marknad för försäkringsbolag som specialiserat sig på att försäkra högriskfastigheter mot höga försäkringspremier och hög självrisk.

I januari sjösatte regeringen en *Nationell handlingsplan mot rasism* som erkänner islamofobi som ett samhällsproblem som måste lösas. Diskrimineringslagen utvidgades genom att arbetsgivare och utbildningsanordnare måste dokumentera de "aktiva åtgärder" de vidtagit för att förebygga diskriminering och främja lika rättigheter och möjligheter för alla inom sina respektive organisationer. Emellertid hindrade inte detta Diskrimineringsombudsmannen från att följa EU-domstolen och sluta sig till att företag kan införa slöjförbud utan att bryta mot diskrimineringslagen. Beslutet föranledde stora protester i den framväxande muslimska medborgarrättsrörelsen, som för första gången deltog i 1 maj-demonstrationer för att försvara muslimska kvinnors rätt till arbete och likabehandling.

## Introduction

On February 18, 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump defended his call for a Muslim Ban by referring to a series of terror attacks in Europe, including Sweden. “You look at what was happening last night in Sweden. Sweden, who would believe this? Sweden. They took in large numbers. They’re having problems like they never thought possible.”<sup>1</sup> Swedish officials and reporters were bewildered. What happened in Sweden the night before? The Foreign Ministry declared that the Swedish government was not aware of any “terror-linked major incidents” that occurred on the night of February 17.<sup>2</sup> The Swedish daily *Aftonbladet* listed the major news to occur in Sweden that day: famous singer Owe Thörnqvist had technical problems during rehearsal for a singing competition; a man died in hospital after an accident in the workplace; due to harsh weather the road E10 was partially closed.<sup>3</sup> Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said he was “surprised” by Trump’s allegations, adding, “We must verify information that we spread.”<sup>4</sup> While the general conclusion in Sweden was that “nothing happened” the night before, a group of Swedish photographers sought to set the record straight by documenting all the small moments that rarely make the news but make up everyday life in Sweden in all its diversity. The project resulted in the exhibition *Last Night in Sweden* at Fotografiska, Stockholm, and a photobook that eventually was sent to President Trump.<sup>5</sup>

As Trump’s claim was rated “false,”<sup>6</sup> the president tweeted that he had not referred to anything that had happened in Sweden but to a story on Fox News concerning Muslim immigrants and Sweden that he had seen that night. That Fox story was an interview with alt-right filmmaker Ami Horowitz about his documentary *Stockholm Syndrome*, which seeks to assert that Sweden has become

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1. Chan, Sewell, “‘Last Night in Sweden’? Trump’s Remark Baffles a Nation”, *New York Times*, (February 19, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/europe/last-night-in-sweden-trumps-remark-baffles-a-nation.html>

2. Allison Graves, “Donald Trump in Florida Laments ‘What’s Happening Last Night in Sweden.’ But Nothing Happened”, *PolitiFact*, (February 19, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2017. <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2017/feb/19/donald-trump/donald-trump-florida-rally-laments-attack-last-nig/>

3. “This happened in Sweden Friday Night, Mr President”, *Aftonbladet* (February 18, 2017), retrieved December 12, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/Vn17J/in-english-this-happened-in-sweden-friday-night-mr-president>

4. “‘We Must Verify Information That We Spread’: Swedish PM Responds to Trump”, *AFP/The Local*, (February 21, 2017), retrieved December 12, <https://www.thelocal.se/20170221/we-must-verify-information-that-we-spread-swedish-pm-responds-to-trump>

5. Last Night in Sweden, Exhibition, Fotografiska Stockholm, Sept 13 – Nov 5, 2017. <http://fotografiska.eu/en/utstallningar/utstallning/13100/>; Karlsson, Petter, *Last Night in Sweden* (English Language Edition), Stockholm: Max Ström Publisher.

6. Allison Graves, “Donald Trump in Florida Laments ‘What’s Happening Last Night in Sweden.’ But Nothing Happened”, *PolitiFact*, (February 19, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2017. <http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2017/feb/19/donald-trump/donald-trump-florida-rally-laments-attack-last-nig/>

the rape capital of the world, because it has “taken more refugees from the Islamic world than any Western nation.” “This immigration has led to cultural clashes, enclaves of self-contained societies,” “shootings,” “sexual attacks across Sweden” and Muslim-controlled “no-go areas.”<sup>7</sup> Fact-finding journalists found the claims bogus, and the two police officers used to substantiate the story were “shocked” when realizing that Horowitz had edited the answers. “We were answering completely different questions in the interview,” they stated.<sup>8</sup>

In *Stockholm Syndrome*, Horowitz repeated a stunt popular with populist journalists: he went to a stigmatized underclass area, where many inhabitants have non-European migrant background, to pick a fight. Many people in these areas are fed up with journalists touring their neighbourhoods as if they were on a safari, and often object to being filmed. If the journalist is provocative enough, there might be a brawl which makes good television. Used to “prove” the uncivilized nature of Muslims, the trick has been enacted by radical nationalists, e.g. Roger Sahlström and Jan Sjunnesson (who also acted as ‘tour guides’ to Australian *60 minutes*), and the Norwegian Minister of Immigration Sylvi Listhaug of the Progress Party, as part of the 2017 Norwegian election campaign.<sup>9</sup> Obviously, the stunt depends on the fact that there really are no “no-go zones” in Sweden. It may impress an anti-Muslim audience but not anyone with personal experience of these areas. While Horowitz’s dramaturgy came across as silly to a Swedish audience - the film sequence turns black and we only hear, in Swedish, a man saying that he does not like to be filmed and Horowitz yelling “help” - it made Horowitz a hero at *Info Wars* (“Filmmaker Ami Horowitz Attacked by Muslim Gang

7. Horowitz, Ami. *Stockholm Syndrome*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RqaIgeQXQgI>

8. Quoted in Matthew Rozsa “This is Bad Journalism”: Swedish Cops Blast Fox News Story Based off “Madman” Filmmaker Referenced by President Trump. *Salon*, (February 20, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2017 <https://www.salon.com/2017/02/20/this-is-bad-journalism-swedish-cops-blast-fox-news-story-based-off-madman-filmmaker-referenced-by-president-trump/>. See also Mattias Areskog and Malin Ekmark, “Six Claims and Facts about Sweden: A Closer Look at Ami Horowitz’ Report”. *TT-The Local* (February 20, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2017 <https://www.thelocal.se/20170220/sweden-facts-a-closer-look-at-filmmaker-ami-horowitz-claims>; Robert Farley, “Trump Exaggerates Swedish Crime”, *FactCheck*, (February 20, 2017), retrieved December 12, 2017 <http://www.factcheck.org/2017/02/trump-exaggerates-swedish-crime/>

9. Daniel Vergara, “Antimuslimsk ‘Pride-parad’ i Stockholm”, *EXPO* (July 27, 2016) retrieved December 13, 2017 [http://expo.se/2016/antimuslimsk-pride-parad-i-stockholm\\_7134.html](http://expo.se/2016/antimuslimsk-pride-parad-i-stockholm_7134.html); Flores, Juan, Tv-team från “60 minutes” angripet i Rinkeby, *Dagens Nyheter*, (March 1, 2016), retrieved December 13, 2017, <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/tv-team-fran-60-minutes-angripet-i-rinkeby/>; 60 Minutes. “Swedish reality today 55 no go zones for police and locals”, *You Tube*, (March 26, 2016), retrieved Dec 13, 2017; “Här blir australiska reportrarna attackerade i Rinkeby, *You Tube*, March 3, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a84GUOGBps>; Gardell, Mattias, *Raskrigaren. Seriemördaren Peter Mangs*, Stockholm: Leopard; SD. “Riksdagsledamot Kent Ekeroth och oppositionsrådet Magnus Olsson besöker Seved i Malmö”, *Sverigedemokraterna*, Press Notice, (Nov. 2, 2011); Lennart Larsson. “Stöktigt efter SD-besök på Seved, *Skånskan* (November 2, 2011); Oscar Shau. “SD blev hett mottagna i Seved, *Kvällsposten*, (Nov. 3, 2011); Sonja Anshelm, “Oroligt när SD-politiker besökte bostadsområde”, *Expo*, 3 november; Listhaug, Sylvi “Svensk asylpolitik ett totalt misslyckande”, *Aftonbladet*, (Aug. 27, 2017), retrieved Dec. 13, 2017, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/GdBK4/svensk-asylpolitik-ett-totalt-misslyckande>; Sylvi Listhaug er på besök i Rinkeby, *Nettavisen* (Aug. 29, 2017), retrieved December 13, 2017, <https://www.nettavisen.no/nyheter/sylvi-listhaug-er-pa-besk-i-rinkeby/3423367842.html>

in Swedish No-Go Zone”), and *Breitbart* (“Filmmaker Ami Horowitz Beaten in Swedish No-Go Zone: ‘I Can Tell You for a Fact They Exist’.”)<sup>10</sup>

Obviously, stories like this work better outside Sweden. Not least in the transnational anti-Muslim networks, where Malmö and Sweden are construed as multicultural dystopias. In Sweden, they work best in rural or small-town areas with no or few Muslim residents. This is congruent with the fact that the anti-Muslim Sweden Democrats, a radical nationalist party with national socialist origins, has the most sympathizers in voting districts with no or few Muslim residents.<sup>11</sup> Islamophobia works better without Muslims.

This is not to say that Sweden is without its problems. During the past quarter of a century, we have seen growing income inequality, and Sweden has transformed into one of the most segregated societies in the OECD region. The basis of segregation is class, but as class distinction covaries with structural discrimination on the basis of racialized ethnicity, religion, and culture, this development constitutes an important context for the report on Islamophobia in Sweden in 2017. What follows is a summary of what has taken place, based on a selection of incidents and should not be understood as exhaustive.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

Islamophobia played contradictory roles in mainstream Swedish politics in 2017. In January, the Social Democrat/Green Party government launched the *National Plan to Combat Racism*, which acknowledges Islamophobia as a form of racism. While the plan tends to favour an understanding of racism in terms of attitudes at the expense of racism as practice, it nonetheless represents a breakthrough as Islamophobia is recognized as a problem that needs to be addressed.<sup>12</sup> However, another government authority, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), which is responsible for public safety, risk management and civil defence, was carried away by Islamophobic

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10. “Filmmaker Ami Horowitz Attacked by Muslim Gang in Swedish No-Go Zone”, *Infowars*, (December 13, 2016), <https://www.infowars.com/filmmaker-ami-horowitz-attacked-by-muslim-gang-in-swedish-no-go-zone/>; Hayward, John, Filmmaker Ami Horowitz Beaten in Swedish No-Go Zone: ‘I Can Tell You for a Fact They Exist’, *Breitbart* (December 14, 2016), retrieved December 13, 2017, <http://www.breitbart.com/radio/2016/12/14/filmmaker-ami-horowitz-beaten-swedish-no-go-zone-can-tell-fact-exist/>

11. Sannerstedt, Anders, *Hur extrema är Sverigedemokraterna?* I Fragment, Bergström, Annika et al, Göteborgs universitet: SOM-institutet 2015; Sannerstedt, Anders (2014) *Sverigedemokraternas sympatisörer* i Annika Bergström & Henrik Oscarsson (red). Mittfåra & marginal. Göteborgs universitet: SOM-institutet; Ulrika Anderson (red), *Slutna rum och öppna landskap* Den sydsvenska SOM-undersökningen 2015, SOM-rapport nr 69, Göteborgs universitet: SOM-institutet, 2017.

12. Government Offices of Sweden, *A Comprehensive Approach to Combat Racism and Hate Crime (National Plan to Combat Racism, Similar Forms of Hostility and Hate Crime)*, Jan. 4, 2017. Download at: <https://goo.gl/A4W7H7>.

conspiracy theory. Somehow convinced that Islamist and jihadi organizations were infiltrating Sweden to further their aim of “(re)establishing a utopian caliphate,” the MSB commissioned a study to “expose the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood” in Sweden and “assess its consequences” to “public safety, primarily life, health, and fundamental societal values.”<sup>13</sup>

Published in February, the report *Muslimska brödrskapet i Sverige* (The Muslim Brotherhood in Sweden) claims that the Muslim Brotherhood was clandestinely infiltrating Sweden, aiming to establish a totalitarian Islamic state. Allegedly capitalizing on the romance with “diversity” and “tolerance” supposedly cultivated by Sweden’s “political elite,” the Muslim Brotherhood is said to hide the extent to which Islam is incompatible with Swedish values, and uses the phony concept of “Islamophobia” to silence its critics. While casting the Muslim Brotherhood as masters of deception, the report claims to have uncovered its secret leadership structure, and identifies a number of named organizations and individuals as Muslim Brotherhood agents.<sup>14</sup> As none of these accusations was substantiated, twenty-two scholars of Islam in Sweden denounced the report as scientifically unsound.<sup>15</sup> The critique got wide media coverage, and the MSB quietly distanced itself by stating that “it does not back the report,”<sup>16</sup> that did not qualify as “research.”<sup>17</sup>

13. Myndigheten för samhällsskydd och beredskap, Beställning. Ordernr 2312602. The MSB entrusted Magnus Norell, Aje Carlbom and Pierre Durrani with the task. Magnus Norell is a former analyst for the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), a fellow at the European Foundation for Democracy, and contributor to the populist nationalist and conspiracy peddling *Ledarsidorna.se*, who has been warning for some time of a creeping Muslim Brotherhood takeover, and was a vocal critic of Mehmet Kaplan when he was elected as Minister of Housing in 2014. Aje Carlbom is a social anthropologist at Malmö University who believes that the Muslim Brotherhood wants to establish parallel societies built on ethnic and religious apartheid. When Mehmet Kaplan was elected in 2014 as the first Muslim minister in the Swedish government, Carlbom saw it as a sign of Muslim separatism, not integration. Pierre Durrani is a radical traditionalist, a “deep right” Tage Lindbom disciple who at one point saw Islam as the antidote to modernity and converted to Islam. He left Islam after some years and has since been a critic of the Muslim Brotherhood (Norell, Magnus: “Det muslimska brödrskapet”, *Ledarsidorna.se*, (July 4, 2016), <https://ledarsidorna.se/2016/07/magnus-norell-muslimska-brodrskapet/>; Norell, Magnus, *Kalifatets återkomst* (published by Norell himself as no publisher “dared” to publish it), Trail, 2016; European Foundation for Democracy. “Experts. Dr. Magnus Norell”, <http://europeandemocracy.eu/expert/magnus/>; Carlbom, Aje, Kaplans islamism allvarligt problem för regeringen, *Dagens samhälle*, (Oct 15, 2014) <https://www.dagenssamhalle.se/debatt/kaplans-islamism-allvarligt-problem-foer-regeringen-11340/>; Carlbom, Aje, Oförutsedda konsekvenser av dialog med självutnämnda muslimska ledare, *Socialvetenskaplig tidskrift* nr 3-4 • 2009; Gustafsson, Lisbet, “Ung svensk fann sina andliga rötter i islam”, *DN*, (April 8, 2011), <https://www.dn.se/arkiv/insidan/ung-svensk-fann-sina-andliga-rotter-i-islam/>; Conversations with Pierre Durrani, a student at the Department of Theology, Uppsala University.

14. Norell, Magnus, Carlbom, Aje & Pierre Durrani, *Muslimska brödrskapet i Sverige*, MSB, DNR 2017-1287.

15. Undermålig forskning i svensk myndighetsrapport, *Religionsvetenskapliga kommentarer*, (March 2, 2017), retrieved March 2, 2017. <http://religionsvetenskapligakommentarer.blogspot.se/2017/03/debatt-undermalig-forskning-i-svensk.html>

16. MSBs Anneli Bergholm Söder, quoted in Kasurinen, Anton, “Vi vet väldigt lite om Muslimska brödrskapet”, SVT, (March 3, 2017). <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/msb-vi-fakta-granskar-inte-rapporter>. In a television interview, Bergholm Söder admitted that “we know were little about the Muslim Brotherhood” after reading the report, which should not be mistaken for research. “When it comes to research, one needs greater clarity and references, and to show where one gets one’s sources from, but you need to talk with Magnus Norell about that.” Kasurinen, Anton, “Vi vet väldigt lite om Muslimska brödrskapet”, SVT, (March 3, 2017). <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/msb-vi-fakta-granskar-inte-rapporter>.

17. MSB om förstudien Muslimska brödrskapet i Sverige, MSB, (March 3, 2017). <https://www.msb.se/sv/Om-MSB/Nyheter-och-press/Nyheter/Nyheter-fran-MSB/MSB-om-forstudien-Muslimska-brodrskapet-i-Sverige/>

Despite its lack of credibility, the report was used as a reference by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) when it rejected the Swedish Young Muslim's (SUM) application for government grants. The MUCF is a government agency that works to ensure young people's access to influence and welfare by supporting self-organized youth associations. As grants are only administered to organizations that respect the ideas of democracy, the MUCF declined the SUM's proposal for 2017, due to its alleged "links with the Muslim Brotherhood" and certain individuals whose ideals were incompatible with democracy. Documenting its long-standing engagement with democracy, equality, and human rights, the SUM took the MUCF to court. In its defence, the MUCF referred to the press and the MSB report to show the "SUM's problematic links to the Muslim Brotherhood," a known "hotbed of extremism" that promotes "violence to further [its] political and religious aims." In November 2017, the Administrative Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the SUM. The articles that the MUCF had referred to were not news but opinions delivered by people with a negative attitude towards the SUM, and the MSB study "lacked references" for the relevant sections; consequently, "its value as evidence is highly limited."<sup>18</sup>

In terms of issues that rose in political opinion, the main one was "immigration and integration." Insisting that refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan were part of a mass invasion that would lead to the "collapse" of Sweden,<sup>19</sup> the Sweden Democrats (SD) rose in opinion polls to become the third, second and, according to polling firms YouGov and Sentio that use online panels, even the first party in Sweden. Long a pariah to mainstream politics, the SD felt its time had come. In 2017, the conservative Christian Democrats were open to form a government with the support of the SD.<sup>20</sup> In January, Anna Kinberg Batra, leader of the liberal/conservative Moderates opted for "dialogue" with the SD. As voters fled the party for the SD or the liberal Center Party, Kinberg Batra was replaced with Ulf Kristersson in October 2017. While officially excluding dialogue with the SD – except locally where the Moderates already govern with the SD in five municipalities – Kristersson took the party closer to the SD. At its 2017 congress, the Moderates adopted a "strict" migration program with reversible citizenship, enforced repatriation programs, and

18. MUCF, Yttrande i mål nr 193-17, Sveriges unga muslimer, ställt till Förvaltningsrätten 2017-03-10, dnr 0001/17; Sveriges unga muslimer, Inlaga. Myndigheter för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågor, ombud Sigrd Alikei Quezada, mål nr 192-17; MUCF, Beslut om bidrag för barn- och ungdomsorganisationer, dnr 1439-16; Mail correspondence between Rashid Musa, SUM, and MUCF, re: Beslutsunderlag kring ärende 1439-16; Förvaltningsrätten i Stockholm, Avdelning 31. Dom. Mål nr 192-17, 2017-11-14

19. Of course, this alarmist rhetoric is not new to the Sweden Democrats. It has declared that Sweden is "dead by immigration" and lambasted Muslims as a threat to everything Swedish since the early 1990s (cf., Johansson, Tomas, "I väntan på kollapsen", *SD-Bulletinen*, (August 1993); Gardell, Mattias, *Islamofobi*, (Stockholm: Leopard, 1993).

20. Berger, Ella, "Jimmie Åkesson: Tydligaste beskedet hittills från Alliansen", SVT, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/jimmie-akesson-det-tydligaste-hittills-fran-alliansen>

the abolishment of the right to seek asylum.<sup>21</sup> While not as unpolished as Moderate MP Hanif Bali who slams the Prophet Mohammad as a “pedophile” and “warlord,” Kristersson airs SD-like rhetoric. “In Sweden, we talk Swedish,” Kristensson stated in his Christmas address of 2017, thereby erasing the language reform of 1999 that recognized Sweden’s five national minority languages (*Saami*, *Meänkieli*, Finnish, *Romani chib*, Jiddish) and the rights of all students in the Swedish school system to receive mother tongue tuition.<sup>22</sup>

The Liberal party too adopted populist rhetoric, e.g. suggesting a “zero tolerance against terrorism” – yet, no party says a little terrorism is okay. However, the Liberal party with a small margin turned down a motion to ban the veil and prohibit schools with a religious profile at the 2017 party congress. Like the Centre Party it wants to keep the right to asylum, and suggests lower wages for newcomers.<sup>23</sup>

The Social Democrats also adjusted their politics. Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, who in September 2015 had stated “My Europe builds no walls,” turned 180 degrees from his position and in November 2015, sealed Sweden’s borders. In 2017, Löfven let the “Swedish Model” be officially associated with border protection and exclusionary cultural politics. The Green party quietly went along, as it had not recovered from the unsubstantiated allegations of being “infiltrated” by the Muslim Brotherhood, which had been trumped up in 2016, McCarthy style. The Green party panicked, and ousted several members, including Mehmet Kaplan, who had been a trusted member of parliament for eight years and in 2014 had become the first Muslim minister in Sweden.<sup>24</sup>

Nor was the Left party immune to the winds of Islamophobia. In 2017, the party suffered from a controversy around Amineh Kakabaveh, founder of *Varken hora eller kuvad* (*Ni Putes Ni Soumises*, Sweden) and a member of parliament. In 2016, Kakabaveh posted a fake video produced by the identitarian fascist Nordic Youth. Featur-

21. TT. “Massivt M-stöd för skärpt migrationspolitik”, (Oct. 25, 2017), <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/massivt-m-stod-for-skarpt-migrationspolitik>; Moderaterna, En långsiktigt hållbar migrationspolitik”, <https://moderaterna.se/en-langsiktigt-hallbar-migrationspolitik>; SR, Radio, “Migrationspolitik”, Moderaternas stämma, (Oct. 25, 2017) <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=83&artikel=6798721>

22. Bali, Hanif, twitter, (Aug. 2, 2016) Hanif Bali @hanifbali, Svar till @hanifbali @amersraja, <https://twitter.com/hanifbali/status/760435365647904769>; Kristersson, Ulf, Jultal 2017, SVT, Dec. 15, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/i-sverige-galler-svenska-lagar>; Skolverket. Tema modersmål, <http://modersmal.skolverket.se/engelska/index.php/om-modersmal>

23. Liberalerna, *Sverige måste införa nolltolerans mot terrorism*, (June 30, 2015), <https://www.liberalerna.se/nyheter/sverige-maste-infora-nolltolerans-mot-terrorism/>; Larsson Mats, Liberalerna säger nej till förbud mot religiösa friskolor, DN, (Nov. 22, 2017), <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/politik/inget-forbud-mot-alla-religiosa-friskolor/>; Liberalerna, Integration (2017), <https://www.liberalerna.se/politik/integration/>

24. Svahn, Claes, Forskare tror att islamister infiltrerat Miljöpartiet”, *DN*, (April 22, 2016), <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/forskare-tror-att-islamister-infiltrerat-miljopartiet/>; Olof Svensson, “MP-man gör omstritt tecken i SVT-sändning. Miljöpartist gjorde islamistiskt tecken i Almedalen”, *Aftonbladet* (April 22, 2016) <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article22683898.ab>; Jakobsson, Hanna, “Mehmet Kaplan avgår som bostadsminister”, *Expressen* (April 18, 2016), <https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/fridolin-stalld-in-presstraff-forhinder/>; Kaplan, Mehmet. “Jag lämnar inte mina värderingar”, *Expressen* (April 18, 2016), <https://www.expressen.se/debatt/kaplan-jag-lamnar-inte-mina-varderingar/>

ing a bogus translation of a film originally shot at a Somalian Telecom event, it plays on Afrophobic and Islamophobic stereotypes about Somali Muslims seeking their way to Sweden to rob, peddle drugs, and rape Swedish women. Kakabaveh added an introduction of her own: “Congratulations Sweden for the establishment of an Islamic state and a Caliphate soon to be inaugurated in more suburbs, thanks to the Swedish ‘integration’ policies - a political idiocy.” Following an uproar in the Afro-Swedish and Muslim communities, Kakabaveh removed the fascist video, saying she “had not realized that it was fake,” but insisted its meaning was “true.” While many party members called for her expulsion, she was backed by others in a heated conflict that culminated in December 2017, when Kakabaveh was removed from the list of candidates for the 2018 national elections, and then reinstated by members’ vote.<sup>25</sup>

Of course, when it comes to Islamophobic opinions, the SD tops the list. Three examples will suffice. In January 2017, Monika Wollmer (SD, Ludvika), said “Muslims have no business here. They want to destroy and take over the country. I hate all Muslims to the extent that I get sick when I see them.” In September 2017, Arnold Boström (SD, Huddinge) suggested to solve the Muslim problem by converting them all to Christianity: “Muslims should be integrated and become members of the Swedish Church.” At the SD Congress in November 2017, Martin Strid (SD, Borlänge) declared Muslims the antithesis of being human. There is a scale between the two poles “Human” and “Muhammedan,” Strid explained. “At one end of the scale, one is 100 percent human ... at the other end, one is 100 percent Muhammedan...All Muslims are somewhere on that scale.” An “IS-member is close to 100 percent Muhammedan,” whereas “an ex-Muslim has come a long way towards becoming fully human.” At the SD congress, no one objected. The party leadership took exception only when Strid’s theory reached national news.<sup>26</sup>

The tilt towards Islamophobic politics was reflected in a series of motions on the national, regional, and municipal level put forward by the SD, Liberals, Moderates,

25. Holmqvist, Annette & Pär Karlsson, “Spred fascistfilm - partiet tvingar henne be om ursäkt”, *Aftonbladet* (April 27, 2016, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/samhalle/article22712623.ab>); Lindahl, Karl, “Vänsterpartist delade fascistisk propaganda: “Visste inte vad det var”” *Nyheter24*, (April 26, 2016) <https://nyheter24.se/nyheter/politik/841516-vansterpartist-delade-fascistisk-propaganda-visste-inte-vad-det-var>; Poohl, Daniel, “Dags att berätta hela historien om Kakabavehs delning av rasistpropaganda” *Expo* (Dec. 16, 2016) [http://expo.se/2016/dags-att-beratta-hela-historien-om-kakabavehs-delning-av-rasistpropaganda\\_7208.html](http://expo.se/2016/dags-att-beratta-hela-historien-om-kakabavehs-delning-av-rasistpropaganda_7208.html); Johansson, Malin & Pär Karlsson, “Kakabaveh petas från riksdagslista”, *Aftonbladet* (Nov. 29, 2017); <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/samhalle/a/jPPRRq/kakabaveh-petas-fran-riksdagslista-jan-bjorklund-utsatt-for-mobbni>; Columbus, Rasmus P, “Petades – men medlemmarna röstade in Kakabaveh (V)” *Skärholmen Direkt*, (Dec. 4, 2017); <https://www.stockholmdirekt.se/nyheter/petades-men-medlemmarna-rostade-in-kakabaveh-v/repqld!hFxD38T6w71yzDPC9C8g/>

26. Åhbeck Öhrman, “Myra SD-politikern: ‘Hatar alla muslimer så jag får spykänslor när jag ser dem’, *IRM*, (Jan. 11, 2017). <https://www.interestmen.se/granskning/sd-politikern-hatar-alla-muslimer-sa-jag-far-spykanslor-nar-jag-ser-dem/>; Lindstedt, Henrik “SD - Omvänd förortens muslimer till kristna”, *Huddinge Direkt*, (Sept. 11, 2017), <http://www.stockholmdirekt.se/nyheter/sd-omvand-forortens-muslimer-till-kristna/repqik!IG38bey6rph5oDrK95OOMg/>; Mattsson, Ponte, “SD-politiker: Muslimer inte fullt ut människor”, *SVT*, 26 nov 2017, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/sd-politiker-muslimer-inte-fullt-ut-manniskor-1>; Lindhe, Jon, “Islamolog: “En ren parallell till nazism”, *SVT*, 26 nov, 2017, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/islamolog-en-ren-parallell-till-nazism>; Svensson, Adam, “Martin Strid (SD) väljer själv att lämna partiet”, *DN* (Nov. 27, 2017) <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/politik/martin-strid-sd-valjer-sjalv-att-lamna-partiet/>

and Christian Democrats. On the national level, the SD filed motions to ban the veil in public schools,<sup>27</sup> and religious attributes within the police.<sup>28</sup> Regionally, the SD motioned to ban the veil or religious symbols for all public employees in Blekinge, Sörmland, Skåne, and Västmanland.<sup>29</sup> The Liberals motioned to ban veils in public schools in Trollhättan and Helsingborg.<sup>30</sup> The Moderates motioned to ban the veil in public schools in Västmanland, and the niqab and burqa for all public employees in Norrköping,<sup>31</sup> while the Christian Democratic Youth wanted a niqab and burqa ban for all public employees in Sweden.<sup>32</sup>

While Islamophobia has made an inroad into mainstream politics, it is far from certain that this reflects popular opinion. A sign that it does not reflect widespread beliefs came on April 7, when in the name of the so-called Islamic State, Rakhmat Akilov hijacked a truck and killed five people in downtown Stockholm. In the radical nationalist milieu, the terror attack was met by excitement, predicting that the Swedish people would oust all Muslims and the traitors that had let them in. The Nordic Youth called for an *Enough is Enough!* rally outside the national parliament on April 9. It gathered 14 people, plus the cameraman. On the same day, a *Love Manifestation* attracted 45,000 people to demonstrate that Stockholm stood united in all its diversity. “There’s something seriously wrong with the Swedish people,” Ingrid Carlqvist, a radical anti-Muslim nationalist lamented.<sup>33</sup>

27. *Slöjförbud i den svenska skolan, Motion 2017/18:2353*, [http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/\\_H5022353](http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/_H5022353)

28. *Förbud mot religiösa attribut hos polisen, Motion 2017/18:890*, [http://riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/forbud-mot-religiosa-attribut-hos-polisen\\_H502890](http://riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/motion/forbud-mot-religiosa-attribut-hos-polisen_H502890)

29. *Förbjud huvudduk/slöja hos vårdanställda i landstinget Blekinge (2017-03-22)*, [http://ltblekinge.se/globalassets/politik/motioner-interpellationer/2017-00423-1-motion-sd-sloja-298231\\_1\\_1.pdf](http://ltblekinge.se/globalassets/politik/motioner-interpellationer/2017-00423-1-motion-sd-sloja-298231_1_1.pdf); *SD vill förbjuda religiösa symboler hos landstingets personal*, SVT (July 15, 2017) <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/sormland/sd-vill-forbjuda-politiska-och-religiosa-symboler-hos-landstingets-personal>; *Region Västmanlands klädpolicy ska vara fri från religiösa och politiska symboler*, Motion RV 170617, <http://motionerointerpellationer.ltv.se/motioner/motion/453>; *Region Skånes klädpolicy skall vara fri från religiösa och politiska symboler*, <https://skane.sd.se/wp-content/uploads/sites/315/2015/05/Motion-neutral-kl%C3%A4dpolicy.pdf>; *Inget stöd för slöjförbud i vården (March 27, 2017)*, <http://www.bl.se/blekinge/sd-vill-forbjuda-sloja-i-varden/>;

30. *The liberal motion to ban the veil was heiled in the radical nationalist press*, *L-förslag om slöjförbud i grundskola*, *Nyheter Idag* (Sept 27, 2017), <https://nyheteridag.se/liberalerna-i-trollhattan-vill-infora-slojforbud/>; *L-politiker kräver förbud mot slöja i skolan*, *Helsingborgs Dagblad*, (March 7, 2017), <https://www.hd.se/2017-03-07/l-politiker-kraver-forbud-mot-sloja-i-skolan>; *Norström (l), Förbjud slöja i grundskolan.*, *Helsingborgs Dagblad*, (March 14, 2017), <https://www.hd.se/2017-03-14/forbjud-sloja-i-grundskolan>; *Liberala Kvinnor: Förbjud slöja på barn i förskolan*, *SVD*, <https://www.svd.se/liberala-kvinnor-forbjud-sloja-pa-barn-i-forskolan>

31. *Moderaterna vill införa slöjförbud*, *NT*, (May 12, 2016) <http://www.nt.se/nyheter/norrkoping/moderaterna-vill-infora-slojforbud-om4134165.aspx>; *Så vill Moderaterna stoppa slöja i skolan*, *SVT/Västmanland*, *SVT* (Feb 7, 2017), <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/vastmanland/sma-barn-ska-inte-ha-sloja>

32. *KDU, Förbjud burka och niqab i offentlig verksamhet*, *KDU* (Oct. 10, 2017), <http://kdu.se/forbjud-burka-och-niqab-i-offentlig-verksamhet/>

33. *Nordisk ungdom. “Nog är nog. Nordisk Ungdom - Reaktion efter terrorattentatet i Stockholm”*, *Nordisk Ungdom*, YouTube, (April 11, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdYDJRMTzhw>; *Carlqvist, Inger*, *Tweet* (April 9, 2017), <https://twitter.com/ingridcarlqvist/status/851171230363389952>

## Justice System

According to the Second EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-Midis II), which analyses the responses of 10,527 self-identified Muslim respondents in 15 EU member states, the majority (76%) feel strongly attached to their country of residence and have higher levels of trust in public institutions than the general population. Generally, the most trusted institutions were the police and the legal system. In Sweden, EU-Midis II targeted Muslims with backgrounds in Turkey and Sub-Saharan Africa. The Swedish Muslims' level of attachment to their country of residence was second highest among the member states. They had high levels of trust in the police (61%), the legal system (63%), and elevated awareness of laws prohibiting discrimination (ca 80%). Yet, 41% of Afro-Swedish and 19% of Turk-Swedish Muslims had experienced discrimination in the past 12 months. Three out of four did not report the incident. Thirty-four percent of Afro-Swedish and 18% of Turk-Swedish Muslims had experienced harassment, and 7% of the respondents had been physically attacked. Again, the majority did not report the incident. Of those who did, 61% were dissatisfied with how the case was handled. Personal experience of the police and the justice system had a negative effect on the levels of trust in these institutions.<sup>34</sup>

Personal experience with the police includes being stopped, searched or questioned. Of the Swedish respondents who had such an experience, 51% of the Afro-Swedish and 31% of the Turk-Swedish Muslims thought they were stopped because of their ethnic or immigrant background.<sup>35</sup> In a 2017 study on ethnic/racial profiling for Civil Rights Defenders, criminologist Leandro Schclarek Mulinari found that being singled out by the police is a common experience for people in the Afro-Swedish, Roma, and Muslim communities. They might be stopped while driving, walking, crossing borders or interacting in public space. Many have an accumulated experience of frequently being stopped and treated as a potential perpetrator for no reason other than being Afro-Swedish, Roma, or Muslim. To Swedish Muslims, border crossing is a particular hotspot. For instance, one veiled Muslim woman had flown to Brussels five times in the past year and been searched in a separate room every single time. In the case of Swedish Muslims, profiling is also conducted by the Security Police. Of course, living under potential surveillance for no reason other than being Muslim may be a demanding experience.<sup>36</sup>

On January 1, 2017, amendments were made to the Swedish Discrimination Act of 2008. All employers with more than 25 employees and all educational institu-

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34. FRA, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey*, Luxembourg; <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-second-eu-minorities-discrimination-survey>

35. FRA, *Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey*, Luxembourg; <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/survey-data-explorer-second-eu-minorities-discrimination-survey>

36. Schclarek Mulinari, Leandro, *Slumpvis utvald. Ras-etnisk profilering i Sverige*, (2017). Stockholm: Civil Rights Defenders.

tions now have a duty to take “active measures” to prevent and counteract discrimination due to sex, gender identity, ethnic identity, and religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation and age, within the organization. Accordingly, schools and employers have a duty to investigate risks for discrimination and harassment within their organization, and implement preventive measures to secure equal rights and opportunities. The active measures should be documented, and will be evaluated on a yearly basis. Employers with 10 – 25 employees are only required to document the work done in relation to salary surveys, and enterprises with less than 10 employees have no such obligation.<sup>37</sup>

## Employment

Significant events took place in the wake of the EU Court of Justice (EJC) decision on March 14 that banning the Islamic headscarf in the workplace can be justified. In Sweden, vocal Muslims objected to further institutionalization of Islamophobia.<sup>38</sup> According to Iman Aldebe, a Swedish Muslim designer who has designed official hijabs for the Swedish police, military, pharmacies and hospitals, the decision will lead to the exclusion of Muslim women from the labour market.<sup>39</sup>

A particular case that received a lot of media attention in the aftermath of the EJC ruling is that of 23-year-old Aye Valdés. She was denied employment at the Scandinavian airline company SAS with the argument that her headscarf goes against the company’s clothing policy.<sup>40</sup> The case was reported to the Equality Ombudsman that decided that SAS’s uniform policy doesn’t violate the Swedish discrimination act provided that the policy only applies to employees with direct customer contact.<sup>41</sup>

When it comes to discrimination in the labour market, prior research has shown that applicants with ‘Muslim’ names have fewer chances of being called for a job interview compared to applicants with ‘Swedish’ names.<sup>42</sup> Muslim women who

37. Sveriges riksdag, [https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/diskrimineringslag-2008567\\_sfs-2008-567](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/diskrimineringslag-2008567_sfs-2008-567).

