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EUROPEAN ISLAMOPHOBIA REPORT 2018

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ (Eds)





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FOREWORD

The Christchurch terror attack on March 15, 2019 shocked the international community with its high number of casualties, the morbid use of social media, and the exhibited violation of the sanctity of places of worship. Beyond bitter grief and sorrow, this attack highlights the extent that Islamophobic terrorism constitutes a concrete threat for civilians anywhere in the world - even in peaceful and relatively remoted countries like New Zealand.

Muslims are already the people who suffer the most from terrorism emanating from radicals in the Muslim world as the vast majority of terrorist attacks occur in Muslim-majority countries. However, Muslims are now facing a new kind of terror rooted in anti-Muslim racism and white supremacist ideology.

This fourth edition of European Islamophobia Report shows how European societies are challenged by the rise of violent far-right groups that do not only preach hatred of Muslims but also participate in the organization of bloody terror attacks. In France, the far-right group AFO (Action of Operational Forces) was about to physically attack hundreds of imams, Muslim women, and mosques in the summer of 2018. The AFO was linked to *Volontaires Pour la France* (Voluntaries for France, VPF) that calls for “defending French identity” and “fighting against the Islamization in France.”

In Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, since 2015, the network Hannibal recruits former security service agents, soldiers, and policemen along with right-wing individuals to prepare them for “Day X,” the day organized society supposedly collapses as we know it. The 2019 edition of the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT), published by EUROPOL, discloses in detail the growing danger of right-wing terrorism even if the study never mentions the anti-Muslim ideological framework working behind this trend.

This report investigates in detail the underlying dynamics that directly or indirectly support the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Europe. This extends from Islamophobic statements spread in national media to laws and policies that restrain the fundamental rights of European Muslim citizens. As a result, the European Islamophobia Report 2018 does not only elaborate on Islamophobic terrorism but also discusses the impact of anti-Muslim discourse upon human rights, multiculturalism, and the state of law in Europe.

Yet, while European societies are progressively being shaped by racist and Islamophobic discourses, most of the European media bodies do not cover anti-Muslim attacks to the extent they deserve. For instance, incidents that in other cases would be portrayed as terrorist attacks, when Muslims are targeted, are described as the unmeditated hate crime of a “lone wolf.” This is the reason why, at SETA, we believe in the exigent need for academic studies on Islamophobia that will constitute key tools to understanding the current social transformations that are taking place on the European continent.

By gathering 39 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized on racism and human rights, the European Islamophobia Report 2018 addresses the lack of comparative surveys on Islamophobia at a European level. All 34 country reports included in this book follow a unique structure that is convenient, first, for comparing country-reports and, second, for selected readings on a particular topic such as politics, employment, or education. Only the Portuguese report has a particular format due to the distinctive dynamics of anti-Muslim racism specific to this country.

Last but not least, SETA cooperated with new partners on the elaboration of this report’s edition. The Leopold Weiss Institute, an Austrian NGO based in Vienna dedicated to the research of Muslims in Europe, helped us design the entire project from August 2018 to the report’s publication. Moreover, the European Union – through the Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey (CSD-V) – generously funded the whole project including this book, panels, workshops, and many other activities related to this study (videos, infographics, website, etc.).

We hope the European Islamophobia Report 2018 will provide useful insights and data for any policy-maker or institution willing to seriously tackle anti-Muslim racism in Europe.

Burhanettin Duran
SETA General Coordinator

THE STATE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA IN EUROPE IN 2018

ENES BAYRAKLI • FARID HAFEZ

We are delighted to present the fourth edition of the annual *European Islamophobia Report (EIR)*, this time in cooperation with the Leopold Weiss Institute and with generous funding by the European Union, the Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey (CSD-V). The *EIR 2018* is an overall evaluation of Islamophobia in Europe in the year 2018, as well as 34 country reports that include almost all EU member states and additional countries, which we had not covered in previous years, such as Montenegro and Moldova. This year's *EIR* represents the work of 39 scholars, experts, and civil society activists from various European countries.

The year 2018 was a year of unrest within and at the borders of Europe. We witnessed the populist grassroots yellow vests movement (*Mouvement des gilets jaunes*) in France, which protested for economic justice and against authoritarian structures, the uncertainty surrounding Brexit and the worsening situation at the borders of Europe with the drowning of many adults and children in the Mediterranean Sea.¹

More importantly, all over Europe far-right parties and far-right narratives are on the rise and in some countries such as in Italy and Austria they are already in power. The cover picture we have chosen for this year shows three ministers of interior: Matteo Salvini, who is also the leader of the right-wing Lega; Herbert Kickl, who is one of the most important figures in Austria's right-wing Freedom Party; and Horst Seehofer, a hardliner within Angela Merkel's centrist-right Christian democratic party (representing the Bavarian Christian Social Union). They stand for a tougher refugee and asylum policy, teaming up to demonstrate that Europe is not willing to accept more refugees. With the strengthening of nationalist positions, a new front for the isolation of Europe ("Fortress Europe") has been created. "Europe That Protects" was the official motto of the Austrian EU Council presidency in 2018. In this

1. UNHCR, "Six People Died Each Day Attempting to Cross Mediterranean in 2018", *UNHCR Report*, 30 January 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2019/1/5c500c504/six-people-died-day-attempting-cross-mediterranean-2018-unhcr-report.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

endeavor, Austria's then-head of government Sebastian Kurz was casting himself as Europe's security chancellor.² Islamophobic arguments and narratives have played a central role in this story.

At the same time, there have been small but important attempts in combating Islamophobia. The existing research on Islamophobia is growing. In Austria, an NGO the *Dokustelle Muslime* published an annual report documenting anti-Muslim racism; in the UK, the National Union of Students (NUS) published a report to foster a better understanding of the range of issues facing Muslim students in higher education and to contribute to the fight against the normalization of Islamophobia; in France, activists conducted a France-wide survey ("Consultation of Muslims") on the situation of Muslims in France leading to debates in 57 mosques and collecting answers from 24,029 individuals.