38. Abdullahi, Maimuna, “Åter nekas muslimska kvinnor rätten till sina kroppar”, *Göteborgs fria*, (March 14, 2017), <http://www.goteborgsfria.se/artikel/127540>; Osman, Bilan, “Islamofobins nya kryphål”, *Expo*, (March 14, 2017) [http://expo.se/2017/islamofobins-nya-kryphal\\_7279.html](http://expo.se/2017/islamofobins-nya-kryphal_7279.html); Waara, Anna, “I praktiken är det vi som drabbas”, *NSD*, (March 16, 2017) <http://www.nsd.se/nyheter/i-praktiken-ar-det-vi-som-drabbas-nm4491600.aspx>

39. Jerrstedt, Karin, “Iman Aldebe om slöjdomen: “Kommer stänga ute muslimska kvinnor”, *Svt Nyheter*, (March 14, 2017) <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/kommer-stanga-ute-muslimska-kvinnor>

40. Lindström, Emma, “Aye, 23, fick inte jobbet på SAS – för att hon bär slöja”, *Nyheter 24*, (April 26, 2017) <https://nyheter24.se/nyheter/inrikes/883000-jobbet-sas-bar-sloja>

41. Equality Ombudsman, “Tillsyn avseende arbetsgivares uniformspolicy samt arbete med aktiva åtgärder”, *Ärende GRA 2017/76, handling 16*, (Decision 2017-12-19), <http://www.do.se/globalassets/stallningstaganden/arbetsliv/tillsynsbeslut-kladpolicy-arbetsplats-gra-2017-76.pdf>; Equality Ombudsman, “Uniformspolicy och arbete med aktiva åtgärder”, (Dec. 19, 2017), <http://www.do.se/lag-och-ratt/stallningstaganden/uniformspolicy-och-arbete-med-aktiva-atgarder/>

42. Agerström, Jens et al. “Warm and Competent Hassan = Cold and Incompetent Eric: A Harsh Equation of Real-Life Hiring Discrimination”. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*. Vol. 34, Nr. 4 (July/August, 2012), pp.359-366. Arai, Mahmood, Bursell, Moa. Nekby, Lena. *Between Meritocracy and Ethnic Discrimination: The Gender Difference*. Discussion Paper Series. Working paper No. 3467. (May 23, 2008), Bonn: Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA).

wear the headscarf often experience discrimination in the labour market.<sup>43</sup> Prejudice against Muslims has also been highlighted within specific sectors such as the civil services,<sup>44</sup> and we know that name changing is a strategy sometimes used by persons with Muslim-sounding names in order to be viewed as less Muslim and avoid discrimination.<sup>45</sup>

In 2016, the Equality Ombudsman released a report on the experiences of Islamophobia among Muslims and presumed Muslims. The report is based on an analysis of 217 cases of discrimination received by the Equality Ombudsman during 2014. Out of these, 64 cases revolved around discrimination in the labour market. Two-thirds of these cases were filed by men and one-third by women. Almost 50% of these cases contain experiences of discrimination during the recruitment process. Other experiences revolve around harassment by colleagues.<sup>46</sup> Another study, based on field experiments where 566 similar CVs were sent by applicants with Swedish and Arabic names, shows that male applicants with Arabic names are more frequently targeted with negative stereotypes than female applicants with Arabic names.<sup>47</sup>

Prior research has shown that Muslim women who wear headscarves feel that they need to work much harder than others to secure employment. Their experiences sometimes lead them to develop strategies such as hiding their religious identity by removing their headscarves.<sup>48</sup> Similar results were found in a 2016 report on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women, which showed that the majority of the women interviewed, 26 out of 45, had experienced negative treatment from their colleagues. The women said that their headscarf is a constant workplace issue of contention and that they often feel obliged to explain their

43. Roald, Anne Sofie. Ouis, Pernilla. *Muslim i Sverige*. (Stockholm: Wahlström och Widstrand, 2003). Sixtensson, Johanna. *Hemma och främmande i staden – kvinnor med slöja berättar*. (Malmö: Malmö University Publications in Urban Studies 4, 2009).

44. Eliassi, Barzoo. "Diskriminerande föreställningar inom socialtjänsten", in *Den segregerade integrationen: Om social sammanhållning och dess hinder. Rapport av Utredningen om makt, integration och strukturell diskriminering*. (Stockholm: Fritzes, 2006).

45. Khosravi, Shahram. "White Masks/Muslim Names: Immigrants and Name-Changing in Sweden". *Race and Class*. Vol. 53, Nr. 3 (January/March, 2012), pp. 65-80.

46. Bursell, Moa, "Kedjor av händelser. En analys av anmälningar om diskriminering från muslimer och förmodade muslimer" (The Equality Ombudsman, 2016).

47. Arai, Mahmood. Nekby, Lena. Bursell, Moa. "The Reverse Gender Gap in Ethnic Discrimination: Employer Stereotypes of Men and Women with Arabic Names". *International Migration Review*. Vol. 50, Nr. 2 (Summer, 2016) pp. 385-412. The procedure took place in two stages. In the first stage, equivalent CVs were sent to job openings. The results show a call-back gap between Arabic and Swedish names for both men and women. In the second stage of the study, the CVs with Arabic names were enhanced with more relevant work experience than the CVs with Swedish names. The result shows that whereas the differences for women regarding the number of call-backs disappear, the difference remains strong for the male applicants, suggesting that Arabic-named men face stronger discrimination in the labour market than Arabic-named women.

48. Roald, Anne Sofie. Ouis, Pernilla. "Muslim i Sverige" (Stockholm: Wahlström och Widstrand, 2003). Sixtensson, Johanna. *Hemma och främmande i staden – kvinnor med slöja berättar*. (Malmö: Malmö University Publications in Urban Studies 4, 2009).

decision to wear it. Experiences of being discriminated during the recruitment process also emerged.<sup>49</sup>

Cases that have gained media attention have mostly revolved around instances where Muslim women have been denied employment or been subject to discrimination at work. Such examples include Muslim women who have either been fired or denied work for not wanting to shake hands with male colleagues or clients.<sup>50</sup> In September 2017, the Equality Ombudsman ruled that an assistant nurse who was told by her employer not to wear long sleeves at work in a hospital in Stockholm had been subjected to discrimination.<sup>51</sup>

### Physical and Verbal Attacks

Based on the Swedish Crime Survey (NTU) on self-reported victims of crime and an analysis of police reports with identifiable hate crime motives, the *2016 Hate Crime Report* by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) was published in 2017. According to the NTU, some 145,000 individuals (1.9% of the population) were exposed to 225,000 hate crimes with racist or xenophobic motives; while 47,000 individuals (0.6% of the population) were exposed to 81,000 hate crimes with “anti-religious,” including Islamophobic, motives. Only 17% of hate crimes with racist/xenophobic motives were reported to the police.<sup>52</sup>

The study of police reports with identified hate crime motives is based on a computerized search of a random sample of fifty percent of police reports relating to specific crime categories, which are then studied manually.<sup>53</sup> In 2016, there was an estimated 6,415 reported hate crimes. Most incidents (4,609) were classified as hate crimes with xenophobic/racist motives (72%); 439 hate crimes (7%) had identified Islamophobic motives, which represent a decrease from 558 (8%) in 2015. However, with the exception of 2015, the number remains high compared to previous years. (Fig. 1)

49. Abdullahi, Maimuna. “Forgotten Women: The Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Women in Sweden” (Brussels: Enar, 2016).

50. Frithiof, Felicia. “Hon blev av med lärarjobb – tog inte kollega i hand”. *Svt Nyheter* (September 23, 2016) <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/helsingborg/tog-inte-kollega-i-hand-blev-av-med-lararvikariat>; The Equality Ombudsman. “Tolkföretag i Uppsala” (Decision April 5, 2017). <http://www.do.se/lag-och-ratt/diskrimineringsarenden/tolkforetag/>

51. Johansson, Carina. „Muslimsk undersköterska får rätt mot sjukhus - hygienregler för kläder diskriminerande”. *Dagens juridik*. (September 25, 2017) <http://www.dagensjuridik.se/2017/09/muslimsk-underskoterska-far-ratt-mot-sjukhus-hygenregler-klader-diskriminerande>

52. Brå, *Hatbrott 2016*, (Rapport 2017:11), Stockholm: Brå. The NTU includes hate crime with Islamophobic motives in the category of anti-religious hate crime. However, as respondents may identify an Islamophobic assault as racist or xenophobic, hate crimes with such motives may also be included in the first category.

53. Violent crime, threat and intimidation, defamation, criminal damage/graffiti, hate speech, and unlawful discrimination; robbery, theft, and sexual crime are not included. As only a minority of hate crimes are reported, and identification is dependent on the specific terms used by the police officer and individual who files the report. Hence, there is a substantial dark figure of crime.

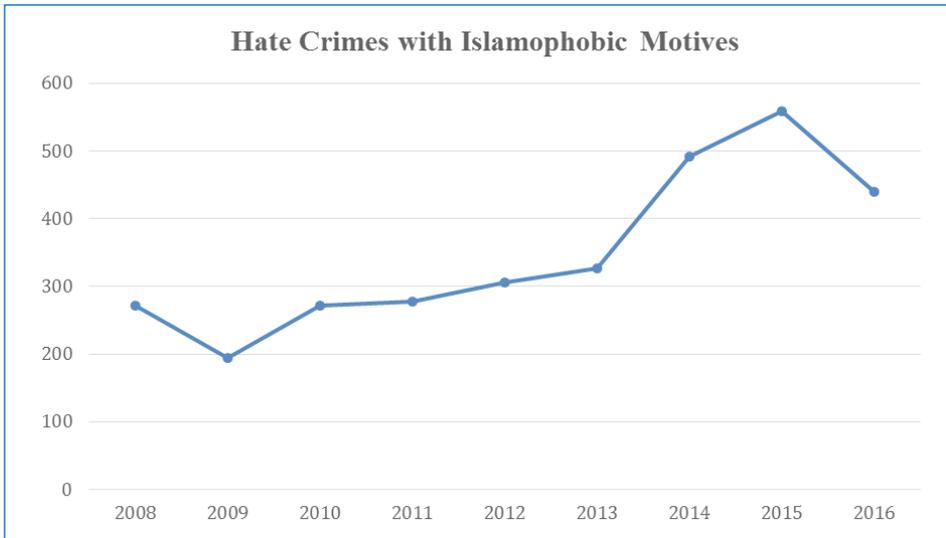


Figure 1: Hate crimes with Islamophobic motives reported to the police between 2008 and 2016.

Threat of violence and intimidation is by far the most common category of Islamophobic hate crime, followed by hate speech, vandalism and graffiti, defamation and violence. (Fig 2) Less common is unlawful discrimination, which possibly may be explained by the fact that institutions other than the police (e.g. the Equality Ombudsman, local discrimination bureaus, trade unions) also handle discrimination cases.<sup>54</sup>

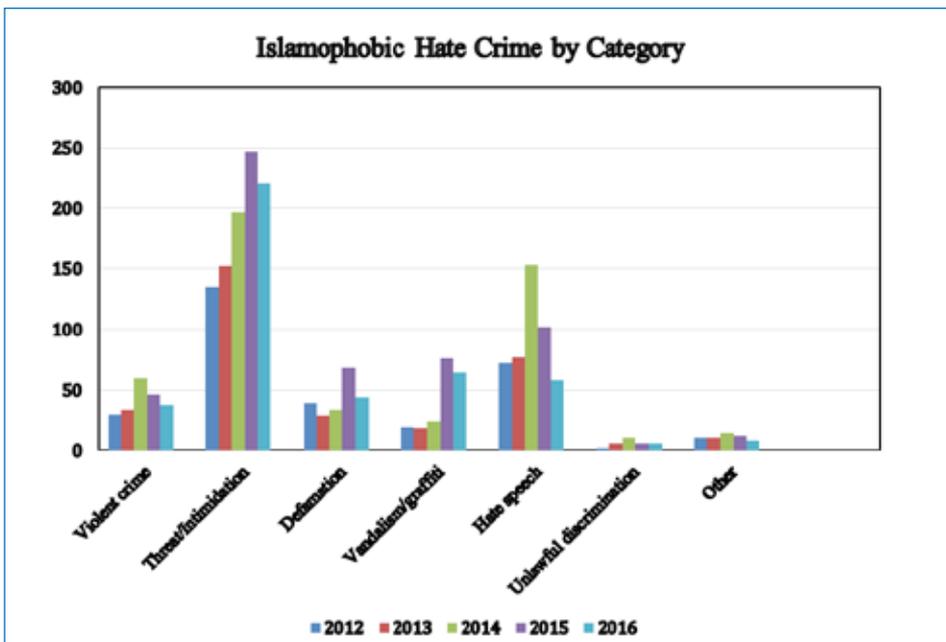


Figure 2: Islamophobic hate crime reported to the police, by category, in the period of 2012-2016. Source: *Hate Crime 2016*.

54. Bursell, M. 2016. *Kedjor av händelser. En analys av anmälningar om diskriminering från muslimer och förmodade muslimer*. DO 2016:2.

For Islamophobic hate crime incidents in 2017, we reviewed a series of media-reported incidents, supplemented by interview data. Classified in the categories *verbal assault, threats and intimidation, arson and bombing campaigns*, the list should not be understood as exhaustive.

*Verbal assaults.* A series of conversations and interviews with individual Muslims and focus groups conducted in the context of ongoing research in Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Klippan, Malmö, Stockholm, and Uppsala indicate high levels of experienced everyday racism, micro-aggression, and harassment. The data corroborates the findings of a 2015 study on anti-Muslim hate crime by Gardell, and shows that visible Muslims to a certain extent live with the possibility of experiencing unfriendly passing encounters with unknown others when using public transportation or doing their business in public space, at least in certain sections of the city. Typically, there was no prior history to each incident - an unfriendly look, comment, whisper, and attitude – nor anything that the targeted person had done or said, beyond looking Muslim while talking, walking, laughing, reading, being.<sup>55</sup>

*Threats and intimidation* may be hurled in everyday instances of harassment, but can also assume other forms. In the Minerva upper secondary school in Umeå, Muslim students felt intimidated when the Facebook group *hundred ways to kill Muslims* was started by schoolmates and became the talk of the school. For a year, Muslim students in vain tried to get the school management to take their concerns seriously. Instead, the management invited an external lecturer that further intimidated Muslim students by reiterating Islamophobic opinions, including demands that the “veil must be banned.” Eventually, in 2017, the Muslim students filed a complaint with the Equality Ombudsman.<sup>56</sup> In Södertälje, a preschool with a Muslim profile was vandalized, and threatening graffiti stating “Fuck Islam” and “Move” was sprayed on its walls.<sup>57</sup> In Stockholm, the Soldiers of Odin targeted the Al-Azhar Elementary School, a private school with a Muslim profile, which scored high in student achievement tests, but became the centre of controversy following a stigmatizing documentary. April 5, a group of uniformed Soldiers of Odin men showed up at the school, putting up stickers with “Support your local Soldiers of Odin,” filming the young students, and appearing aggressive. The school management found it necessary to employ se-

55. Gardell, Mattias “What’s Love Got to Do with It? Ultrnationalism, Islamophobia, and Hate Crime in Sweden”, *Journal of Religion and Violence* 3:1 (2015). ISSN 0738-098X. pp. 91–115, doi: 10.5840/jrv20155196

56. Evelina Lindfors, “Startade grupp om hur man skulle döda skolkamrater”, SVT Västerbotten (March 21, 2017), retrieved March 21, 2017, <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/vasterbotten/startade-grupp-om-hur-man-skulle-doda-skolkamrater>

57. Kvarnström, Sara, “Förskola utsatt för hatklotter: ‘Det är väldigt obehagligt’”, *Länstidningen*, (Oct. 2, 2017), <http://www.lt.se/blaljus/brott/forskola-utsatt-for-hatklotter-det-ar-valdigt-obe-hagligt>, SVT “Föräldrar efter hotfullt klotter: ‘De är ju barn!’”, SVT, (Oct. 2, 2017), <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/sodertalje/de-ar-ju-barn>

curity guards at the school, while the Soldiers of Odin bragged about the incident on their Facebook page in a posting that featured a call to “catch and kill Muslims.”<sup>58</sup> In Flen, the Islamic Cultural Centre had to fence in their facilities with barbed wire. That did not stop threats from pouring in: “Nail a pig head to the door, and decorate with bacon,” “Firebomb it,” “Perhaps a little gas during Friday prayers.” Someone sprayed swastikas on the walls, and carved “White Power” on the metal door.<sup>59</sup> Assaults on mosques include the April 10 stone attack against the Islamic Cultural Centre in Falkenberg, the damage caused to a mosque in Malmö on April 11, and the vandalization of the mosque in Säffle on Christmas Eve.<sup>60</sup>

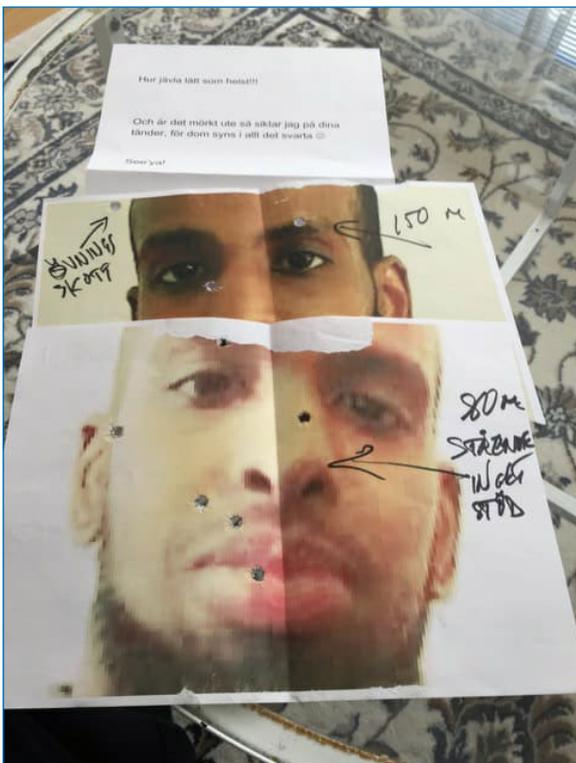


Figure 3: Death threats. The letter states, “How fucking easy.” “If it’s dark outside, I’ll aim at your teeth, they’ll shine in all that blackness.” Enclosed were photos of Rashid Musa with the messages, “Shooting practice. 150 meters,” “80 meters. Standing [position]. Without support.”

Another category of threats is directed against outspoken Swedish Muslims. On May 23, Rashid Musa, chairperson of Sweden’s Young Muslims received a death threat including two photos of himself pierced with bullets, and details about the alleged distance from which the shooter had practiced shooting him. (Fig. 3)

*Arson and bombing campaigns.* Attacks against mosques and Islamic association facilities increased during the 2000s. According to a survey by a network of Islamic associations in 2014, 66 percent had received threats and/or been vandalized. By 2015, mosques had been subjected to arson in Avesta, Eslöv, Göteborg, Hultsfred, Malmö, Norrköping, Strömsund, Trollhättan, and Up-

58. TT/Aftonbladet, “Högerextremt nätverk vid Al-Azharskol an”, Aftonbladet (April 5, 2017), retrieved April 5, 2017, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/6axwO/hogerextremt-natverk-vid-al-azharskolan>; SR, “Oro på Al-Azharskolan efter Soldiers of Odin-besök”, Sveriges Radio P4 (April 6, 2017), <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=103&artikel=6668833>; Claes Svahn, “Friskola tillkallade polis när Soldiers of Odin kom dit”, DN (April 6, 2017), <https://www.dn.se/sthlm/friskola-tillkallade-polis-nar-soldiers-of-odin-kom-dit/>.

59. Hansson, Anna et al, “Sveriges största hatgrupp på nätet styrs från Eskilstuna - Flens muslimer måste skydda sina bönestunder - med järngaller och taggtråd”, *Katrineholms-Kuriren*, (Dec. 7, 2017), <https://www.kkuriren.se/sormland/sveriges-storsta-hatgrupp-pa-natet-styrs-fran-eskilstuna/>

60. „Moské utsatt för stenattack”, *Hallands Nyheter* (April 10, 2017) „Muslimsk församling utsatt för stenkastning”, SVT/Skåne (April 11, 2017) 17:46 Fjellman, Therese, Moskén i Säffle utsatt för skadegörelse, *SVT* (Dec 25, 2017).

psala - in some cases repeatedly.<sup>61</sup> In 2016, mosques were set ablaze in Borås and Malmö. That year, the Zayed Mosque in Stockholm was attacked by fascist mobs of more than fifty masked men.<sup>62</sup>

During the night of January 31, 2017, a truck belonging to the Uppsala Islamic Association was set on fire. The police suspected arson.<sup>63</sup> On February 21, 2017, the facilities of the Islamic



Figure 4: Imam Ali Islamic Centre burning after an arson attack on April 30, 2017.

association in Kungälv was ravaged by fire. The police found a broken window and investigated the incident as arson.<sup>64</sup> On Walpurgis Night, April 30, 2017, the Imam Ali Islamic Centre in Järfälla – Sweden’s largest Shia mosque - was set aflame by a single perpetrator who was caught on security cameras as he climbed the mosque roof, poured flammable liquid, and set it on fire. (Fig. 4) The mosque was severely damaged and will take a year to restore. As images of the burning mosque circulated in the Swedish news, anti-Muslim commentators celebrated: “Let it burn” and “Happy Walpurgis Night”.<sup>65</sup> On the night of September 26, a mosque in Örebro was set ablaze. The fire totally devastated parts of the mosque, and the police investigating the incident as arson.<sup>66</sup>

61. Islamiska samarbetsrådet, *Säkerhet och krisberedskap i Sveriges moskéer* (ISR 2014); Gardell, Mattias “What’s Love Got to Do with It? Ultrationalism, Islamophobia, and Hate Crime in Sweden”, *Journal of Religion and Violence* 3:1 (2015). ISSN 0738-098X. pp. 91–115, doi: 10.5840/jrv20155196

62. Field notes, June 2016; “Attack vid moské. 50-tal personer skrek rasistiska ord”, *Aftonbladet* (June 16, 2017) <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/krim/article23002310.ab>

63. Lindgren, Jan “Anlagd brand vid moské”, *Uppsala nya tidning*, (January 31), retrieved February 1, 2017, <http://www.unt.se/nyheter/upsala/anlagd-brand-vid-mosk-4525003.aspx>

64. Camilla Walldán, “Sorg i muslimska föreningen efter branden”, *Kungälv-Posten*, (Dec. 22, 2017). <http://kungalvsposten.se/nyheter/sorg-i-muslimska-foreningen-efter-branden/>; Magå, Joakim “Föreningslokal brann – misstänkt mordbrand”, *Aftonbladet* (Feb. 21, 2017), <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/2a8LR/foreningslokal-brann--mistankt-mordbrand>

65. Maja K Nilsson, Efter moskébranden: “Det känns fruktansvärt” *Aftonbladet* (May 1, 2017), <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/84Xzx/efter-moskebranden-det-kanns-fruktansvart>; Melin, Erik, En person anhållen misstänkt för moskébrand”, *Aftonbladet*, April 30, 2017; <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/WpJkK>; Kasurinen, Anton, “Polisen tror att moskébrand i Järfälla var anlagd”, *SVT*, (May 1, 2017), <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/stockholm/moske-brinner-i-jarfalla>; Henricson, Emilie, “Efter moskébranden: “Vi vill visa att vi inte är rädda, *Järfälla tidning*, (May 5, 2017). <http://www.stockholmdirekt.se/nyheter/efter-moskebranden-vi-vill-visa-att-vi-inte-ar-radda> repqed!1d7gseCV8XAw3OyC3LI0g/; Interview with Akil Zahiri, Solna, May 2, 2017.

66. Ossi Carp & Ulrika By, “Mordbrand mot moské i Örebro”, *Dagens Nyheter*, (September 26, 2017), <https://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/mordbrand-mot-moske-i-orebro/>; Silverberg, Josefin et al, “20-årig man gripen för moskébrand”, *Aftonbladet*, (September 25, 2017), <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/p37K6/20-arig-man-gripen-for-moskebrand>.

Finding insurance for a mosque is difficult, as Islamic associations are frequently redlined or exposed to reversed redlining, i.e. targeted by companies such as the German *Hübener Versicherung* and *Insurify*, that specialize in offering Swedish high-risk enterprises, e.g. mosques and homes for refugees, insurance at high premium/high deductible terms. The Imam Ali Islamic Centre was insured by the German company and had to pay one million Swedish crowns in deductibles before they would receive insurance coverage, and could restore the mosque.<sup>67</sup>

In 2017, there were ongoing campaigns against mosque constructions in Borlänge, Halmstad, Hässleholm, Karlstad, Norrköping, and Skövde. In Karlstad, the Stop the Mosque movement turned aggressive. (Fig. 5) Its Facebook group published pictures, home addresses, and phone numbers of the local politicians who were in favour of the mosque construction, encouraging its readers to talk some sense into them, which resulted in threats and intimidations. On June 19, some 50 activists from the Nordic Resistance Movement and Nordic Youth forced their way into a municipality council meeting shouting “Resign, PC Scum.” Despite the pressure, the majority voted in favour of allowing the Islamic congregation to build its mosque. The Sweden Democrats, Christian Democrats and the Moderates voted against the construction. Gathering the required signatures, the Sweden Democrats demanded a local referendum. At the council meeting in November, the request



Figure 5: Nationalist anti-Muslim protest, “No mosque in Karlstad”.

was turned down with the argument that freedom of religion is protected by the constitution, and not an issue for local opinions to decide.<sup>68</sup>

In July 2017, an autonomous cell of three men with links to the national socialist Nordic Resistance Movement were

67. Gardell, Mattias, “Inledning”, i *Den ensamme terroristen? Om lone wolves, näthat och brinnande flyktingförläggningar*, av Heléne Lööv, Mattias Gardell och Michael Dahlberg-Grundler, Stockholm: Ordfront. Interview with Akil Zahiri, Solna, May 2, 2017.

68. Nationalister protesterade mot moskébygge i Karlstad, *Motgift*, (June 20, 2017), <https://www.motgift.nu/2017/06/20/nationalister-protesterade-mot-moskebygge-karlstad/>; Redaktionen, “Ja till ny moské i Karlstad väckte starka protester”, *Nordfront*, (June 19, 2017), <https://www.nordfront.se/ja-till-ny-moske-karlstad-vackte-starka-protester>; Hedin, Bengt, “Moskémotståndare protesterade på fullmäktigemötet” *SVT*, (June 20, 2017), <https://www.svt.se/nyheter/lokalt/varmland/moskemotstandare-avbrot-fullmaktigemotet>, *Nej tack till moské i Karlstad*, <https://www.facebook.com/Nej-tack-till-moske-i-Karlstad-161855850533369/>; Sims, Anna, “Många vill folkomrösta om moské på Rud”, *Nya Wermlandstidningen*, (August 21, 2017) <https://nwt.se/karlstad/2017/08/21/manga-vill-folkomrosta-om-moske-pa>; Karlstad kommun. “Planerad moské i Karlstad”, (November 24, 2017), retrieved December 22, 2017, <https://karlstad.se/Bygga-och-bo/Kommunens-planarbete/Detailplaner/Tidigare-detailplaner/Samrad-/moske-i-karlstad/>

sentenced to up to eight-and-a-half years in prison for bomb attacks against two refugee housings and a libertarian socialist trade union office in Gothenburg. Nobody was killed, but one man was severely wounded. The police investigation revealed that two of the men had received urban guerrilla warfare training with Partisan, a Russian radical nationalist and anti-Muslim paramilitary organization that trains volunteers for Russian separatists in Ukraine. (Fig. 6) The perpetrators were influenced by Islamophobic and anti-Semitic discourse, and convinced that only violence against the Muslim “invaders” would suffice. Inspired by racist heathen philosophy, the men recorded a standing prayer to All-Father Odin in which they vowed to “retake our land” and “take the fight against you who have defiled our country.” “Oh Jew, oh Muslim / We Norsemen have awoken / You should fear us / We are coming after you / The rage of the Norsemen thunder / Be assured / Oh, Jew and Muslim / the Norsemen are coming after you.”<sup>69</sup>

## Internet

Actors in the anti-Muslim landscape have a strong online presence, with their own digital news media, blogs, podcasts, Facebook groups, YouTube channels, and keyboard warriors. Among social media users, the Sweden Democrats dominate among all parties in parliament, engaging 29% of Facebook users and 42% of tweeters, with the Social Democrats as a distant second with 18% social media impact.<sup>70</sup> Scrutinizing the discursive strategies of the “counter-jihadist” network by combining social network analysis and crit-



Figure 6: Two of the Swedish national socialist perpetrators at a Partisan training camp, Russia. Source: Partisan, VK.

69. Nationella åklagarmyndigheten, Ansökan om stämning, Ärende AM-8443-17, Inkom 2017-06-09MÅLNr: B 618-17, AKTBIL: 206; Säkerhetspolisen, Huvudprotokoll, dnr 0105-K98-16 0105-K8-17 0105-K9-17, Inkom 2017-06-09; Säkerhetspolisen, Protokollbilaga, Göteborgs tingsrätt, Målbilaga B 618-17, 0105-K8-17, AM-8443-17, Inkom 2017-06-09, Mål nr: B 618-17, Aktbil: 209. Melin, in Sætran, Frode, “Høyreradikale i Göteborg: - Vi går så langt som nødvendig”, *Aftenposten*, (April 25, 2016). In 2016, One of the perpetrators had taken part in vigilante National Socialist patrols on the streets in Gothenburg “to prevent members of our race from being raped, mugged, or assaulted” by racial strangers, and a National Socialist “security team” that protected white women from Muslim “rapefugees” at a public bath in Kungälv. Vegara, Daniel, “Nazistiska “trygghetsvärden” – dömd för rån och våldsbrott”, *EXPO* (Feb. 16, 2016); Olsson, Daniel “Dömd nazist bakom ‘trygghetsaktionen.’”, *GT*, (Feb. 16, 2016); Nordfront, “Näste 2 agerade trygghetsvärd på Kungälvs badhus”, (Feb. 14, 2016) Nordfront.se, <https://www.nordfront.se/naste-2-agerar-trygghetsvard-kungalvs-badhus.smr>; Säkerhetspolisen. “PM Melin och Thulin i Ryssland”, 2017-04-28 12:47 diariennr: 0105-K98-16; Roth, Andrew, “A Right-Wing Militia Trains Russians to Fight the Next War — with or without Putin”, *Washington Post*, (Jan. 2, 2017), Säkerhetspolisen. “Transkribering av ‘predikan’”. Utredningsenheten. Diariennr. 0105-K98-16, 2017-04-24.

70. Hagberg, Sebastian, Mätning: SD dominerar stort i sociala medier, (Sifo) March 26, 2017.

ical discourse analysis, Mattias Ekman found that it constitutes a dynamic milieu with ties to different political actors in different geographical settings. By constantly recycling certain themes (e.g. that Muslims are inherently violent, constitute a demographic threat, infiltrate society by strategies of stealth jihad and creeping sharia) they have pushed the limits of what is considered acceptable public speech about Muslims in an effort to facilitate more space for anti-Muslim political actors, decision- and policymaking.<sup>71</sup>

In a 2017 study, Karina Horsti analysed the digital culture of Islamophobic misinformation experts by focusing on how a forensic photograph of a Swedish woman taken after she was subjected to a violent attack was transformed into an Islamophobic meme allowing bloggers to “imagine a shared white community in danger, symbolized by the injured, blond, Swedish woman,” who needs protection from the “Muslim rape epidemic.” The story began in New Year’s Eve 2004 when two Swedish women, Jenny and Lina, were attacked in Gothenburg. Jenny was raped, Lina beaten. Hoping to empower women to report gendered violence, Lina decided to publish her forensic photo in a defiant pose. To the women, the fact that the man who raped Jenny had Somali background was irrelevant - not so to the Islamophobic bloggers. Via the Norwegian blogger Fjordman, who writes in English for “counter-jihadist” blogs, and Pamela Geller’s *Atlas Shrugs*, the picture, and subsequent alterations of it, circulated the radical nationalist blogosphere in hundreds of postings inserted into an Islamophobic frame, thereby transforming its message from female empowerment to a narrative of “Western Muslims’ Racist Rape Spree,” “rape jihad,” and “Muslim gang rape in Sweden.” (Fig. 7) In radical nationalist narratives, Horsti notes, women are often represented as the embodiment of the nation, and family, and therefore of what belongs to men.

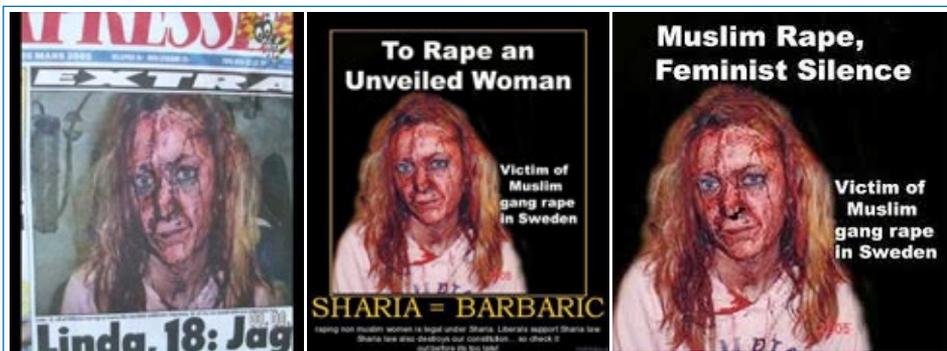


Figure 7: Message of female empowerment transformed into an Islamophobic meme.

71. Mattias Ekman (2015), “Online Islamophobia and the Politics of Fear: Manufacturing the Green Scare”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38:11, 1986-2002, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2015.1021264.

“Furthermore, the ‘openness’ and softness of the female body is represented as a weakness, a boundary for which violation and infection from the outside are constant threats.”<sup>72</sup> To the Islamophobic bloggers, female Swedishness simultaneously signifies pure whiteness (that needs to be protected) and feminism (that has destroyed white masculinity), and hence the dystopia ahead if white men do not get their act together, and defend their borders, nation, and women – in other words, the worldview that informed Trump’s *Last night in Sweden* speech.<sup>73</sup>

Analysing the discursive connections between Islamophobia and anti-feminism on *Flashback*, a Swedish online discussion forum with one million users, Anton and Petter Törnberg used custom web crawlers to download the entire forum, comprising over 50 million posts and 968,289 users. Törnberg & Törnberg combined critical discourse analysis with topic modelling, which inductively identifies any number of topics describing a text corpus without using present keywords. By analysing these topics, Törnberg & Törnberg found a discourse declaring “a claimed immanent oppression of women within Islam and an alleged contradiction among feminists and the political left to be both in favour of gender equality and at the same time pro-Islam and positive toward Muslim immigration.” This is claimed to constitute reverse discrimination whereby Swedish men are criticized by feminists while Muslim men are not.<sup>74</sup>

In the 2017 study *Det vita hatet* (The White Hate), Lisa Kaati et al analyse the prominent Swedish “hate sites” *Nordfront*, *Avpixlat*, *Motgift*, *Nordisk ungdom*, *Nya tider*, and *Nyheter idag* with a special focus on the two largest forums, *Avpixlat* (today *Samhällsnytt*) with links to the Sweden Democrats, and *Nordfront* of the Nordic Resistance Movement. A recurring theme was the narrative about Swedish female victimization to alien (Muslim) male offenders. Meanwhile, 99% of all articles and 94% of all comments in *Avpixlat* were written by men. *Nordfront* was even more male dominated.<sup>75</sup>

Beginning in October 2017, the hashtag *#metoo* derailed the Islamophobic discourse on Muslim rape jihad. More than 70,000 Swedish women of more than 50 different professions - artists, singers, lawyers, teachers, politicians, academics, sportswomen, journalists, medical doctors, nurses, chefs, construction workers, waitresses - contributed with stories of experienced sexual harassment in their workplace. The fact that thousands of non-Muslim Swedish men suddenly were exposed as sex-

72. Hirsti, Karina, “Digital Islamophobia: The Swedish Woman as a Figure of Pure and Dangerous Whiteness”, *New Media & Society*, 2017, Vol. 19(9) 1440–1457.

73. Hirsti, Karina, “Digital Islamophobia: The Swedish Woman as a Figure of Pure and Dangerous Whiteness”, *New Media & Society*, 2017, Vol. 19(9) 1440–1457.

74. Törnberg, Anton & Petter Törnberg, “Combining CDA and Topic Modeling: Analyzing Discursive Connections between Islamophobia and Anti-Feminism on an Online Forum”, *Discourse & Society*, 2016, Vol. 27(4) 401–422.

75. Kaati, Lisa et al, *Det vita hatet: radikal nationalism i digitala miljöer*, Stockholm: FOI, November 2017, FOI-R-4463—SE.

ual offenders made the Islamophobic keyboard warriors upset. Gone was their concern for the endangered white Swedish woman. Instead, #metoo was lambasted as an “evil strategy” to “blame white Swedish men” to remove focus from Muslim rapists.<sup>76</sup>

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

The EU court decision regarding the ban on wearing religious signs spurred opposition and demonstrations in Sweden, not least from Muslim civil society. Muslim women highlighted their concerns over further discrimination and difficulties in being employed if wearing a hijab. A particular form of resistance took shape through *Rätten till våra kroppar* (The right to our bodies), a network of Muslim female ac-



Figure 8: The logo used by the network *Rätten till våra kroppar*. The signs reads from the right, “Stop the Unveiling” and “The Right to Our Bodies.”

tivists, academics, and organizations working with human rights to deal with issues of racism and discrimination against Muslim women.<sup>77</sup> (Fig. 8) The network arranged and participated in May 1 demonstrations in Stockholm, Malmö, and Gothenburg to defend Muslim women’s labour rights.<sup>78</sup> (Fig. 9)

On August 6, a group of unaccompanied Afghani refugee minors initiated a demonstration against the Swedish Migration Agency’s program of forced deportations.<sup>79</sup> According to Amnesty International, no part of Afghanistan is safe and all deportation of asylum-seekers should be suspended.<sup>80</sup> The protest turned into a two-month sit-in in downtown Stockholm, which gained massive support from other parts of civil society and evolved into the network *Ung i Sverige* (Young in Sweden). On August 8,

76. Cf Julia Caesar, #Metoo-kampanjens syften (Oct. 23, 2017), <https://juliacaesar.blog/2017/10/23/metoo-kampanjens-syften/>; Ernius, Anna, “#MeToo flyttar fokus från de importerade grova våldtäkterna”, *Samhällsnytt*, (Nov 14, 2017), <https://samtiden.nu/2017/11/metoo-flyttar-fokus-fran-de-importerade-grova-valdtakterna/>; Bianca Muratagic, “Hyckleriet i #metoo står mig upp i halsen” *Katerina magasin*, (October 22 2017), <http://katerinamagasin.se/hyckleriet-metoo-star-mig-upp-i-halsen/>.

77. Ismail, Jasmin, “Stå upp för muslimska kvinnors rätt till arbete” *Kupolen* <http://www.ibnrushd.se/sta-upp-muslimska-kvinnors-ratt-till-arbete/>.

78. Wijk, Fanny, “De demonstrerar mot slöjförbud”. *Göteborgs Posten*. (May 1, 2017) <http://www.gp.se/nyheter/g%C3%B6teborg/de-demonstrerar-mot-sl%C3%B6j%C3%B6rbud-1.4259011>.

79. Migration Agency “Fortsatt allvarligt säkerhetsläge i Afghanistan” Migration Agency homepage (August 29, 2017) <https://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Nyhetsarkiv/Nyhetsarkiv-2017/2017-08-29-Fortsatt-allvarligt-sakerhetslage-i-Afghanistan.html>.

80. Amnesty International. *Afghanistan: Forced Back to Danger: Asylum-Seekers Returned from Europe to Afghanistan*. (October 5, 2017) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa11/6866/2017/en/>.

the sit-in was attacked by the Nordic Youth,<sup>81</sup> and on August 19, the nationalist Facebook group *Stå upp för Sverige* (Stand Up for Sweden) with 170,000 members, made a call to action. A few hundred aggressive anti-Muslims showed up, shouting slogans such as “Send home the trash; Shall we exterminate them – Yes!; No Muslims on our streets.” However, the anti-racist counter-demonstration outnumbered the anti-Muslim crowd, and the call to violence turned null.<sup>82</sup>

Young in Sweden is led by 17-year-old Fatemeh Khavari. (Fig. 10) She received a lot of media attention and has been subject to threats as well as conspiracy theories questioning her gender. Rumors flourished on the Internet of her being a man with the argument that a woman from Afghanistan could not be as bold and confident.<sup>83</sup>

Other forums highlighting the issue of Islamophobia include the



Figure 9: Marching for Muslim women’s labour rights, May 1, Stockholm and Gothenburg.



Figure 10: The Afghani Right to Existence Movement “Young in Sweden” at Medborgarplatsen with Fatemeh Khavari at the front, Stockholm. The sign states, “We Want to Live.”

81. Dalsbro, Anders. „Aktivister från Nordisk ungdom attackerade ensamkommande” *Expo idag* (August 8, 2017). [http://expo.se/2017/aktivister-fran-nordisk-ungdom-attackerade-ensamkommande\\_7421.html](http://expo.se/2017/aktivister-fran-nordisk-ungdom-attackerade-ensamkommande_7421.html)

82. Field notes, Medborgarplatsen, Stockholm, August 19, 2017.

83. Sidner, Julija et al. 2017. „Här konfronteras hon om nätlöggen: “Såg ut som en man””. *Aftonbladet* (November 16, 2017) <https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/QG6yA/har-konfronteras-hon-om-natlognen-sag-ut-som-en-man>

theatre. On October 14, 2016, a community theatre project called *Svenska hijabis* (Swedish hijabis) premiered and toured theatre scenes in Sweden. The project was based on five young Muslim hijabis, namely Benin Al-Najjar, Ruhani Islam, Maryam Dinar, Sarah Ameziane and Shama Vafaipour. The play revolved around their stories, everyday lives and interests and showed how Islamophobia and discrimination affects their daily lives. This was the first play of its kind in Sweden, dealing with experiences of Islamophobia with hijabis in lead roles.<sup>84</sup> The director of the play, America Vera-Zavalla, followed up with a performance lecture called “The Muslim Ban in 2017” that took on the effects of Islamophobia from a male perspective.

In 2016, a program called *Jag är muslim* (I am a Muslim) aired on the Swedish state television. For six Wednesday evenings, at prime time, a broad spectrum of Muslims shared their everyday experiences of being Muslim in Sweden. According to the anchor of the program, Anna Lindman, the aim was to bring forth the voices of a group that the majority of society has opinions about but that is actually very little known.<sup>85</sup>

In March 2017, famed Swedish Muslim author Johannes Anyuru’s dystopian novel *De kommer att drunkna i sina mödrars tårar* (They will drown in their mothers’ tears) was released. The story revolves around a future scenario where Islamophobia and racism have become systematically institutionalized in Sweden. The novel received massive acclaim and Anyuru was awarded with the prestigious literary August Prize in the category of Best Swedish Fiction of the Year.

The aforementioned initiatives, projects, and happenings are only a few examples of events that in different ways, have played a role in countering Islamophobia and polarization in Swedish society.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia had a discernible impact on Swedish society in 2017. Politically, the rise of the Sweden Democrats pushed most other parties to adopt populist rhetoric and exclusionary culturalist policies that may further normalize Islamophobic discourse and practice. On the other hand, the government launched the *National Plan to Combat Racism* which recognized Islamophobia as a problem that needs to be addressed. The report found that Swedish Muslims frequently experience negative discrimination, not least in the labour market. While the Discrimination Act requires that employers and schools take active measures to prevent discrimination and secure equal rights and opportunities, it lacks sanctions. Documented hate crimes with Islamophobic motives remain at high levels. Yet, most hate crimes are not reported.

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84. Svenska hijabis. <http://www.svenskahijabis.se/>.

85. Granback, Linda, “Jag vill ge Sveriges muslimer en röst” *Svenska Dagbladet* (October 24, 2016) <https://www.svd.se/jag-vill-ge-sveriges-muslimer-en-rost>.

The majority of those who report incidents are dissatisfied with how the case was handled. Among the initiatives to counter Islamophobia, the emerging Muslim civil rights movement plays a significant role. To continue the effort to combat Islamophobia, we recommend the following measures:

- Impose sanctions on companies and public institutions that violate the Discrimination Act.
- Review the principle of “neutrality” in companies’ clothing policies to ensure that it does not infringe on Muslim women’s labour rights.
- Offer all government agencies training in source criticism to prevent the impact of fake news and conspiracy theories.
- Offer all mosques and Islamic associations state insurance of their facilities on reasonable terms.
- Allocate resources to further train the police in how to handle cases of hate crime and unlawful discrimination.
- Impose active measures to counter ethnic profiling as police practice.
- Allocate funding for research programs to produce critical knowledge on racism, including Islamophobia.
- Strengthen the possibilities for civil society associations to counter racism by providing means for long-term engagement rather than short-lived projects.

## Chronology

- **01.01.2017:** Amendments in the Swedish Discrimination Act of 2008 require employers and educational institutions to take “active measures” to prevent discrimination and secure equal rights and opportunities within their organizations.
- **04.01.2017:** The government launches its *National Plan to Combat Racism*, which includes Islamophobia.
- **31.01.2017:** A truck belonging to the Uppsala Islamic Association and parked at the mosque was set on fire. Police suspects arson.
- **21.02.2017:** Arson attack against the Islamic association in Kungälv.
- **26.02.2017:** The MSB (Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency) releases a report with unsubstantiated claims of a clandestine Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy to establish a totalitarian Islamic State in Sweden.
- **14.03.2017:** The EU Court of Justice states that banning the Islamic headscarf may be “appropriate” to ensure “neutrality,” in a ruling with direct implications for Swedish Muslim women’s labour rights.
- **04.04.2017:** Uniformed Soldiers of Odin men intimidate young students at Al-Azhar Elementary School in Stockholm.
- **07.04.2017:** Rakhmat Akilov hijacks truck and downs five pedestrians in downtown Stockholm in the name of the so-called Islamic State.

- **09.04.2017:** Two public manifestations following the terrorist attack in downtown Stockholm. Rally to oust all Muslims gathers 14 people, rally to defend diversity gathers 45,000.
- **10.04.2017:** Mosque in Falkenberg attacked with stones.
- **11.04.2017:** Mosque in Malmö vandalized.
- **27.04.2017:** Mosque in Bredäng, Stockholm, denied security despite attacks.
- **30.04.2017:** Arson attack by single perpetrator devastates the Imam Ali Islamic Centre, in Järfälla, Stockholm.
- **01.05.2017:** Rallies for Muslim women's labour rights organized in Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö.
- **19.06.2017:** Fifty activists from the Nordic Resistance Movement and Nordic Youth forced their way into a municipality council meeting to stop the decision to allow the construction of a mosque in Karlstad.
- **06.07.2017:** Three national socialist sentenced for bombing campaign with Islamophobic and anti-Semitic motives in Gothenburg.
- **05.08.2017:** Mosque in Eskilstuna tightens security after series of threats and vandalism.
- **08.08.2017:** Nordic Youth attacks sit-in organized by Afghani minors protesting deportation in downtown Stockholm.
- **19.08.2017:** A few hundred aggressive anti-Muslims seek to attack Afghani refugee minors in Stockholm but are outnumbered by antiracists.
- **09.08.2017:** Mosque in Flen vandalized. Stones are thrown through the windows, national socialist graffiti is sprayed on its walls.
- **11.09.2017:** Arnold Boström, (SD, Huddinge) suggests solving the Muslim problem by converting them all to Christianity in a move to profile the party in the Church elections.
- **26.09.2017:** Mosque in Örebro set ablaze in arson attack.
- **02.10.2017:** Muslim preschool vandalized in Södertälje. Smashed windows and threatening Islamophobic graffiti sprayed on the walls.
- **12.12.2017:** Mosque in Sundsvall denied security cameras despite threats.
- **02.11.2017:** Mosque in Trollhättan attacked for the second time in 2017.
- **11.11.2017:** Sweden's Young Muslims redressed in court after unfunded allegations by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, based in part on the MSB report.
- **26.11.2017:** Sweden Democrat (SD) Martin Strid explains his theory that Muslims are not human at SD's party congress.
- **02.12.2017:** Mosque in Flen is vandalized, a swastika is painted on the door. This is the third occasion in 2017.
- **19.12.2017:** The Equality Ombudsman rules that banning religious symbols, the Islamic headscarf included, is not unlawful discrimination.
- **23.12.2017:** Mosque in Säffle vandalized.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**SWITZERLAND**  
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NERMINA ADEMOVIĆ-OMERČIĆ



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## Executive Summary

Muslims would become the only obligation-burdened minority in Switzerland without almost any rights if judged by the demands of the Swiss political right in 2017. Longstanding requests such as the abolition of funding mosques with money from abroad, sermons in the local language, controlling the education of imams (Motion by Lorenzo Quadri, adopted in the National Council) are no surprise as they have become a trend across Europe. However, these requirements, if adopted, will only be applied to Muslims (whose religious community is not even recognized) and not to other religious communities in Switzerland. On the other hand, restrictions on imports of halal meat (the Swiss Parliament accepted “Mandatory Labelling of Imported Halal Meat and Its Price Increase,” a parliamentary initiative by Yannick Buttet); the demand to ban Islamic religious care (Jean-Luc Addor’s Parliamentary Initiative “No Muslim Chaplains in the Swiss Army”); the prevention of the possibility for the education of imams at public universities in Switzerland; and the non-recognition of Islamic religious communities (“A recognition of the public right of Islam or a state training of imams is out of the question,” according to the SVP’s set of requirements) leave Muslims practically on the margins of the law. However, it is most concerning that the population does not see clearly the real impact of the aforementioned restrictive requirements, because there is not enough statistical information. The attacks on the mosque in Grenchen and a Muslim cemetery in Lausanne do not support the assumption that Islamophobia is not really a problem. Media interpretations, particularly of statements by so-called experts of Islam are also worrying. Fear and prejudice increase exponentially over time while Muslims find no legal authority (Counselling Centre) to complain to and where they can seek protection. Fortunately, there are also those who voiced general support for Muslims and encouraged greater Muslim affirmative action.

## Zusammenfassung

Nach den Forderungen der Schweizer Rechtsparteien im Jahr 2017, würden Muslime die einzige mit Verpflichtungen belastete religiöse Minderheit in der Schweiz sein, die fast keine Rechte hat. Forderungen, wie die Abschaffung der Auslandsfinanzierung von Moscheen, Predigten in der jeweiligen Landessprache oder Kontrolle der Ausbildung von Imamen (Motion von Lorenzo Quadri angenommen im Nationalrat) sind kein Wunder mehr, weil sie zum europaweiten Trend geworden sind. Diese sollten jedoch nur für Muslime (dessen Religionsgemeinschaft nicht einmal anerkannt ist) gelten, nicht aber für andere Religionsgemeinschaften. Zusätzlich wird verlangt: Einfuhr von Halal-Fleisch zu beschränken (Das Parlament akzeptierte die *obligatorische Deklaration von importiertem Halalfleisch und die Erhöhung des Preises*, eine parlamentarische Initiative von Yannick Buttet), die islamische Seelsorge zu verbieten (Parlamentarische Initiative von Jean-Luc Addor “Keine muslimischen Armee-seelsorger in unserer Armee”), die Imam-Ausbildung an den Universitäten in der Schweiz zu verhindern und die Anerkennung islamischer Religionsgemeinschaften zu stoppen (“*Eine öffentlich-rechtliche Anerkennung des Islams oder eine staatliche Ausbildung von Imamen kommt nicht in Frage*”, gemäss dem Forderungskatalog von SVP), was Muslime praktisch am Rande des rechtlichen Schutzes stellt. Am besorgniserregendsten ist jedoch die Tatsache, dass die Bevölkerung die tatsächlichen Auswirkungen der oben genannten restriktiven Forderungen nicht wahrnimmt, weil derzeit nicht genügend Statistiken erfasst wurden. Angriffe auf die Moschee in Grenchen sowie einen muslimischen Friedhof in Lausanne unterstützen nicht die Annahme, dass Diskriminierung kein echtes Problem ist. Media Interpretationen, insbesondere von Aussagen sogenannter Islam-Experten, sind ebenfalls besorgniserregend. Trotz exponentieller Zunahme von Angst und Vorurteilen, fehlt Muslimen eine legale Autorität (Beratungsstelle), wo sie sich beschweren und Schutz suchen können. Glücklicherweise gibt es auch diejenigen, welche für die Muslime allgemeine Unterstützung bekundeten und sie damit ermutigen Förderungsmassnahmen zu ihren Gunsten einzuleiten.

## Résumé

Les musulmans deviendraient la seule minorité à avoir le plus d'obligations que de droits si on en juge les demandes de la partie politique droite de Suisse en 2017. Les demandes habituelles comme d'arrêter de bâtir des mosquées avec de l'argent provenant de l'étranger, de faire des sermons en langue locale, de contrôler l'éducation des imams (motion par Lorenzo Quadri, adopté au Conseil National) ne sont plus surprenantes, car cela devient une tendance à travers l'Europe. Cependant, ces exigences, si elles sont adoptées, ne seront appliquées qu'aux musulmans (dont la communauté religieuse n'est même pas reconnue), mais pas à d'autres communautés religieuses en Suisse. D'autre part, cela concerne les restrictions d'importation de la viande halal (le Parlement Suisse a accepté l'étiquetage obligatoire de la viande halal importée et l'augmentation de son coût, initiative parlementaire de Yannick Buttet), la demande d'interdire les soins religieux islamiques" (initiative parlementaire de Jean-Luc Addor « Non à l'aumônier musulman dans l'armée suisse »), la prévention de la formation possible des imams dans les universités publiques en Suisse et de la non reconnaissance de la communauté islamique, etc. ("La reconnaissance de la communauté musulmane ou une formation des Imams par l'Etat sont hors de question", selon l'ensemble des exigences de l'UDC), d'une manière générale, les musulmans sont négligés par la protection judiciaire. Cependant, le plus inquiétant est le fait que la population ne voit pas clairement l'impact réel des exigences restrictives précédemment énoncées, car il n'y a pas assez d'information sur les statistiques. Les attaques contre la mosquée à Granges et le cimetière musulman à Lausanne ne suggèrent pas le fait que l'islamophobie soit réellement un problème. Les interprétations médiatiques, en particulier les déclarations de soi-disant experts en Islam, sont également inquiétantes. La peur et les préjugés augmentent de façon exponentielle au fil du temps tandis que les musulmans ne trouvent aucune autorité légale (Centre de Conseil) pour se plaindre et se procurer une protection. Heureusement, il y a ceux qui ont exprimé leur soutien général aux musulmans ce qui devrait encourager une meilleure reconnaissance des musulmans.

## Introduction

The waves of Islamophobia in Switzerland throughout 2017 breached the rule of law uncounted times. This becomes even more astonishing when the alarming multiple media interpretations, as political manoeuvres directed against Muslims, are taken into account.

In addition to the unavoidable issues of the constitutional stipulations of “the ban on facial covering” and “the ban of the hijab,” there was a demand for greater control over mosques and the interdiction of certain Muslim groups. The regular occurrence of two politically motivated demands, namely to place Islam and Muslims under greater control, is of particular concern and great worry.

Interestingly and appraisingly, the year 2017 marked affirmative actions of non-Muslim politicians to resolve emerging issues, i.e. the (possible) recognition of Islam and Islamic communities in Switzerland, greater involvement of Swiss Muslims in resolving specific issues, and problems concerning the smaller Muslim and wider Swiss community.

The SZIG (Schweizer Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft) of the University of Freiburg has implemented a special project to interact with and train several Muslim organizations, conduct workshops, round table discussions, public talks, and seminars. The events were organized in collaboration with several Muslim associations and imams. It is also noteworthy that new offers to train imams for the context of Switzerland’s society and a degree in pastoral care in the context of migration commenced officially in autumn 2017 in the Universities of Bern and Geneva.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

There is not enough information on the statistics of people subject to discrimination and the NGO hotlines are not sufficiently known, which is a concern. We realize that something is wrong only when comparing the massive amounts of hate speech in comments on the Internet, the debates in the parliament and the political requirements for restricting the freedom of Muslims with the reality of the underreported cases of discrimination against Muslims. The OSCE/ODIHR hate crime data on Switzerland for 2016,<sup>1</sup> i.e. *The 2016 Report of Racist Incidents Identified by Counseling Centers*, records only 2 cases, whereas the Network of Counselling Centres for Victims of Racism<sup>2</sup> records 31 cases of bias against Muslims. The Association of Islamic

1. ODIHR, “Hate Crime Reporting 2016,” (November 16, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from [http://hatecrime.osce.org/incidents?limit=10&ordering=date&offset=0&country=CH&year=2016&bias\\_motivations=5&bias\\_motivations=3](http://hatecrime.osce.org/incidents?limit=10&ordering=date&offset=0&country=CH&year=2016&bias_motivations=5&bias_motivations=3).

2. The “Network of Counseling Centers for Victims of Racism” is a joint project of *humanrights.ch* and the Federal Commission against Racism (CFR), which brings together 26 specialist services from all over Switzerland to provide consultation in cases of racial discrimination. Verein humanrights.ch und Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus (EKR), “*Rassismustorfälle aus der Beratungspraxis*,” Januar bis Dezember 2016, p. 14. Also found here: [www.network-racism.ch/](http://www.network-racism.ch/), “*Rassismustorfälle aus der Beratungspraxis 2016*,” retrieved January 2018 from <http://www.network-racism.ch/auswertungsberichte/index.html>.

Organizations in Zurich (VIOZ) has several hundred individual case descriptions from 2016/2017 that are not public. The gap between the actual number of cases and the recorded number of cases is obvious. The FIOS hired a legal counsellor to advise victims and better track the rising number of cases of discrimination.<sup>3</sup>

## Politics

The non-affirmative actions of the politics of exclusion and the limitation of rights convey messages of intolerance of thought and views of the Other. Adherents of such spectrums habitually attack Islam in general and Muslims in particular, considering them as a threat to Swiss society. Hence, emotional politics might slowly become part of the constitution if no adequate and timely responses are provided against such parties' actions.

The parliamentary "No"<sup>4</sup> to the SVP Initiative "Yes to a Ban on Full Facial Coverings" did not stop the SVP in its intentions. They managed to gather 105,553 valid signatures for the popular initiative, so that there could be a referendum on whether the burqa should be forbidden in the constitution.<sup>5</sup> On December 20, 2017, the Federal Council announced its position on the federal popular initiative which officially commenced on October 11, 2017. The Federal Council rejected the initiative on the grounds that the cantons should alone decide whether to ban facial coverings. As for the cases where a covered face is problematized, targeted action at the legislative level was proposed.<sup>6</sup> The FIOS supported the government's position, considering that dress codes should not be regulated in the Swiss constitution.<sup>7</sup>

The political debate to ban or restrict the import of meat slaughtered without stunning (which would constitute a serious restriction on religious freedom, for both Muslims and Jews) has taken several directions and even united two opposing political sides: left-wing circles cite animal welfare as their main concern and right-wing politicians view the custom as foreign to Swiss culture. Both sides, each in its own way, limits Muslims (halal methods of slaughter) and Jews (*shechita* method of slaughter) in particular. This type of ritual slaughter (without stunning) is prohibited in Switzerland,<sup>8</sup> but import of this type of meat is still allowed. The Swiss Parliament

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3. FIDS, "Anlaufstelle," retrieved January 9, 2018, from [http://www.fids.ch/?page\\_id=3011](http://www.fids.ch/?page_id=3011).

4. SDA, "Ständerat will Burkis nicht verbieten," (March 9, 2017), *parlament.ch* retrieved January 8, 2018, from [https://www.parlament.ch/de/services/news/Seiten/20170309111640572194158159041\\_bsd090.aspx](https://www.parlament.ch/de/services/news/Seiten/20170309111640572194158159041_bsd090.aspx)

5. <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/federal-gazette/2017/6447.pdf>

6. Federal Department of Justice and Police FDJP, "Federal Council Rejects Constitutional Facial Coverings Ban, Accepts Provisions in Law," (December 20, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.ejpd.admin.ch/ejpd/en/home/aktuell/news/2017/2017-12-200.html>.

7. FIDS, "Stellungnahme zur Mitteilung des Bundesrates bez. der Burkainitiative," *fids.ch*, (December 22, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018 from <http://www.fids.ch/?p=3131>.

8. Admin.ch, The Federal Chancellery FCh, "Eidgenössische Volksinitiative 'für ein Verbot des Schlachtens ohne vorherige Betäubung,'" from <https://www.bk.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis1t.html>. For more information see Historischen Lexikon der Schweiz, Bern, "Schächtverbot," January 10, 2012, from <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D11380.php>.

accepted a parliamentary initiative of CVP National Councillor Yannick Buttet, with the following demands: (1) mandatory labelling of imported halal meat at all stages of sale, (2) and the increase in the price of imported halal meat.<sup>9</sup> Following adoption by the Council of States, the National Council Commission will draw up a legislative amendment. Although the mandatory declaration of halal meat is in itself a major burden for a restricted halal market, the demand by Matthias Aebischer, a socialist member from the canton of Bern, for the banning of meat imports of inhumanely slaughtered animals was a far more challenging one, because such a ban would mostly apply to kosher and halal meat. Although the National Council accepted the initiative, the Council of States rejected it.<sup>10</sup> It remains to be seen whether a popular initiative will take place.

The issues of greater control over Islamic communities and the ban of independent Islamic organizations were discussed several times in the parliament; the latter issue was also discussed in a few cantons. The Motion of the National Councillor Quadri Lorenzo from the Ticino League (*Lega dei Ticinesi*)<sup>11</sup> with which he initiated the legal procedures to ban dangerous associations, such as the Salafist organization “Lies!” - a Swiss offshoot of the group *The true religion* - was eventually rejected. Consequently, the SVP initiated two new additional motions. The first motion was (again) about banning the Salafist organization “Lies!” and stopping the spread of “jihadist doctrine,”<sup>12</sup> while the second motion aimed at stopping the spread of “radical Islam” in Switzerland. Furthermore, the Federal Council was asked, among other things, to undertake the task of establishing the necessary legal foundations for implementing the anticipated laws. Moreover, it was expected that the Federal Council undertakes all measures to ensure that authorities at cantonal and federal levels are effectively provided with sufficiently trained specialists who have both language skills and knowledge about Islam. These are considered tools which make monitoring of mosques and imams easier and possible.<sup>13</sup> The first SVP motion was accepted by the National Council. It is for the Council of States to announce the final decision. As for the second motion, the National Council is still in the process of arriving at a decision.

9. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, “Motion 15.499: Import of Halal Meat from Animals Slaughtered without Stunning,” retrieved January 18, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaef?t:AffairId=20150499>.

10. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, “Motion 15.3832: Ban Imports of Inhumanely Slaughtered Animals,” retrieved January 18, from <https://www.parlament.ch/fr/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaef?t:AffairId=20153832>.

11. Swiss Italian equivalent of the SVP: Stefano Arroque, “A Restive Canton: The Rise of Ticino’s Own Lega,” *nationalia.info* (June 1, 2016), retrieved January, 2018 from <https://www.nationalia.info/opinion/10796/a-restive-canton-the-rise-of-ticinos-own-lega>.

12. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, “Motion 16.3937: Möglichkeit, gefährliche islamistische Vereinigungen zu verbieten”, (March 16, 2017), retrieved January 8, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaef?t:AffairId=20163937>.

13. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, “Motion 17.3681: Stopp der Ausbreitung des radikalen Islams in der Schweiz!”, (September 19, 2017), retrieved January 8, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaef?t:AffairId=20173681>.

The fact that Islamophobia is dangerous, especially when it effects lawmakers is exposed by Austria's controversial laws, such as the face-covering ban, the prohibition of the distribution of the Qur'an, or the ban on the financing of Muslim organizations and mosques from abroad. The Austrian law enforcements<sup>14</sup> impacted the Swiss right-wing political spectrum. The parliamentary motion by Lorenzo Quadri, adopted in the National Council, instructed the Federal Council to draw up a bill, which, following the rules that apply in Austria, provides a guarantee for the following:

- The prohibition of Islamic places of worship and Imams that accept funds from abroad;
- The obligation for Islamic centres to disclose the origin and use of their finances.
- The duty to conduct sermons in the language of residence.<sup>15</sup>

The FIOS and VIOZ united in their position that Austria and Switzerland cannot be compared in terms of the regulated status of Islam, because Islam has been recognized in Austria for more than 100 years. For this reason, it is not fair to prescribe additional obligations without simultaneously granting rights. Muslim communities and imams should not be treated as suspects. If someone wants to simply replicate or project the situational context of Islam in Austria to Switzerland by demanding from Muslims to abide to the aforementioned three prescriptions, additional rights should be granted, including the official recognition of Islamic religious communities in Switzerland.<sup>16</sup> The Swiss Council of States has not yet taken a position.

After the Chief of the Army Corps Commander Philippe Rebord spoke on the occasion of his hundred-days in office about the possibility of hiring army imams to serve as Muslim army chaplains in the future, SVP politicians were outraged.<sup>17</sup> Firstly, it was Beat Arnold, who raised the question in the parliament: "Does the Federal Council really intend to allow the army to recruit imams?,"<sup>18</sup> followed soon by Jean-Luc Addor with his Parliamentary Initiative "No Muslim Chaplains in the Swiss Army" in September.<sup>19</sup>

14. Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres, "The Austrian Islam Law," (March 31, 2015), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/integration/the-austrian-islam-law/> and "Integration Act," (June 9, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018 from <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/integration/integration-act/>.

15. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, "Motion 16.3330: Islamische Gebetsstätten. Verbot der Finanzierung durch das Ausland und Offenlegungspflicht," (September 26, 2017), retrieved January 9, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/amtliches-bulletin/amtliches-bulletin-die-verhandlungen?SubjectId=41116>.

16. Ibid. VIOZ, "Stellungnahme zur Annahme der Motion Quadri Lorenzo betreffend Islamische Gebetsstätten durch den Nationalrat am 26.09.2017," *vioz.ch*, (September 27, 2017) retrieved January 9, 2018 from <http://vioz.ch/medien-ueber-vioz/stellungnahme-zur-annahme-der-motion-quadri-lorenzo-betreffend-islamische-gebetsstaetten-durch-den-nationalrat-am-26-09-2017/>. FIDS, "À propos de la motion parlementaire d'interdiction des financements étrangers et obligation de transparence," retrieved January 9, 2018 from <http://www.fids.ch/?p=2671>.

17. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament, "Interpellation 17.3278: Wie ernst ist es dem Bundesrat mit der Einführung von Armee-Imamen?," (May 2, 2017), retrieved January 9, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20173278>.

18. Ibid.

19. The Federal Assembly - The Swiss Parliament: "Parliamentary initiative 17,485: Keine muslimischen Armeeseelsorger in unserer Armee," (September 29, 2017), retrieved January 9, from <https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaefte?AffairId=20170485>.

Such an initiative does not only discriminate against Muslims but also other religious communities, as it defends the position that the spiritual assistance available to the military is exclusively entrusted to Protestant chaplains, Roman Catholics and Christian Catholics.<sup>20</sup> It remains to be seen how the National Council will react on this initiative.

On October 28, 2017, the SVP delegates adopted a set of requirements (some for cantons, municipalities and cities and others at the confederation level) under the banner “Zero Tolerance to Islamist Radicalization!” It demands from Muslims to respect “our” legal regime, culture, habits, and customs.<sup>21</sup> Due to some of the demands being in contradiction to the rule of law, but also the customs and culture of Switzerland, it is not clear to whom “our” refers. Some of their demands read as follows,

- A recognition of the public right of Islam or a state training of imams is out of the question.
- The pastoral activity of imams in prisons and the army must stop. Imams can be replaced by army psychologists.
- We refuse the introduction of official Muslim holidays especially Ramadan.
- Until further notice, the activities of imams must be supervised throughout Switzerland.
- Any financial support for Islam in Switzerland by Muslim states, other governments, foreign organizations or foreign individuals must be strictly stopped.
- Halal meat, facial concealment, etc. should not be tolerated in public places like schools, prisons, hospitals or in the army. We must live according to our Christian values.<sup>22</sup>

The terminology of “radical Islam” in these demands is not clear, because the SVP carelessly blends the terms “radical Islam,” “Islam,” “Islamists,” and “Muslims.” Their requirements, actually, restrict Islam and Muslims in general, because out of 20 requests only 7 are directed against radical Islam i.e. radical Muslims. Weeks later, the president of the CVP, Gerhard Pfister (known for the statement that Muslims could belong to Switzerland but not Islam) additionally demanded the implementation of a “value paper,” announced over a long period, to fight against political Islam, but in reality, containing additional restrictions on Muslims. The NZZ summed up the requirements,<sup>23</sup> which the VIOZ characterized as superficial and unconstructive.<sup>24</sup> The CVP requested among other things, that a headscarf ban for pupils (Muslim

20. Ibid.

21. SVP, “Delegierte verabschieden Forderungskatalog «Null Toleranz gegenüber radikalem Islam in der Schweiz,” *svp.ch*, (October 28, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://www.svp.ch/news/artikel/medienmitteilungen/delegierte-verabschieden-forderungskatalog-null-toleranz-gegenueber-radikalem-islam-in-der-schweiz-2/>.

22. Ibid.

23. Christina Neuhaus, “CVP legt Forderungskatalog für Muslime vor,” *nzz.ch*, (December 17, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/cvp-legt-forderungskatalog-fuer-muslime-vor-ld.1340277>.

24. VIOZ, “Medienmitteilung: CVP-Präsident Pfister hält fest an einer unkonstruktiven Identitätspolitik,” *vioz.ch*, (December 17, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from <http://vioz.ch/medien-ueber-vioz/medienmitteilung-cvp-praesident-pfister-haelt-fest-an-einer-unkonstruktiven-identitaetspolitik/>.

girls and Jewish boys) should also apply to schools and kindergartens. They also called for a massive increase of control over Muslim communities.<sup>25</sup> Gerhard Pfister said that the issue of the face covering ban is not enough to handle Islam. This is, according to him, too tight a corset to wear, a greater focus on the issue of intensified control over the Muslim community is better suited and seems to be “an appropriate measure” to deal efficiently with the religion of Islam.<sup>26</sup> In fact, there are already discussions in the CVP on a so-called “article on religion,” which would regulate the relationship between “freedom of worship” and the rule of law.<sup>27</sup>

## Justice System

A Sion district court found Jean-Luc Addor (SVP), a national councilor, guilty of racial discrimination for comments made on his Twitter and Facebook accounts on August 22, 2014. After a man was shot to death in a St Gallen mosque, he wrote “On en redemande!” (“Let’s have more!”). The court said, that through his message, he gave the impression, that members of the Muslim community were people whose life was worthless, which could support a hostile attitude towards the Muslim community. The court charged him a suspended fine of CHF18,000 for his remarks that contravened the Swiss racial discrimination law.<sup>28</sup>

The new Federal Law on Intelligence (NDG) came into force on September 1, 2017.<sup>29</sup> The new NDG envisages that the Federal Intelligence Service will be able to listen to telephone conversations, secretly bug private spaces, hack or manipulate computers (Article 26) and intercept data (Article 39) in the case that internal and external security or essential national interests are threatened, for example by terrorism.<sup>30</sup> Some groups perceived this as a threat to the privacy of all Muslims and mosques, labelled “radical” by the government. Hence, Muslims worry more about potential legislations rather than intelligence surveillance.

25. Christina Neuhaus, “CVP legt Forderungskatalog für Muslime vor,” *nzz.ch*, (December 17, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/cvp-legt-forderungskatalog-fuer-muslime-vor-ld.1340277>.

26. Othmar von Matt, “CVP-Präsident Pfister: ‘No Billag ist absolut chancenlos,’” *aargauerzeitung.ch*, (November 6, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/schweiz/cvp-praesident-pfister-no-billag-ist-chancenlos-131876914>.

27. Denis von Burg, “CVP will Kopftücher an Schulen verbieten: Was im neuen Grundsatzpapier der Partei zum politischen Islam steht.», *Tagesanzeiger*, (December 17, 2017): <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/sonntagszeitung/kopftuchverbot-und-sozialhilfestopp-fuer-fundamentalisten/story/10356756>.

28. Kanton Valis, District court, *Medienmitteilung*, August 17, 2018: [https://www.vs.ch/de/web/tribunaux/communique-de-presse/-/asset\\_publisher/Ovyq5QIFPrCN/content/affaire-du-tweet-de-jean-luc-addor?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vs.ch%3A443%2Ffr%2Fweb%2Ftribunaux%2Fcommunique-de-presse%3Fp\\_id%3D101\\_INSTANCE\\_Ovyq5QIFPrCN%26p\\_p\\_lifecycle%3D0%26p\\_p\\_state%3Dnormal%26p\\_p\\_mode%3Dview%26p\\_p\\_col\\_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p\\_p\\_col\\_count%3D1](https://www.vs.ch/de/web/tribunaux/communique-de-presse/-/asset_publisher/Ovyq5QIFPrCN/content/affaire-du-tweet-de-jean-luc-addor?inheritRedirect=false&redirect=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vs.ch%3A443%2Ffr%2Fweb%2Ftribunaux%2Fcommunique-de-presse%3Fp_id%3D101_INSTANCE_Ovyq5QIFPrCN%26p_p_lifecycle%3D0%26p_p_state%3Dnormal%26p_p_mode%3Dview%26p_p_col_id%3Dcolumn-1%26p_p_col_count%3D1).

29. Admin.ch, Bundesgesetz über den Nachrichtendienst: AS 2017 4095, <https://www.admin.ch/opc/de/classified-compilation/20120872/index.html>.

30. Humanright.ch, “Das neue Nachrichtendienstgesetz - eine Auslegeordnung,” (September 25, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.humanrights.ch/de/menschenrechte-schweiz/inneres/person/sicherheit/schweizer-nachrichtendienstgesetz>.

## Education

Schools and workplaces are crucial areas of life where discrimination is very dangerous and has detrimental psychological effects. *TagesWoche* put together an interesting collection of articles about the headscarf in the workplace. “Job-killer headscarf” refers to the reality that women wearing headscarves experience greater difficulties securing positions in the job market. The articles are about two Turkish women who grew up in Switzerland and because of their headscarves could not get a job for years.<sup>31</sup> *Watson* wrote about the story of a Muslim woman of Bosnian origin who had a similar experience. Her applications for a job were rejected due to her headscarf.<sup>32</sup>

A concrete example of how far the discrimination of Muslims wearing headscarves can reach is the following leaflet where an association for training in the footwear industry was bothered by the increasing number of women with headscarves. (Fig. 1) Consequently, women who attend the inter-company courses (üK) will have to procure an authorization by their training companies for wearing a headscarf.<sup>33</sup>

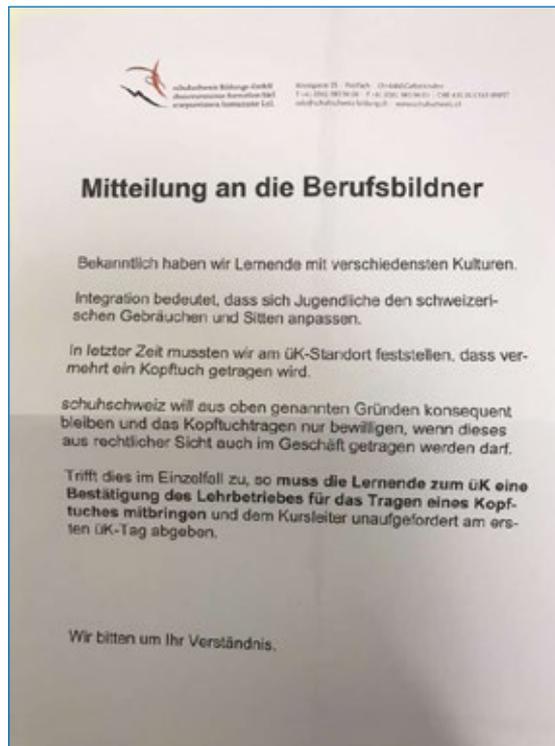


Figure 1: “Notification to the vocational trainers,” Image of the Swiss shoe industry association’s regulation. Women who attend the inter-company courses (üK) will have to procure an authorization by their training companies for wearing a headscarf. ÜK courses are the mandatory nature. Picture was provided to the *Blick.ch*.<sup>34</sup>

31. TagesWoche, “Jobkiller Kopftuch,” (August 28-30, 2017), *tageswoche.ch*, retrieved January 9, 2018 from <https://tageswoche.ch/story/jobkiller-kopftuch/>.

32. Watson, “Eine Muslimin erzählt, warum sie ein Kopftuch trägt und was sie über das Burkaverbot denkt,” (December 28, 2017), *watson.ch*, retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.watson.ch/Schweiz/Was%20ich%20wirklich%20denke/661604997-Eine-Muslimin-erz%C3%A4hlt--warum-sie-ein-Kopftuch-tr%C3%A4gt-und-was-sie-%C3%BCber-das-Burkaverbot-denkt>.

33. The Swiss shoe industry association “Schuhschweiz” demands from Muslim shoe professionals, who take part in their inter-company courses (cs), to bring a license (of the training company) for their headscarves, because, according to their leaflet, “more headscarves are being worn at the campus” and “Integration means that young people adapt to Swiss customs.” Moritz Kaufmann, “Schuhhändler verbieten ihren Lehrtöchtern die Kopfbedeckung.” Kopftuch nur mit Bewilligung,” (December 30, 2017), *blick.ch*, retrieved January 9, 2018, from [https://www.blick.ch/news/wirtschaft/schuhhaendler-verbieten-ihren-lehrtoechtern-die-kopfbedeckung-kopftuch-nur-mit-bewilligung-id7787459.html#community\\_article\\_comments\\_default\\_7787459](https://www.blick.ch/news/wirtschaft/schuhhaendler-verbieten-ihren-lehrtoechtern-die-kopfbedeckung-kopftuch-nur-mit-bewilligung-id7787459.html#community_article_comments_default_7787459).

34. Source: <https://www.blick.ch/news/wirtschaft/schuhhaendler-verbieten-ihren-lehrtoechtern-die-kopfbedeckung-kopftuch-nur-mit-bewilligung-id7787459.html>.