Also on a political level, a modest progress can be observed in some areas. Worth mentioning is the attempt of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims, which presented an inquiry into a working definition of Islamophobia³ to be adopted by the British parliament in order to institutionalize the struggle against Islamophobia. While the APPG was not able to convince the majority of the parliament and especially not the Conservative Party, some first steps were taken by the Labour Party⁴ and others such as the mayor of London,⁵ who adopted the definition of Islamophobia. The Conservative Party has adopted the definition so far only in Scotland, although many have called for an official inquiry into Islamophobia within the Conservative Party.⁶

Combating Islamophobia at the European and Supranational Levels

The European Commission appointed its new coordinator on anti-Muslim hatred, an institution that was created on December 1, 2015. Tommaso Chiamparino succeeded David Friggeri on July 1, 2018. The coordinator's main mandate is to address anti-Muslim hate speech, hate crime, and discrimination; the key

2. Farid Hafez, "Europe's New Isolationist Front", *qantara.de*, 8 August 2018, <https://en.qantara.de/content/the-axis-of-the-right-europes-new-isolationist-front?nopaging=1>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

3. "Islamophobia Defined. The Inquiry into a Working Definition of Islamophobia", All Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cfffdd8a9/t/5bfd1ea3352f531a-6170ceee/1543315109493/Islamophobia+Defined.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

4. Frances Perraudin, "Labour Formally Adopts Definition of Islamophobia", *The Guardian*, 20 March 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/mar/20/labour-formally-adopts-definition-islamophobia>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

5. "Mayor Adopts APPG Definition of Islamophobia", *Mayor of London*, 22 March 2019, <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/sadiq-says-government-should-follow-suit>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

6. Ed Sykes, "Conservative Party to Start 'Long-Awaited' Investigation into Islamophobia Crisis", *The Canary*, 5 August 2019, <https://www.thecanary.co/uk/analysis/2019/08/05/conservative-party-to-start-long-awaited-investigation-into-islamophobia-crisis/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

stakeholders are organizations that deal with anti-racism and non-discrimination policy at the European and national level. A newly formed platform, the European Coalition against Islamophobia, raised its structural concerns before the new person was nominated. They criticized that this position lacks a clear mandate as to “what the role of the coordinator entails in terms of representation, official communication and actions that can be undertaken, also defining the remit of issues to be covered.”⁷

Chiamparino set up a European Commission high-level meeting in December 2018, which was attended by member state representatives and NGOs working in the field of anti-racism and Muslims. The meeting produced concrete recommendations and the commitment of the representatives of the Netherlands and Spain to secure and build on the legacy of the present commission after the 2019 European elections, with the view to develop concrete measures against Islamophobia. The intention has been uttered by many to develop a common working definition of Islamophobia to support policy and advocacy work.⁸ These are important steps by the coordinator together with member states and NGOs to institutionalize further the struggle against Islamophobia. With Ursula von der Leyen as the first elected female European commission president, there might be some hope that the German political will to combat Islamophobia at a state level might also be transferred to the European level. While different NGOs are increasingly coordinating their efforts, as the European Coalition against Islamophobia shows, the involvement of international as well as supranational institutions such as the EU, the Council of Europe, the OSCE, and the UN are essential.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) organized a meeting in Frankfurt, Germany in co-operation with the Goethe University’s Academy for Islam in Science and Society, on June 25-26, 2018. The meeting had the purpose to work on a draft of the practical guide being developed by the ODIHR on understanding hate crimes against Muslims and addressing the security needs of Muslim communities. ODIHR Adviser on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims Djermana Seta argued that the guide will support governments in assessing the specific security needs of Muslim communities and improve responses to hate crime by local authorities and law enforcement agencies.⁹ In fact, according to the OSCE database, currently only 16

7. “Open Letter A Meaningful Coordinator on Anti-Muslim Hatred to Transform EU Approach on Islamophobia”, *ENAR*, 5 July 2018, <https://www.enar-eu.org/Open-letter-A-meaningful-coordinator-on-anti-Muslim-hatred-to-transform-EU-1523>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

8. “Annual Report 2018”, *ENAR*, p. 13 https://www.enar-eu.org/IMG/pdf/annualreport_2018_final-2.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

9. “Strategies to Improve Security of Muslim Communities and Reduce Hate Crime the Focus of ODIHR-Organized Consultations in Frankfurt”, *OSCE*, 26 June 2018, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/385875>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

states officially document anti-Muslim hate crimes¹⁰ and even in these cases, there is a lot of room for improvement.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) and the Council of Europe's annual report for 2018 stresses that "Islamophobia is still prevalent [...] In public discourse, Islam and Muslims continue to be associated with radicalization, violence and terrorism. There is, generally, only very little positive media coverage of Muslim communities in Europe. Islamophobic hatred is often spread via the Internet. Anti-Muslim sentiments are also regularly manifested in petitions and protest rallies against the construction of mosques. In many member states a dangerous 'normalisation' of Islamophobic prejudice can be observed."¹¹ The ECRI especially stresses that Black Muslims and Muslim women suffer from multiple discrimination. The ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 5 which deals with combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims, adopted on March 16, 2000, is still an important legislation which – if followed – would allow Muslims to live in a much safer space.¹²

In 2018, the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations, which monitors state parties' adherence to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights found that France violated the human rights of two women by fining them for wearing the niqab, a full-body Islamic veil.¹³ This intervention is important, giving weight to the rights of marginalized women in France and beyond.

In March 2019, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) published the *12th Report on Islamophobia* that lists anti-Muslim events between June 2018 and February 2019. The report provides a general analysis of Islamophobia in European countries.¹⁴ Similarly, the OIC's Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPHRC) in collaboration with the Republic of Turkey, held its 5th Annual Seminar on the subject of "Islamophobia: A Human Rights Violation and a Contemporary Manifestation of Racism" in Istanbul on October 17-18, 2018. Besides commission members, the event brought together relevant experts from academia and international organizations such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner

10. "Hate Crime Reporting, Bias against Muslims", *OSCE-ODIHR*, <http://hatecrime.osce.org/what-hate-crime/bias-against-muslims>, (Access date: 2 September 2019)

11. "Annual Report on ECRI's Activities Covering the Period from 1 January to 31 December 2018", *ECRI's Council of Europe*, 29 (2019), p. 10-11, <https://rm.coe.int/annual-report-2018/168094d6fe>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