In January, regarding the domain of education, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled in support of the practice of the Federal Supreme Court that schools are allowed to compel young Muslim girls to attend mixed swimming classes. The interest of children's complete school education, which enables successful social integration, outweighs the parents' interest in dispensing religious education in the case of swimming lessons at school.<sup>35</sup> The VIOZ believes that requests made by laypeople are often confused with the "theologically founded means for attaining dignity" of a religious community. This confusion causes harm to entire religious communities.<sup>36</sup>

Although attempts to prohibit wearing headscarves in school do not stop, the mainstream responses reject the ban. The Canton of Aargau created a school guide for the easier handling of religious challenges in schools. For example, the headscarf must be tolerated because there is no law in Aargau prohibiting the headscarf.<sup>37</sup> The cantonal parliament of Valais declared as invalid the popular SVP initiative stipulating that children cannot wear headscarves in schools. However, the SVP and CVP are still persistent in their intentions of banning Muslim girls from wearing headscarves in schools.<sup>38</sup>

## Media

Negative representations of Muslims in the media cause not only negative attitudes towards Muslims, but could also support policies that harm Muslims. The media's and its interlocutors' continuous negative portrayal of Muslims confirms the empirical study on the quality of reporting on Muslims in Switzerland. The report entitled "Muslims in the Media Increasingly Problematized" by the fög - Research Institute Public Sphere & Society of the University of Zurich examined the frequency and intensity of the media coverage of Muslims in 18 Swiss media (Newspapers, TV stations) in the period from 2009 to 2017.<sup>39</sup> The coverage of Muslims is thematically diverse. In the first half of 2017, according to the study, multiple contributions

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35. OSMANOĞLU und KOCABAŞ v. Schweiz, retrieved January 9, 2018 from [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{\"itemid\":\[\"001-170346\"\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{\).

36. Georges Scherrer, "Alle Muslime werden das Urteil respektieren", (January 11, 2017), *kath.ch*, retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.kath.ch/newsd/alle-muslime-werden-das-urteil-respektieren/>.

37. Departement Bildung, Kultur und Sport, Abteilung Volksschule, "Umgang mit religiösen Fragestellungen an der Volksschule. Eine Orientierungshilfe für die Schulen", p. 9, (March 23, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from [https://edudoc.ch/record/126172/files/AG\\_handreichung.pdf](https://edudoc.ch/record/126172/files/AG_handreichung.pdf).

38. SRF, "Initiative ungültig. Kopftuch-Abstimmung ohne die SVP", *srf.ch*, (December 15, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.srf.ch/news/regional/bern-freiburg-wallis/initiative-ungueltig-kopftuch-abstimmung-ohne-die-svp>.

39. The results of the study will be published in 2018. It was commissioned by the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism (FCR/EKR) and represented at the conference "Islamophobia: Society, Media and Politics", organized by the FCR, the Swiss Center for Islam and Society of the University of Freiburg SZIG, and the Center for Religious Research of the University of Lucerne ZRF on September 11, 2017, at the University of Fribourg: [http://www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/Master\\_EKR\\_ppt\\_Nachmittag\\_11.9.2017.pdf](http://www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/Master_EKR_ppt_Nachmittag_11.9.2017.pdf) and published in Tangram 40, Bulletin of the FCR, December 2017: [http://www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/Tangram\\_40\\_Web.pdf](http://www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/Tangram_40_Web.pdf).

regarding Muslims in Switzerland addressed the two issues of radicalization and terror. A serious matter is also the critical and doubtful contributions on integrating Muslims in Switzerland which tend to over-proportionally (21%) associate generalizations with distance-generating statements and are exaggeratedly emotionalized. The intensive reporting on violent events as well as political campaigns in the context of popular initiatives are two factors, which primarily characterize the reporting on Muslims in Switzerland. On the other hand, topics such as the successful integration or everyday life are marginal and almost completely absent in the media. So, it is not surprising that the proportion of contributions whose tonality creates distance from Muslims in Switzerland has grown relatively steadily between 2009 and 2017 from 22% to 69%. A comparison of media headlines showed that the distance-generating articles occur with above average frequency in the reporting of *Weltwoche* (84%), *Sonntags Blick* (63 %), *Sonntags Zeitung* (61%) and *Blick* (59%). This type of reporting was slightly lower in *NZZ* and *Le Temps* (31%). Media coverage achieve mainly Muslim actors representing polarizing positions (It tends to be always the same people).<sup>40</sup> Muslims with knowledge and experience in the community are rarely taken into account.

A study of discrimination experienced by Muslims in Switzerland titled “Notes on Experienced, But Barely Registered Hate Crime” was conducted by the Swiss research institute gfs.bern.<sup>41</sup> This study showed that 85% of Muslim respondents experienced the representation of Islam in the Swiss media as rather or very negative. They are particularly clear in the responsibility of the media for the deteriorated attitude of non-Muslims towards Muslims (88%).<sup>42</sup>

The Zeitungshaus AG,<sup>43</sup> publisher of the *Basler Zeitung* - whose board member and SVP’s chief strategist Christoph Blocher owns one-third of the company’s shares -, expanded its media empire in 2017 by buying Zehnder Media AG. Zehnder Media encompasses 25 free local newspapers and serves around 800,000 readers a week across Switzerland.<sup>44</sup> Many received this news with concern, fearing that with this purchase, the SVP’s political views may be reinforced.

40. Ibid.

41. This study was pursued by the Union of European Turkish Democrats (UETD) in 2016 and was run by different Muslim communities. It included more than 500 interviews, evaluating discrimination against Muslims in Switzerland in the period between December 2016 and March 2017: <http://www.gfsbern.ch/de-ch/Detail/hinweise-auf-erlebte-aber-kaum-registrierte-hasskriminalitaet>.

42. gfs.bern, “Schlussbericht Pilotstudie Diskriminierung Muslime”, starting on page 36: <http://www.gfsbern.ch/de-ch/Detail/hinweise-auf-erlebte-aber-kaum-registrierte-hasskriminalitaet>.

43. Until October 2017 known as the “BaZ Holding AG”. Persoenlich.ch, “Namensänderung in Zeitungshaus AG”, (October 24, 2017), retrieved from <http://www.persoenlich.com/medien/namensanderung-in-zeitungshaus-ag>.

44. Rainer Stadler, “Christoph Blocher erweitert seinen Zeitungsbesitz,” (August 16, 2017), *NZZ*, retrieved from <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/uebernahme-durch-baz-holding-ag-christoph-blocher-kauft-die-zehnder-regionalmedien-ld.1311020>; Reporters Without Borders, “Media Oligarchs Go Shopping,” p. 23: [https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/oligarchs\\_eng.pdf](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/oligarchs_eng.pdf).

## Physical and Verbal Attacks

Vandal acts on the Muslim burial ground of a cemetery Bois-de-Vaux in Lausanne in October shocked many. This was not the first attack on the cemetery. The hate graffiti messages called on Muslims to leave Switzerland.<sup>45</sup> As a reaction to this, more than 500 people belonging to the left political spectrum and a number of organizations, demonstrated against Islamophobia in Lausanne but also in solidarity with the Muslims.<sup>46</sup>

Two attacks on the same mosque might have never been discovered by the media if it were not for an inspection control on an “illegal employee,” who had escaped in the mosque construction site. The construction site of the prayer house of the Albanian Islamic religious community AIG in Grenchen (SO) is known for having fallen victim to a racist attack six years ago. Strangers buried a dead pig and four pig heads and spilled over 100 liters of pig blood across the grounds. This was done with the intention of desecrating the building area and preventing the construction of the new mosque. In November, the mosque structure was again the target of racist attacks, and, again, none of the media reported it. Only when an inspection control discovered an “illegal employee” working on the construction, did several media stations mention that there had been two hate attacks perpetuated on the construction sites.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, the under construction



Figure 2: Photo shows a graffiti ‘Shit Islam’ written on the site of a mosque in Grenchen.<sup>49</sup>

Grenchen Mosque was again stained with pig blood and racist graffiti was written by unidentified individuals.<sup>48</sup> (Fig. 2)

The mosques in Switzerland are placed under general suspicion and have to cope with mistrust because of the mistakes of few. The controversies related to the Imam of the An’Nur Mosque in Winterthur and the Libyan “preacher” of the Ar’Rahman

45. SDA, “Vandalen suchen Muslim-Friedhof in Lausanne heim,” *nzz.ch* (October 14, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/vandalen-suchen-muslim-friedhof-in-lausanne-heim-ld.1321973>.

46. SDA, “Mehr als 500 Menschen demonstrieren gegen Islamophobie in Lausanne,” *aargauerzeitung.ch* (October 18, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/schweiz/mehr-als-500-menschen-demonstrieren-gegen-islamophobie-in-lausanne-131820226#>.

47. Oliver Menge, “Illegaler flüchtet von der Moschee-Baustelle – Polizist stürzt bei Verfolgung in die Tiefe,” *Grenchner Tagblatt.ch* (December 13, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.grenchnertagblatt.ch/solothurn/grenchen/illegaler-fluechtet-von-der-moschee-baustelle-polizist-stuerzt-bei-verfolgung-in-die-tiefe-131993734>.

48. Simon Ulrich, “Schweineblut-Attacke auf Rohbau von Moschee,” *20min.ch*, (December 13, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://www.20min.ch/schweiz/bern/story/Schweineblut-Attacke-auf-Rohbau-von-Moschee-14599356>.

49. Source: <http://www.20min.ch/schweiz/bern/story/Schweineblut-Attacke-auf-Rohbau-von-Moschee-14599356>; Photo belongs to Isa Ismaili/AIG.

Mosque in Biel gave rise to political and media pressure on the mosques in Switzerland. Namely, the imam of the An’Nur Mosque was arrested in late 2016 because of accusations of instigating worshipers to kill Muslims who do not take part in communal prayer.<sup>50</sup> The VIOZ suspended the mosque after the incident.<sup>51</sup> It was reported that the members of the An’Nur Mosque committee attacked two people inside the mosque for sharing information about the imam’s sermons with journalists. This led to their arrest in early 2017.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the Winterthur An’Nur Mosque was put under great pressure due to suspicion of links with radical Islamic movements and was consequently closed.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, a second scenario emerged concerning the Ar’Rahman Mosque in Biel in August 2017. It attracted media attention when Abu Ramadan, an occasional volunteer preacher at the Ar’Rahman Mosque, was refused asylum. Abu Ramadan was also criticized for his statements, which he claimed to be incorrectly translated and interpreted.<sup>54</sup> For several months, *DerBund.ch* and the *Rundschau* of the SRF (Swiss Radio and Television) researched his case. A television report showed that he preached messages of hatred against other religions<sup>55</sup> from the Ar’Rahman Mosque in Biel while having received to that point in time about CHF 600,000 in Swiss social welfare.<sup>56</sup> Saïda Keller-Mesahli, president of the Forum for Progressive Islam, accused him of being a member of DAESH; he consequently sued her for defamation of character.<sup>57</sup> Trials concerning this controversy are in progress.

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

What in another context could and usually is easily qualified as hate speech or a call for wholesome discrimination against a whole group of people, if spoken by a

50. NZZ, “Polizei verhaftet Imam wegen Aufruf zum Mord”, (November 2, 2016): <https://www.nzz.ch/zuernich/umstrittene-winterthurer-moschee-razzia-in-der-annur-moschee-ld.125778>.

51. VIOZ, “Beschluss vom 4. November 2016: ‘Suspendierung der Mitgliedschaft des Kultur Vereins An’ Nur’”, (November 5, 2016): <http://vioz.ch/medien-ueber-vioz/vioz-beschluss-vom-4-november-2016-suspendierung-der-mitgliedschaft-des-kultur-vereins-an-nur/>.

52. SRF, “Umstrittene Moschee - Zehn Verhaftungen nach Auseinandersetzung in An’ Nur-Moschee”, (February 21, 2017): <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/zehn-verhaftungen-nach-auseinandersetzung-in-an-nur-moschee>.

53. SRF, “An’Nur-Verein gibt auf - Umstrittene Moschee in Winterthur wird geschlossen”, (May 28, 2017): <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/umstrittene-moschee-in-winterthur-wird-geschlossen>.

54. Tagesanzeiger, Kurt Pelda, Thomas Knellwolf, “Streit um Abu Ramadans Zitate: Der Islamische Zentralrat und ein Professor behaupten, Abu Ramadans Predigten seien falsch übersetzt worden. Experten schaffen Klarheit.” (September 7, 2017): <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard/Streit-um-Abu-Ramadans-Zitate/story/16016005>.

55. “Oh Allah, I beg you to destroy the enemies of our religion. Destroy the Jews, Christians, Hindus, Russians and the Shia,” in Tagesanzeiger, Kurt Pelda, Thomas Knellwolf, “Streit um Abu Ramadans Zitate: Der Islamische Zentralrat und ein Professor behaupten, Abu Ramadans Predigten seien falsch übersetzt worden. Experten schaffen Klarheit.” (September 7, 2017): <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard/Streit-um-Abu-Ramadans-Zitate/story/16016005>.

56. SRF, Franziska Ramser, “Abu Ramadan: Hassprediger lebt auf Staatskosten: Ein libyscher Imam predigt in Biel Hass gegen Andersgläubige und Abkehr vom Staat – hat aber über eine halbe Million Franken Sozialhilfe kassiert.” (August 23, 2017): <https://www.srf.ch/news/schweiz/abu-ramadan-hassprediger-lebt-auf-staatskosten> <https://www.derbund.ch/bern/kanton/hassprediger-hetzt-gegen-christen-und-juden/story/27818485>.

57. Fabian Eberhard, “Hassprediger zeigt Islam-Kritikerin an,” *Blick.ch*, (October 13, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.blick.ch/news/schweiz/zoff-nach-dschihad-vorwurferen-hassprediger-zeigt-islam-kritikerin-an-id7399422.html>.

Muslim (at least by name), is presented as allowed and necessary criticism of religion. Such reports get space in the media. However, if in another context a Muslim voices some type of intolerance, then it may and most probably will receive a massive scale repudiation of not just the said Muslim but of Islam as a religion, as well. One of these persons is the self-proclaimed Islamic expert (without any theological educational background), Saïda Keller-Mesahli, who holds strong individual opinions and shows intolerance towards other Muslim views, without participating in any of the local Muslim communities.<sup>58</sup> Her criticism of Islam is characterised by many as a mere articulation of what is supported by the right-wing populist political circle, which as mentioned in her book, she looks forward to cooperating with – namely, the SVP in Switzerland or the Alternative for Germany (AfD) in Germany.<sup>59</sup> Whether some kind of cooperation between them already exists and what the extent or nature of that collaboration is, remains unclear. However, it is interesting, that she does not see any basis for cooperation nor collaboration, whatsoever, with Islamic organizations in Switzerland.<sup>60</sup>

Many of her statements in the media in recent years have been meager paraphrasing without serious investigation. Saïda Keller-Mesahli summarized her viewpoints in the book *Islamistische Drehscheibe Schweiz* (Islamist hub Switzerland), in which she characterized most imams as radical and labeled the Islamic organizations in Switzerland, mainly through negative associations, as Saudi mercenaries, Islamists or the wrong interlocutors of naïve Swiss authorities. Her book was massively supported via interviews prior to publication.<sup>61</sup> There is no doubt that the book deserves adequate, evidence-substantiated responses by qualified non-biased scholars, and well-researched reporting by journalists. As the award winner of the Human Rights Award 2016 by

58. Lic. phil. Saïda Keller-Mesahli was born in Tunisia in July 1957 into a Muslim extended family. She has spent the largest part of her life in Switzerland, where she studied Romance Studies, English Literature and Film Studies in Zurich. She is a founder of the Forum for Progressive Islam.

59. Saïda Keller-Mesahli, “Islamistische Drehscheibe Schweiz” (Zürich: NZZ Libro, 2017), 94.

60. Markus Gilli, “TalkTäglich - Islamistische Drehscheibe Schweiz,” *TeleZüri*, (September 13, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.telezueri.ch/86-show-talktaeglich/18175-episode-islamistische-drehscheibe-schweiz>. Maya Brändli, “Debatte: Wie gefährlich ist der Islamismus in der Schweiz?,” *SRF 2 Kultur*, (September 19, 2017), retrieved from <https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/kontext/debatte-wie-gefaehrlich-ist-der-islamismus-in-der-schweiz>.

61. Some of them: NZZ am Sonntag: Christine Brand, “Saïda Keller-Mesahli: ‘Mehrheit der Schweizer Imame ist islamistisch,’” (August 26, 2017): <https://nzzas.nzz.ch/public/saida-keller-mesahli-mehrheit-der-schweizer-imame-ist-islamistisch-ld.1312846>, NZZ: Florian Schoop, “Frau Keller und die bärtigen Männer”, (September 1, 2017): <https://www.nzz.ch/schweiz/morddrohungen-und-beschimpfungen-saida-und-die-baertigen-maenner-ld.1313712>. SRF: Hansjörg Schultz, “Saïda Keller-Mesahli, Menschenrechtsaktivistin”, (August 27, 2017): <https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/musik-fuer-einen-gast/saida-keller-mesahli-menschenrechtsaktivistin-2>, Oliver Meier, “Islamistische Drehscheibe Schweiz”, (September 1, 2017): <https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/kultur-kompakt/islamistische-drehscheibe-schweiz>. Blick: Fabian Eberhard, “Hassprediger radikalisieren Secundos in der Schweiz: Sie sind Allahs junge Geiseln”, (August 27, 2017): <https://www.blick.ch/news/schweiz/hassprediger-radikalisieren-secundos-in-der-schweiz-sie-sind-allahs-junge-geiseln-id7211305.html>. Le Temps: Emmanuel Garessus, “La majorité des Imams suisses est islamiste”, (August 27, 2017): <https://www.letemps.ch/societe/2017/08/27/majorite-imams-suisses-islamiste>.

the International Society for Human Rights (ISHR),<sup>62</sup> Keller-Messahli wants to abolish women's right to wear any kind of religious coverage: "Nowadays, any form of women's veiling is the banner of political Islam, whether it's the headscarf, the niqab, or the burqa. [...] Any form of veiling of Muslim women must be prevented because it represents not a religious but a political imperative of Islamists."<sup>63</sup>

The established fact that her statements are harmful and have a negative reverberation on Muslims, just supports another disappointing fact, which is that the book was sold through church portals<sup>64</sup> and presented in churches.<sup>65</sup>

### Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

In contemporary times, to be brave is not profitable and becoming a bystander is easier and more plausible. It's easier to say what everyone expects to hear than to tell the truth. It is easier to be silent on injustice than risk being attacked while standing up for others. It is easier to criticize than offer solutions. It is easier to pull back into one's comfort zone than face the challenges of others' unwillingness to accept diversity. Therefore, courageous, hardworking and noble people need to be mentioned and rewarded in order to feel appreciated. This mutual appreciation is needed because of today's unpopularity to side with Muslims and help them overcome the raising challenges.

Canton Zurich is a bright example in Switzerland in the way it combats Islamophobia and should serve as a good example to others. They have a beautiful, symbolic tradition of organizing a football game of "FC Religions vs. FC Cantonal Council"<sup>66</sup> What better way to battle prejudices? The reception organized for imams and Islamic communities by the city of Zurich on Ramadan is also an example of how to promote living together.<sup>67</sup>

62. Monique Schlegel, "Communiqué Menschenrechtspreis an Islamwissenschaftlerin Frau S. Keller-Messahli," *IGFM-CH*, (December 6, 2016), retrieved Januar 5, 2018, from <http://www.igfm.ch/2016/12/07/communiquemenschenrechtspreis-an-islamwissenschaftlerin-frau-s-keller-messahli/>.

63. "Heutzutage ist jede Form der Verschleierung der Frau, ob Kopftuch, Nikab oder Burka, das Banner des politischen Islam. [...] Jede Form der Verschleierung der muslimischen Frau ist zu verhindern, weil sie kein religiöses, sondern ein politisches Gebot der Islamisten verkörpert." Saïda Keller-Messahli, *Islamistische Drehscheibe Schweiz* (Zürich: NZZ Libro, 2017), 62.

64. Author unknown, "Liberale Muslimin: Mehrheit der Schweizer Imame ist islamistisch," *Kath.ch*, (August 31, 2017), retrieved January 5, 2018, from <http://www.kath.net/news/mobile/60754>.

65. Author unknown, "Saïda Keller-Messahli stellt ihr neuestes Buch zum Thema Islam vor," *Die Lesegesellschaft Horgen*, (September, 2017), retrieved Januar 5, 2018, from [http://www.lesegesellschaft-horgen.ch/cms/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=155:saida-keller-messahli-buch-islam&catid=5:archiv-lesegesellschaft-horgen&Itemid=5](http://www.lesegesellschaft-horgen.ch/cms/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=155:saida-keller-messahli-buch-islam&catid=5:archiv-lesegesellschaft-horgen&Itemid=5).

66. VIOZ, "reformiert. vom 28. Juni 2017: 'FC Religionen vs. FC Kantonsrat' – Ob da Gott mitgeschüttet hat?," (Juni 28, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <http://vioz.ch/medien-ueber-vioz/reformiert-vom-28-juni-2017-fc-religionen-vs-fc-kantonsrat-ob-da-gott-mitgeschuttet-hat/>. More at: <https://www.facebook.com/reformiertpunkt/videos/923419657798282/>.

67. VIOZ, "Imam-Empfang bei der Stadtpräsidentin," *vioz.ch*, (June 28, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://vioz.ch/medien-ueber-vioz/imam-empfang-bei-der-stadtpraesidentin/>. <http://vioz.ch/medien-ueber-vioz/imam-empfang-bei-der-stadtpraesidentin/>

Government Councilor Jacqueline Fehr, head of the Department of Justice and Home Affairs of the Canton of Zurich, put together a working group to define the conditions for Islamic pastoral care. The working group is comprised of representatives of the Reformed Church, Catholic Church, the VIOZ, and Department of Justice and Home Affairs of the Canton of Zurich. Various groups for years have tried to uphold the rights of Muslims to Islamic pastoral care. Besides the VIOZ, Fehr is most responsible for the continued development of the training program in Islamic pastoral care. Great financial support has been invested, some of which comes from the half million francs of the lottery fund withdrawn by the Zurich government.<sup>68</sup> Fehr also proposed guidelines intended to lead the relationship between the state and religious communities.<sup>69</sup> Actually, she saw in the legal recognition of Muslims the possibility to undergo more scrutiny that could lead to higher pressure on them. That is why she proposed a balanced path which means “no recognition” but the canton must have a say in questions concerning Muslims. She intends to define a distinct relationship between state and religious communities which can accept or reject the guidelines on a voluntary basis.<sup>70</sup>

The young politician, representative of the Green Party of Switzerland in the National Council, Irène Kälin<sup>71</sup> and President of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland (SP) Christian Levrat<sup>72</sup> declared their public support of the recognition of Muslim communities. Andrea Caroni, a state councillor from the FDP (Liberals) and its vice president, gathered representatives of all factions to set up a counter-movement against the burqa ban.<sup>73</sup>

It is not easy for universities to attain the power to influence the fight against Islamophobia because of the tension between knowledge (science) and power

68. Brigitte Hürlimann, “Die muslimische Notfallseelsorge anders aufgleisen,” *nzz.ch*, (January 18, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.nzz.ch/zuerich/ambitionierte-projekte-von-jacqueline-fehr-die-muslimische-notfallseelsorge-anders-aufgleisen-ld.140419>. Katrin Oller, “2015 wurde muslimische Notfallseelsorge gestoppt: Warum Kanton Zürich jetzt einen zweiten Anlauf wagt,” *aargauerzeitung.ch*, (February 20, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/limmattal/zuerich/2015-wurde-muslimische-notfallseelsorge-gestoppt-warum-kanton-zuerich-jetzt-einen-zweiten-anlauf-wagt-130991498>.

69. Kanton Zürich, Direktion der Justiz und des Innern Generalsekretariat, “Staat und Religion im Kanton Zürich Eine Orientierung,” (November 29, 2017): [https://www.zh.ch/internet/de/aktuell/news/medienmitteilungen/2017/leitsaetze-zum-verhaeltnis-zwischen-staat-und-religionsgemeinsch/\\_jcr\\_content/contentPar/downloadlist/downloaditems/236\\_1512658978660.spooler.download.1512658852255.pdf/Orientierung\\_Staat+und+Religion+KtZH.pdf](https://www.zh.ch/internet/de/aktuell/news/medienmitteilungen/2017/leitsaetze-zum-verhaeltnis-zwischen-staat-und-religionsgemeinsch/_jcr_content/contentPar/downloadlist/downloaditems/236_1512658978660.spooler.download.1512658852255.pdf/Orientierung_Staat+und+Religion+KtZH.pdf).

70. SDA, “Der Kanton will auch bei nicht anerkannten Religionsgemeinschaften mitreden,” *Limmattaler Zeitung*, (December 8, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.limmattalerzeitung.ch/limmattal/zuerich/der-kanton-will-auch-bei-nicht-anerkannten-religionsgemeinschaften-mitreden-131984462>.

71. Georges Scherrer, “Kein Grund, nicht weitere religiöse Minderheiten zu integrieren,” *kath.ch*, (October 18, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.kath.ch/news/ich-sehe-keinen-grund-warum-wir-nicht-weitere-religioese-minderheiten-integrieren-sollten/>.

72. Denis von Burg und Pascal Tischhauser, “Ich wehre mich gegen Islam-Hass und Scheinkämpfe,” *derbund.ch*, (November 19, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.derbund.ch/sonntagszeitung/aufgeklärte-muslims-unterstuetzen/story/26695156>.

73. Reza Rafi, “Andrea Caroni (37) gründet Komitee gegen Burkaverbot,” *blick.ch*, (September 3, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.blick.ch/news/politik/fdp-vize-betritt-die-kampfzone-andrea-caroni-37-gruendet-komitee-gegen-burkaverbot-id7251277.html>.

(structures). Undoubtedly, ignorance is, in fact, one of the main causes of intolerance. Symbolically, a conference titled “Islam - Knowledge - Power. Interactions from a Theological and Historical Perspective” was the first conference within the framework of the doctoral program “Islam and Society: Islamic-Theological Studies” at the Swiss Centre for Islam and Society (SZIG).<sup>74</sup> The scientific circle and Muslims have high expectations in combating numerous prejudices created by politics and various incidents in society. That is why even a small step towards understanding and impacting the fight against Islamophobia is important. At the SZIG, in the autumn semester of 2017, the Master’s program “Islam and Society” was offered. In addition, in the period between September 2016 and May 2017, 25 workshops were organized under the project “Muslim Organizations and Social Actors” in collaboration with multiple communities of Muslim partners.<sup>75</sup> Since summer of 2017, two universities have offered courses for the further education of Muslims i.e. Imam Training Courses (but not in collaboration with the Islamic community). Firstly, the University of Bern offers the course “CAS Religious Care in Migration Contexts,” which is open to members of all religious denominations. It provides the authorities a better assessment of the need for an Islamic pastoral training program.<sup>76</sup> Secondly, the University of Geneva offered courses in French on political philosophy, human rights and ethics, which served towards the greater integration of imams in Switzerland.<sup>77</sup>

The University of Fribourg hosted a symposium with the title “Muslim Hostility: Society, Media and Politics” organized by the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism (FCR), the Swiss Centre for Islam, the Society of the University of Freiburg (SZIG), and the Centre for Religious Research of the University of Lucerne (ZRF). The conclusion of this symposium was that Islamophobic attacks and hate crimes against Muslims are undeniably a fact. The narratives in which Islamophobia expresses itself in Swiss society reflect more about the religious illiteracy of the majority of Swiss society than about the real situation of Muslims in Switzerland.<sup>78</sup>

74. Stiftung Mercator, “Schweizerisches Zentrum für Islam und Gesellschaft: Rückblick und Ausblick,” (August 9, 2017), *stiftung-mercator.ch*, retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://www.stiftung-mercator.ch/de/aktuelles/schweizerisches-zentrum-fuer-islam-und-gesellschaft-rueckblick-und-ausblick/>.

75. SZIG, “Weiterbildung – Workshops,” *unifi.ch*, retrieved January 8, 2018, from <https://www3.unifi.ch/szig/de/weiterbildung/muslimische-organisationen/workshops.html>.

76. Uni Bern, Theologische Fakultät, “CAS Religious Care in Migration Contexts,” *unibe.ch*, retrieved January 9, 2018, from [http://www.theol.unibe.ch/weiterbildung/cas\\_religious\\_care\\_in\\_migration\\_contexts/index\\_ger.html](http://www.theol.unibe.ch/weiterbildung/cas_religious_care_in_migration_contexts/index_ger.html).

77. Sophie Davaris et Pierre Ruetschi, “L’Université donnera des cours aux imams,” *La Tribune de Genève* (September 18, 2017) retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.tdg.ch/geneve/actu-genevoise/universite-donnera-cours-imams/story/14945657>. SDA, “Universität Genf bietet Kurse für Imame an,” *fids.ch* (September 26, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018, from <http://www.fids.ch/?p=2657>.

78. Tangram 40, Bulletin der EKR December 2017, Muslimfeindlichkeit: Gesellschaft, Medien und Politik, 109.

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This feeling of unnatural imposition of social forms, which are devastating in their prejudices, is detrimental, not only for Muslims, but for the society as a whole. Putting one part of society on the legal margins by denying its fundamental rights and not giving its members the opportunity to express themselves freely lacks legal fairness. To be regularly addressed through the lens of accusation is very limiting. These “less valuable people,” Muslims, certainly contribute to the country they live in - although this contribution is not of interest to the media as it does not make the headlines.

- The current statistics structure on discrimination against Muslims should be thought through anew. The reporting of incidents should be easier for the victims. The new FIOS contact structure for reporting and counselling should act as a mediator between the Muslim organizations, the existing Swiss NGOs, and the official structures.
- Courses, seminars and conferences for inter-religious dialogue and the fight against Islamophobia must be reinforced. Islamic centres should serve as hosts for such events, in order to break the climate of mistrust and prejudice.
- Muslim organizations must engage more and take greater responsibility in local communities. To counter Islamophobic groups, they have to bring people together at the local community level and promote more dialogue and exchange.
- Empowerment of women within Muslim organizations needs to be reinforced, and their inclusion in the public debate needs to be eased. Muslim women need to engage more to defend both their religious and gender rights.
- The social engagement of Muslims in local communities and their participation in existing political parties is needed to contribute to the social debates and the decision-making process.
- Special awareness and educational actions to ease the inclusion and social integration of people with a migration background should be developed through joint work with Muslim organizations.

## Chronology

- **10.01.2017:** The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that schools are allowed to oblige young Muslim girls to participate in mixed swimming lessons.
- **17.01.2017:** Government Councillor Jacqueline Fehr put together a working group to define the conditions for Islamic pastors; the Reformed Church, the Catholic Church, the VIOZ and the Department of Justice and Home Affairs of the Canton of Zurich are represented.

- **20.03.2017:** Two umbrella organizations of Albanian Muslims filed a charter, committing to the rule of law.<sup>79</sup>
- **23.03.2017:** The Canton of Aargau created a school guide for easier handling of the religious challenges in schools.
- **17.05.2017:** The Bosnian *Grossmufti* Husein Kavazović signed a joint charter with the president of the Swiss Federation of Protestant Churches. In it, the Bosnian Muslims committed to the rule of law and equality based on the Swiss model.<sup>80</sup>
- **15.06.2017:** Switzerland's parliament adopted a motion that proposes halting the import the meat of animals that have been slaughtered in alleged inhumane ways.
- **23.08.2017:** The Federal Council welcomes pastoral activities for Muslim army members.
- **11.09.2017:** The symposium “Muslim Hostility: Society, Media and Politics” of the Swiss Federal Commission against Racism (ECR), the Swiss Center for Islam and Society of the University of Freiburg (SZIG), and the Centre for Religious Research of the University of Lucerne (ZRF) is held.
- **19.09.2017:** SVP Motion 17.3681 “Stop the Expansion of Radical Islam in Switzerland!” is submitted.
- **26.09.2017:** The National Council accepts the Motion Quadri Lorenzo 16.3330: “Islamic Places of Worship. Prohibition of Foreign Financing and Disclosure.”
- **29.09.2017:** Addor Jean-Luc Parliamentary Initiative 17.485: “No Muslim Chaplains in the Swiss Army”.
- **14.10.2017:** Vandal acts on the Muslim burial ground of a Lausanne cemetery.
- **18.10.2017:** More than 500 people demonstrate against Islamophobia in Lausanne.
- **28.10.2017:** Catalogue of demands in relation to “radical Islam” presented at the delegates’ meeting of the SVP.
- **November 2017:** Two hate attacks perpetuated on the construction grounds of a mosque in Grenchen (SO).
- **08.12.2017:** Jacqueline Fehr presented guidelines intended to define the relationship between state and religious communities.
- **15.12.2017:** The Valais cantonal parliament declared invalid a popular SVP initiative, stipulating that children cannot wear the headscarf in schools.
- **20.12.2017:** The Federal Council rejected the popular initiative “Yes to a Ban on Full Facial Coverings.”

79. Daniel Fuchs, “Bekanntnis zum Rechtsstaat: Bund weiss seit Monaten von Muslim-Charta,” *aargauerzeitung.ch*, (March 23, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.aargauerzeitung.ch/schweiz/bekanntnis-zum-rechtsstaat-bund-weiss-seit-monaten-von-muslim-charta-131144029>,

80. SRF2, “Bosnische Muslime bekennen sich zu Schweizer Werten,” *srf.ch*, (May 17, 2017), retrieved January 9, 2018, from <https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/kultur-kompakt/bosnische-muslime-bekennen-sich-zu-schweizer-werten>.



ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
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## Executive Summary

The year 2017 was challenging for the United Kingdom. The country continued to live under the shadow of the June 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union, with a notable strengthening of nationalist-nativist narratives that feed hostility against all minority groups. This was also a year with an unusually large number of deadly terrorist incidents and a significant spike in hate crimes both off- and online. The overall figure for reported hate crime cases increased by nearly 29% nationally to just over 80,000; but the increase in religiously aggravated hate crime reached 35%, the overwhelming majority of which relates to anti-Muslim instances, with Islamophobic attacks rising by 40% in Greater London. The number of attacks on Muslim places of worship climbed to 110 from 47 in the previous year.

The publication of the new report on Islamophobia by the Runnymede Trust, twenty years after its landmark first report in 1997, offered an opportunity and space for taking stock. Calling for Islamophobia to be defined officially as “anti-Muslim racism”, as this report has also done in the past, the report also noted that increased public awareness has not reversed the intensification, institutionalisation, and normalisation of Islamophobia in contemporary British society.

Contrary to what PM Theresa May said in the wake of the attack on Finsbury Park Mosque in June, Islamophobia should not be restricted to a discussion of extremism. In employment (recent data showed significant distortions caused by discrimination from recruitment to workplace); in education (where the government watchdog has been accused of singling out Muslims by authorising inspectors to interview pupils who go to school wearing the hijab); in counter-terrorism (with two-thirds of all referrals involving ‘concerns over Islamic terrorism’); and in media (where sectors of the mainstream press continue to reproduce Islamophobia and certain tabloid titles were accused of systematically inciting anti-Muslim hatred in 2017); Islamophobia has become embedded in mainstream narratives and institutions. Meanwhile, the government’s counter-terrorism Prevent strategy continues to affect disproportionately Muslim communities, extending into places of employment, education, and public service.

In a year also dominated by snap parliamentary elections, some party and cross-party initiatives to combat Islamophobia offered a welcome respite from an otherwise challenging environment. A similar positive message has been offered by the tireless work of NGOs that continue to fight against Islamophobic narratives, lead research projects, and provide support for victims and vulnerable targets of anti-Muslim hate crime.

Nevertheless, Islamophobia continues to cast a grave shadow on Muslims and their communities in the UK. Framing the conversation on the basis of security versus extremism, ‘British values’ and ‘muscular liberalism’ versus immigration, free-

dom versus human rights, has not yielded sufficient space for Muslim counter-narratives that could also effectively challenge and then alter assumptions and stereotypes about them, their communities, and their faith. Lack of progress in terms of defining either extremism in general or Islamophobia in particular continues to undermine initiatives to tackle it effectively.

## Introduction

During a TV interview in January 2018, the US president Donald J Trump was asked whether he regretted having retweeted anti-Muslim material from the Twitter account of Jayda Fransen, the deputy leader of the far-right Islamophobic group Britain First, two months earlier. (Fig. 1) While he seemed willing to offer an apology of sorts, claiming that he knew “nothing about Britain First”, he repeated his belief that ‘Islamic terror’ remains a threat to the UK and the world: “Radical Islamic terror, whether you like talking about it or not, you look at what’s going on in the U.K., you look at what’s going on all over the world. ... It was done because I am a big believer in fighting radical Islamic terror.”<sup>1</sup>

Since announcing his candidacy for US president back in 2015, Trump had never resisted the temptation to talk in apocalyptic terms about a ‘massive Muslim problem’ in the UK and accuse British authorities of trying to disguise the extent of the alleged threat. Following the terrorist attack in London Bridge and the Borough Market attack in early



Figure 1: The Islamophobic video originally posted by the deputy leader of Britain First, Jayda Fransen, here retweeted by President Trump.<sup>2</sup>

June, Trump had openly criticised the city’s first Muslim mayor, Sadiq Khan, for what he saw as his failure to recognise the severity of the threat. In October 2017, in the aftermath of the publication of the official crime statistics in England and Wales,<sup>3</sup> he intervened publicly by linking the spike in crime with the “spread of radical Islamic

1. Griffiths, James. “Trump Didn’t Know Far-Right Group Were ‘Horrible Racists’.” CNN, 26 Jan. 2018, edition. [cnn.com/2018/01/26/politics/trump-britain-first-apology-intl/index.html](http://cnn.com/2018/01/26/politics/trump-britain-first-apology-intl/index.html)

2. Source: <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/brendan-cox-donald-trump-ashamed-sharing-tweets-britain-first-deputy-leader/>

3. “Recorded Crime up 13% in England and Wales.” BBC News, 19 Oct. 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41677046](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41677046).

terror”.<sup>4</sup> After he received a rare rebuke from the British PM, Theresa May, for reposting the material from Britain First, the US president hit back by advising her to deal with the “destructive radical Islamic Terrorism that is taking place within the United Kingdom” rather than focusing on him.<sup>5</sup>

The year had started with a promising judicial development in the fight against far-right extremism - the proscription of the neo-Nazi hate group National Action, the first ever in the UK to face such a ban. In September, the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, extended the ban to two related neo-Nazi organisations (NS131 and Scottish Dawn) as aliases of National Action.<sup>6</sup> Since November 2016 at least, there have also been official calls and a number of petitions for the proscription of Britain First because of its extremist attitude to Islam and immigrants.<sup>7</sup> Stifled by Britain’s first-past-the-post electoral system that makes it very hard for small parties to translate votes into parliamentary representation, the British Islamophobia far right continues to lurk in the shadowy fringes of the political system.<sup>8</sup> A large influx of new members into UKIP just ahead of yet another leadership election in July prompted fears that extreme Islamophobes were preparing a takeover led by the leadership candidate Anne Marie Waters. Waters, who had publicly described Islam as “an expansionist, political, totalitarian and supremacist faith, commanded to world domination”,<sup>9</sup> eventually lost to Henry Bolton; but the fight for the ideological soul of UKIP and the populist right in Britain is far from over.