12. "ECRI General Policy Recommendation No.5 Combating Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims Adopted on 16 March 2000", *ECRI's Council of Europe*, (2000), <https://rm.coe.int/ecri-general-policy-recommendation-no-5-on-combating-intolerance-and-d/16808b5a76>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

13. UN Experts, "France: Banning the Niqab Violated Two Muslim Women's Freedom of Religion", *United Nations Human Rights*, 23 October 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23750&LangID=E>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. OIC Observatory, "12th Report on Islamophobia Presented to the 46th Council of Foreign Ministers", *OIC*, 1-2 March 2019, https://www.oic-oci.org/upload/islamophobia/2019/12th_islamophobia_annual_report_2019_en.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the European Commission (EC), and the OIC Women Advisory Council. A large number of OIC member and observer states and representatives of their National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI) also participated in the seminar.¹⁵

The Rise of the Far Right in Europe

During the last decade, nationalist, populist, and far-right movements increased their influence in Europe. Using concerns about immigration, globalization, and religious terrorism, far-right extremist political parties seized power in Austria (October 2017) and Italy (March 2018) alongside previously elected nationalist governments in Poland, Hungary, and Serbia. In countries that are not yet ruled by nationalists, far-right movements are also growing. In September 2017, the populist right-wing extremist party *Alternative for Germany* (AfD) entered the German parliament for the first time and became the third party in the Bundestag with 12.6% of votes. Similarly, for the first time since the end of the Francoist dictatorship (1975), the Spanish electors sent several politicians of the far-right extremist party VOX to parliament in April 2019.¹⁶

Far-right extremist parties are also benefiting from social anger towards mainstream politics. In the German city of Chemnitz, protests against Merkel's immigration policy led to mob-like street violence (September 2018). Likewise, many protests occurred in France and Belgium against the Marrakech Migration Pact in December 2018, mixing anti-immigration and anti-Muslim resentment. European liberal and centrist parties seem unable to counter nationalistic discourse. On the contrary, some of them even use far-right arguments for electoral purposes such as in Norway with the Progress Party, the third largest party in parliament and part of the governmental coalition, in Denmark with the *Venstre* party, and in France with *Les Républicains* (The Republicans). Yet, by spreading ideas and expressions that were previously tied to far-right extremist parties, those mainstream parties are actually legitimizing the hatred against the other, i.e. all those who look like an immigrant, a gypsy, a Muslim, etc.

In fact, Muslims are among the first victims of the rise of far-right extremism in Europe. In Austria, the *Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus* (Office for Documenting Islamophobia and Anti-Muslim Racism) recorded an

15. "Istanbul Declaration on 'Islamophobia: A Human Rights Violation and a Contemporary Manifestation of Racism', *Outcome Document of the 5th International Seminar of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission*, 17-18 October 2018, <https://www.oic-iphrc.org/en/data/docs/seminars/339401.pdf>; See the concept paper from the conference: https://www.oic-iphrc.org/en/data/docs/International_Seminars/Istanbul_Seminar/Concept%20Paper%20for%20The%205th%20International%20Seminar%20of%20IPHRC%20-%20Istanbul%202018_EV.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

16. "Europe and Right-Wing Nationalism: A Country-by-Country Guide", BBC, 24 May 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36130006>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

increase of approximately 74% of documented anti-Muslim racist acts in its report for 2018: 540 cases of Islamophobia were recorded in 2018 compared to 309 cases in 2017. In France, the *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF) recorded 676 Islamophobic incidents in 2018 against 446 in 2017 (increase of 52%). In the UK, the upward trend in Islamophobic incidents continued in 2017-18 (the typical census period for official government data), with the number of cases recorded in official statistics rising by 17% and religion-specific cases by a staggering 40% (double the figure of 2015/16). Instances of vandalism directed at places of worship also recorded a significant (50%) rise in the same period. Finally, in the Netherlands, the Anti-discrimination Agencies (ADVs) announced that 91% of a total of 151 incidents of religious discrimination reported to the police were related to Muslims. The Anti-discrimination Agencies received 304 reports of religious discrimination, two thirds of which were directed against Muslims. Women constitute the majority of the victims of Islamophobia, especially when they wear headscarves. For instance, the *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF) notes that 70% of the victims of Islamophobic acts in France are women. In her report on Islamophobia in Belgium, Amina Easat-Daas demonstrates how “attacks against Muslim women range from verbal aggressions, denial of access to services, Muslim women forcibly having the headscarf removed, and go as far as attempted rape” and physical attacks.

Islamophobia is not only a threat for Muslim communities established in the old continent but also for the security and the stability of European states. The section below on Islamophobic terror attacks illustrates the extent to which anti-Muslim racism promoted in far-right and nationalistic circles represents a concrete danger to human rights, national security, and the European model of coexistence.

The Right Wing in Opposition

Although the far right does not rule the majority of European countries, figures and movements related to nationalistic or nativist ideology keep imposing their Islamophobic agenda on European politics. Actually, the immediate goal of far-right movements “is to influence and drive debate rather than win power or join a coalition.”¹⁷ There are many examples of this trend such as Angela Merkel’s announcement of setting “transit camps” for migrants along the German border in July 2018; Emmanuel Macron’s focus on French identity in his decisive speech on the yellow vests movement in April 2019; or Lars Løkke Rasmussen’s promotion of the Danish “anti-ghetto laws” – that betrays the fundamental principle of equality of all citizen in front of the law – in January 2018. In other words, far-rights ideas extend their reach into political mainstream movements. This “lepenization of minds” (*lepenisa-*

17. Sasha Polakow-Suransky, “The Far-Right Doesn’t Have to Win to Set the Legislative Agenda”, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/23/the-far-right-doesnt-have-to-win-to-set-the-legislative-agenda>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

tion des esprits)¹⁸ that has spread throughout Europe makes any attempt to deconstruct nationalistic arguments difficult.

Most of the far-right opposition parties manage to put pressure on the liberal governments because of their ability to seize any discourse regarding the “we.” They claim to defend national sovereignty against the European Commission, the national welfare state against globalization, national culture against immigration, and national religious, cultural, and secularist heritage against Islam.

This ideological “success” also triggered the emergence of new far-right figures in recent years. In the Netherlands, for instance, Thierry Baudet who created the party *Forum voor Democratie* in 2016, appeared to gain popularity with his anti-Islam attitude. The Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz or the newly established Spanish VOX party (created in 2013) are also good examples of this new far-right generation.