Meanwhile, the Runnymede Trust published a new report of the state of Islamophobia in the country, marking the twentieth anniversary of the publication of its first landmark report back in 1997. The new report noted that, while awareness of the discrimination against Muslims has grown, the net result has been an “intensification and banalisation of Islamophobic sentiment, policy and practice in Britain” during the intervening years between the two reports.<sup>10</sup> Although electoral

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4. “Trump Attributes Spike in UK Crime to ‘Radical Islamic Terror’.” POLITICO, 20 Oct. 2017, [www.politico.eu/article/trump-attributes-spike-in-uk-crime-to-radical-islamic-terror/](http://www.politico.eu/article/trump-attributes-spike-in-uk-crime-to-radical-islamic-terror/).

5. Smith, David. “Donald Trump Attacks Theresa May over Her Criticism of His Far-Right Retweets.” The Guardian, 9 Feb. 2018, [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/29/donald-trump-theresa-may-tweet-uk-us](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/29/donald-trump-theresa-may-tweet-uk-us).

6. “Further Extreme Right-Wing Groups Banned in the UK”, [www.gov.uk/government/news/further-extreme-right-wing-groups-banned-in-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-extreme-right-wing-groups-banned-in-the-uk); Travis, Alan. “Rudd Extends Ban to Two National Action-Related Neo-Nazi Groups.” The Guardian, 28 Sept. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/28/amber-rudd-neo-nazi-ban-national-action-scottish-dawn-ns131](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/28/amber-rudd-neo-nazi-ban-national-action-scottish-dawn-ns131).

7. “MP Calls for Britain First to Be Listed as a ‘Terrorist Organisation’ Following the Murder of Jo Cox.” Independent, 25 Nov. 2016, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britain-first-terrorist-organisation-listed-lousie-haigh-jo-cox-thomas-mair-labour-mp-a7439036.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britain-first-terrorist-organisation-listed-lousie-haigh-jo-cox-thomas-mair-labour-mp-a7439036.html).

8. “After Failing to Take over UKIP, the Far Right Is at Bay”. The Economist, 5 Oct. 2017. <https://www.economist.com/news/britain/21730020-britains-first-past-post-electoral-system-stifles-radical-parties-all-colours-after>

9. Walker, Peter. “Large Influx of New Ukip Members Prompts Fears of Far-Right Takeover.” The Guardian, 27 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jul/02/ukip-members-anne-marie-waters-anti-islam-far-right-fears](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jul/02/ukip-members-anne-marie-waters-anti-islam-far-right-fears).

10. “Islamophobia Has Grown Stronger Across Britain, Report Says”. Hope not Hate, 14 Nov. 2017, <http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2017/11/14/islamophobia-grown-stronger-across-britain-report-says/>.

support for extremist and populist anti-Islam parties in the UK has remained low - and may even have fallen recently in voting percentage terms after UKIP's poor showing in the June elections,<sup>11</sup> Islamophobia has continued to make inroads into the political and social mainstream.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

2017 turned out to be an election year after the decision of PM Theresa May to go to the polls and seek a fresh mandate that would strengthen her government's position in the Brexit negotiations. The election of 8 June resulted in a hung parliament and the formation of a new Conservative-led government supported by the small Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland.

But the year was largely overshadowed by a series of terrorist incidents with significant casualties. On 22 March, four civilians were killed and a further 49 were injured when a man drove his car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge, before crashing into the perimeter fence of the Palace of Westminster. He then attempted to enter the grounds of the Palace of Westminster, where he attacked a police officer who tried to stop him and was shot dead.

Two months later, on 22 May, a suicide bomb attack took place in the foyer of the Manchester Arena at the end of an Ariana Grande concert. In what was the worst terrorist attack in the UK since the London bombings of 7 July 2005, 22 people were killed and about 250 were injured, the majority teenagers attending the music concert.

Then on 3 June another terrorist incident occurred in the London Bridge area of central London, leaving behind eight people dead and at least 48 injured. Three terrorists drove a van at high speed across London Bridge, crashing into pedestrians

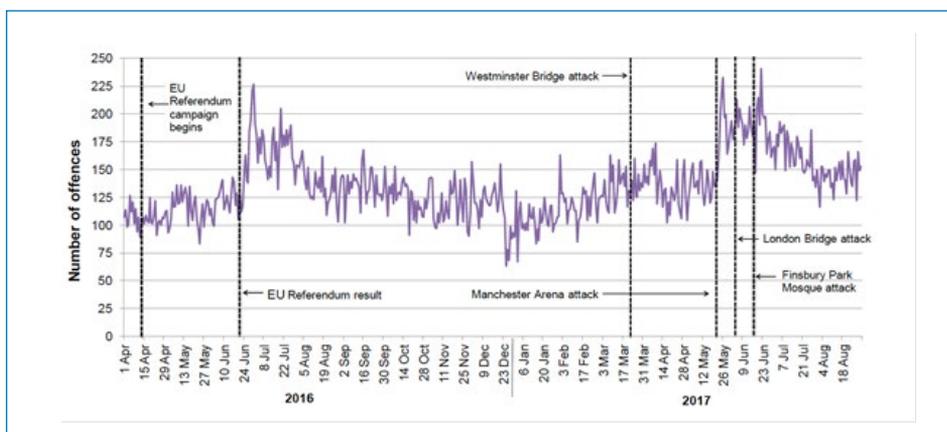


Figure 2: Number of racially or religiously aggravated crimes recorded by police, 2016/17.<sup>12</sup>

11. "Paul Nuttall Defeated as Ukip Are Decimated in 2017 General Election." The Telegraph, 8 June 2017, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/08/ukip-heading-huge-loss-vote-share-2017-general-election/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/08/ukip-heading-huge-loss-vote-share-2017-general-election/).

12. Source: O'Neill, Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17, p. 17

on a busy Saturday night. They then went on a shooting rampage in the nearby Borough Market, where they attacked people with knives.<sup>13</sup>

A significant spike in recorded racially and religiously aggravated hate crime in the wake of each of the three incidents was recorded.<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 2) This trend culminated in another terrorist incident involving a man who drove a vehicle into people who had just finished their evening prayer at a mosque in Finsbury Park, north London. The attack left one dead and 10 more injured. After the attack, the driver, who was reportedly quoted saying “I want to kill all Muslims” and “This is for London Bridge”, was protected from the anger of the public by the mosque’s imam until the police arrived on the scene and arrested him.<sup>15</sup>

On 15 September, a homemade bomb was detonated inside a train at Parsons Green Underground station, west London.<sup>16</sup> While there were no deaths as a result of the explosion, ten passengers suffered injuries. In the aftermath of the attack, the British government raised the threat level for the country to its highest (‘red’) point for the following two days.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, on 23 June, a man drove his van at a curry house owner in Harrow, north-west London. Just before his attack he had given a Nazi salute and shouted “white power”. The driver turned out to be a Britain First supporter and told a police officer that he intended to “kill a Muslim”.<sup>18</sup> The attack took place on the first anniversary of the Brexit vote.

Such an atmosphere of political fluidity, on the one hand, and heightened tension and perceived insecurity, on the other, has nurtured dominant narratives of securitisation in an array of fields, from integration and immigration to political/social participation and adherence to ‘British values’.<sup>19</sup> In this particular respect, 2017 proved a particular tough year for making political interventions and reclaiming the conversation.

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13. “This is Everything We Know about the London Attacks So Far.” Independent. 5 June 2017. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/london-attack-timeline-what-happened-when-borough-market-stabbing-bridge-white-van-police-a7772876.html>.

14. O’Neill, Aoife. Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17. Statistical Bulletin, London: Home Office, [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf).

15. “Imam ‘Protected Van Driver’ Involved in Suspected Terror Attack on Muslims Until Police Arrived.” Independent, 19 June 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/finsbury-park-mosque-attack-latest-imam-protected-van-driver-crash-terror-dead-pedestrians-a7796626.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/finsbury-park-mosque-attack-latest-imam-protected-van-driver-crash-terror-dead-pedestrians-a7796626.html).

16. Metropolitan Police. “UPDATE: Third Arrest Made in Parsons Green Tube Attack Investigation”, [news.met.police.uk/news/update-arrest-made-re-parsons-green-attack-260334](http://news.met.police.uk/news/update-arrest-made-re-parsons-green-attack-260334).

17. “UK Terror Threat Increased to Critical.” BBC News, 15 Sept. 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41288525](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41288525).

18. Metropolitan Police. “Man Convicted After Telling Police He Was Going to ‘Kill a Muslim’”, [news.met.police.uk/news/man-convicted-after-telling-police-he-was-going-to-kill-a-muslim-283270](http://news.met.police.uk/news/man-convicted-after-telling-police-he-was-going-to-kill-a-muslim-283270).

19. Merali, Arzu. “Counter-Islamophobia Kit. Workstream 1: Dominant Islamophobic Narratives UK. Working Paper 10 – July 2017”, pp. 15-19, 37-40, <https://cik.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/36/2017/07/2017.07.31-WS1-UK-Final-with-Cover.pdf>

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The 2017 election campaign was affected significantly by the terrorist attacks in London and Manchester. Predictably it was UKIP that made the most out of the security and identity issues during the election campaign, seizing every discursive opportunity to whip up anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant feeling. In late May, and in the shadow of the Manchester terrorist attack, the (then) party leader Paul Nuttall described “radical Islam” as “a cancer that needs to be cut out”, while the party’s deputy chairwoman, Suzanne Evans, claimed that mainstream politicians who had voted in parliament to restrict immigration controls, including the PM, bore some responsibility for the Manchester attack.<sup>20</sup> The UKIP election platform contained an ‘Integration Agenda’, launched on 24 April, whose every single stipulation targeted explicitly or implicitly Muslims by reproducing a series of stereotypical narratives. (Fig. 3) When asked, Nuttall responded that “this isn’t an attack specifically on Muslims, it’s all about integration” and security concerns.<sup>21</sup> The manifesto promised to push a public ban on “face coverings” and proscribe sharia courts in the UK. It also included a series of measures with a distinct anti-Muslim character, such as “moratorium on any new Islamic state schools”<sup>22</sup> and immediate closure of those schools that “taught or imposed ... Islamist ideology on the children”; and calls for girls at risk of female genital mutilation to face medical checks on a yearly basis.<sup>23</sup>

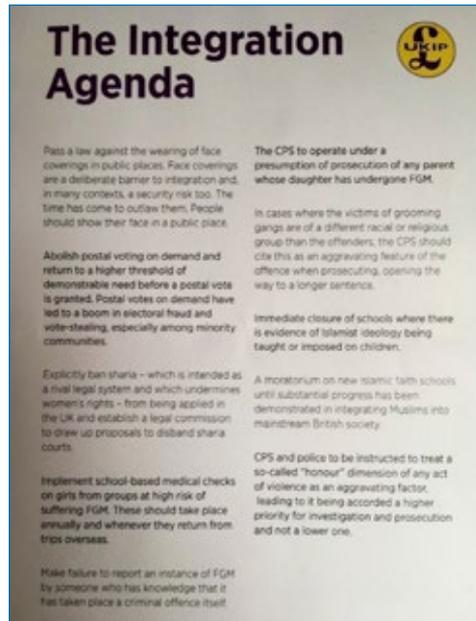


Figure 3: The ‘Integration Agenda’ launched by UKIP’ (24 April 2017) as part of the party’s manifesto for the 2017 parliamentary elections.<sup>24</sup>

20. “UKIP Leader: Terrorists ‘Will Not Win’.” BBC News, 25 May 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/40039616](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/40039616).

21. Elgot, Jessica. “Ukip to Campaign to Ban Burqa and Sharia Courts, Says Paul Nuttall.” *The Guardian*, 27 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/23/ukip-to-campaign-to-ban-burka-and-sharia-courts-says-paul-nuttall](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/apr/23/ukip-to-campaign-to-ban-burka-and-sharia-courts-says-paul-nuttall).

22. “UKIP is Taking an Anti-Islam Turn Ahead of the British General Election.” *Newsweek*, [www.newsweek.com/british-general-election-ukip-islam-integration-policies-burqa-ban-fgm-islamic-588575](http://www.newsweek.com/british-general-election-ukip-islam-integration-policies-burqa-ban-fgm-islamic-588575).

23. “Ukip Accused of ‘Full Throttled’ Islamophobia After Pledging to Ban the Veil.” *HuffPost UK*, 24 Apr. 2017, [www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/ukip-muslim-face-veil\\_uk\\_58fdfd2ae4b018a9ce5cdd3b](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/ukip-muslim-face-veil_uk_58fdfd2ae4b018a9ce5cdd3b).

24. Source: [http://www.ukip.org/our\\_integration\\_agenda\\_aims\\_to\\_bring\\_communities\\_together](http://www.ukip.org/our_integration_agenda_aims_to_bring_communities_together)

It is encouraging that during the election campaign the UK's three main political parties (Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats) treaded a more careful path between support for equality and diversity, on the one hand, and concerns about security and immigration, on the other.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the Conservative Party was singled out for criticism for three further reasons. First, the party's decision to impose a centrally selected candidate in non-target (i.e. safe) parliamentary seats resulted in a situation where the overall figure of Conservative parliamentary candidates with a Muslim background was halved in comparison to the 2015 election, with very few of them having realistic chances of being elected.<sup>26</sup> The result was that only three Conservative MPs with a Muslim background were elected in the 2017 parliament, at a time where the overall figure increased to a record 15 (with 12 Labour MPs).<sup>27</sup>

Second, the Conservative Party's decision to reselect Zac Goldsmith for the south-west London constituency of Richmond Park<sup>28</sup> was widely criticised in the light of the candidate's record of campaigning for the post of the Mayor of London in 2016.<sup>29</sup> Goldsmith had been largely discredited because his mayoral campaign had attempted to associate his opponent, the current mayor Sadiq Khan, with extremists and terrorism.<sup>30</sup>

The third reason that exposed the Conservative Party to criticism for its attitude to communities with a Muslim background concerned its election pledge to retain and extend the Prevent strand of the government's counter-terrorism strategy - a strand that has been repeatedly singled out for criticism for its effect on Muslim communities in the past.<sup>31</sup> According to the recently published 2015-16 figures for Prevent referrals, a person with a Muslim background was

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25. MCB (Muslim Council of Britain). "2017 Elections: Manifesto Comparison", [www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/manifestocomparison-mcb-a3.pdf](http://www.mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/manifestocomparison-mcb-a3.pdf)

26. "The Conservative Party: Slowly Turning into a Muslim-Free Zone." Middle East Eye, [www.middleeasteye.net/columns/election-tories-islamophobia-mps-corbyn-foreign-policy-2052171586](http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/election-tories-islamophobia-mps-corbyn-foreign-policy-2052171586).

27. Cracknell, Richard. "Diversity in the 2017 Parliament". House of Commons Library, 13 June 2017, <https://secondreading.parliament.uk/parliament-and-elections/parliament/diversity-in-the-2017-parliament/>.

28. "Goldsmith to Run as Tory MP Despite No Change to Policy He Resigned over." The Independent, 26 Apr. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/zac-goldsmith-general-election-mp-seat-richmond-park-selection-latest-a7704446.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/zac-goldsmith-general-election-mp-seat-richmond-park-selection-latest-a7704446.html).

29. Merali, Arzu. "Islamophobia in the United Kingdom. National Report 2016". In: European Islamophobia Report 2016, ed. By Enes Bayrakli, Farid Hafez (Ankara, Istanbul, Washington DC: SETA), p. 593, <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/UNITEDKINGDOM.pdf>

30. MEND. Muslim Manifesto 2017, p.12, [https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MEND-Muslim-Manifesto-2017\\_FINAL\\_lowres.pdf](https://mend.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/MEND-Muslim-Manifesto-2017_FINAL_lowres.pdf)

31. Abbas, Tahir, and Imran Awan. "Limits of UK Counterterrorism Policy and its Implications for Islamophobia and Far Right Extremism." *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2015; O'Toole, Therese, et al. "Governing through Prevent? Regulation and Contested Practice in State-Muslim Engagement." *Sociology*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2015, pp. 160-177.

40 times more likely to be referred than others.<sup>32</sup> While both Labour and Liberal Democrats pledged in their manifestos to “review”<sup>33</sup> or “scrap”<sup>34</sup> the Prevent programme as ineffective and potentially damaging to minority communities, the Conservatives fought the election on a promise to extend it through a new Commission for Counter Extremism “to fight extremism in all its forms”<sup>35</sup> - a plan that was announced in the wake of the Manchester attack. Launching the new Commission without a robust definition of what extremism means,<sup>36</sup> however, was criticised by the former independent reviewer of terrorism legislation, David Anderson QC.<sup>37</sup> When the government announced in January 2018 that the new body would be headed by Sara Khan, a controversial figure known for her support for the government’s pursuit of the Prevent agenda, widespread criticism focused on the appointee’s links with the Home Office that raised serious doubts about the independence and impartiality of the new Commission.<sup>38</sup>

The Labour Party was not immune to accusations of Islamophobia either. During the election campaign, a constituency candidate was forced to withdraw after a report suggested that he sent out tweets calling for the eradication of Islam from Europe.<sup>39</sup> In August, Sarah Champion, the Labour MP for Rotherham, resigned from the shadow cabinet after she had used her column in *The Sun* newspaper to argue that “British Pakistani men ARE raping and exploiting white girls... and it’s time we faced up to it”.<sup>40</sup> (Fig. 4)

32. Versi, Miqdaad. “The Latest Prevent Figures Show Why the Strategy Needs an Independent Review | Miqdaad Versi.” *The Guardian*, 10 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/10/prevent-strategy-statistics-independent-review-home-office-muslims](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/10/prevent-strategy-statistics-independent-review-home-office-muslims).

33. “The Labour Party Manifesto 2017: For the Many, Not the Few”, p. 77, <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/labour-manifesto-2017.pdf>

34. “Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2017: Change Britain’s Future”, p. 76, <https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/themes/5909d4366ad575794c000000/attachments/original/1495020157/Manifesto-Final.pdf?1495020157>. The Green Party also joined in the call for the complete review of the programme, with the party’s co-leader Caroline Lucas branding it as “toxic for the Muslim communities in the UK” – see “Caroline Lucas Calls for Review of ‘Toxic’ Prevent Strategy”. *BBC News*, 28 May 2017. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-40078431](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-2017-40078431)

35. Home Office. “Home Office Advertises for Extremism Commissioner”, 17 Sep. 2017, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-advertises-for-extremism-commissioner>

36. Travis, Alan. “Paralysis at the Heart of UK Counter-Extremism Policy.” *The Guardian*, 24 Jan. 2018, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/17/paralysis-at-the-heart-of-uk-counter-extremism-policy](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/17/paralysis-at-the-heart-of-uk-counter-extremism-policy).

37. “Extremism ‘Difficult to Legally Define’, Says Ex-UK Terrorism Watchdog.” *Middle East Eye*, [www.middleeast-eye.net/news/former-uk-terror-reviewer-calls-government-define-extremism-762934757](http://www.middleeast-eye.net/news/former-uk-terror-reviewer-calls-government-define-extremism-762934757)

38. “Decision to Hire Sara Khan as the Head of New Counter-Extremism Body Widely Criticised.” *The Independent*, 25 Jan. 2018, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/sara-khan-extremism-appointment-government-criticism-a8177006.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/sara-khan-extremism-appointment-government-criticism-a8177006.html).

39. “Labour to Investigate Islamophobic Tweets from Candidate.” *Politico*, 2 May 2017, [www.politico.eu/article/labour-to-investigate-islamophobic-tweets-from-candidate/](http://www.politico.eu/article/labour-to-investigate-islamophobic-tweets-from-candidate/).

40. Champion, Sarah. “Britain Has a Problem with British Pakistani Men Exploiting White Girls.” *The Sun*, 18 Aug. 2017, [wwwthesun.co.uk/news/4218648/british-pakistani-men-rape-exploiting-white-girls/](http://wwwthesun.co.uk/news/4218648/british-pakistani-men-rape-exploiting-white-girls/).



Figure 4: The Islamophobic article written by Labour MP Sarah Champion<sup>41</sup>

overt discrimination, in parts of the justice system”. The report found that BAME groups were far more likely to be convicted and serve prison sentences than white women and men.<sup>44</sup> It also noted with alarm that the number of Muslims in prison rose by more than 50% in the last decade, with Muslim males now making 15% of the male prison population. Only a small part of this increase is attributable to convictions on the basis of the anti-terrorist legislation. Instead, Dr Zubaida Haque, researcher for the Runnymede Trust, has argued that the increase in the figure is most likely the result of racial profiling and the persistence of cultural stereotypes about Muslims in British society.<sup>45</sup> Particular attention has been drawn to the also significant increase of the percentage of women with a Muslim background in custody (6.3% of total female prisoners in 2017 as opposed to 5.2% in 2014).<sup>46</sup>

More recently, the Scottish Labour Party suspended the leader of its South Lanarkshire Council group after Anas Sarwar, member of the Scottish Parliament and candidate for the leadership of the Scottish Labour Party in 2017, accused him of saying to him during the campaign that “Scotland wouldn’t vote for a brown Muslim Paki”.<sup>42</sup>

### Justice System

September saw the publication of the report into the criminal justice system headed by the Labour Party MP David Lammy.<sup>43</sup> The report’s main conclusion was that black and minority ethnic (BAME) individuals “still face bias, including

41. Source: The Sun (11 August 2017)

42. “Labour Councillor Suspended in Sarwar Row.” BBC News, 30 Jan. 2018, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-42880755](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-42880755).

43. The Lammy Review. “An Independent Review into the Treatment of, and Outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System”, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf)

44. “David Lammy’s Report: Minorities More Likely to Go to Prison Than White Defendants | LabourList.” LabourList, 16 Nov. 2016, [labourlist.org/2016/11/david-lammys-report-minorities-more-likely-to-go-to-prison-than-white-defendants/](http://labourlist.org/2016/11/david-lammys-report-minorities-more-likely-to-go-to-prison-than-white-defendants/).

45. “The Muslim Prison Population Has Surged, Here’s Why the ‘Stereotypes and Myths’ Are Wrong.” HuffPost UK, 8 Sept. 2017, [www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/lammy-review-muslim-prisoners\\_uk\\_59afcaa0e4b0b5e531022f26](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/lammy-review-muslim-prisoners_uk_59afcaa0e4b0b5e531022f26).

46. Gani, Aisha. “Muslim Women in Prisons Face a Unique Combination of Stigma and Discrimination.” BuzzFeed, [www.buzzfeed.com/aishagani/muslim-women-in-prisons-face-a-unique-combination-of-stigma](http://www.buzzfeed.com/aishagani/muslim-women-in-prisons-face-a-unique-combination-of-stigma)

Government statistics about the number of stop-and-searches carried out under Section 43 and 43A of the Terrorism Act 2000 have shown that, while the overall figure has been reduced by two-thirds since 2009/10, people with BAME backgrounds continue to be over-represented in the sample, with 29% of all targets identifying as Asian and 11% as Black/Black British.<sup>47</sup> Still, according to the data captured in the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, the two UK minority groups included in the sample (immigrants and descendants from Pakistan/Bangladesh and from Sub-Saharan Africa) displayed significantly higher than average trust in the legal system and in extent of stops by police over the last five years.<sup>48</sup>

The year ended with a high-profile legal case against the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) for race discrimination. Although the MoJ agreed to implement the recommendations of the Lammy report, it has been criticised for the continuing under-representation of BAME backgrounds in the judiciary. What sets this legal case apart is that it has been brought on by three judges, including Peter Harbert QC who received a formal warning from the ministry after he had publicly criticised as racist the decision to bar the former mayor of the Tower Hamlets borough in east London, Lutfur Rahman, from holding public office for five years.<sup>49</sup>

## Employment

In the field of employment, the year was marked by a ruling from the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in relation to a case - dating back to 2006 - of two female employees from Belgium and France who had been fired for wearing a headscarf to work.<sup>50</sup> The ECJ ruled that employers could enforce bans on the wearing of “any political, philosophical or religious sign” as it did not constitute direct discrimination as long as the ban applied to all workers on the grounds of religious neutrality.<sup>51</sup> The court ruling was widely criticised by faith groups and human rights organisations alike across Europe.<sup>52</sup> The British PM Theresa May also criticised the ruling, stating

47. Home Office. “Operation of Police Powers under the Terrorism Act 2000 and Subsequent Legislation: Arrests, Outcomes, and Stop and Search, Great Britain, Quarterly Update to June 2017. Statistical Bulletin 14/17”, Sep. 2017, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/644558/police-powers-terrorism-jun2017-hosb1417.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644558/police-powers-terrorism-jun2017-hosb1417.pdf)

48. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. “EU-MIDIS II: European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey”, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2015/eu-midis-ii-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey>

49. Taylor, Diane, “Judge Sues Ministry of Justice for Race Discrimination”. The Guardian, 14 Mar. 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/14/judge-peter-herbert-suing-ministry-justice-race-discrimination>; Taylor, Diane. “Three Judges Sue Ministry of Justice for Race Discrimination”. The Guardian, 19 Dec. 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/law/2017/dec/19/three-judges-sue-ministry-of-justice-for-race-discrimination>

50. “Case C-157/15 (CJEU): European Court of Justice Keeps the Door to Religious Discrimination in the Private Workplace Opened. The European Court of Human Rights Could Close It”, 27 Mar. 2017, <https://strasbourgobservers.com/2017/03/27/european-court-of-justice-keeps-the-door-to-religious-discrimination-in-the-private-workplace-opened-the-european-court-of-human-rights-could-close-it/>

51. “EU Top Court OKs Workplace Headscarf Ban.” Politico, 15 Mar. 2017, [www.politico.eu/article/eu-top-court-oks-workplace-headscarf-ban](http://www.politico.eu/article/eu-top-court-oks-workplace-headscarf-ban).

52. “Amnesty Warns ECJ Headscarf Ban Ruling ‘Panders to Prejudice?’ Euractiv.com, 15 Mar. 2017, [www.euractiv.com/section/freedom-of-thought/news/amnesty-warns-ecj-headscarf-ban-ruling-panders-to-prejudice/](http://www.euractiv.com/section/freedom-of-thought/news/amnesty-warns-ecj-headscarf-ban-ruling-panders-to-prejudice/).

that “it is the right of all women to choose how they dress and we don’t intend to legislate on this issue ... it is not for government to tell women what they can or cannot wear and we want to continue that strong tradition of freedom of expression”.<sup>53</sup> Whether the ruling will have a significant effect on UK employment practices or law in relation to religious freedom is yet to be seen.

Muslims continued to experience significant levels of disadvantage in employment. Obstacles occurred at all stages, from the recruitment process to the workplace environment and from career progression to levels of pay. The 2017 UK Race Disparity Audit figures for the labour market showed great disparities between the employment rates of different ethnic groups living in the UK. The percentage of people with Muslim background in employment lagged significantly behind white groups, with the figure for Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities in particular being the lowest among all individuals aged 25-49.<sup>54</sup> A report published by the Social Mobility Commission on the prospects of children of Bangladeshi and Pakistani origins noted that, while they performed strongly in school attainment, they were far less likely to be employed in professional or managerial jobs, largely due to the persistence of discriminatory (conscious and unconscious) attitudes at the workplace.<sup>55</sup> A more recent report by the same body, published in September, highlighted that only 6% of people with Muslim background hold professional jobs (the equivalent figure for the entire population is 10%). A similar gap is observed in relation to employment, with less than 20% of Muslims (as opposed to 34.9% overall) in full-time jobs. Those at the intersection of statuses were even more vulnerable to discrimination:<sup>56</sup> for example, it was noted that women with a Muslim background were suffering double discrimination.<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, the publication of the second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey in the autumn confirmed that, while discrimination on religious ground when seeking employment and in the workplace is lower in the UK than in most of the other 15 EU member states included in the report, a still significant 6-7% of those surveyed acknowledged that they had suffered discrimination. Of those, the report found that 13% made

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53. Jones, Marcus. “Theresa May Questions European Court Religious Symbol Ban”. Premier, 15 Mar. 2017, <https://www.premier.org.uk/News/UK/Theresa-May-questions-European-court-religious-symbol-bans-European-court-religious-symbol-ban>

54. “Labour Disparity Audit - Labour Market.” MEND, 14 Nov. 2017: <https://mend.org.uk/news/race-disparity-audit-labour-market/>

55. “Race Disparity Audit? Labour Market.” Muslim Engagement and Development, 14 Nov. 2017, [mend.org.uk/news/race-disparity-audit-labour-market/](https://mend.org.uk/news/race-disparity-audit-labour-market/).

56. Abubaker, Mahmoud, and Christopher Bagley. “Methodology of Correspondence Testing for Employment Discrimination Involving Ethnic Minority Applications: Dutch and English Case Studies of Muslim Applicants for Employment.” *Social Sciences* 6, no. 4 (2017), 112. doi:10.3390/socsci6040112

57. “She Works | Careers Site for Women.” She Works | Careers Site for Women, 10 Dec. 2017, [www.she-works.co.uk/single-post/2017/12/10/Double-Discrimination-Islamophobia-in-the-Workplace](http://www.she-works.co.uk/single-post/2017/12/10/Double-Discrimination-Islamophobia-in-the-Workplace).

a report or filed a formal complaint based on their experience - a figure that is above average for the sample used in the report.<sup>58</sup>

The report of the Social Mobility Commission also identified a number of more specific factors that affected adversely the prospects of young Muslims in particular: minority ethnic-sounding names, wearing a headscarf for women, stereotyping, as well as harassment at workplace.<sup>59</sup> Research carried out by the Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship of the University of Bristol found that male job candidates with a Muslim background were up to 76% less likely to get a job compared to a white male British candidate of the same age and qualifications. A similar trend was confirmed in a BBC TV programme, in which it was shown that the name 'Adam' was three times more likely to be preferred for the job of religious education teacher than the name 'Mohammed'.<sup>60</sup>

The number of people with a Muslim background in employment has consistently risen in recent years in the UK. However the unemployment rate among the group is currently more than twice as high as that of any other community.<sup>61</sup> Meanwhile, changes to the counter-terrorism legislation introduced in 2015 under Section 26(1) of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act<sup>62</sup> have resulted in an escalation of discriminatory practices against Muslims in the workplace. As the new legislation is based on the concept of targeting a pre-criminal space, the statutory duty of public sector workers in the National Health Service, educational institutions, and government has been accused of bringing discrimination into the workplace and introducing a culture of distrust among colleagues. Although the overwhelming majority of referrals (nine in ten) are rejected or dismissed after a short investigation,<sup>63</sup> this culture of pre-criminal suspicion is magnifying pervasive societal stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. In July, the High Court rejected a test legal challenge brought by Dr Salman Butt against the government's 2015 guidance for implementing the new 'duty to prevent' guidance in higher and further education institutions. In the ruling, the court dismissed the notion that Prevent constituted

58. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. 2017. Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II): Muslims - Selected findings. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, pp. 31-5.

59. "Young Muslims in the UK Face Enormous Social Mobility Barriers", 7 Sep. 2017, [www.gov.uk/government/news/young-muslims-in-the-uk-face-enormous-social-mobility-barriers](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/young-muslims-in-the-uk-face-enormous-social-mobility-barriers).

60. Adesina, Zack. "Adam or Mohamed - Who Gets the Job?" BBC News, 6 Feb. 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-38751307](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-38751307)

61. "The 6 Charts Which Show the Employment Barriers Faced by British Muslims." The Independent, 11 Aug. 2016, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslims-more-likely-to-be-unemployed-than-any-other-social-group-in-the-uk-mps-warn-a7185451.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslims-more-likely-to-be-unemployed-than-any-other-social-group-in-the-uk-mps-warn-a7185451.html); House of Commons. Women and Equalities Committee. "Employment Opportunities for Muslims in the UK. Second Report of Session 2016-17", <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmwomeq/89/89.pdf>

62. Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/26/enacted>

63. "Hundreds Referred to Counter Terror Scheme by NHS, In Short Radio 5 Live." BBC News, [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04gxhvp](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p04gxhvp).

an attack on both free speech in general and Islam in particular.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless the ongoing massive over-referral of people with a Muslim background via the workplace stipulations of the Prevent programme is a distressing reflection of a deeper institutionalised Islamophobic prejudice.<sup>65</sup>

## Education

The shadow of the 2014 ‘Trojan Horse’ investigation into an alleged organised attempt to introduce a “Salafist curriculum” into a number of schools of Birmingham continued to loom over the UK education sector in 2017. The government’s adviser on integration, Dame Louise Casey, claimed that a number of similar initiatives to ‘take over’ schools were still in operation across the country.<sup>66</sup> In March, a dispute between a Catholic school in Birmingham and the city council’s Equality chief, Waseem Zaffar, escalated into a public row that eventually resulted in the councillor’s resignation.<sup>67</sup> At the heart of the dispute was Zaffar’s public reprimand of a local Catholic school that had prevented a four-year-old student from wearing the hijab.<sup>68</sup> The incident prompted another intervention by Dame Louise Casey, who accused the city council of not having “learnt lessons (from the) ‘Trojan Horse’” precedent.<sup>69</sup> In May, the government finally dropped the disciplinary case against the senior leaders of the Park View Trust that was at the heart of the earlier Trojan Horse investigation, reversing an earlier decision to impose lifetime bans on them.

Three years of investigation into ‘Trojan Horse’ have produced no concrete evidence for the alleged ‘conspiracy’ to take over schools.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless this did not stop Nick Timothy, the former chief of staff of the prime minister, from resurrecting the ghost of ‘Trojan Horse’ by penning an inflammatory article published in

64. Rumney, Emma. “British Judge Rejects Legal Challenge to Counter-Terrorism Strategy”. Reuters, 26 July 2017, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-britain-security-extremism/british-judge-rejects-legal-challenge-to-counter-terrorism-strategy-idUKKBN1AB2FR>

65. Elahi, Farah and Omar Khan, eds., *Islamophobia. Still a Challenge for Us All* (London: Runnymede Trust, 2017), pp. 44-5; Qurashi, Fahid. 2018. “The Prevent Strategy and the UK ‘War on Terror’: Embedding Infrastructures of Surveillance in Muslim Communities”. *Palgrave Communications* 4: 1–13.

66. Dominic Kennedy, Investigations Editor. “Birmingham Accused of Going Soft on Extremism.” *The Times & The Sunday Times*, 1 Mar. 2017, [www.thetimes.co.uk/article/birmingham-accused-of-going-soft-on-extremism-t7k3flkw3](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/birmingham-accused-of-going-soft-on-extremism-t7k3flkw3).

67. “School Headscarf Row Councillor Resigns from Birmingham Cabinet.” *BBC News*. 3 Mar. 2017. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-39157116](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-birmingham-39157116)

68. Turner, Camilla. “Catholic School Prompts Uniform Row by Banning Muslim Girl from Wearing a Headscarf.” *The Telegraph*, 23 Jan. 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2017/01/23/catholic-school-prompts-uniform-row-banning-muslim-girl-wearing/>.

69. Elkes, Neil. “Birmingham Has ‘Not Learned Lessons of Trojan Horse’ Warns Government Tsar”. *Birmingham Live*. 2 Mar. 2017. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/birmingham-not-learned-lessons-trojan-12672484>

70. Shackle, Samira. “Trojan Horse: The Real Story Behind the Fake ‘Islamic Plot’ to Take over Schools.” *The Guardian*, 27 Nov. 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/01/trojan-horse-the-real-story-behind-the-fake-islamic-plot-to-take-over-schools>. See also Holmwood, John. “The Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair: A Very British Injustice”. *openDemocracy*, 13 Dec. 2017, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/john-holmwood/birmingham-trojan-horse-affair-very-british-injustice>.

The Telegraph in November.<sup>71</sup> Timothy focused his attack on a panel discussion organised by MEND and titled ‘Trojan Horse: The Facts’, accusing the organisation of “plotting to mislead the local community” and of helping those behind ‘Trojan Horse’ to do the same “all over again, and right under our noses”. The event was eventually cancelled by its organisers but the moral panic stirred up by mainstream media and public figures over the incident exposed once again how divisive the legacy of the ‘Trojan Horse’ investigation continues to be.

In November, Ofsted, the government’s education watchdog, was accused of “reinforcing an anti-Muslim culture” in the wake of its decision to allow inspectors to question girls who wear the hijab in the school.<sup>72</sup> The Ofsted chief, Amanda Spielman, justified the measure as part of a campaign against the “sexualisation of young girls”<sup>73</sup> but this explanation did not stop more than 1,000 faith leaders, teachers, and academics from signing an open letter and protesting the measure publicly, branding it “a kneejerk, discriminatory and institutionally racist response”.<sup>74</sup> (Fig. 5) Ofsted has since sought to reassure its critics that the measure will be introduced sensitively and without any intention to “single out” Muslims.<sup>75</sup> However, as the recent example of the row over a London primary school’s decision to ban younger pupils from wearing the hijab has illustrated, Ofsted and its chief have chosen a far more interventionist course of action that is unlikely to shake off the suspicion that its new policy targets Muslims unduly.<sup>76</sup>



Figure 5: Protest against Ofsted’s recently hardening stance on wearing the hijab in schools.<sup>77</sup>

71. “The Trojan Horse Is Being Dragged Back into Our Schools: It Must Be Stopped.” The Telegraph, 1 Nov. 2017, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/01/trojan-horse-dragged-back-schools-must-stopped/>

72. Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC). “Press Release - UK: OFSTED Condone and Promotes Anti-Muslim Discrimination”, 27 Nov. 2017, <http://www.ihr.org.uk/activities/press-releases/12001-press-release-uk-donald-trump-voted-islamophobe-of-the-year>; and Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND). “Ofsted to Question Muslim Primary School Girls about Wearing Hijab.”, 21 Nov. 2017, <https://mend.org.uk/whats-new/action-alerts/ofsted-announces-plans-quiz-primary-school-girls-wearing-hijab/>.

73. Griffiths, Sian and Iram Ramzan. “School Inspectors to Quiz Girls in Hijabs.” The Times, 19 Nov. 2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/school-inspectors-to-quiz-girls-in-hijabs-3f2hllkqv>.

74. Gani, Aisha. “Over 1,000 Teachers and Academics Want to Know Why School Inspectors Are Asking Kids about Their Hijabs”. BuzzFeed, 29 Nov. 2017, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/aishagani/teachers-and-academics-hijab-ofsted>.

75. “Ofsted to Consult and Publish Guidance on Religious Clothing Policy.” National Secular Society, 30 Nov. 2017, <http://www.secularism.org.uk/news/2017/11/ofsted-to-consult-and-publish-guidance-on-religious-clothing-policy>.

76. Adams, Richard. “Senior Ofsted Official Backs Headteacher over Hijab Ban for Under Eights.” The Guardian, 1 Feb. 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/feb/01/ofsted-chief-backs-headteacher-over-hijab-ban-for-under-eights>.

77. Source: Stand Up to Racism Twitter feed, 12 Dec. 2017, <https://twitter.com/antiracismday>

The impact of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act on the education sector is significant. It is telling that schools and universities produced one-third of the referrals in 2015-16 - by far the largest single referral stream even when compared to the equivalent number referred by the police.<sup>78</sup> The extension of the ‘duty to prevent’ to the education sector has been criticised by Conservative MP Lucy Allan as heavy-handed and “undermining the trust between teachers and pupils”.<sup>79</sup> Meanwhile, a joint research project by Coventry, Durham, and Huddersfield Universities, has revealed that teachers have serious misgivings about using anti-radicalisation measures in the classroom, fearing that it would stigmatise Muslim students and would undermine wider social cohesion efforts.<sup>80</sup> Similar concerns have been expressed by university lecturers who feel increasingly pressurised into a “security regime” that rests on undefined concepts and blurred distinctions.<sup>81</sup> A report published by Just Yorkshire went further, describing the effect of the ‘duty to prevent’ in the higher education sector as “built upon a foundation of Islamophobia and racism”.<sup>82</sup>

## Media

The role of media in inciting Islamophobia and perpetuating stereotypes about Muslims in the UK came under intense scrutiny in 2017. Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, a former Conservative cabinet minister, has accused British newspapers of Islamophobia and hate speech and called for a parliamentary investigation into the issue.<sup>83</sup> Tabloid newspapers have repeatedly become targets of criticism: for example, The Sun described the Finsbury Park terrorist attack in June as a “revenge terror incident” and was notably slow to discuss the incident in the same way that it treated preceding terrorist attacks in London and Manchester.<sup>84</sup> In August, the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, also added his voice to the criticism of the right-wing tabloid press, accusing The Sun of “inciting Islamophobia”.<sup>85</sup> Corbyn was respond-

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78. “Prevent: Anti-terror Referrals Most Likely to Come from Education Sector.” Times Education Supplement, 9 Nov. 2017, <https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/prevent-anti-terror-referrals-most-likely-come-education-sector>.

79. “Lucy Allan MP: Prevent Is Not Working, and It Undermines Trust between Teachers and Pupils.” PoliticsHome.com, 27 Jan. 2017, [www.politicshome.com/news/uk/home-affairs/terrorism/opinion/house-commons/82786/lucy-allan-mp-prevent-not-working-and-it](http://www.politicshome.com/news/uk/home-affairs/terrorism/opinion/house-commons/82786/lucy-allan-mp-prevent-not-working-and-it).

80. Weale, Sally. “Prevent Strategy Stigmatising Muslim Pupils, Say Teachers.” The Guardian, 4 July 2017, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jul/03/prevent-strategy-anti-radicalisation-stigmatising-muslim-pupils-teachers](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jul/03/prevent-strategy-anti-radicalisation-stigmatising-muslim-pupils-teachers).

81. Spiller, Keith, Imran Awan and Andrew Whiting, “What Does Terrorism Look Like?: University Lecturers’ Interpretations of Their Prevent Duties and Tackling Extremism in UK Universities”, *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 11/1(2018):130-50

82. The report, authored by Bano Murtuja and Waqas Tufail is available at <http://rethinkingprevent.org.uk>.

83. Ruddick, Graham. “Sayeeda Warsi Accuses UK Press of Hate Speech and Islamophobia.” The Guardian, 27 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/14/sayeeda-warsi-accuses-uk-press-of-hate-speech-and-islamophobia](http://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/nov/14/sayeeda-warsi-accuses-uk-press-of-hate-speech-and-islamophobia).

84. “Look Who’s Preaching Hate – How the Right-Wing Press Stirs Up Islamophobia.” New Statesman, 19 July 2017, [www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/06/look-who-s-preaching-hate-how-right-wing-press-stirs-islamophobia](http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/06/look-who-s-preaching-hate-how-right-wing-press-stirs-islamophobia).

85. “Corbyn Condemns Sun Journalist for “Inciting Islamophobia” | LabourList.” LabourList, 16 Aug. 2017, [labourlist.org/2017/08/corbyn-condemns-sun-journalist-for-inciting-islamophobia/](http://labourlist.org/2017/08/corbyn-condemns-sun-journalist-for-inciting-islamophobia/).

ing to a protest against the newspaper's columnist Trevor Kavanagh. Kavanagh had used the phrase "Muslim problem" to conclude an article that reproduced nearly every single anti-Muslim stereotype about immigration, terrorism, gender discrimination, sexual violence, and 'political correctness'.<sup>86</sup> The newspaper and columnist have since been referred to the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) by both Tell MAMA and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. However IPSO ruled that the article, while offensive and containing inaccuracies, did not breach its code of conduct.<sup>87</sup>

In the wake of this verdict, IPSO was widely criticised as unfit for purpose and in desperate need of a new, more robust code of practice.<sup>88</sup> It has since been urged to investigate the broader "climate of hostility" against Muslims and not just stories with anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim content in isolation. Cases of misreporting and misrepresenting that had an adverse effect on individuals and communities with a Muslim background have increased in recent years, contributing to the trend of rising hostility to Islam and Muslims.<sup>89</sup> The case of the moral panic stirred up by newspapers involving an adoption case in Tower Hamlets, an east London borough with a sizeable population of people identifying as Muslim, is telling in this respect. The press campaign accused the council of allegedly failing a Christian girl by placing her with Muslim foster carers. In a press campaign that started from an investigation carried out by *The Times* and then run for days in the front page of a number of British newspapers over August, it was alleged that the foster family banned the girl from eating pork, had her crucifix removed, and had made her express a hatred of Christmas and Easter. The council was ordered to carry out an investigation,<sup>90</sup> which has since rejected the allegations made in the original article of *The Times*.<sup>91</sup> (Fig. 6)

Controversy also surrounded a television programme titled *My Week As a Muslim* that was broadcast by Channel 4 in October. The programme featured a British white woman, who had previously expressed anti-Muslim views and had supported calls for a ban on the 'burqa', immersing herself in the life of a Brit-

86. Kavanagh, Trevor. "Now Phil Is Finally out He Must Shut the Door Behind Him and Take Control of Our Laws, Our Trade and Immigration." *The Sun*, 21 Aug. 2017, [www.thesun.co.uk/news/4235655/now-phil-hammond-is-finally-out-he-must-shut-the-door-behind-him-and-take-control-over-our-laws-our-trade-and-especially-immigration/](http://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4235655/now-phil-hammond-is-finally-out-he-must-shut-the-door-behind-him-and-take-control-over-our-laws-our-trade-and-especially-immigration/).

87. "Ruling 17562-17 ElgyvTheSun", <https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=17562-17;> "Sun Cleared over 'Muslim Problem' Article." *BBC News*, 23 Nov. 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42102361](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-42102361).

88. "Board Says Press Watchdog's Code of Conduct is 'Unfit for Purpose' After Sun Complaint Is Rejected." *The Jewish Chronicle*, 23 Nov. 2017, [www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/board-says-press-watchdog-s-code-of-conduct-is-unfit-for-purpose-after-sun-complaint-is-rejected-1.448923](http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/board-says-press-watchdog-s-code-of-conduct-is-unfit-for-purpose-after-sun-complaint-is-rejected-1.448923).

89. Sherwood, Harriet. "Press Publishing 'Consistent Stream' of Inaccurate Stories about Muslims." *The Guardian*, 28 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/19/press-publishing-consistent-stream-of-inaccurate-stories-about-muslims](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/19/press-publishing-consistent-stream-of-inaccurate-stories-about-muslims).

90. "The statement from a Tower Hamlets Council: 'Foster Carer Story Statement'", [www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News\\_events/News/2017/November\\_2017/Foster\\_carer\\_story\\_statement.aspx](http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/News_events/News/2017/November_2017/Foster_carer_story_statement.aspx).

91. "Council Rejects Muslim Foster Concerns." *BBC News*, 1 Nov. 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41833590](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41833590); Cathcart, Brian. "The Times and the Tower Hamlets Foster Care Story: Bad Journalism." *Byline*, [www.byline.com/column/68/article/1932](http://www.byline.com/column/68/article/1932).



<b>Table 2: % Increase in hate crime compared to same week in 2016*</b>	<b>Week 1 (week containing attack)</b>	<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Week 3</b>
Westminster	12%	34%	23%
Manchester	50%	34%	20%
London Bridge	34%	20%	-7%
Finsbury Park	-7%	7%	-28%

Figure 7: Figures showing the correlation between terrorist incidents and increase in reported hate crime.<sup>101</sup>

of the EU.<sup>96</sup> Published figures for the 2016-17 period in England and Wales point to a 29% increase in comparison to the 2015-16 period - and these figures extend only until the immediate aftermath of the first of the terrorist attacks (Westminster Bridge, 22 March 2017).<sup>97</sup> According to Greater Manchester Police, the attack in Manchester in May resulted in a fivefold increase in Islamophobic hate crime in the region.<sup>98</sup> Following the London Bridge attack in early June, figures collated by the Mayor of London's office recorded a similarly exponential rate of increase in hate crime targeting Muslims in the capital.<sup>99</sup> The aggregate figures for reported crime cases in Greater London for the entire year 2017 released by Scotland Yard confirmed the spike with an almost 40% rise (1,678 from 1,204 in the previous year).<sup>100</sup> Overall, the correlation between reporting of terrorist incidents and spikes in recorded hate crime incidents against Muslims has been confirmed by various pieces of research and official figures from the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), released in August. (Fig. 7)

96. "UK: Hate Crime 'at Record Levels' After Brexit Vote." Breaking News, World News & Video from Al Jazeera, 15 Feb. 2017, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/uk-hate-crime-record-levels-brexit-vote-170215123414863.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/uk-hate-crime-record-levels-brexit-vote-170215123414863.html); "Race and Religious Hate Crimes on London's Tube Network Increased 60% Following Brexit Vote." Muslim Engagement and Development, 17 Apr. 2017, [mend.org.uk/news/race-religious-hate-crimes-londons-tube-network-increased-60-following-brexit-vote](http://mend.org.uk/news/race-religious-hate-crimes-londons-tube-network-increased-60-following-brexit-vote); "Brexit Vote Sees Highest Spike in Religious and Racial Hate Crimes Ever Recorded." The Independent, 10 July 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/racist-hate-crimes-surge-to-record-high-after-brexit-vote-new-figures-reveal-a7829551.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/racist-hate-crimes-surge-to-record-high-after-brexit-vote-new-figures-reveal-a7829551.html)

97. O'Neill, Aoife. Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2016/17. Statistical Bulletin, [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652136/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717.pdf).

98. Halliday, Josh. "Islamophobic Attacks in Manchester Surge by 500% After Arena Attack." The Guardian, 27 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/22/islamophobic-attacks-manchester-increase-arena-attack](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/22/islamophobic-attacks-manchester-increase-arena-attack).

99. Marsh, Sarah. "Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes Increase Fivefold Since London Bridge Attacks." The Guardian, 15 Sept. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/07/anti-muslim-hate-crimes-increase-fivefold-since-london-bridge-attacks](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/07/anti-muslim-hate-crimes-increase-fivefold-since-london-bridge-attacks).

100. De Peyer, Robin. "Revealed: Anti-Muslim Hate Crimes in London Soared by 40% in a Year." Evening Standard, 27 Feb. 2018, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/revealed-antimuslim-hate-crimes-in-london-soared-by-40-in-a-year-a3775751.html>

101. Source: National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). "Latest Hate Crime Figures Covering the Period of 2017 UK Terrorist Attacks Published", 10 Aug. 2017, [news.npcc.police.uk/releases/latest-hate-crime-figures-covering-the-period-of-2017-uk-terrorist-attacks-published](http://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/latest-hate-crime-figures-covering-the-period-of-2017-uk-terrorist-attacks-published).

But an extensive report on identity, race, and faith in England published by Hope not Hate (HnH) in the summer has painted a more complex picture of the correlation between terrorism, Islamophobia, and hate crime. HnH researchers found that, while the ‘liberal’ section of society has grown in number and confidence, the size of the ‘hostile’ cohort at the end of the spectrum has remained constant since 2011, with their views hardened in an increasing polarising political environment and with far more opportunities to express them and have them validated.<sup>102</sup> The report also included a poignant caveat - that low(er)-level hate crimes remain largely unreported. This is a somber observation that rests on prior data showing only about one in ten cases of religiously motivated hate crimes as reported to the police.<sup>103</sup> Even with allowances for better reporting in recent years, it is very likely that official statistics on anti-Muslim hate crime continue to underestimate the problem by a wide margin.

According to figures released in November by Tell MAMA for 2016, the majority of anti-Muslim hate crime incidents concern offline intimidation and violence. This category of hate crime involved verbal and non-verbal intimidating behaviour (by far the highest number with 54% of all reported cases), vandalism and threatening behaviour (both at 7%), and physical attack (19%). More than half of the reported incidents took place in public areas, with a smaller number of cases reported in the workplace (9%) and in educational institutions (8%). (Fig. 8)

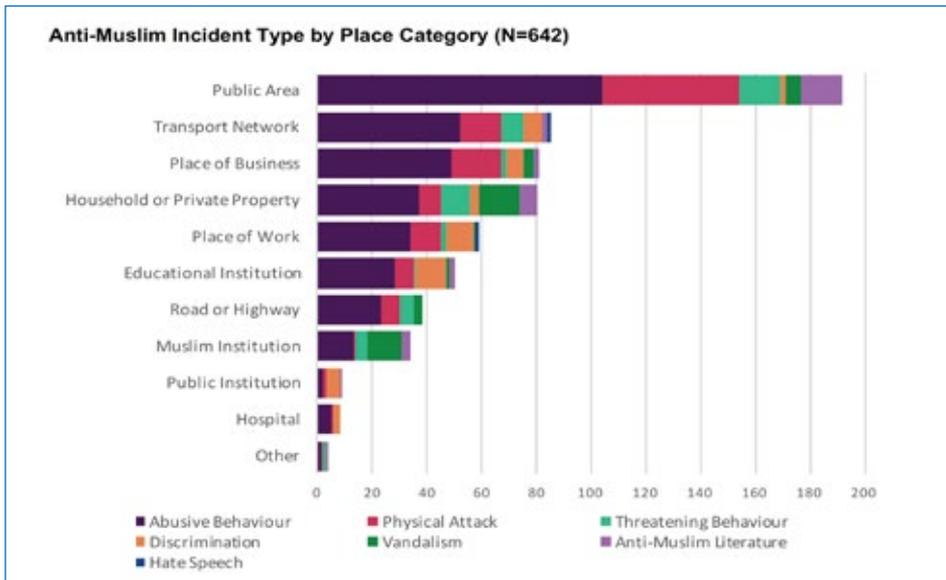


Figure 8: Breakdown of Islamophobic incidents by type, including off- and online cases.<sup>104</sup>

102. Hope not Hate. “Understanding the Spike in Hate Crimes”, 17 Oct. 2017, [www.hopenothate.org.uk/2017/10/17/understanding-spike-hate-crimes/](http://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2017/10/17/understanding-spike-hate-crimes/).

103. Amnesty International. “Tackling Hate Crime in the UK. A Background Briefing Paper, 2017”, p. 6, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/Against-Hate-Briefing-AIUK.pdf>.

104. Source: Tell MAMA. “A Constructed Threat: Identity, Prejudice and the Impact of Anti-Muslim Hated. Tell MAMA Annual Report 2016”, p. 32.

Women were the target of offline violence in 56% of the reported cases. It is important to note that two-thirds of the female victims were described as ‘visibly Muslim’ - a term that referred overwhelmingly to religious clothing. In June, it was revealed that various Muslim women going to the Al-Madina Mosque in Barking, London had been subjected to abuse - mostly verbal but in some instances involving spitting or aggressive physical contact.<sup>105</sup> Similar forms of verbal and physical attacks were reported in Manchester and Belfast in the wake of the terrorist attack in May<sup>106</sup> as well as later in the year.<sup>107</sup> In June, a young Muslim woman suffered from life-changing injuries after she and her cousin Jameel Muhktar became victims of an unprovoked acid attack.<sup>108</sup> It took a few days for the police investigation to treat the attack as a hate crime linked to Islamophobia.<sup>109</sup>

Places of worship were associated with some of the most serious Islamophobic physical attacks of 2017.<sup>111</sup> During the March-July period (which coincided with the terrorist incidents in London and Manchester), a reported 110 mosques were attacked. This figure represented a dramatic spike from the 47 cases reported during

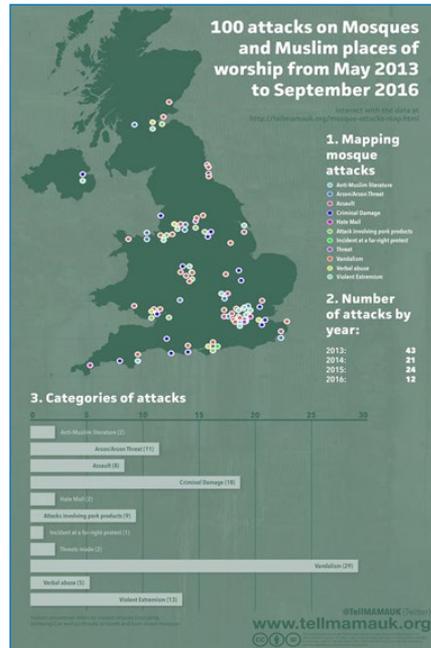


Figure 9: Infographic showing recorded attacks on Muslim places of worship in the UK, 2013-2017.<sup>110</sup>

105. D'Arcy, Scott. "Muslim Women 'Grabbed Round Throat and Spat at' Outside Mosque near Islamic Centre Attended by London Bridge Terrorist". *Mirror*, 6 June 2017. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/muslim-women-grabbed-round-throat-10572866>

106. Booth, Robert. "Muslim Leaders in Manchester Report Rise in Islamophobic Incidents." *The Guardian*, 21 June 2017, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/24/muslim-leaders-in-manchester-report-rise-in-islamophobic-incidents](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/24/muslim-leaders-in-manchester-report-rise-in-islamophobic-incidents).

107. Hughes, Brendan. "Muslim Women 'Assaulted in Belfast' After Manchester and London Terror Attacks." *The Irish News*, 20 June 2017, [www.irishnews.com/news/2017/06/20/news/muslim-women-assaulted-in-belfast-after-manchester-and-london-terror-attacks-1061174/](http://www.irishnews.com/news/2017/06/20/news/muslim-women-assaulted-in-belfast-after-manchester-and-london-terror-attacks-1061174/).

108. Tell MAMA. "Woman Spat 'in the Face' of Muslim Boy at the Trafford Centre.", 11 Dec. 2017, [tellingmama.org/woman-spat-in-the-face-of-muslim-boy-at-the-trafford-centre](http://tellingmama.org/woman-spat-in-the-face-of-muslim-boy-at-the-trafford-centre); Ismail, Sufyan. "East London Acid Attack: When Muslims Are the Victims, We Refuse to Call It Terrorism". *Independent*, 1 July 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/east-london-acid-attack-terrorism-islamophobia-a7817466.html>.

109. "A Muslim Man Was Attacked with Acid. He Wants to Know Why It's Not Being Called a Terror Attack." *The Independent*, 30 June 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/muslim-man-acid-attack-victim-why-not-terror-attack-east-london-jameel-muhktar-resham-khan-21st-a7816331.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/muslim-man-acid-attack-victim-why-not-terror-attack-east-london-jameel-muhktar-resham-khan-21st-a7816331.html).

110. Source: Tell MAMA. "Over 100 Mosques Targeted and Attacked since May 2013", <https://tellingmamauk.org/over-100-mosques-targeted-and-attacked-since-may-2013/>.

111. Allen, C., 'Islamophobia and the Problematization of Mosques: A Critical Exploration of Hate Crimes and the Symbolic Function of "Old" and "New" Mosques in the United Kingdom', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 37/3 (2017), pp. 294-308.

the same period in 2016.<sup>112</sup> (Fig. 9) Unsurprisingly, it was Manchester (9 versus none) and London (17 versus 8) where the largest increases were reported.<sup>113</sup> On average, since 2013 one mosque has been targeted every week, according to figures released by Tell MAMA.<sup>114</sup>

Two serious physical assaults in or close to places of worship were recorded within days from each other. On 25 September, Dr Nasser Kurdy, a Manchester-based surgeon who had treated victims outside the Manchester Arena in May was stabbed in the neck on his way to a mosque in Altrincham, south Manchester, by a 28-year-old man.<sup>115</sup> The other incident occurred in Birmingham on 30 September, where a 14-year-old boy suffered life-threatening injuries after being stabbed multiple times outside the *Idaara Maarif-e-Islam Mosque*.<sup>116</sup> A further incident, treated as a racial assault by the police, took place in July outside *Jamia Masjid Ghausia* in Birchills, Walsall, leaving behind two people with relatively minor injuries.<sup>117</sup>

One major case of arson attack against a place of worship was recorded. (Fig. 10) It concerned the Manchester *Nasfat Islamic Centre*, in Newton Heath, which was destroyed completely on 16 July, having been targeted eight times in the past four years.<sup>119</sup> Two other



Figure 10: Image showing the destruction of *Nasfat Islamic Centre*, in Newton Heath, Manchester by fire in July 2017.<sup>118</sup>

112. "Hate Crime Targeting UK Mosques More Than Doubled in Past Year." *The Independent*, 9 Oct. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hate-crime-muslims-mosques-islamist-extremism-terrorism-terror-attacks-a7989746.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hate-crime-muslims-mosques-islamist-extremism-terrorism-terror-attacks-a7989746.html).

113. MEND. "Hate Crimes Against Mosques 'More Than Doubled' in Past Year", 9 Oct. 2017, [www.mend.org.uk/news/hate-crimes-mosques-doubled-past-year/](http://www.mend.org.uk/news/hate-crimes-mosques-doubled-past-year/).

114. "A UK Mosque is Targeted Once a Week – We Need to Deal with Anti-Muslim Hatred." *New Statesman* | Britain's Current Affairs & Politics Magazine, [www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/07/uk-mosque-targeted-once-week-we-need-deal-anti-muslim-hatred](http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/07/uk-mosque-targeted-once-week-we-need-deal-anti-muslim-hatred).

115. "'Hate Crime' Victim 'Feared the Worst'." *BBC News*, 25 Sept. 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-41381616](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-41381616).

116. Slawson, Nicola. "Boy, 14, Critical After Being Stabbed Outside Mosque in Birmingham." *The Guardian*, 1 Dec. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/30/two-men-killed-series-stabbings-london-manchester-birmingham-sheffield](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/sep/30/two-men-killed-series-stabbings-london-manchester-birmingham-sheffield).

117. Jackson, Carl. "Investigations Continue into Walsall Mosque Hate Crime." *Express & Star*, 15 June 2017, [www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/walsall/2017/06/15/investigations-continue-into-walsall-mosque-hate-crime-](http://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/walsall/2017/06/15/investigations-continue-into-walsall-mosque-hate-crime-).

118. Source: Cox, Charlotte. "The Moment a Manchester Mosque Went up in Flames After a Possible Arson Attack." *Manchester Evening News*, 17 July 2017, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/moment-manchester-mosque-went-up-13342585>.

119. Cox, Charlotte. "Members of Manchester Mosque Guttled by Fire After 'Arson Attack' Are Offered a New Venue". *Manchester Evening News*. 18 July 2017, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/members-manchester-mosque-guttled-fire-13349888>

incidents of arson attack were also recorded. The first occurred in early January, when the Al Falah Braintree Islamic Centre in Braintree, Essex, was targeted by two men who broke the door, threw bricks inside, and finally launched a burning refuse bag onto the roof.<sup>120</sup> This same mosque had been attacked in 2013, in the wake of the terrorist attack that claimed the life of Lee Rigby. The second incident was reported just hours after the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in May, when a man was caught on CCTV approaching a mosque in Oldham, Greater Manchester and setting a bottle of flammable liquid alight.<sup>121</sup> (Fig. 11)

Incidents of vandalism and threatening behaviour included offensive graffiti on the walls of Sutton Islamic Centre in south London;<sup>123</sup> a pig's head placed outside an Islamic centre in Newtownards, Belfast, with associated offensive content sprayed onto the walls of the building;<sup>124</sup> pork posted through the door of the Belfast Islamic Centre;<sup>125</sup> and a series of threatening letters sent to a number of mosques across the country, including the Finsbury Park Mosque only weeks after the attack on its members.<sup>126</sup>



Figure 11: CCTV footage showing the arson attack against Al Falah Braintree Islamic Centre in Braintree, Essex in January 2017.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, far-right organisations led protests against plans for the construction of expansions of mosques. The redevelopment plans for Maidstone Mosque attracted numerous visits by supporters of the controversial far-right group Britain First.<sup>127</sup> Over the summer, in Perth, Scotland, the council's decision to grant permission for

120. Christie, Sam. "Shocking Footage Shows Thugs Throwing Burning Bags of Rubbish into the Same Mosque That Was 'bombed' After Lee Rigby's Murder." *The Sun*, 13 Jan. 2017, [www.thesun.co.uk/news/2594586/mosque-fire-braintree-lee-rigby-al-falah-bombed/](http://www.thesun.co.uk/news/2594586/mosque-fire-braintree-lee-rigby-al-falah-bombed/).

121. "Video Shows Arson Attack on Mosque Hours After Manchester Attack." *The Telegraph*, 24 May 2017, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/24/video-shows-arson-attack-mosque-hours-manchester-attack/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/05/24/video-shows-arson-attack-mosque-hours-manchester-attack/).

122. Source: [swns.com](http://swns.com)

123. "Sutton Mosque Defaced with Offensive Graffiti Following London Bridge Terror Attack." *Muslim Engagement and Development*, 8 June 2017, [mend.org.uk/news/sutton-mosque-defaced-offensive-graffiti-following-london-bridge-terror-attack/](http://mend.org.uk/news/sutton-mosque-defaced-offensive-graffiti-following-london-bridge-terror-attack/).

124. "Pig's Head Left Outside Islamic Centre in Newtownards." *The Irish Times*, 24 Aug. 2017, [www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/pig-s-head-left-outside-islamic-centre-in-newtownards-1.3197367](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/pig-s-head-left-outside-islamic-centre-in-newtownards-1.3197367).

125. "Pork Thrown Through Door of Islamic Centre in 'Hate Attack'." *Metro*, 24 Dec. 2017, [metro.co.uk/2017/12/24/pork-thrown-door-islamic-centre-hate-attack-7183721/](http://metro.co.uk/2017/12/24/pork-thrown-door-islamic-centre-hate-attack-7183721/).

126. "Finsbury Park Mosque Has Been Sent Threatening Letters Promising 'Rivers of blood'", *Metro*, 5 July 2017, [metro.co.uk/2017/06/30/finsbury-park-mosque-sent-threatening-letters-promising-rivers-of-blood-6747590/](http://metro.co.uk/2017/06/30/finsbury-park-mosque-sent-threatening-letters-promising-rivers-of-blood-6747590/).

127. "Money Pledge to Counter Anti-mosque Protesters." *Kent Online*, 30 Aug. 2017, [www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/money-pledge-to-counter-anti-mosque-131290/](http://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/money-pledge-to-counter-anti-mosque-131290/).

the construction of a mosque prompted a demonstration organised by the Scottish Defence League.<sup>128</sup> In October, the announcement of plans to redevelop the Golders Green Hippodrome auditorium in Barnet, London into a Muslim community centre caused a wave of protests by local residents.<sup>129</sup>

## Internet

The majority of anti-Muslim hate crime has been occurring online for some years and 2017 was far from an exception in this respect. Like with offline instances of Islamophobia, the shift towards normalisation of anti-Muslim online hate has been ongoing in popular Internet platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Google Plus. In addition, research has shown that the boundaries between on- and offline hate crime tend to be overstated, especially for victims of hate crimes who find it increasingly hard to isolate online threats from offline intimidation and abuse that they suffer offline.<sup>130</sup>

In a year when the number of both offline and online instances of anti-Muslim hate and violence increased exponentially in the wake of a series of terrorist attacks, the UK government and parliament took some steps to address the growing threat of online hate crime. In August, the director of public prosecutions, Alison Saunders, announced a new policy of taking online hate crime more seriously, treating it as equivalent to offences carried out face-to-face.<sup>131</sup> Police officers will actively help victims of online hate crime to lodge their reports in order to pressure social media platforms and facilitate prosecution.<sup>132</sup>

Initiatives in the direction of countering the spread of hate speech online on the EU level have been ongoing for the past two years. In May 2016, the European Commission agreed with Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter and YouTube on a “Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online” to help users notify illegal hate speech, im-

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128. “Violence Fears as SDL and Anti-fascist Protestors Face off in Perth.” HeraldScotland, [www.heraldscotland.com/news/15525984.Violence\\_fears\\_as\\_SDL\\_and\\_anti\\_fascist\\_protestors\\_face\\_off\\_in\\_Perth/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/15525984.Violence_fears_as_SDL_and_anti_fascist_protestors_face_off_in_Perth/); “Politicians Join Anti-fascists in March to Chase off SDL Protest against Perth Mosque”. Daily Record. 10 Sep. 2017. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/politicians-join-anti-fascists-march-11144569>

129. Sherwood, Harriet. “Rabbi Urges Calm in Row over Plan to Turn Golders Green Landmark into a Mosque.” The Guardian, 1 Dec. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/14/golders-green-hippodrome-mosque-plan-rabbi-urges-calm](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/14/golders-green-hippodrome-mosque-plan-rabbi-urges-calm).

130. Awan, Imran, and Irene Zempi. “The Affinity between Online and Offline Anti-Muslim Hate Crime: Dynamics and Impacts.” *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, vol. 27 (2016), pp. 1-8.

131. Dodd, Vikram. “CPS to Crack Down on Social Media Hate Crime, Says Alison Saunders.” The Guardian, 27 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/21/cps-to-crack-down-on-social-media-hate-says-alison-saunders](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/aug/21/cps-to-crack-down-on-social-media-hate-says-alison-saunders); Oglesby, Kathryn. “Online Hate Crime Could Soon Be Treated Just as Seriously as Face-to-Face Abuse”. Manchester Evening News. 22 Aug. 2017. <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/online-hate-crime-could-soon-13509188>

132. “Police to Tell Social Media Firms to Take Down Hate Posts in Major Government Crackdown.” The Telegraph, 8 Oct. 2017, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/08/police-tell-social-media-firms-take-hate-posts-major-government/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/10/08/police-tell-social-media-firms-take-hate-posts-major-government/).

prove the support to civil society as well as the coordination with national authorities.<sup>133</sup> As a result, social media companies, Facebook, Twitter, and Google's YouTube have greatly accelerated their removal of online hate speech, reviewing over two-thirds of complaints within 24 hours. The companies managed to meet the 24-hour removal target in 81 per cent of cases, compared with 51 per cent in May 2017 when the European Commission last monitored their compliance with the code of conduct.<sup>134</sup> In December, Twitter suspended the accounts of Britain First leaders Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen, as well as the account of the far-right English Defence League.<sup>135</sup>

The problem of Internet bots has also been recognised as a crucial contributing factor to the increase in the volume and reach of Islamophobic content. The image of a hijab-wearing woman walking past the victims of the Westminster Bridge attack in London became viral because it allegedly showed her walking away from the crime scene with an attitude of seeming aloofness. (Fig. 12) It has since been proven that

the original image had been posted by a fake Twitter account in Russia, whose goal was to spread anti-Muslim content among UK social media users.<sup>136</sup> Bots that propagate selected hate content have proliferated in recent years and are getting increasingly sophisticated when it comes to detection.<sup>137</sup>



Figure 12: The image of a woman allegedly walking past victims of Westminster Bridge terrorist attack, used as part of an orchestrated Islamophobic campaign in the wake of the incident.<sup>138</sup>

133. European Commission. "Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online #NoPlace4Hate - European Commission", 4 Nov. 2016, [ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item\\_id=54300](http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=54300).

134. "Social Media Companies Accelerate Removal of Online Hate Speech: EU." The Straits Times, [www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/social-media-companies-accelerate-removals-of-online-hate-speech-eu](http://www.straitstimes.com/world/europe/social-media-companies-accelerate-removals-of-online-hate-speech-eu).

135. "Twitter Bans Britain First Leaders After Anti-Muslim Videos Shared by Donald Trump." The Telegraph, 18 Dec. 2017, [www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/12/18/twitter-bans-britain-first-account-whose-anti-muslim-videos/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/12/18/twitter-bans-britain-first-account-whose-anti-muslim-videos/); "Twitter Suspends EDL's Account in Latest 'Purge' of the Far-Right." Metro, 18 Dec. 2017, [metro.co.uk/2017/12/18/twitter-suspends-edls-account-latest-purge-far-right-7169683](http://metro.co.uk/2017/12/18/twitter-suspends-edls-account-latest-purge-far-right-7169683).

136. Tell MAMA. "The Truth Behind the Photo of the Muslim Woman on Westminster Bridge", 24 Mar. 2017, [tellmamauk.org/the-truth-behind-the-photo-of-the-muslim-woman-on-westminster-bridge](http://tellmamauk.org/the-truth-behind-the-photo-of-the-muslim-woman-on-westminster-bridge).

137. Revesz, Rachael. "Islamophobia on the Internet 'Amplified by Army of Bots'". Independent, 26 Nov. 2017. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/bots-online-islamophobia-pamela-geller-tommy-robinson-twitter-terror-attacks-hope-not-hate-a8076691.html>

138. Source: r/The\_Donald subreddit on Reddit, reproduced in Tomlinson, Zac. "Propaganda and Presumption.", Medium, 17 Apr. 2017, <https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/propaganda-presumption-fe98190aaaf3>

In spite of progress in detection and cooperation with social media platforms, the Home Affairs Select Committee of the UK parliament has repeatedly accused social media platforms of not doing enough to protect public safety<sup>139</sup> and for profiting from hate content propagated by the far right.<sup>140</sup> Facebook, Google, and Twitter have been singled out for their failure to act quickly to remove pages with anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish content<sup>141</sup> and to mitigate the distorting effect of manipulation of web searches by websites associated with the far right.<sup>142</sup> In spite of promises to look more seriously into inflammatory content posted by Britain First and other UK anti-Muslim organisations,<sup>143</sup> Facebook has been more strongly criticised for its slower and patchier response to online hate crime.<sup>144</sup> More recently, the government has announced that it has been working closely with Silicon Valley firms to target online ‘safe spaces’ for radicalisation and to push forward automated solutions for the swift removal of offensive digital content.<sup>145</sup>

### Central Figures in the Islamophobic Network

In late November, the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) held its satirical ‘Islamophobia Awards’ event. The overall winner for 2017 was no other than President Donald J Trump. Still, in a departure from previous years, the UK award was given not to an individual but to Ofsted, the education sector watchdog, in response to its decision to send inspectors to interview students who wear the hijab in school.<sup>146</sup>

Ofsted won the accolade beating a shortlist of candidates that included high-profile names - among them the ex-leader of UKIP Nigel Farage. Farage continued to command significant media attention in 2017 after a bumper year in 2016 during which he celebrated the Leave victory in the EU referendum and be-

139. “Social Media Giants ‘Failing’ over Hate.” BBC News, 1 May 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-39744016](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-39744016).

140. “MPs Accuse Twitter and YouTube of Spreading Far-Right Hate.” Evening Standard, 19 Dec. 2017, [www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/mps-accuse-twitter-and-youtube-of-spreading-farright-hate-a3723011.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/mps-accuse-twitter-and-youtube-of-spreading-farright-hate-a3723011.html).

141. Tell MAMA. “MPs Criticise Facebook’s Failure to Remove Antisemitic and Anti-Muslim Pages”, 17 Mar. 2017, [tellmamauk.org/mps-criticise-facebooks-failure-to-remove-antisemitic-and-anti-muslim-pages/](http://tellmamauk.org/mps-criticise-facebooks-failure-to-remove-antisemitic-and-anti-muslim-pages/); Shona Ghosh, Business Insider UK; “‘Your Algorithms Are Doing the Grooming and Radicalising’: MPs Tore into Google, Facebook, and Twitter.” Business Insider, 19 Dec. 2017, [uk.businessinsider.com/mps-tear-into-google-facebook-and-twitter-2017-12](http://uk.businessinsider.com/mps-tear-into-google-facebook-and-twitter-2017-12). Tell MAMA data provided to the committee can be found at <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/hate-crime-and-its-violent-consequences/written/48199.pdf>

142. “UK Group Warns of Far-Right Web Search Manipulation over Islamophobia, Racism.” Daily Sabah, 3 Nov. 2017, [www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/11/04/uk-group-warns-of-far-right-web-search-manipulation-over-islamophobia-racism](http://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/11/04/uk-group-warns-of-far-right-web-search-manipulation-over-islamophobia-racism).

143. “Facebook ‘Reviewing’ Britain First Page After Twitter Suspends Far-Right Group’s Accounts.” The Telegraph, [www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/12/19/facebook-reviewing-britain-first-page-twitter-suspends-far-right/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2017/12/19/facebook-reviewing-britain-first-page-twitter-suspends-far-right/).

144. Reynolds, Matthew. “Facebook Could Block Far-Right Hate Speech, So Why Isn’t It?” Wired UK, 19 Dec. 2017, [www.wired.co.uk/article/facebook-twitter-youtube-online-extremists-hate-home-affairs-committee](http://www.wired.co.uk/article/facebook-twitter-youtube-online-extremists-hate-home-affairs-committee).

145. “Amber Rudd to Meet Tech Firms in California over Extremist Content.” Sky News, 1 Aug. 2017, [news.sky.com/story/amber-rudd-only-has-google-meetings-planned-as-she-urges-web-extremism-crackdown-10969423](http://news.sky.com/story/amber-rudd-only-has-google-meetings-planned-as-she-urges-web-extremism-crackdown-10969423).