Finally, all these movements try to constitute a social support at grass-roots level. On December 2018, Belgian far-right networks organized the protest *La Marche contre Marrakech* - the same way the German AfD party had triggered Chemnitz mobs in September 2018. Similarly, the French National Rally, formerly the National Front, has been the party that benefited the most from the yellow vest movement according to opinion polls in December 2018 (i.e. when the movement was at its peak).¹⁹

The Right Wing in Power

Once in power, far-right extremist parties do not only incriminate foreigners in the public debate but also directly attack the fundamental rights of minorities, in general, and of Muslims, in particular. In other words, far-right governments jeopardize the fundamental principles of the constitutional system. In his report on Islamophobia in Austria, Farid Hafez writes,

“After the ÖVP and the FPÖ formed a coalition in December 2017, several anti-Muslim laws were introduced and Islamophobic policies were implemented in 2018. First, the government implemented a hijab ban for children in kindergarten. This act was legitimized by presenting it as a measure against so-called political Islam. The symbol act was also presented as a measure to fight “political Islam.” Secondly, the government attempted to close mosques and the Arab Islamic Community of the Islamic Religious Authority (IGGÖ). [...] Thirdly, the general secretary of the governing ÖVP even demanded to ban fasting in school for pupils.”²⁰

18. The meaning of “lepenization” is the “minds that get shaped by J.M. Le Pen’s ideas and worldview.” The term is constructed from the famous French xenophobic leader’s name (Le Pen) and from the suffix of “action -ation”. See: Pierre Tevanian and Sylvie Tissot, *Les mots sont importants*, (Libertaria, Paris: 2010).

19. Caroline Vigoureux, “Sondage élections européennes: les Gilets jaunes protestent, le RN fait le plein”, *L’Opinion*, 12 December 2018, <https://www.lopinion.fr/edition/politique/sondage-elections-europeennes-gilets-jaunes-protestent-rn-fait-plein-171734>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

20. In the present edition see Farid Hafez, “Islamophobia in Austria: National Report 2018”.

Anna Piela reports similar dynamics in the report on Islamophobia in Poland. She underlines the “large discrepancy between the lived experiences of Polish Muslims who feel threatened by the sheer scale of anti-Muslim verbal and physical violence in Poland on the one hand, and the claims made by the Polish state apparatus which insists that the problem of anti-Muslim hate crime is declining.”²¹ Piela reminds us that hate crime in Poland is heavily under-reported with only 5% of those targeted reporting hate crime to the police. According to Piela, the denial of anti-Muslim racism goes along with the dismantlement of mechanisms protecting minorities in Poland. In sum, anti-Islam propaganda allows far-right governments to attack the constitutional system as a whole.

Nadia Jones-Gailani and Gabi Göbl draw an analogous conclusion in their report on Islamophobia in Hungary. They show how xenophobic attitudes towards Muslims and migrants occupied a great part of the April 2018 countrywide elections campaign, and how the government multiplies restrictions on many fundamental rights such as applied rule of law; academic freedom; human rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees; women’s and gender protections; rights of minority groups; and the functioning of an independent judiciary system. Again, attacks against Muslims’ rights and bodily integrity jeopardize the fundamental rights of any citizen - Muslim or not.

Finally, the xenophobic and anti-Islam climate fostered by far-right governments paves the way for physical and terror attacks against Muslims or people who might be taken to be Muslim. In Italy, Alfredo Alietti and Dario Padovan report an increase of physical and verbal attacks on immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and Muslim citizens since the formation of far-right coalition in 2018, leading to dramatic events such as the wounding by gunshot of six migrants from Nigeria in Macerata on February 3 and the murder of a Senegalese street seller, Idy Diene (54), in Florence on March 5. Likewise, Ivan Ejub Kostić shows how since they came to power in 2012, nationalists in Serbia have been rehabilitating Islamophobes, who are among those responsible for crimes against Muslims during the civil war.

The Co-option of Islamophobia by Centrist Parties

As has been mentioned above, centrist parties do not manage to counter far-right discourse and often even fall into their trap by adopting their xenophobic approaches on security, immigration, and diversity issues. For several years now, the “lepenization of minds” (*lepenisation des esprits*)²² has taken over European politicians and media regardless of their position on the political spectrum. As a result, Islamophobia has become the new normal in Europe among politicians of any ideology.

21. In the present edition see Anna Piela, “Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2018”.

22. Pierre Tevastian and Sylvie Tissot, *Les mots sont importants*, (Libertaria, Paris: 2010).

For instance, Austrian governmental measures and laws against Muslims were discursively supported by the majority of the political opposition parties. Likewise, discourses and politics that depict the Danish Muslim minority as incompatible with Danish values and “Danishness” have been widely relayed in circles where mainstream liberal politicians outshine such as the governmental coalition, the parliament, and media. In his report on the Czech Republic, Selma Muhič Dizdarevič brilliantly underlines that “Islamophobia is not a phenomenon related only to certain politicians and parties.”²³ Besides the Direct Democracy Party (SPD), which is leading the way regarding Islamophobia in the Czech Republic, she notes that “we find Islamophobes both in the left (Communist Party, Social Democratic Party) and the right (Civic Democratic Party). Particularly encouraging for Islamophobes is that the Czech president himself [Miloš Zeman from *Strana Práv Občanů* – Civil Rights Party] supports and promotes such views.”²⁴ She concludes that in the Czech Republic it is almost impossible to have a political career and hold a positive attitude towards minorities and, in particular, Muslims.

Even among political parties who claim that they are fighting the far-right wing we find patterns of Islamophobic discourse and approaches. The French presidential party Republic on the Move (*La République en Marche*, right-wing liberal), for example, has an ambiguous position on Islam. While President Macron seemed first to promote a liberal interpretation of *laïcité* and the 1905 Law on the Separation of the Churches and State, he kept repeating that Islam in France must be reorganized by the state in order to prevent radicalization. Moreover, Macron and the presidential party took decisions that strengthen an exclusively security-based approach towards Muslim people. The counterterrorism law of October 2017 has been widely implemented throughout the year 2018. The United Nations, the Human Rights League, and the French Supreme Court (*Conseil Constitutionnel*) raised concerns about the consequences of this law on Muslim people.²⁵

The (Mis-)Use of Education and Academia

Teaching and public schools constitute some of main tools in the hands of nation-states for transmitting general ideologies to a great number of their citizens. Therefore, they play a role in structural racism and the pervasive Islamophobia in Europe.