146. IHRC. “Press Release: Donald Trump Voted Islamophobe of the Year”, [www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/press-releases/12001-press-release-uk-donald-trump-voted-islamophobe-of-the-year](http://www.ihrc.org.uk/activities/press-releases/12001-press-release-uk-donald-trump-voted-islamophobe-of-the-year).

came a high-profile advisor to Trump's successful presidential campaign. He was quick to attribute the Westminster Bridge terrorist attack to a systemic failure of multiculturalism that had created a "fifth column" of terrorists in western countries.<sup>147</sup> In the wake of the London Bridge attack, he alluded to possible mass detentions of all those who are on a known or suspected terrorist list.<sup>148</sup> Although he disagreed with calls to 'ban Islam'<sup>149</sup> or with the prospect of turning UKIP into an openly Islamophobic party,<sup>150</sup> he also endorsed claims that there were "wholly Muslim areas" in London and other UK cities.<sup>151</sup> He penned the foreword to a book written by his former senior advisor Raheem Kassam, now editor in chief of Breitbart London, endorsing the book's theme of 'no-go' zones created by sharia law in the UK.<sup>152</sup> (Fig. 13) He weighed into all controversial debates, from 'grooming gangs'<sup>153</sup> to openly backing the far-right Islamophobic Alternative For Germany (AfD) party in September's German federal elections<sup>154</sup> to Trump's retweeting of Britain First videos.<sup>155</sup>

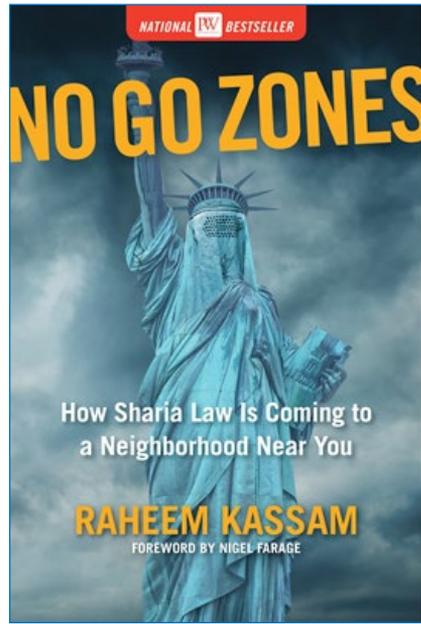


Figure 13: Raheem Kassam's No Go Zones book, with a foreword by Nigel Farage.<sup>156</sup>

147. "Nigel Farage Had the Worst Response to the Westminster Attack." The Independent, 23 Mar. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/nigel-farage-london-terror-attack-multiculturalism-blame-immigration-lbc-radio-ukip-mep-leader-a7645586.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/nigel-farage-london-terror-attack-multiculturalism-blame-immigration-lbc-radio-ukip-mep-leader-a7645586.html).

148. "Fox News Distances Itself from Farage and Hopkins' Talk of Internment." INews, 5 June 2017, [inews.co.uk/news/politics/fox-news-distances-farage-hopkins-talk-internment](http://inews.co.uk/news/politics/fox-news-distances-farage-hopkins-talk-internment).

149. "West Will 'Lose' If We Outlaw Islam, Nigel Farage Says." ABC News, 28 Mar. 2017, [www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-27/west-will-lose-if-we-outlaw-islam-nigel-farage-says/8391590](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-27/west-will-lose-if-we-outlaw-islam-nigel-farage-says/8391590).

150. "Nigel Farage 'to Form New Party' if Anne Marie Waters Wins Ukip Leadership." The Independent, 24 Sept. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nigel-farage-new-party-anne-marie-waters-aaron-banks-ukip-leadership-contest-a7965136.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nigel-farage-new-party-anne-marie-waters-aaron-banks-ukip-leadership-contest-a7965136.html).

151. "Nigel Farage Says London Blighted by 'Wholly Muslim Areas' as He Defends Donald Trump's Response to the Attack." The Telegraph, [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/04/nigel-farage-says-london-blighted-wholly-muslim-areas-defends/](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/06/04/nigel-farage-says-london-blighted-wholly-muslim-areas-defends/).

152. Kassam, Raheem. "Exclusive: Nigel Farage's Foreword for Raheem Kassam's 'No Go Zones' Book, Out Today." Breitbart, 14 Aug. 2017, [www.breitbart.com/london/2017/08/14/exclusive-nigel-farages-foreword-for-raheem-kassams-no-go-zones-book-out-today/](http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/08/14/exclusive-nigel-farages-foreword-for-raheem-kassams-no-go-zones-book-out-today/).

153. "Nigel Farage: Political Correctness Allows Grooming Gangs to Thrive." LBC, 10 Aug. 2017, [www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/nigel-farage-political-correctness-allows-grooming/](http://www.lbc.co.uk/radio/presenters/nigel-farage-political-correctness-allows-grooming/).

154. Oltermann, Philip. "Nigel Farage Backs Far-Right AfD for 'Historic' German Election Success." The Guardian, 14 Feb. 2018, [www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/sep/08/nigel-farage-backs-far-right-afd-for-historic-german-election-success](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/sep/08/nigel-farage-backs-far-right-afd-for-historic-german-election-success).

155. "Farage Defends Trump's Tweets." BBC News, 3 Dec. 2017, [www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-42213950/nigel-farage-defends-donald-trump-s-britain-first-tweets](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-42213950/nigel-farage-defends-donald-trump-s-britain-first-tweets).

156. Source: Amazon.



Figure 14: Katie Hopkins' inflammatory tweet (subsequently deleted) in the wake of the Manchester bombing. Retrieved 23 May 2017 from Twitter.

criticism,<sup>158</sup> earned her a referral to the police,<sup>159</sup> and forced her to terminate her radio contract with LBC.<sup>160</sup> (Fig. 14) When a minicab driver struck pedestrians outside the Natural History Museum in west London in October, Hopkins tweeted her theory that the incident was terror-related and questioned the motives behind the police verdict that the crash was a road accident.<sup>161</sup> By the end of the year, she had left MailOnline by mutual consent, after a series of legal cases against her that resulted in a number of retractions and financial penalties imposed on the publisher.<sup>162</sup>

Hopkins' writings have followed a pattern of inflammatory language bent on mainstreaming a message of hate against Muslims, in Britain and on a global scale. In April, she used another abusive to insinuate a causal link between Ramadan fasting and an alleged spike in terrorist incidents in Europe.<sup>163</sup> Her links with the European and US Islamophobic far right are well-documented: in July, she spent time with members of a far-right, vehemently Islamophobic group called Defend Europe in

Katie Hopkins also made it to the shortlist of this year's Islamophobia Awards, as she had in 2016.<sup>157</sup> Hopkins has used both old and new media to stir up controversy and oftentimes come very close to incitement to hatred and violence against Muslims. Her tweet in the wake of the Manchester Arena attack in May that we need a "final solution" to "the problem" attracted the most

157. IHRC. "Press Release: UK - Islamophobia Awards 2016 – WINNERS", [www.ihr.org.uk/activities/press-releases/11637-press-release-uk-islamophobia-awards-2016-shortlist-released](http://www.ihr.org.uk/activities/press-releases/11637-press-release-uk-islamophobia-awards-2016-shortlist-released).

158. Karmi-Ayyoub, Salma. "Has Katie Hopkins Committed a Hate Crime?" Breaking News, World News & Video from Al Jazeera, 2 June 2017, [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/06/katie-hopkins-committed-hate-crime-170602092246107.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2017/06/katie-hopkins-committed-hate-crime-170602092246107.html).

159. "Katie Hopkins Reported to Police After 'Final Solution' Manchester Attack Tweet." The Guardian, 27 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/23/manchester-attack-police-investigate-katie-hopkins-final-solution-tweet](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/23/manchester-attack-police-investigate-katie-hopkins-final-solution-tweet).

160. Topping, Alexandra. "Katie Hopkins Leaves LBC Radio Show After 'Final Solution' Tweet." The Guardian, 27 Nov. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/media/2017/may/26/katie-hopkins-leaves-lbc-radio-final-solution-tweet-manchester-attack](http://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/may/26/katie-hopkins-leaves-lbc-radio-final-solution-tweet-manchester-attack).

161. Jones, Harrison. "Katie Hopkins Stands by Tweets in Wake of Natural History Museum Crash." The Guardian, 10 Oct. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/09/katie-hopkins-natural-history-museum-tweets](http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/oct/09/katie-hopkins-natural-history-museum-tweets).

162. "What's the Truth Behind Katie Hopkins Ending Her Contract 'by Mutual Consent' with Mail Online?" The Independent, 29 Nov. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/voices/katie-hopkins-daily-mail-why-did-she-end-her-contract-a8079816.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/katie-hopkins-daily-mail-why-did-she-end-her-contract-a8079816.html).

163. Lion, Patrick. "Katie Hopkins Slammed over Sick Ramadan Tweet After Suspected Terrorist Is Arrested Near Westminster". Mirror, 27 Apr. 2017. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/without-food-nasty-katie-hopkins-10310369>

Sicily;<sup>164</sup> while in late November, she addressed the David Horowitz Freedom Center, repeating her allegations about the “Muslim mayor of Londonistan” and areas of Britain controlled by a ‘Muslim mafia’.<sup>165</sup>

Hopkins’ trajectory through anti-Muslim hate speech intersected on numerous occasions with that of another figure who also made it to the 2017 shortlist of the Islamophobia Awards: Tommy Robinson (née Stephen Christopher Yaxley and also known as Stephen Christopher Lennon), the founder and ex-leader of the English Defence League. Robinson joined Hopkins

in pronouncing the incident outside the National History Museum in London as a “jihadi incident”.<sup>166</sup> In December, Hopkins joined The Rebel Media website, a Canadian far-right opinion organisation that has for some time employed Robinson. But Robinson was especially prolific on the offline front in 2017. In April, he appeared in Birmingham alongside the leader of Britain First, Paul Golding, and his deputy, Jayda Fransen.<sup>167</sup> In November, he was seen marching along with a Polish far-right group and other far-right organisations from many European countries in Warsaw, at an event where the slogan “Pray for Islamic Holocaust” appeared alongside “Remove Jewry from power”.<sup>168</sup> (Fig. 15) Robinson’s 2017 book *Mohammed’s Koran: Why Muslims Kill for Islam* has been an Amazon bestseller in the UK, currently featuring an overall review rating of 4.5/5.



Figure 15: Tommy Robinson’s tweet in the aftermath of his participation in the far-right gathering and demonstration in Warsaw, Poland, 11 Nov. 2017.<sup>169</sup>

164. Mulhall, Joe. “Why Has Katie Hopkins Set Sail with a Bunch of Far-Right Activists? | Joe Mulhall.” *The Guardian*, 25 July 2017, [www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/21/katie-hopkins-boat-far-right-activists-sicily-migrants](http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jul/21/katie-hopkins-boat-far-right-activists-sicily-migrants).

165. “Katie Hopkins Leaves Mail Online Days After Video Emerges of Her Anti-Muslim Speech to Far-Right Group.” *The Independent*, 27 Nov. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/media/press/katie-hopkins-muslims-far-right-speech-mailonline-racism-islamophobia-david-horowitz-freedom-center-a8078356.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/press/katie-hopkins-muslims-far-right-speech-mailonline-racism-islamophobia-david-horowitz-freedom-center-a8078356.html).

166. “Tommy Robinson Arrives at Car Crash Scene to a Declare a ‘Jihadi Incident.’” *The Independent*, 7 Oct. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tommy-robinson-natural-history-museum-jihadi-incident-terror-attack-police-a7988341.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tommy-robinson-natural-history-museum-jihadi-incident-terror-attack-police-a7988341.html).

167. “Britain First Flee Birmingham When Confronted by ‘Extremely British Muslim.’” *HuffPost UK*, 13 Apr. 2017, [www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/britain-first-and-tommy-robinso-birmingham\\_uk\\_58edf8cbe4b0df7e2046aaff](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/britain-first-and-tommy-robinso-birmingham_uk_58edf8cbe4b0df7e2046aaff).

168. “‘White Europe of Brotherly Nations?’ Tommy Robinson Represents UK at Huge Far-Right Polish Demo.” *RT International*, [www.rt.com/uk/409720-tommy-robinson-poland-farright/](http://www.rt.com/uk/409720-tommy-robinson-poland-farright/).

169. Source: Tommy Robinson’s Twitter feed, <https://twitter.com/trobinsonnewera/media>

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Positive initiatives to counter Islamophobia have been urgently needed in a year dominated by unprecedented spikes in hate crime against Muslims. November was Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM2017) - an initiative organised by the Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND) to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions about Muslims in the UK. (Fig. 16) This year MEND worked closely with the Police and Crime Commissioners and a wide range of government, education, media, and civil society organisations to raise awareness of Islamophobia and facilitate a culture of better reporting of incidents to the police.<sup>170</sup> The IAM2017 was kicked off in the House of Commons, with an event that was attended by the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, MPs, and representatives of numerous rights organisations.<sup>171</sup> Throughout the month, the organisers planned more than 60 well-attended events across the country.

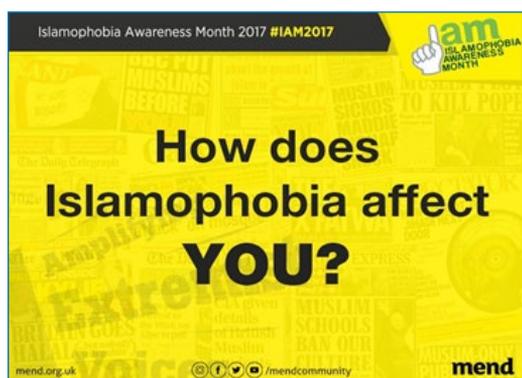


Figure 16: MEND's publicity for Islamophobia Awareness Month 2017.<sup>174</sup>

In many other respects, the Labour Party led the way in the political mainstream's fight against Islamophobia. In May and as part of the party's political programme for the elections, the Labour Party published a Race and Faith manifesto that promised to lead the fight against Islamophobia and anti-Semitism in Britain. The manifesto pledged to take action against violence and hate crime, review

the Prevent programme, and work to eliminate institutional biases in the use of stop and search powers.<sup>172</sup> It was also Labour MP Naz Shah who organised a campaign against The Sun and its former political editor Trevor Kavanagh for the use of the phrase "Muslim problem" in an article published by the newspaper. The campaign brought together a formidable cross-party group of more than 100 politicians.<sup>173</sup>

170. MEND. "Islamophobia Awareness Month #IAM2017", [mend.org.uk/iam2017/](http://mend.org.uk/iam2017/).

171. MEND. "Jeremy Corbyn Launches Islamophobia Awareness Month 2017 in Parliament with MEND", 7 Nov. 2017, [mend.org.uk/news/jeremy-corbyn-launches-islamophobia-awareness-month-2017-parliament-mend/](http://mend.org.uk/news/jeremy-corbyn-launches-islamophobia-awareness-month-2017-parliament-mend/).

172. "Labour's Race and Faith Manifesto Launched / News / Labour Policymaking", [www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/news/labours-race-and-faith-manifesto-launched](http://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/news/labours-race-and-faith-manifesto-launched). The Manifesto is at <https://action.labour.org.uk/page/-/party-documents/Race%20&%20Faith%20Manifesto%202017.pdf>

173. "More Than 100 MPs Demand Action over Sun's 'Muslim Problem' Article." The Independent, 15 Aug. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/over-100-cross-party-politicians-demand-action-over-muslim-problem-article-in-sun-newspaper-a7895211.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/over-100-cross-party-politicians-demand-action-over-muslim-problem-article-in-sun-newspaper-a7895211.html).

174. Source: MEND Facebook account, <https://www.facebook.com/mendcommunity/photos/a.1438970063033826.1073741828.1433739670223532/1948010655463095/>

Furthermore, numerous initiatives took the fight against Islamophobia literally to the streets of Britain. In October, London Metropolitan Police and Transport for London launched a campaign against Islamophobic hate crime on the capital's London's transport system.<sup>175</sup> In Edinburgh, the City Council together with Police Scotland and the Scottish Government funded 13 community projects from a fund of £40K earmarked for initiatives to reduce prejudice, foster positive relationships, and combat Islamophobia in the Scottish capital.<sup>176</sup>

Communities and civil society organisations expanded and diversified their efforts in the field of combating Islamophobia. Organisations such as the MEND, IHRC, the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), Hope not Hate, Stop Funding Hate, and Tell MAMA engaged in an extraordinary portfolio of activities, in the direction of both exposing anti-Muslim prejudice and fostering a culture of better understanding that has empowered Muslim communities. But it was also smaller-scale civil society groups that made an invaluable contribution to this ongoing effort to fight anti-Muslim prejudice and hate, against the backdrop of an extraordinary challenging year. The Mercy For Mankind charity challenge, organised by the Ahamadiyya Muslim Youth Association, saw hundreds of young Muslims travel to the Lake District in north-west England to raise £500K for social causes and in the process dispel misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.<sup>177</sup> On Christmas Eve, the West Yorkshire charity Penny Appeal launched the first mainstream television advertisement by a Muslim charity that sought to highlight the little-known role of British Muslims in helping vulnerable people across the UK and thus challenge stereotypes that Muslims are anti-Christmas.<sup>178</sup> ( Fig. 17) Meanwhile, 5 February 2017 was the third annual VisitMyMosque day, during which over 150 mosques across Britain opened their doors to all members of the community.<sup>179</sup>

But perhaps the most powerful channel for challenging Islamophobia is the positive effort to give as many Muslims a voice and a presence in society. In July, a report with the title *The Missing Muslims: Unlocking British Muslim Potential for the Benefit of All* was published. The report, chaired by Conservative MP Dominic Grieve, was the culmination of the 18-month work of the Citizens Commission on Islam,

175. "Campaign Against Anti-Islam Hate Crime Launched on London's Transport." Evening Standard, 16 Oct. 2017, [www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/campaign-against-antiislam-hate-crime-launched-across-london-transport-network-a3659351.html](http://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/campaign-against-antiislam-hate-crime-launched-across-london-transport-network-a3659351.html).

176. Scottish Police Services Authority. "Edinburgh Continues Its Fight to Eradicate Islamophobia - Police Scotland." Police Scotland - Keeping People Safe, 7 Mar. 2017, [www.scotland.police.uk/whats-happening/news/2017/march/edinburghislamophobia](http://www.scotland.police.uk/whats-happening/news/2017/march/edinburghislamophobia).

177. "These Muslims Are Hoping to Raise £500,000 in a Single Event to Fight Back Against Islamophobia." The Independent, 16 Aug. 2017, [www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslim-youth-group-uk-ahamadiyya-raise-500000-half-million-charity-a7897001.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/muslim-youth-group-uk-ahamadiyya-raise-500000-half-million-charity-a7897001.html).

178. Townsend, Mark. "Charity Launches Festive TV Ad to Challenge View of British Muslims as Anti-Christmas." The Guardian, 28 Dec. 2017, [www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/24/penny-appeal-muslim-charity-christmas](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/24/penny-appeal-muslim-charity-christmas).

179. "Record Number of Britons Show Solidarity with Muslims on Largest Ever #VisitMyMosque Day – Visit My Mosque." Visit My Mosque, [www.visitmymosque.org/record-number-of-britons-show-solidarity-with-muslims-on-largest-ever-visitmymosque-day](http://www.visitmymosque.org/record-number-of-britons-show-solidarity-with-muslims-on-largest-ever-visitmymosque-day).



Figure 17: Penny Appeal whose advert broadcast on ITV and Channel5 on Christmas Eve.<sup>182</sup>

Participation and Public Life. Reacting to the increasing absence of Muslims from British civil society, members of the commission gave voice to a wide range of Muslim voices from all walks of life and from all concerns of the UK.<sup>180</sup> The report urged the government to adopt a definition of anti-Muslim prejudice, along the lines of that adopted in 2016 for anti-Semitism.<sup>181</sup>

## Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

2017 was a landmark year for the debate on Islamophobia in the UK. The reasons for this assessment are both welcome and cause for profound concern for the future. The publication of the twentieth-anniversary report on Islamophobia from the Runnymede Trust has illustrated a mixed picture: on the one hand, increased awareness of Islamophobia in British society and the formation of a Muslim civil society as significant actors in the debate and on the other hand, an alarming deepening and normalisation of political and social mobilisation against Islam and Muslim communities.<sup>183</sup> During the twenty years since the publication of the first report, Muslims have been found in a social field populated by hostile narratives centring on security, identity, nativism, acceptance of ‘British values’, and integration.

Nevertheless, it remains deeply frustrating that Islamophobia remains a slippery term that lacks a widely accepted official definition. Without a definition that recognises Islamophobia as a particular widespread form of anti-Muslim racism,<sup>184</sup> and without a frank admission by all stakeholders of the extent of the problem not just among extremists but within mainstream society, the fight against Islamophobia will continue to be an increasingly uphill and deeply uneven one.

Nevertheless, it remains deeply frustrating that Islamophobia remains a slippery term that lacks a widely accepted official definition. Without a definition that recognises Islamophobia as a particular widespread form of anti-Muslim racism,<sup>184</sup> and without a frank admission by all stakeholders of the extent of the problem not just among extremists but within mainstream society, the fight against Islamophobia will continue to be an increasingly uphill and deeply uneven one.

180. Equality and Diversity Forum. “Citizens Commission on Islam, Participation and Public Life: Missing Muslims Report”, 3 July 2017, [www.edf.org.uk/citizens-commission-on-islam-participation-and-public-life-missing-muslims-report/](http://www.edf.org.uk/citizens-commission-on-islam-participation-and-public-life-missing-muslims-report/).

181. Citizens UK. “The Missing Muslims”, [www.citizensuk.org/missing\\_muslims](http://www.citizensuk.org/missing_muslims).

182. Source: Penny Appeal Twitter feed, <https://twitter.com/pennyappeal/status/948339508835246080>

183. Elahi, Farah and Omar Khan, eds., *Islamophobia. Still a Challenge for Us All* (London: Runnymede Trust, 2017), pp. 10-12

184. The same definition of Islamophobia highlighted by the 2017 Runnymede Trust report has featured in this report since 2015. See Bayrakli, Enes and Farid Hafez (eds). *European Islamophobia Report 2015* (Ankara, Istanbul, Washington DC and Cairo: SETA), pp. 6-7.

In addition, the following recommendations are offered:

- Promote a culture of transparency and accountability in efforts to address discrimination against Muslims and other minority groups, across all areas of society (employment, justice, police, media).
- Review the state's counter-terrorism strategy, with a view to revising assumption, processes, and provisions surrounding its Prevent strand in particular.
- Ensure that significantly more resources be made available for the gathering and processing of data regarding incidents of hate crime against Muslims, both off- and online.
- Strengthen and diversify measures to combat hate speech in social media, understanding that the Internet can function as a rehearsal for taboo-breaking behaviour, which in turn can influence attitudes and behaviours in various offline environments.
- Develop a holistic approach for targeting instances of anti-Muslim hate, recognising the cumulative effect of criminal behaviour in one sphere on other spaces.
- Provide training, in the form of briefing and workshops, to raise awareness of, and effectively combat, Islamophobia in a variety of contexts, from the media to public services and from the criminal justice system to the police.
- Promote more effective government action to tackle structural causes of inequality that continue to affect disproportionately communities with a Muslim background across the UK.
- Strengthen the role and accountability of government regulators, watchdogs, and independent regulatory bodies, particularly in fields that remain central to the propagation and normalisation of Islamophobia (press, education, Internet). In particular, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) has been found seriously wanting on numerous occasions in 2017.

## Chronology

- **12.01.2017:** Arson attack against Al Falah Braintree Islamic Centre in Essex.
- **24.04.2017:** UKIP launches its 'Integration Agenda', which calls, among other things, for the banning of 'face coverings' and of sharia courts.
- **23.05.2017:** Arson attack against Oldham Islamic Centre.
- **23.05.2017:** Graffiti appear on wall of Glasgow Central Mosque.
- **23.05.2017:** Responding to the Manchester Arena attack, columnist Katie Hopkins tweeted, 'We need a final solution'.
- **04.06.2017:** Stones thrown at the Islamic Centre on Orchard Street, Lincoln.
- **04.06.2017:** In an interview on the Fox network, Nigel Farage hinted that 'internment camps' for 20,000 Muslims 'linked to extremist organisations' may be needed in the future.
- **19.06.2017:** Finsbury Park terrorist attack: a man drove his van deliberately into a crowd of Muslim worshippers leaving the mosque in north London, causing 1 death and 11 injuries.

- **22.06.2017:** Greater Manchester Police reported a fivefold rise in Islamophobic hate crime in the region in the wake of the Manchester Arena attack.
- **16.07.2017:** Arson attack against Nasfat Mosque, Greater Manchester, leaves the building entirely destroyed.
- **10.08.2017:** The Home Office published figures showing a 29% increase in hate crime incidents.
- **16.08.2017:** Labour MP Sarah Champion resigned from shadow cabinet after having published an article in The Sun tabloid newspaper accusing ‘British Pakistani men’ of ‘raping and exploiting white girls’.
- **21.08.2017:** The Sun columnist Trevor Kavanagh used the phrase ‘Muslim problem’ in his article.
- **08.09.2017:** The report on the findings of a review of the criminal justice system headed by Labour MP David Lammy was published. The report noted that the number of Muslims in prison rose by 50% in the last decade.
- **25.09.2017:** Dr Nasser Kurdy, a Manchester-based surgeon who had treated victims outside the Manchester Arena in May was stabbed in the neck on his way to the mosque in Altrincham, south Manchester.
- **28.09.2017:** Following the ban on National Action in December 2016, two further far-right hate groups were banned by the Home Secretary Amber Rudd.
- **17.10.2017:** The Home Office hate crime figures for the 2016-17 period showed a 35% rise in religiously aggravated cases in England and Wales.
- **30.11.2017:** A 14-year-old boy suffered life-threatening injuries after being stabbed multiple times outside the Idaara Maarif-e-Islam Mosque in Birmingham.
- **23.11.2017:** IPSO, the independent review body of press, ruled that Trevor Kavanagh’s article (see 21.08 above) did not breach discrimination legislation.
- **27.11.2017:** Ofsted, the government’s education watchdog, was accused on reinforcing an anti-Muslim culture after its decision to question schoolgirls who wear the hijab.
- **27.11.2017:** Baroness Warsi, ex-minister and co-chair of the Conservative Party, accused UK newspapers of Islamophobia.
- **29.11.2017:** President Trump retweets Islamophobic videos from the Twitter account of the deputy leader of Britain First, Jayda Fransen.
- **18.12.2017:** Twitter bans the accounts of Britain First’s leader and deputy leader, as well as the account of the English Defence League.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN  
**UKRAINE AND  
OCCUPIED  
CRIMEA**  
NATIONAL REPORT 2017

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## Executive Summary

The year 2014 brought many historical and political changes to Ukrainian society. The annexation of Crimea and the Russian intervention in Eastern Ukraine triggered processes within the Muslim communities in Donbass and Crimea concerning the revision of their place in the political landscape of Ukraine. Due to political and religious reasons many people were forced to become IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons). Many of them had a Muslim background which was met with Russian hostility following the annexation. Those who did not leave the Crimea Peninsula are under tremendous pressure. The main geographical destinations of migration have been Kiev and Lvov. Thus, Islam is now a political reality in Ukraine and even if the general numbers of the Muslim community are not comparable with those of Russia and Western Europe, their role is quite important in Ukrainian social and political life.

Several conclusions emerged following the research for this report. First, since 2014, Islam and Muslims themselves have become a serious element of the political life of Ukraine. Second, in many cases, Ukrainian Muslims were accepted in the political life of the country in both governmental discourse and by the far-right movements – both unprecedented developments. Third, Crimean Muslims and Crimean Tatars are the most prosecuted group in Crimea, which has been annexed by the Russian Federation. Fourth, the light shed on the absolutely unexplainable behaviour of the SBU (Security Service) against Muslims who have become the target of prosecution within the Ukrainian mainland. This special group of people, namely Muslims from Central Asia and Russia, are accused of collaboration with extremists; many human rights defenders, however, consider this as element of political struggle against opposition and Islamophobia. Fifth, Ukrainian Muslims themselves have become the target of the SBU by being accused of collaborating with ‘terrorists’ and ‘extremists’. Finally, the new positive status of the Ukrainian Muslims is gradually falling victim to Islamophobia. There are two main reasons, an international and a domestic one. The former is the Islamophobia in Europe and the latter the fact that the Ukrainian government cherishes the far-right movements within the country. Those movements clearly have racist, Islamophobic, nationalist and xenophobic views. It is still unknown how far Ukrainian society can embrace tolerance and acceptability of the Muslim presence within the country. Islamophobia could develop in Ukraine because of the rising role of the far-right groups in Ukrainian society and owing to the political elite additionally maintaining nationalistic discourse - currently this is mostly oriented against Russia. However, history shows that these groups have aggressive and xenophobic tendencies.

## Резюме / короткий зміст

У традиційних європейських християнських суспільствах, лише дві країни на континенті мають корінні мусульманські громади. Україна може бути єдиною державою, яка має євразійську традицію ісламу (історично сильний вплив ісламу на регіон був зроблений Монгольською Золотою Ордою) і в той же час має корінне співтовариство\громаду мусульман. Ці дві особливості належать корінним жителям Криму - кримським татарам. Це найбільша та найстаріша мусульманська громада. Орієнтовна кількість кримських татар в Україні становить 300 000 чол. Разом з ними загальна кількість мусульман в Україні становить менше 1 млн. чол.

Відповідно до Конституції України, Україна є світською державою, але більшість людей є православними християнами. Проте, слід зазначити, що практично все XX століття Україна була частиною Радянського Союзу і підверглася значному впливу комунізму та атеїзму. Після розпаду Радянського Союзу ситуація змінюється: це суспільство, перед яким стоїть задача реставрації релігійних традицій та установ. Значна частина всього мусульманського населення знаходилася в Криму, і до 2014 року українці ніколи не були свідками ісламу як чинника внутрішньої політики за межами Криму. Іслам та Україна зустрілися лише після політичних змін в Україні у 2014 році.

Іслам з самого початку існування української державності почався як політичний феномен і завжди був пов'язаний з кримськими татарами або татарами Поволжжя на Донбасі. У Донбасі для татар Поволжжя іслам зіграв консолідаційну роль. Це стало визначальним фактом їх успіху, в період на початку 90-х бо найбагатшою людиною України є Рінат Ахметов, який походить з Поволзьких татар та є мусульманином. Ісламофобія рідко присутня в українському суспільстві, але траплялись деякі неприємні випадки.

2014 рік приніс багато історичних та політичних змін в українське суспільство. Анексія Криму та втручання Росії в Східну Україну спричинили процеси в мусульманських громадах на Донбасі та в Криму. Багато людей через політичні та релігійні причини змушені стати переселенцями. Багато хто з них мали релігійний минуле, яке викликало агресивну ворожість в Росії після анексії. Ті, хто не залишив півострів, знаходяться під величезним тиском у Криму. Основним географічним призначенням стали Київ та Львів. Таким чином, іслам зараз є політичною реальністю в Україні, навіть якщо загальна чисельність мусульманського співтовариства є незрівнянною з Росією та Західною Європою, а їхня роль є досить важливою в українському суспільно-політичному житті.

Досі ще невідомо, як далеко українське суспільство могло б піти в питанні толерантності та прийнятності присутності мусульман. Ісламофобія могла б розвиватися в Україні через зростаючу роль крайніх правих груп в українському суспільстві та через те, що політична еліта додатково підтримувала націоналістичний дискурс, який в основному орієнтувався у напрямку проти Росії. Однак, як показує історія, ці групи мають агресивні та ксенофобні тенденції.

## Introduction

Ukraine compared to other European nations has enjoyed a very long period of cultural interaction with Islam. It was a long and difficult process which is still ongoing. It is possible to divide the history of Islam in Ukraine into several important periods.

1. Period of Khazar Khaganate
2. Kievan Ruse and Ukraine form part of the Golden Horde
3. Crimean Khanate
4. The Russian annexation of Crimea and the deportation of the Crimean Tatars by the Soviet Union
5. The return of the Crimean Tatars to Crimea at the end of the 1980s and Ukraine's independence
6. Two central developments for Ukrainian Muslims: the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the growth of the Muslim community in the Ukrainian mainland

Historically the territory of contemporary Ukraine has always been a symbolical and actual frontier of different civilisations and cultures. Islam played a crucial role in the history of the Pontic Steppe up to the end of 18th century.

Until the end of the 18th century, almost the entire Southern Ukraine was populated by Muslims. The local indigenous non-Slavic nomadic population of the Pontic Steppe (Pechenegs, Cumans) were Muslims since the Arab invasions reached the Northern Caucasus in the 7th and 8th centuries. The situation dramatically changed in AD 1240 when the Mongolian Army approached the walls of Kiev and finally invaded almost entire Eastern Europe. Since then, the Ukrainian territories became an integral part of Ulus of Juchi and finally, the Golden Horde. In the mid-14th century, a serious part of contemporary Ukraine was populated by Muslims. Khan Uzbek and his son Dzanni Bek eventually converted all the Golden Horde to Islam.

During the Soviet Union period, the Muslims who were living in the territories of contemporary Ukraine were concentrated in Crimea only, with the exceptions of some sporadic representations in large cities. In 1944, the Soviet Union made a final effort to annihilate the Pontic Steppe culture and Islam on the southern frontier. However, at the end of the 1980s, Crimean Muslims started returning to Crimea with tremendous efforts and despite the outstanding restrictions introduced by Moscow.

Throughout the 1991-2014 period, the official Ukrainian position on Islam was very controversial. In many cases, Muslims were considered as a threat and the Ukrainian government effectively supported a schism with the Ukrainian Muslim community. The Crimean Tatars claimed the right to lead the Ukrainian Muslim community, but the Ukrainian government considered such a claim as a threat to the state. Nevertheless, it did not play a crucial role in the restoration of Islam in

Ukraine. For instance, in 1992, the Muslim Spiritual Board of Ukraine (MSBU) was established in Kiev and in 1994, the Grand Mufti of Ukraine was elected.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, in 1997, the political party Islamic Party of Ukraine (Партия Мусульман Украины) was founded.

In the beginning of the 90s, the Crimean Muslim Spiritual Board (CMSB) with its own mufti, who had a close association with the Crimean Tatars,<sup>2</sup> operated in Crimea and in Donetsk, the Spiritual Centre of the Ukrainian Muslims was established. There were permanent confrontations between the Kievan Grand Muftiat and the two regional institutions (Crimean and Donbass) which were supported allegedly by the Special Services. The religious reason the regional Muslims were not eager to integrate with the Grand Muftiat is that, reportedly, many thought that the Grand Mufti of Ukraine belonged to the religious movement *Al-Ahbash*.<sup>3</sup> In 2010, the MSBU opened a new Crimean Spiritual Centre for the Muslims of Crimea specifically against the Crimean Muftiate (in order to undermine the Crimean Tatars' leadership).<sup>4</sup> In 2009, a new Muftiate named "Umma" was created with a pro-governmental mission; it declared a geopolitical "European vector" and claimed to be "patriotic and Ukrainian-centric."<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the two large organisations Arraid<sup>6</sup> and Hizb Ut-Tahrir,<sup>7</sup> the controversial movement with a highly polarising political context, are present in Ukraine.

The current situation of Islam in Ukraine has more positive features than negative ones. Islamophobia has rarely manifested itself in openly aggressive narratives or aggressive actions.

However, the current Ukrainian political situation and the place of Islam within it deeply depends on the following critical factors:

1. The ethnic character of the Muslim community of Ukraine has mostly a Eurasian nature (Crimean Tatars, Volga Tatars, Chechens, Azerbaijanis and Turks) with a growing number of Slavic-origin Muslims. The Muslim population is approxi-

1. Muftij Ukrainy, <http://islam.ua/dumu-2/muftij-ukrainy/>

2. It still operates in Crimea under Russian occupation and is the only Crimean Tatar's indigenous institution which survives since Russia annexed Crimea.

3. Bogdan Salgirchuk, "Kuda idet musul'manskaya umma Ukrainy posle agressii Rossii?" (Where is the Muslim Ummah of Ukraine after the Aggression of Russia?), Day.Kiev.ua, (July 31, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from <http://m.day.kyiv.ua/ru/article/kuda-idet-musulmanskaya-umma-ukrainy-posle-agressii-rossii>

4. Dukhovnyy Tsentr Musul'man Kryma khochet znat' chetkuyu pozitsiyu DUMKa v otnoshenii konkretnykh sektantskikh grupp - "khizb-ut-tahrir", vakhkhabitov i tak nazyvayemogo "dzhamaat al'-islamiya" (The Spiritual Centre of the Muslims of Crimea wants to know the clear position of the SAMK concerning specific sectarian groups - "Hizb ut-Tahrir", Wahhabis and the so-called "Jamaat al-Islamiya"), (June 2, 2011), retrieved January 2, 2018 from <http://dcmk.org/novosti/DCMK-chochet-znat-chetkuiu-pozitsiyu-DUMK>

5. Pro DUMU «UMMA» (About UMMA) retrieved January 2, 2018 from [http://umma.in.ua/?page\\_id=1249](http://umma.in.ua/?page_id=1249).

6. All-Ukrainian Association of Social Organisations Arraid // <http://www.arraid.org/en>.

7. Informatsionnyy ofis islamskoy partii Khizb ut-Tahrir v Ukraine (Information office of the Islamic Party Hizb ut-Tahrir in Ukraine) // <https://hizb.org.ua/ru/>.

mately one million. They have 160 mosques and praying houses, seven Muslim schools and approximately 100 Sunday schools. The radical nationalistic movements make a distinction between the Muslims who “have invaded” Europe and those who are of European origin. This is exclusively related to the possibility of the settlement of Syrian refugees in Ukraine.

2. The biggest Muslim community in Ukraine is the Crimean Tatars, who are indigenous people to Crimea. Most cases of Islamophobia throughout the process of Ukrainian independence were related to them.
3. The foundation of the Ukrainian internal policy regarding Islam is based not on openly xenophobic policies, but on the political consideration of keeping Islam under permanent control and the effective integration of the state surveillance of Muslims’ activities. In Ukraine, Islamophobia before 2014 had features of the state policy.
4. Without intending to, Ukraine became deeply involved in the Russian fight against counter-terrorism and extremism. There are many cases of political refugees from Russia or from Middle Eastern state, as well as Russian citizens.
5. The Ukrainian law enforcement agencies have not only prosecuted Russian-origin Muslims in the last couple of years, but also Ukrainian Muslims. These cases, however, remain undisclosed to the general public in Ukraine.
6. The views on Islam in Ukrainian society have a double context. When it concerns local indigenous Muslims communities, Islam, for the most part, enjoys a positive narrative - namely “Islamobenderovcy” (Islamobenderovians).<sup>8</sup> This is the political narrative with the highest level of Muslim recognition in the new (after Euromaidan) Ukrainian society. On the other hand, are the public and media observations and analyses of European events (the so-called refugee crisis and the wave of terrorist attacks throughout the continent). These attitudes share a lot in common with the far-right and nationalistic Ukrainian movements.
7. The so-called “case of Hizb ut-Tahrir” and “case of Tablighi Jamaat”. The prosecution of the Crimean Muslims was launched by the FSB at the beginning of 2015 and is now the main course of Russia’s prosecution policy in Crimea. Three individuals have been accused of extremism and each was sentenced to five years of in prison.
8. The turning point for Ukraine and its Muslim community was the geopolitical changes in Kiev in 2014 (“Euromaidan”) and the subsequent developments in Crimea (its annexation by the Russian Federation) and the Russian invasion of the Donbass.
9. The biggest Muslim communities in Ukraine live in Crimea (Crimean Tatars) and Donbass (Tatars).
10. The destiny of both communities after 2014 is dividedness. On both sides, some sided with Ukraine and others with Russia. In Donbass, the Volga Tatars created the pro-separatist Muftiate “All-Ukraine Spiritual Board – Edinenie” (Unity).