This year, many reports underline the role of courses and schoolbooks’ content in the rise of Islamophobia at the national level. Adem Ferizaj reports that narratives of “Al-

23. In the present edition see Selma Muhič Dizdarevič, “Islamophobia in the Czech Republic: National Report 2018”

24. Ibid.

25. “France: UN Expert Says New Terrorism Laws May Undermine Fundamental Rights and Freedoms”, *United Nations Human Rights*, 23 May 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23130&LangID=F>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

banian and European” lead to biased approaches towards Islam and Muslims in Kosovo’s high schools. He shows how these narratives “drastically sanction voices criticizing national figures which are at the same time represented as ‘defender[s] of Christianity in the Balkans’ or as ‘magnificent patriotic and European figure[s]’ in school books. Moreover, the complexity of the Albanian history during the Ottoman Empire is ignored at the expense of the focus on a Eurocentric account of history.”²⁶ Likewise, Anna Piela underlines the lack of proper education on Islam – and any religion other than the Roman Catholic one – in Polish state schools. She adds that teachers only evoke Islam when they come to historical accounts of war and conflict such as the battles of Poitiers (AD 732), Lepanto (AD 1571), and Vienna (AD 1683).²⁷ In his report on Islamophobia in Slovakia, Jozef Lenč offers some more general factors for the biased approach to Islam in Slovakian schools. According to Lenč, “The insufficient hourly subsidy for the humanities, the lack of education on world religions, and the low qualifications of teachers for teaching religion and civic or political education can be seen as the source of the problem [i.e. the spread of Islamophobia].”²⁸ On the same topic, Ivan Ejub Kostić highlights problems concerning history textbooks in Serbia, especially the “distorted representations of the Ottoman period and the depiction of the basics of Islamic faith and culture.” He also notes that these textbooks “are widely in use not only among Serbian Orthodox children but among Albanian, Bosniak, and Roma children as well.”²⁹ Yet it should be noted that, beyond education, hatred against Muslims remains a general problem in Serbia mainly due to nationalist ideology of great Serbia, decades of ethnic cleansing and the Bosnian genocide in the 1990s.

Governments are sometimes even more active in the spread of negative approaches towards Islam in national education. This is, for example, the case of the Albanian project to train 22,000 teachers to fight extremism. In his report, Olsi Jazexhi discloses the xenophobic character of this program that presents “Islam as the only source of violent extremism” and depicts “in negative terms traditional events such as the Shariah, the Caliphate, the Hegira, etc.” Jazexhi mentions that many imams and Muslim activists – among them the Albanian League of Imams – denounced this project by claiming, “it was aimed to scare the students of Islam and turn teachers into spies against their Muslim students.”³⁰

Disputes about the place of Islam in education are not the prerogative of governments but also filter upwards from society. In Bulgaria, for example, the positive proposition made in 2018 to include the assimilation policy of the totalitarian communist regime against Muslims and Turks in history textbooks fueled a virulent debate in Bul-

26. In the present edition see Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018”.

27. In the present edition see Anna Piela, “Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2018”.

28. In the present edition see Jozef Lenč, “Islamophobia in Slovakia: National Report 2018”.

29. In the present edition see Ivan Ejub Kostić, “Islamophobia in Serbia: National Report 2018”.

30. In the present edition see Olsi Jazexhi, “Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2018”.

garian society as it turned out that many were opposed to the idea. Likewise, in Greece, with the support of extreme-right groups and the Church, hundreds of parents protested against textbook reforms that include more information about other religions and Islam. In Italy, where education gives a great space to multiculturalism, much polemics occurred in 2018 about history textbooks that supposedly “promote Islam.”

In Denmark, private Muslim schools are targeted and placed under strong surveillance because of supposed “links with extremism.” Sibel Özcan and Zeynep Bangert report that in May 2018, “the government inserted background checks and deprived state aid from several Free Schools that were not meeting the requirements of the Free School Law. This meant the closure of certain Muslim Free Schools.”³¹ In the UK, similar debates took place and between 2014 and 2018, the authorities conducted an inquiry to inspect private Muslim schools in Birmingham. Aristotle Kallis, the author of the Islamophobia report on the UK, notes that “in the end, although the investigation did uncover evidence that some schools ended up being run as faith institutions, there was no proof of an *organised* ‘conspiracy’, as right-wing press and the government had alleged. Of the expected 100 or more cases of professional misconduct, only 15 ended up with charges - and all but one eventually collapsed in bitter recriminations.”³²

Online Islamophobia

It is well-known that Islamophobia is particularly rooted and spread on the Internet. The *Collectif contre l’islamophobie en Belgique*, one of the main organizations that fight Islamophobia in the kingdom, mentions that 29% of reported Islamophobic incidents in 2018 pertain to Islamophobia in the media and online. We can certainly explain this situation by the fact that the Internet allows people to express freely their ideas under anonymous accounts.

As a result, almost all reports give examples of hate speech in social media. In his Kosovo report, Adem Ferizaj mentions anti-Muslim racist accounts that are followed by hundreds of thousands of people on Instagram and Facebook such as *FMimages Albania* (more than 100,000 followers) and *Feja e shqiptarit është Europa* (The religion of Albanians is Europe, around 40,000 followers). In these pages, Islam and Muslim people are presented as “premodern”, “aggressive”, or “non-rational.”³³ The author of the report on Albania, Olsi Jazexhi gives examples of pages that promote conflict between “Catholic nationalism” – represented by the figure Scanderbeg, a priest who fought the Ottomans in the 15th century – and other nations and religions such as Turks, Greeks, Slavs, Orthodoxy, and, of course, Islam. Olsi Jazexhi indicates

31. In the present edition see Sibel Özcan and Zeynep Bangert, “Islamophobia in Denmark: National Report 2018”.

32. In the present edition see Aristotle Kallis, “Islamophobia in the UK: National Report 2018”.

33. In the present edition see Adem Ferizaj, “Islamophobia in Kosovo: National Report 2018”.

that “their ideology is similar to the ideology of the Australian terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who committed the New Zealand massacre on March 15, 2019.”³⁴

Amina Easat-Daas, author of the report on Belgium, insists on the fact that all these examples “point to the mainstreaming and banalisation of Islamophobic hate speech in the virtual world.”³⁵ Yet, online Islamophobia is not separate from the other spheres of social life. In his Islamophobia report on France, Léonard Faytre shows how the social media, politics, and traditional media are intertwined in Islamophobic polemics. He claims that in 2018, “Islamophobic controversies often started from social media before getting debated in mainstream media and triggering reactions among politicians.” The role of these three actors is, of course, open to change and not necessarily hostile. In Austria, for instance, while the ÖVP-FPÖ government had announced new regulations to challenge online hate, the FPÖ went online with an Islamophobic video. A commercial, which was removed from the Internet the same evening due to criticism, presented Muslim men as social parasites. The video also includes a statement from Social Affairs Minister Beate Hartinger-Klein (FPÖ). Even Chancellor Kurz called the video “unacceptable.”³⁶

The feeling of impunity that anonymous platforms offer does not only permit Islamophobes to personally attack Muslims and to make general racist comments on Islam and Muslim people, but also to organize larger xenophobic protests like the *Marche contre Marrakech* – a march against the EU migration pact - that gathered 5,500 individuals on the streets of Brussels in December 2018. On the other hand, we should not forget that the Internet is also a secure way for victims of Islamophobic attacks to report and share their experiences. Amina Easat-Daas underlines the fact that “the Internet permits the vast sharing of news stories detailing Islamophobia in the nation, thus sharing an understanding that Islamophobia is very much a real phenomenon in Belgium that affects real individuals.”³⁷

Legalizing Islamophobia

By the expression “legalizing Islamophobia” we understand the way some European governments validate Islamophobic ideas by promulgating and applying laws that directly or indirectly restrict the rights of Muslim people. Since Islamophobia is not a fantasy restricted to xenophobes but an ideology shared by a large range of the European political spectrum, both far-right and centrist governments have “legalized Islamophobia” in 2018.

34. In the present edition see Olsi Jazexhi, “Islamophobia in Albania: National Report 2018”.

35. In the present edition see Amina Easat-Daas, “Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2018”.

36. The secretary general of the FPÖ argued that it was “a fact” that primarily “immigrants and foreigners are abusing our social system,” hence the video featured a stereotyped cartoon character named Ali sinisterly laughing, who could no longer abuse the social welfare system due to the new regulation that shows a photo of the person on the insurance card. (2018), “Rassistisches FPÖ-Video: Hofer hat damit keine Freude”, ORF, 14.11.2018, <https://orf.at/m/stories/3100680/>, (Access date: September 2, 2019)

37. In the present edition see Amina Easat-Daas, “Islamophobia in Belgium: National Report 2018”.

We already mentioned some measures the Austrian coalition government of the ÖVP and FPÖ implemented, i.e. the hijab ban for children in kindergarten, the attempt to close mosques and the Arab Islamic Community of the Islamic Religious Authority (IGGÖ), and the call to ban fasting for pupils in school. The author of the report on Austria, Farid Hafez, indicates that “most of these attempts were made based on the proclamation to fight ‘political Islam’, while they are in fact against Muslims in general and especially against organized Muslim civil society.”³⁸ This shows how governments try to hide or disguise their xenophobic actions in order to legitimize them. In this case, the Austrian government does not openly attack Muslim people but “*only* ‘political Islam. Moreover, Hafez discloses the attempt by the state-related Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) to produce knowledge in order to provide policies against “political Islam” with arguments.

Similarly, in Denmark, the widespread rhetoric on the supposed incompatibility of Islam to “Danishness,” the constant division made between “us” (white ‘native’ Danish people) and “them” (colored Muslim ‘migrant’ foreign people) paved the way to a series of discriminatory laws. According to the latest edition of the journal SOS Racism this distinction refers more to “ethnocracy” than to democracy since “in democracy, all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law, while in ethnocracy the power is placed in the hands of one particular group.” In fact, some xenophobic and Islamophobic laws have been designed upon a similar distinction:

- *Reform of the law on day care* (adopted in December 2018). The new law refuses Muslim parents their right to choose freely where their children will go to day care.
- *Burqa ban* (put into practice in August 2018). Sibel Özcan and Zeynep Bangert indicate that “a violation of the ban triggers a fine of 1,000 Danish Kroner (134 EURO), and the fine will increase if the ban is subsequently violated again.” On the other hand, it is estimated that only between 100 and 200 women wear the burka/niqab in Denmark.
- *Anti-ghettos Laws*. “In early 2018, the Danish government introduced a new set of laws to regulate life in low-income and heavy Muslim enclaves, known as the ‘Ghetto Package’. Some of the proposals were rejected as being too radical, such as one saying that ‘ghetto children’ should have curfew after 8 p.m. and should be fitted with electronic ankle bracelets. The purpose of the Ghetto Package is claimed to be to reduce the effects of parallel society and create better integration. The government may implement this package with, among others, the following initiatives: greater penalties for crime, less money from the public sector, and restrictions on how to raise children

38. In the present edition see Farid Hafez, “Islamophobia in Austria: National Report 2018”.

(school and day care, etc.). In total, there are 22 initiatives that it is believed will contribute to achieving the government's desired goals.”

- - *Handshake with local mayor* (approved in December 2018). “Handshakes with the local mayor are mandatory at the citizenship ceremony if one wants to be a Danish citizen. The law has the undertones of being aimed at Muslims because a share of Muslims refuses to shake hands with the opposite sex.”

The Danish report includes many other law proposals that target Muslims that were rejected in 2018 such as the ban of the headscarf in photographs for driving licenses and prohibiting the use of significant religious symbols for students and teachers in primary and lower secondary school.

Besides Denmark, other European countries have directly or indirectly restricted fundamental rights of Muslim people in 2018. Kosovo limited the police officers' rights to attend prayers during their working hours. Furthermore, polemics took place about possible limitations of the wearing of headscarves and burqas in public institutions. On June 5, the Norwegian parliament passed a bill banning cloth covering of the face during classes at educational institutions and day care centers, which included face-covering Islamic veils such as the burka and niqab. On June 20, 2018, the Fundamental Law of Hungary (known as the Constitution prior to 2011) was amended for the seventh time. Changes included that foreign populations cannot be settled in the country and that all state bodies are obliged to protect Hungary's identity and Christian culture.