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8. A portmanteau word used to describe Muslims who are pro-Ukrainian and support the historical Western Ukrainian anti-Russian narrative.

11. There is a relatively small number of human rights violations in Ukraine that can be clearly linked to Islamophobia. However, there are many cases where Islamophobia – along with other factors – can be said to be present. This is particularly true in relation to annexed Crimea.
12. The annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation established a rigid political and social regime for the local indigenous people, the Crimean Tatars. They were deprived of long-existing religious and ethnic institutions, and some religious communities have been purposefully labelled as extremist.
13. The systematic prosecution of the Crimean Muslims in Crimea by the Russian Federation follows a specific strategy of undermining the Crimean Tatars national and religious identity. The majority of Crimean Muslims have Crimean Tatar origin.
14. Islamophobia in Ukraine has one additional characteristic: Ukraine nowadays is a symbolic harbour for many Muslims who have fled prosecution in Russia. According to many human rights activists, the Ukrainian reaction is inappropriate and the current governmental policy is putting these people in danger.

## Significant Incidents and Developments

As has been already mentioned, Islamophobia in Ukraine displays completely different characteristics than in Europe or Russia, while 2014 became a turning point for Ukrainian Muslims when Muslims escaping from the Russian occupation of Crimea were relocated in mainland Ukraine. Moreover, the Muslim community actively participated in the 2014 Euromaidan events and was engaged in the war in the Eastern Ukraine on the Ukrainian side. This engagement took the form of a contribution to the political transition and direct military involvement. Two bright examples are the Muslim women who were working as volunteers in Donbass, the Advisor to Minister of Defence Olga Bashey (a Ukrainian convert to Islam)<sup>9</sup> and Amina Okueva, who was killed on October 30, 2017.<sup>10</sup> (Fig. 1) The perpetrator of the attack remains unknown. It should be noted that in the ATO zone (Counter-Terrorist Zone) in Eastern Ukraine there were organised military chaplains for Muslims who were fighting against separatists in Eastern Ukraine.<sup>11</sup>

9. QHA, “Ольга Башей: Приняв ислам, я почувствовала себя другим человеком”, retrieved January 2, 2018 from <http://qha.com.ua/ru/intervyu/olga-bashei-prinyav-islam-ya-pochuvstvovala-sebya-drugim-chelovekom/172129/>.

10. Adam Osmayev: Aminu Okuyevu vbyly postrilom u holovu (Adam Osmayev: Amina Okuyeva was Shot in the Head) (October 30, 2017) retrieved January 2, 2018 from [https://zik.ua/news/2017/10/30/adam\\_osmaiev\\_aminu\\_okuievu\\_vbyly\\_postrilom\\_u\\_golovu\\_1196103](https://zik.ua/news/2017/10/30/adam_osmaiev_aminu_okuievu_vbyly_postrilom_u_golovu_1196103)

11. Iryna Shutka, “Sim rechet pro islam v Ukraini, yaki varto znaty (Seven Things about Islam in Ukraine Worth Knowing)”, Velyka Ideya, (August 29, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from <https://bigggidea.com/practices/1568/>.



Figure 1: Amina Akueva (left) and Olga Bashey (right).<sup>12</sup>



Figure 2: A sign on the door of the Muslim Association of Ukraine<sup>13</sup>

Despite the striking positive political and social developments for the Muslim community in Ukraine, worrying instances occurred as well. On March 21, 2016, several people made a sign “No Islam” and drew a swastika on the door of the Muslim Association of Ukraine and took a photo in front of the sign.<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 2) In April 2016, the local police department opened an investigation into the case, yet no guilty persons have been found.<sup>15</sup>

Human rights activists placed a lot of attention on the case of Amina Babaeva (originally from Russia, Dagistan).<sup>16</sup> Reportedly her husband was a member of DAESH, but two years ago she divorced him and was living in Istanbul, but after a while she was accused of collaboration with terrorists and consequently she was deported to Kharkov, Ukraine where she sought asylum. In Kharkov, the Ukrainian Security Service on September 12 deported her to Russia despite the active opposition of human rights activists. Famous human rights activist Evgeniy Zakharov described the behaviour of the SBU as “fear of terrorism and Islam. Their logic is that every Muslim

12. Image is available at <https://ru.krymr.com/a/28826579.html> (October 31 2017) and <http://qha.com.ua/ru/intervyu/olga-bashei-prinyav-islam-ya-pochuvstvovala-sebya-drugim-chelovekom/172129/> (March 22 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018

13. Image available at <http://racurs.ua> // “Na zdaniii Assotsiatsii musul’man Ukrainy v Kiyeve ostavili islamofobskuyu nadpis” (The building of the Association of Muslims of Ukraine in Kiev left the Islamophobic inscription) <http://racurs.ua/n68666-na-zdaniii-associacii-musulman-ukrainy-v-kiyev-ostavili-islamofobskuu-nadpis>, March 23, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018.

14. “Neizvestnyye isportili islamofobskoy nadpis’yu zdaniye Assotsiatsii musul’man Ukrainy (Unknown People Have Spoiled the Islamophobic Inscription of the Building of the Association of Muslims of Ukraine)”, *Krym Realii* (March 23, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://ru.krymr.com/a/news/27630508.html>.

15. “Politsiya v Kiyeve nachala rassledovaniye po zayavleniyu ob islamofobskoy nadpisi (The Police in Kiev Launched an Investigation on the Application of the Islamophobic Inscription)”, *Krym Realii* (April 25, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://ru.krymr.com/a/news/27695402.html>.

16. Kateryna Sergatskova, “Na shlyakhu z IDIL: yak kolysnyi boyovyky «Islams’koyi derzhavy» opynyayut’sya v Ukraini (On the Way with IDIL: As Former Militants of the “Islamic State” Are in Ukraine)”, *Hromadske*, (July 11, 2017) retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://hromadske.ua/posts/kolishni-boioviki-islamskoi-derzhavi-v-ukraini>.

struggling to reach Ukraine is *a priori* a terrorist. It is certainly Islamophobia. In this regard and with such logic, in the future they could say that the Crimean Tatars deserve to be deported to Russia as well.<sup>17</sup> The same concerns were expressed by the head of the Crimean Tatars Mejlis Refat Chubarov when he asked the officials from the SBU, “Who can guarantee that Russia is searching for these people for political reasons and not on trumped-up charges? The SBU’s answer: ‘Nobody can’.”<sup>18</sup>

This is not the only example of the SBU cooperating with the Russian Federation, which seems very strange at a time of war with Russia. Another Islamophobic incident occurred in relation to Ruslan Meyriev. Meyriev is 32 years old and comes from Ingushetia, Russia. He fled the Russian Federation in 2012 because of the systematic prosecution of Muslims as he considered his life to be under threat. He started living in Crimea in 2013 and fled after the annexation by the Russian Federation. He then moved to Vinnitsa where he settled until he was invited to participate as a volunteer in the newly organised “Muslim Battalion”. In 2014, Russia added his name to the international ‘wanted list’ and brought criminal proceedings against him.<sup>19</sup> In the following year, he was interrogated by the Ukrainian police but was released soon thereafter. However, in January 2016, he was detained pending extradition. In April, Meyriev applied for political asylum. In November, the court declined his appeal as not relevant. According to the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group there is now “a real danger that the Prosecutor General’s Office will order Meyriev’s extradition”.<sup>20</sup> The only thing which is keeping him in Ukraine is that Ukrainian volunteers and human rights activists are claiming that they are going to send an application for his case to the European Court of Human Rights.

Unfortunately, in Ukraine there exist at least nine cases and two people have already been extradited to Russia, where their destiny is currently unknown. All nine cases involved Muslims. Human rights activists have access to only six cases.<sup>21</sup> The main legal instrument that Russia is imposing against Muslims, in Crimea as well, is Article 205.5 of the Criminal Code (“Organisation of the activities of a terrorist

17. Kateryna Sergatskova “V SBU katuyut’ i nezakonno utrymuyut’ lyudey — pravozakhysnyk Yevhen Zakharov (The SBU Torments and Illegally Detains People - Human Rights Activist Yevhen Zakharov)”, Hromadske, (November 28, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://hromadske.ua/posts/sbu-katuvannia-pravozakhysnyk-yevhen-zakharov>.

18. Bez prava na ubezhishche. Ukraina I krika FSB “Derzhte terrorista” (Without the Right to Asylum. Ukraine and the Screams of the FSB “Catch the Terrorist”), Islam in Ukraine, (November 27, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <http://islam.in.ua/ru/analiz/bez-prava-na-ubezhishche-ukraina-i-kriki-fsb-derzhite-terrorista>.

19. Maria Tomak, «Iz sta vernulos’ pyatero (“Out of a Hundred Five Returned”)”, Lb.ua, (December 8, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // [https://lb.ua/society/2016/12/08/352887\\_sta\\_vernulos\\_pyatero.html](https://lb.ua/society/2016/12/08/352887_sta_vernulos_pyatero.html).

20. Halya Coynash, “Ukraine’s Security Service’s Strange Collaboration with Russia in Its Political Persecution of Opponents”, Human Rights in Ukraine, (November 21, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <http://khpg.org/en/index.php?id=1479572161>.

21. Maria Tomak, “Bez prava na prytulok. Ukrayina i vyhuky FSB «trymayte terorysta!» (No Right to Asylum. Ukraine and FSB Screams “Catch the Terrorist!”), Radio Svoboda, (November 23, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/28135228.html>.

organisation and participation in the activities of such organisations”).<sup>22</sup> All cases have a specific feature which leads to the Ukrainian Migration Service refusing to grant them asylum; consequently, the Ukrainian government believes the best option is to send them to Russia. The common element in all these cases is that the asylum seekers demonstrated an eagerness to support Ukrainian independence and at different levels they were involved as volunteers in the Eastern Ukraine or the border with annexed Crimea. The Russian argument is that they were fighters of DAESH in Syria.<sup>23</sup> In most cases, they were located via Interpol.

The destiny of the prosecuted and detained Muslims in Russia is not clear. Timur Tumgoev was arrested when he arrived at the airport in Kharkov from Turkey in June 2016. He had voiced the desire to become a part of military formations in the Eastern Ukraine and fight on the Ukrainian side.<sup>24</sup> In July 2017, he was released from the detention centre.<sup>25</sup> Human rights defenders know about the following cases:

*Magomed Iliiev* - Still at the detention facility in Zaporozhie.<sup>26</sup>

*Shakhban Isakov* – He arrived in Kiev from Egypt in 2016 and was immediately detained. At the beginning of 2017, he was released after the pressure of Muslims and human rights activists.<sup>27</sup>

*Sharapudin Sharapudinov* – He, as others, faced detention when he arrived to Ukraine in 2016. Following a release from a detention facility, he was arrested again for accusations of criminal activity.<sup>28</sup>

*Zelimkhan Belkharoev* – The last hope of his remaining in Ukraine and not being deported to Russia is the decision of the European Court of Human Rights.<sup>29</sup>

22. Maria Tomak, November 30, 2016, retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://www.facebook.com/maria.tomak/posts/1384513334915727>.

23. “Urozhnens Ingushetii Timur Tumgoevyev otpushchen iz SIZO v Khar’kove (The Native of Ingushetia, Timur Tumgoev, Was Released from Prison in Kharkov)”, Kavkazskiy Uzel, (July 20, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/306434/>.

24. Anvar Derkach, “Khotel vovyevat’ za Ukrainu, a okazalsya za reshetkoy (I Wanted to Fight for Ukraine, but I Found Myself behind Bars)”, Kavkaz Realii, (May 9, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/khotel-voevat-za-ukrainu-a-okazalsya-za-reshetkoi/28475711.html>.

25. Urozhnens Ingushetii Timur Tumgoevyev otpushchen iz SIZO v Khar’kove (The Native of Ingushetia, Timur Tumgoev, Was Released from Prison in Kharkov)”, Kavkazskiy Uzel, (July 20, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/306434/>.

26. Maria Tomak, Zachem Ukraine rossiyskiye «terroristy» (Why Does Ukraine Need Russian “Terrorists?”), Krym Realii, (January 18, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://ru.krymr.com/a/28241328.html>.

27. Anvar Derkach, “Dagestanets, rossiyskiye spetssluzhby i ukrainskaya femida (Dagestan, Russian Special Services and Ukrainian Femida)”, Kavkaz Realii, (April 17, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/dagestanets-specsluzhby-i-ukrainskaya-femida/28434827.html>.

28. V Kiyeye zaderzhali dagestantsa. Advokat govorit, chto patrony podbrosili (In Kiev, Detained Dagestan. The Lawyer Says That the Cartridges Were Planted), Kavkaz Realii, (May 4, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://www.kavkazr.com/a/v-kyeye-zaderzhali-dagestantsa/28468375.html>.

29. Decision of the European Court of Human Rights “Application no. 63044/16 Belkharoyev v. Ukraine” // [https://helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/5538961-v1-6304416-BELKHAROEYEV-LE2.2a-F39-Granted-Only-sent-to-the-applicant-by-e-mail\\_clear-1.pdf](https://helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/5538961-v1-6304416-BELKHAROEYEV-LE2.2a-F39-Granted-Only-sent-to-the-applicant-by-e-mail_clear-1.pdf)

These people represent striking examples of how Interpol can become an effective tool of eliminating political opposition when people are hiding abroad.

## Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

### Politics

The political events which took place in Ukraine in 2013 and 2014 allowed not only democratic and pro-European political parties to come to power, but also brought people to power who clearly represent nationalistic and far-right movements with strong connections to European radical right-wing parties. For instance, the Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament Andrei Parubij before he came to power, had contacts with the French Front National.<sup>30</sup>

Ukrainian Muslims exist in two dimensions: “Ours” as, for instance, Crimean Tatars, Volga Tatars, Chechens, etc., and “Others” - those who are threatening the European continent.<sup>31</sup> Racism towards migrants and Muslims falls under the “Others” category. Many politicians were openly against Ukraine joining the Dublin Regulation. For example, Ukrainian MP Vadim Rabinovich registered a law for excluding Ukraine in participating in the redistribution of refugees within Europe.<sup>32</sup> In May 2017, the representatives of the National-Patriotic Movement of Ukraine tried by force to close a Lebanese café in Kiev, calling it the “Arabian eatery.”<sup>33</sup> In July, the Ukrainian SBU in the city of Zhytomir searched the mosque, house and office of the imam of the religious community Nur Al-Islam Akhmat Azyev and accused him of disseminating terrorist literature.<sup>34</sup>

The general strategy and vision of the far-right movements in Ukraine are that Europe is under the invasion of foreigners and their supporters, and therefore such “dangers” could reach Ukraine. The political public discourse is quite diplomatic

30. Olivier Berruyer, “Un ex-néo-nazi nouveau Président du parlement Ukrainien... [Super les médias !]”, *Les Crises*, (April 14, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://www.les-criSES.fr/un-ex-neo-nazi-nouveau-president-du-parlement-ukrainien/>.

31. Ian Bateson, “As Islamophobia Rises in Many Countries, Muslims Find Unlikely Sanctuary in Western Ukraine”, *Huffington Post*, (September 13, 2016, Updated Oct 30, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/muslim-sanctuary-ukraine\\_us\\_57d1d915e4b00642712ca9f0](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/muslim-sanctuary-ukraine_us_57d1d915e4b00642712ca9f0).

32. Vadim Rabinovich, “Proekt Zakonu pro zaboronu uchasti Ukrayiny u rozpodili mihrantiv, yakyy vidbuvayet’sya v krayinakh-chlenakh Yevropeys’koho Soyuzu” (Draft Law on the Prohibition of Ukraine’s Participation in the Distribution of Migrants, Which Takes Place in the Member States of the European Union) December 26, 2016, under consideration since March 2017 // [http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4\\_1?pf3511=60662](http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb2/webproc4_1?pf3511=60662).

33. Strana UA, „Kak radikaly zakryvali restoran vostochnoy kukhni v tsentre Kiyeva,” (How Radicals Closed the Restaurant of Oriental Cuisine in the Center of Kiev) May 23, 2017 // <https://strana.ua/video/72282-poyavilos-video-razgroma-nacionalistami-tureckogo-kafe-v-centre-kieva.html>

34. ISLAMOFBIYA. Vlasti Ukrainy uchinili antiislamskiy pogrom v mecheti Zhitomira (ISLAMOPHOBIA. The authorities of Ukraine Committed an Anti-Islamic Pogrom in the Mosque of Zhitomir), KAVKAZCENTER, (July 31, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <http://www.kavkazcenter.com/russ/content/2017/07/31/115204/islamofbiya--vlasti-ukrainy-uchinili-antiislamskiy-pogrom-v-mecheti-zhitomira.shtml>.

because of the war with Russia (all attention is dedicated to this) and the concrete tactic is that of avoiding any confrontation with Western public opinion.

However, any concrete attempts from the Ukrainian government to take a more pro-immigrant position have been met with radical resistance. Ukraine promised the European Union to build an asylum shelter in Yagotyn, in the outskirts of Kiev. The construction works suddenly intensified in 2016 and since then, became a highly politicised issue in Ukraine. In Yagotyn, local people together with members of far-right movements such as Azov and Pravy Sektor, blocked any governmental attempts to approve a decision for taking in Syrian refugees.<sup>35</sup> The future of these facilities is still unclear and a decision has yet to be approved because of the open racism towards Muslims and migrants which has been expressed on many occasions.<sup>36</sup>

## Media

As one human rights activist has said during an interview about the Ukrainian media, “They see the situation with the Islamophobia in Russia and Crimea and strongly criticise it but are silent about the prosecutions of the local Muslim community by the SBU”.<sup>37</sup>

In May, in the Western Ukrainian city of Lvov, the SBU arrested the advocate Vladimir (Abdulla) Lushyk, a convert to Islam, for alleged connections with DAESH. The prosecutor accused him of assisting a woman, whose husband is a citizen of Afghanistan and suspected of supporting DAESH, with travel documents. He was detained several times but was eventually released. Currently he is under house arrest and recovering from the injuries he suffered in the detention facilities. The case has not been closed yet, while it has remained completely out of the Ukrainian media.

In the Lvov region, a woman of Slavic origin converted to Islam and was put under psychiatric observation by her relatives as a result. The court deprived her of her parental rights and local authorities were involved in actions which infringed on her civil rights.

## Internet

It is quite interesting that in 2017, there has been public discussion about the danger of the so-called Islamic State to Ukraine. To a degree this was expected since the fight against this terrorist organisation in the Middle East by the Russian Federation and the USA and their allies created the conditions for worldwide spreading of its surviving fighters and

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35. Olga Komarova, “Na Kyivshchyni bunt proty ‘syrivs’kykh bizhentsiv’. Khto ‘nakruchuye’ yahotyntsiv? (In Kyiv Region There Is a Rebellion against “Syrian Refugees”. Who Hypes Up the Yagotins?)”, Radio Svoboda, (March 16, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/27617665.html>.

36. Prava lyudyny v sferi mizhnarodnoho zakhystu («prytulku») – BF “Pravo na zakhyst” (Human Rights in the Field of International Protection (“Asylum”) - Charitable Foundation “The Right to Protection”), UHHRU, (March 6, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://helsinki.org.ua/prava-lyudyny-v-sferi-mizhnarodnoho-zahystu/>. Valentyna Eminova, “Prytulok u Yahotyni: hetto, osidok IDIL chy shmatochok Yevropy? (Shelter in Yagotin: A Ghetto, an IDIL or a Piece of Europe?)”, Depo.Zhyttia, (March 4 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://www.depo.ua/ukr/life/chi-mozhut-yagotynski-siryitsi-zrobiti-z-nas-evropeytsiv-04032016130500>.

37. Confidential interview conducted in December 2017.

supporters. According to Ukrainian experts, Ukraine could become one of the destinations of these terrorists.<sup>38</sup> However, the Ukrainian human rights activists consider the situation from a different angle. For them, the Russian Federation is only using a counter-terrorism approach as a pretext for fighting its religious and political opposition and the people coming from Middle Eastern countries have nothing in common with DAESH.

For example, on April 3, the Ukrainian Internet newspaper *Vesti* published an article under the title “Why Ukraine Became the Centre of Legalisation of ISIS Fighters.”<sup>39</sup> The author tried to convince the readers that Muslims coming to Ukraine have connections with the international terrorist network.

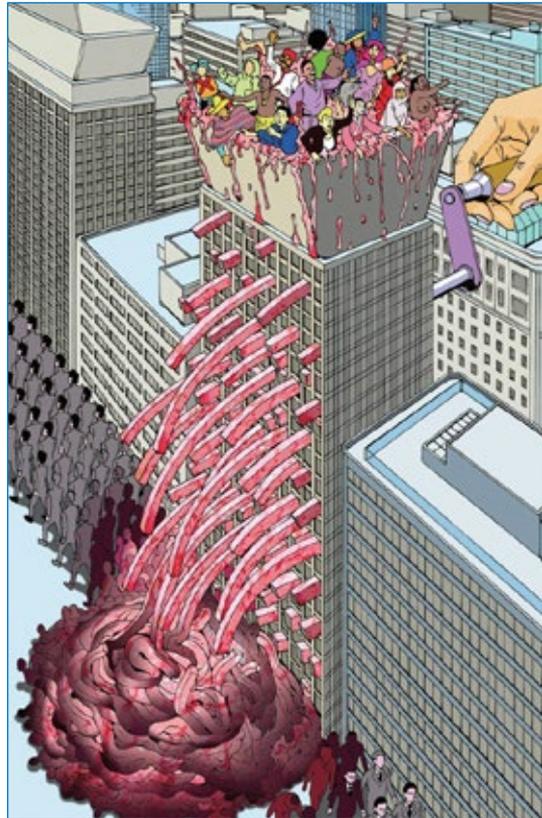


Figure 3: Demonstrates how one of the mainstream far-right political parties of Ukraine sees the increasing numbers of Muslims in Western Europe.<sup>40</sup>

### Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The tricky issue with the far-right movements is that, on the one hand, they certainly have a certain Islamophobic agenda and close connections with far-right movements throughout Europe. Nevertheless, they are troubled by the direct confrontation with the Russian Federation over Crimea and Donbass and by the fact that Russia now evidently has connections with almost every European populist political party and movement. Russian aggression is a primary priority for them. As a result, the Ukrainian far-right movements decided to construct their political agenda in favour of a temporal alliance with the Muslim community of Ukraine.

38. Bogdan Petrenko, “Chy zahrozhuye Ukrayini Islams’ka Derzhava? (Is Ukraine Threatened by the Islamic State?)”, LB.ua, (July 14, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // [https://ukr.lb.ua/blog/bohdan\\_petrenko/371461\\_chi\\_zahrozhuye\\_ukraini\\_islamska.html](https://ukr.lb.ua/blog/bohdan_petrenko/371461_chi_zahrozhuye_ukraini_islamska.html).

39. Petr Pulyayev, “Iz-za chego Ukraina stala tsentrom legalizatsii boyevikov IGIL (Why Did Ukraine Become the Centre of the Legalization of the Isil Militants)”, *Vesti*, (April 3, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // <https://vesti-ukr.com/strana/232590-ukraina-i-ihil>.

40. Image available at the “Ukraine in Front of the Challenges of Liberalism”, retrieved January 2, 2018 (Alexey Romanyuk “Poganyi Pryklad Zahodu dlya Ukrainy” (Bad European Example for Ukraine)// <https://pravyysektor.info/prosvitnyctvo/oriyentyry/poganyy-pryklad-zahodu-dlya-ukrayiny>) August 25, 2017.

## Civil Society and Political Initiatives to Counter Islamophobia

Unfortunately, in Ukraine there are no particular organisations or institutions fully dedicated to the analysis and monitoring of Islamophobia in the country. This work was usually conducted by the religious institutions, the Muftiate Umma; by ethnic communities as in the case of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People; or by many human rights organisations whose efforts often overlap in functions and operational activities. Sometimes journalists who are covering stories in the Ukrainian media are also actively involved in the process of monitoring. Nonetheless it is true that until now none organisation or institution has not involved in systematic way into the process of monitoring of Islamophobia in Ukraine. It is mostly sporadic and chaotic.

## Overview of the Situation in Crimea

The Russian Federation annexed the Crimean Peninsula in 2014 and since then it has been entirely under Russian control. The Crimean case has many different and sophisticated features but one of the crucial ones is the prosecution of the local indigenous Muslim population, namely the Crimean Tatars. Russia has managed to perfectly conflate the fight against the people who support the territorial integrity of Ukraine with the fight against ‘extremists’.

For some it may be a contested assumption but Russia’s policy towards the Crimean Tatars since 2014 has been Islamophobic. The only systematically prosecuted community in Crimea is the community of the Crimean Tatars. From the very beginning, Russia went to a great extent to divide Crimean Tatar leadership and particularly the religious community. Russia created its own alternative religious Islamic architecture in Crimea. In order to make the Crimean Muftiate,<sup>41</sup> which before 2014 was closed to the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatars People, appeaseable they created alternative Muftiates, such as the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims – Taurida Muftiate in 2014.<sup>42</sup> Further afield, in Kiev they took other measures (currently ongoing) such as the prosecution of the followers of the Muslim political group Hizb ut-Tahrir. Many human rights NGOs dealing with Crimea have been paying special attention in the last year to the prosecution of Crimean Muslims, the majority of whom are simultaneously Crimean Tatars and followers of Hizb ut-Tahrir. These are called the cases of “Hizb ut-Tahrir”<sup>43</sup> and “Tablighi Jamaat”, the second being an apolitical religious movement. Both organisations are banned as extremist in the Russian Federation. In the second half of 2017, the systematic interrogations and prosecutions of Crimean Tatars intensified.

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41. Roman Silantyev, “Vserossiyskiye ambitsii muftiyatov (All-Russian Ambitions of Muftis)”, *Nezavisimaya*, (September 17, 2014), retrieved January 2, 2018 from // [http://www.ng.ru/facts/2014-09-17/6\\_muftiat.html](http://www.ng.ru/facts/2014-09-17/6_muftiat.html).

42. *Deyatel'nost' TSDUMTM* // <http://cdumk.ru/tsdumtm/deyatelnost-tsdumtm>.

43. Ivan Putilov, «Delo Hizb ut-Tahrir»: yaltinskiye musul'mane nakanune suda (Hizb ut-Tahrir Case: Yalta Muslims on the Eve of the Trial), *Krym.Realii*, (December 4, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from <https://ru.krymr.com/a/28896455.html>.



Figure 4: The Russian court in Crimea extended the term of arrest of three of the six persons involved in the Hizb ut-Tahrir case; namely, Seyran Saliev, Timur Ibragimov and Memet Belyalov.<sup>44</sup>

Throughout 2017 the following human rights violations against Crimean Muslims were registered by the human rights NGO Krym SOS:<sup>45</sup>

- 23 criminal cases
  - 10 politically motivated court decisions for sentences in prison
  - 4 politically motivated cases currently being heard in court
  - 135 cases of imposing administrative sanctions
- 23 arrests, 86 fines, 22 court decisions are currently pending
  - 40 politically motivated searches of Crimean Muslims' houses and offices
  - 184 people were illegally detained
  - 4 raids by the Special Forces in the places where Crimean Tatars have strong demographic representation



Figure 5: More than a hundred Crimean Tatars picketed all around Crimea holding placards stating "Muslims are not terrorists!"<sup>46</sup>

44. 15minut, (December 7, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from: <https://15minut.org/news/175332-v-krymu-sud-prodlil-arest-figurantov-dela-hizb-ut-tahrir-iz-bahchisaraya-na-zasedanie-prishli-desyatki-lyudej-video>.)

45. Krym SOS „Obzor Situacii w Krymu” (Overview of the Situation in Crimea), January-December 2017 <http://krymsos.com/files/a/4/a426882-2017--1-.pdf>.

46. Image available by Alimdar Crimean Solidarity, (October 14, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from [https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story\\_fbid=288492081638042&id=100014317569547](https://web.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=288492081638042&id=100014317569547)



Figure 6: The daily realities and living conditions of Crimean Muslims in annexed Crimea.<sup>47</sup>



Figure 7: The police in Crimea are about to apprehend a Crimean Muslim activist.<sup>48</sup>

47. Images available at Openrussia.com (<https://openrussia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/legacy/notes/redactor/o/62/b1/62b141b893d1.jpg>) or Anna Nemtsova, “The Daily Beast: kak Putin voyuyet s nesushchestvuyushchimi terroristami (How Putin Fights with Non-Existent Terrorists)”, (original <https://www.thedailybeast.com/putins-super-cynical-war-on-terror> Putin’s Super Cynical ‘War on Terror’), Openrussia, (August 20, 2016), retrieved January 2, 2018 from <https://openrussia.org/post/view/17055/>) and Krymsos.com (<http://krymsos.com/images/doc/7/3/73b4f3b-12736670-526428274185191-6060118-o.jpg>) (retrieved January 2, 2018).

48. Image available at “Znak.com” [https://www.znak.com/2017-10-15/okolo\\_50\\_uchastnikov\\_odinocnyh\\_piketov\\_v\\_podderzhku\\_krymskih\\_tatar\\_zaderzhany\\_na\\_poluostrove](https://www.znak.com/2017-10-15/okolo_50_uchastnikov_odinocnyh_piketov_v_podderzhku_krymskih_tatar_zaderzhany_na_poluostrove) (retrieved January 2, 2018).

## Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islam, as was discussed and analysed throughout the report, has deep roots in Ukraine and Islamophobia has never played a dominant role in Ukrainian culture or public opinion. It usually had a “governmental face” and was always related to the Crimean Tatars who were concentrated in Crimea. After 2014, the Muslim population in Crimea and Donbass started to migrate across the Ukrainian mainland because of the Russian military intervention. Nowadays, there are Muslim communities in many Ukrainian large and mid-sized cities and their numbers will be growing. There are increasing numbers of Crimean IDPs in the Ukrainian mainland; refugees from Russia who are escaping prosecution; and a natural increase of Muslim immigrants and refugees from the Middle East and South and Central Asia. The period 2014-2017 was particularly calm and did not witness any aggressive attitude from the Orthodox Slavic majority. Except in Crimea, of course, where Islamophobia is widespread and has been exercised as a systematic approach by the Russian Federation. Most Ukrainians consider Muslim IDPs as victims of Russian aggression, but the situation could change in the following years in response to the European rise of Islamophobia. In order to mitigate the possible rise of Islamophobia in Ukraine, the government should implement the following recommendations:

- Increase awareness about Islam and the Muslim community in Ukraine and particularly in school textbooks.
- The SBU (Security Service of Ukraine) should immediately stop the prosecution of the representatives of the Muslim community in Ukraine and asylum seekers (mostly from the Russian Federation).
- It is necessary for the Muslim community of Ukraine in the coming year to open a special monitoring mission (possibly an NGO) which will collect information on Islamophobia.
- The best preventive measures against the Islamist threat to Ukraine are the Ukrainian commitment and coherent support of the pro-Ukrainian and anti-extremism Muslim communities.
- It is necessary to elaborate an open and transparent policy towards Muslims since after 2014 Islam has become a reality, not only for Donbass or Crimea but for the entire country due to the sudden and new presence of many Muslim communities in numerous Ukrainian cities. To prevent any possibility of instances of Islamophobia, the Ukrainian government should deliver a strong, reassuring message.
- Self-isolation is the main problem of the Muslim communities in Western Europe. The Ukrainian government should institutionalise the process of monitoring Islamophobia at the state level. Every incident should be recorded and systematised in order to contribute towards appropriate and realistic policy.

- Educational seminars and training should be provided for teachers, civil servants, and especially for police departments.
- Permission should be granted to Muslim women to have passport photos wearing their headscarves and the 1994 provision banning any clothes that are worn on the head should be withdrawn.
- Legislative amendments are necessary to allow the Muslim community of Ukraine to have official days off during the celebration of the Kurban Bayram.
- The rising Muslim community requires the construction of a Grand Mosque of Ukraine and of a central Islamic Centre. The current status threatens the cohesiveness of the Muslim community.

## Chronology

- **12.01.2017:** In Bakhchisaray, Crimea, Zevri Abseitov was placed in a psychiatric hospital for examination. This old Soviet Union practice against opposition is quite often used as a tool in Crimea.<sup>49</sup>
- **17.01.2017:** Emir Kuku was accused of preparing the forcible seizure of power and the forcible change of the constitutional system of the Russian Federation. Kuku called these accusations absurd and stated that they were being directed against “observant” Muslims.<sup>50</sup> The same accusations were issued for several other Crimean Tatars.
- **06.04.2017:** A raid took place in the central market of Simferopol (about 60 people were detained). “Two women were detained ... the main criterion is a visible-Muslim appearance (traditional Muslim clothes and beard). The availability of documents did not matter. After the collection of fingerprints and saliva samples, they were all released.”<sup>51</sup>
- **17.04.2017:** In the Muslim (Crimean Tatars’) cemetery in Bagerevo, Crimea an act of vandalism was recorded. Unknown persons painted the faces of the tombstones green, painted offensive pictures and destroyed the fences in the cemetery.<sup>52</sup>

49. “MUSUL’MANINA IZ BAKHCHISARAYA FSB OTPRAVILA V PSIKHLECHEBNITSU (MUSLIM FROM BAKHCHISARAY FSB SENT TO LOONEYBIN)”, Chernomorskaya Teleradiokomplaniya, (January 15, 2017), retrieved January 2, 2018 from <http://blacksea.tv/news/musulmanina-iz-baxchisaraya-fsb-otpravila-v-psixlechebnicu/>.

50. Facebook page of Anna Bogacheva, January 18, 2017 [https://web.facebook.com/groups/487906314740295/permalink/582642325266693/?\\_rdc=1&\\_rdt](https://web.facebook.com/groups/487906314740295/permalink/582642325266693/?_rdc=1&_rdt).

51. Tamila Tasheva, “Siloviki ustroili oblavu na rynke Simferopolya (Siloviki Staged a Roundup in the Market of Simferopol)”, QHA, (April 6, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from <http://qha.com.ua/ru/obschestvo/siloviki-ustroili-oblavu-na-rynke-simferopolya-obnovlyaetsya/172682/>.

52. Vandalizm v Krymu: v Kerchi oskvernili krymskotatarskoye kladbishche (Vandalism in the Crimea: the Crimean Tatar Cemetery was Defiled in Kerch), CRIMEAN TATAR RESOURCE CENTER, (April 18, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from <http://ctrcenter.org/ru/news/401-vandalizm-v-krymu-v-kerchi-oskvernili-krymskotatarskoe-kladbische>.

- **07.05.2017:** A raid on the homes of 18 families of Crimean Tatars in the Sudak region. During the raid, the Crimean Tatars were questioned with a specific questionnaire containing questions with the purpose of finding out the religious nature of the person.
- **15.06.2017:** Raids on the villages of Urozhainoye and Prisivashnoe of the Soviet district. Selected documents of 10 Crimean Tatar families were checked and a search was carried out in their houses.
- **10.08.2017:** After searching the house of Crimean Muslims (Mirpochaevy family), who were citizens of Tajikistan, the police detained four members of the family (father and sons). Two members of the family were tortured with electricity. After these events, the family left Crimea.
- **11.10.2017:** In Bakhchisaray, the FSB conducted several searches in the houses of Crimean Muslims.<sup>53</sup> Six persons were detained.
- **13.10.2017:** The FSB searched the house of the Crimean Muslim Renat Paralamov, who was taken to the police centre. There, he underwent psychological and physical torture (electrical shocks). The next day he was found by people at Simferopol's bus station.<sup>54</sup>
- **14.10.2017:** More than one hundred Crimean Tatars picketed against the prosecution and violations of human rights of Crimean Muslims.
- **08.11.2017:** In the administrative border between the occupied Crimea and the mainland of Ukraine, a group of Crimean Muslim women were stopped and interrogated for their alleged connection to DAESH. The FSB put psychological pressure on them.<sup>55</sup>
- **08.11.2017:** Organised searches in Crimean Muslims' houses were conducted and the employees of a "Halal Fast Food" café were taken to a police station.

53. "Presechena deyatel'nost' bakhchisarayskoy organizatsii "Khizb-ut-Takhrir al'-Islami" (The Activities of the Bakhchisaray Organization Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami Suppressed)", RiaNovosti Crimea, (October 11, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from <http://crimea.ria.ru/news/20171011/1112258988.html>.

54. Pavel Kazarin "«Bili kulakami i tokom»: pokhishcheniye i osvobozhdeniye Renata Paralamova (I Was Beaten with Fists and Electricity: The Kidnapping and Liberation of Renat Paralamov)", Krym.Realii, (November 8, 2017), retrieved January 8, 2018 from <https://ru.krymr.com/a/28838225.html>.

55. Tamila Tasheva, <https://web.facebook.com/tamila.tasheva/posts/10155115635486868>

**T**his is the third issue of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)* consisting of an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2017, as well as 33 country reports which include almost all EU member states and additional countries such as Russia and Norway. This year's *EIR* represents the work of 40 prominent scholars and civil society activists from various European countries.

The denial of the very existence of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism/anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe by many demonstrates the need for an appropriate effort and political will to tackle this normalized racism and its manifestations that are deeply entrenched in European societies, institutions, and states.

This denial is not only the case for extremist groups on the political fringe of the society, but rather far-right discourses have moved to the center of political power. Consequently, it is not only right-wing extremist groups that rely on the means of Islamophobic propaganda and discourse - social democrats, liberals, leftists or conservatives are not immune to this form of racism.

As a survey published by the FRA reveals 76% of Muslim respondents feel strongly attached to the country they live in, while 31% of those seeking work have been discriminated against in the last five years. At the same time, only 12% of Muslims say they have reported cases of discrimination. Hence, we can say with certainty that the extent of discrimination Muslims face in Europe is much greater than the numbers revealed in any report on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hate crime in Europe.

In other words, one can claim that all the available data and statistics about Islamophobia in Europe show only the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, revealing the comprehensiveness of structural anti-Muslim racism lies at the heart of the *European Islamophobia Report* project, which on a yearly basis analyzes the trends and developments in Europe from Russia to Portugal, and Malta to Norway.

#### **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.