It is also interesting to note that the Law on the Restriction on Wearing Face Coverings was not approved during the previous parliamentary term in Latvia. In the same vein, the UN Human Rights Committee criticized French justice on August 2018 for not having condemned the dismissal of an employee wearing the hijab from the private nursery where she was working. The committee considered this dismissal as unfair and as a discrimination based on religion. On October 2018, a group of UN experts condemned France for having banned the niqab in 2010.

Islamophobic Terror and Violent Attacks against Muslims

Last year, we received criticism and sarcasm from European right-wing circles for including the section “Terrorist Attacks against Muslims” in the introduction of the 2017 *European Islamophobia Report*.³⁹ According to these circles, “Islamophobic terror” was an oxymoron as Muslims are supposed to be the only people responsible of terror attacks in the world and are certainly not the targeted victims of

39. Farid Hafez and Enes Bayraklı, “Introduction”, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Farid Hafez and Enes Bayraklı, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018).

such violence. This is unfortunately not an isolated view as researchers from Georgia State University and the University of Alabama showed in a study published in *Justice Quarterly* on March 2017 that “attacks by Muslim perpetrators received, on average, 357% more coverage than other attacks” in the United States.⁴⁰ Thus, both the public and opinion makers are consciously or unconsciously inadequately aware of anti-Muslim terrorism.

Yet, the multiplication of terror attacks specifically targeting Muslim people – such as the Christchurch terror attacks (New Zealand) on March 15, 2019 – led several international organizations and institutes to focus more on this particular kind of terrorism. Although most of the studies do not describe Islamophobic attacks as “terrorism,” they still warn about the danger far-right terror represents for European societies.

The Global Terrorism Index 2018, published by the Institute for Economics and Peace, underlines that “the majority of [non-jihadist terror] attacks were carried out by lone actors with far-right, white nationalist, and/or anti-Muslim beliefs.”⁴¹ The 2019 edition of the EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report (TE-SAT), published by EUROPOL, discloses in detail the growing danger of right-wing terrorism even if the study never mentions the anti-Muslim ideological framework working behind this trend.⁴² Similarly, in the 2018 report by the UN Secretary-General on terrorism it is claimed that not only jihadist groups such as ISIL and Al-Qaida promote a destructive narrative but also “violent extremist groups such as racial supremacists, far-right groups and other religiously or politically motivated groups.” According to the same report, those groups “pose a significant threat to the cohesion and safety of our societies and communities.”⁴³

Here, in *the European Islamophobia Report 2018*, authors approach Islamophobic terror in three different ways:

- Firstly, they underline the rise of Islamophobic extremist groups and networks that call for and plan terror attacks against Muslims.
- Secondly, they list attacks or failed attacks that are considered terrorist due to the assailant’s background, preparation, or link to an extremist network.
- Thirdly, they list Islamophobic attacks or failed attacks that are more difficult to depict as terrorist but remain extremely violent. These attacks reflect

40. Kearns, E.M., Betus, A. and Lemieux, A. “Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More Media Attention than Others?” *Justice Quarterly*, 36 (2019).

41. “Global Terrorism Index 2018: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism”, *Institute for Economics & Peace*, November 2018, <http://visionofhumanity.org/reports>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

42. “Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2019 (TE-SAT)”, *EUROPOL*, 2019, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-2019-te-sat>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

43. United Nations General Assembly, “Activities of the United Nations System in Implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy”, *The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, 72 (20 April 2018), https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/72/840, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

the thin border between injury and death, between hatred, racist attack, and Islamophobic terrorism.

1. Islamophobic Terror Groups and Networks

Many authors report the rise of structured Islamophobic terror groups in Europe. In the Islamophobia report on the Netherlands, Leyla Yıldırım notes that the three major researches on national security and terrorism – i.e. the Verwey-Joncker Institute, the Dutch Security Agency (AIVD), and the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) – underline the growing influence of extreme and armed far-right groups on Dutch society. They add that their essentialist negative judgement on Islam justifies attacks against Muslim people and buildings. A concrete example of this terrorist threat is the case of Vincent T, who has been sentenced by the court in Zutphen to 40 months of unconditional prison. The 44-year-old man is suspected of preparing a terrorist attack on Muslims. Vincent T. has been detained in the heavily guarded prison in Vught since May 2018. He was active in the Facebook group ATB Special Forces. His expressed goal was to set up a civilian watch “to protect the Dutch people against Muslims.”⁴⁴

In France too, terrorist far-right groups become progressively more structured. In 2018, several groups planned or called for planning terror attacks against Muslim people such as the AFO (Action of Operational Forces) that was about to physically attack hundreds of imams, Muslim women, and mosques in the summer of 2018. The French police partly dismantled the group between June and August 2018, before the attacks could take place. Ten people were arrested, all huntsmen or sport shooters. Police also found weapon facilities such as explosives laboratories in different locations. They seized 15 handguns, some legally owned by their respective owners. According to police, the AFO is a network of around 100 members that planned terror attacks and trained to “resist Islam.” The AFO was linked to Voluntaries for France (VPF) that also calls for “defending French identity” and “fighting against the Islamization in France.” The group registers between 200 and 800 members including many retired soldiers and French generals and officers. Meanwhile, Remora Network openly attempts to organize “civil resistance” and paramilitary operations against Muslims in France. The group split the map of France in 15 areas, all supervised by “former experimented army officers.” Other groups such as Soldiers of Odin Breizh, a French version of a Finish far-right group, and Generation Identity aim to fight against the “Great Replacement” by organizing actions such as patrols in French cities or national borders. In total, the web media *Mediapart* revealed that French intelligence is following around 350 radicalized far-right members who have one or several firearms.⁴⁵

44. In the present edition see Leyla Yıldırım, “Islamophobia in the Netherlands: National Report 2018”.

45. In the present edition see Léonard Faytre, “Islamophobia in France: National Report 2018”.

Another transnational armed right-wing extremist group is the network Hannibal, which operates in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. The network was founded in 2015 and recruits former security service agents, soldiers and policemen along with right-wing individuals to prepare them for a “Day X,” i.e. a military coup d’état.⁴⁶ The German daily *TAZ* published a long piece on this issue,⁴⁷ but a public outcry did not follow.

In Slovenia, public and political figures condemned the formation of paramilitary groups under the leadership of Andrej Šiško, which gathered and performed exercises in the woods of the Štajerska region. Ana Frank, the author of the report on Slovenia, adds that there are charges against the movement with “the allegation of a threat to national security.” She explains that “Andrej Šiško is known for his nationalistic and xenophobic views. He also announced that similar groups and activities will soon be held in other regions of Slovenia. Andrej Šiško was a candidate in the presidential elections in 2017, while in the past he was sentenced to imprisonment for attempted murder.”

The authors of the *European Islamophobia Report 2018* underline the fact that most reports on far-right terrorism do not make the connection between the rise of far-right attacks and Islamophobic debates that have been fueling European public opinion for years now. In his report on France Léonard Faytre points this out and claims that “although it is possible to make the distinction between those who spread Islamophobic rhetoric and ideas and those who plan or call for terror attacks against Muslims, the boundary between both categories is not impermeable.” A good example of the permeability between terror attacks and public debates centered on anti-Muslim hatred occurred in the Czech Republic, where a terrorist incriminated in two attacks has close relationship with the anti-immigration and anti-EU movement Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), which has 22 MPs in the Czech parliament.⁴⁸ In the summer of 2017, Jaromír Balda (72) chopped down trees on two occasions so that they fell across a railway line in order to fake jihadist attacks and Muslim infiltration. Nine passengers were on the first train, while the second - with six passengers and three staff - hit the tree at 80km/h.⁴⁹ Selma Muhič Dizdarevič, the author of the report on the Czech Republic, indicates that “Jaromír Balda was also involved in the dissemination of threatening flyers in which the perpetrator

46. Luca Heyer, “Der Hannibal-Komplex”, *IMI-STUDIE*, 4 (2019), <https://www.imi-online.de/download/IMI-Studie2019-4%20Hannibal-Web.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

47. Martin Kaul, Christina Schmidt and Daniel Schulz, “Hannibal Schattenarmee”, *TAZ*, 16 November 2018, <https://taz.de/Rechtes-Netzwerk-in-der-Bundeswehr/!5548926/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

48. Tomas Hosek, “The First Czech Terrorist and His Links to the Far-Right”, *European Security Journal*, 21 January 2019, <https://www.esjnews.com/the-first-czech-terrorist-and-his-links-to-the-far-right>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

49. “Czech Pensioner Jailed for Terror Attacks on Trains”, BBC, 14 January 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46862508>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

pretended to be a jihadist planning assaults on Czech citizens.”⁵⁰ Balda is a fanatical supporter of Tomio Okamura, leader of Direct Democracy (SPD) - so much so that he plastered Okamura’s portrait on his house. The Czech justice sent Balda to jail for four years in January 2019.

Another example of the intertwining relations between terrorist activities and political circles is the sentence of the Court of Appeals of Belgrade that upheld the acquittal of the members of the paramilitary unit Sima’s Chetniks. In July 1992, the unit had demolished a mosque and murdered 27 Roma civilians in the village of Skočić in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2. Islamophobic Terror Attacks

Authors of the *European Islamophobia Report 2018* also list Islamophobic terror attacks that occurred in 2018. In Italy, for instance, a man shot and killed a Senegalese street seller, Idy Diene (54), a well-known member of his local mosque in Florence (March 5). The murderer was an Italian man, Roberto Pirrone, retired and 65 years old. Still in Italy, a gunshot targeted six migrants from Nigeria in Macerata (February 3). Gratefully no one died in the attack but some of the migrants were wounded. The assailant was a young Italian citizen, Luca Traini, ex-candidate in the administrative election with the League North and close to neo-fascist groups. Here again, we can see clearly the relation between terror attack and the spread of hate speech against immigrants and Muslims in the public debates.

In France, on July 23, French police arrested three people suspected of belonging to the already mentioned AFO group. They were planning to assassinate the singer Medine and jihadist Djamel Beghal after his release from prison. A few weeks later, French intelligence warned Medine that a terror attack had been planned against his future concert in Bataclan Concert Hall. The French singer announced the concert’s cancellation on September 21, 2018, on Twitter.

In Greece, far-right groups attacked Afghan refugees, including women and children, who gathered and protested in the central square of Lesvos about the delay in getting their asylum cards. During the attack racist slogans like “burn them all” were heard. In total, 28 people were injured and hospitalized during this attack.

In Finland, three Finnish youths brutally attacked a Pakistani migrant in Vantaa, stabbed him 20-30 times and repeatedly wounded him with an axe causing, among other injuries, a fractured skull.

In the United Kingdom, three young men deliberately drove a stolen vehicle into pedestrians heading into the Al-Majlis Al-Hussain Islamic Centre (Cricklewood, London) on September 19, injuring three worshippers. The author of the report on the UK, Aristotle Kallis, adds that the “hit-and-run attack was preceded by

50. In the present edition see: Selma Muhič Dizdarevič, “Islamophobia in the Czech Republic: National Report 2018”.

serial verbal taunts directed at Muslim passers-by.” Still in the UK, David Parnham – a 35-year-old British white supremacist with a long history of sending out hundreds of abusive, racist, and Islamophobic letters – was arrested and charged with soliciting murder and orchestrating a campaign of intimidation with intent to cause distress to Muslim communities (June 12).

Finally, in Ukraine, nationalist groups attacked Muslims in Kyiv (May 26). Mykhaylo Yakubovychi, the author of the report on Ukraine, writes that “a brawl broke out in the market close to Lisovaya metro station (where an old man was beaten by some merchants); part of the market has been destroyed by pro-nationalistic forces (‘C14’ and other groups) insulting black people (*churki*, the offensive word used mostly for Middle Eastern and Caucasian nationalities).”⁵¹

These attacks prove that Islamophobic terrorism is not a fancy concept but a real threat to the life of millions of European Muslims and to the cohesion of European multicultural societies.

3. Extremely Violent Attacks Targeting Muslims

Finally, authors of the *European Islamophobia Report 2018* list Islamophobic attacks or failed attacks that are more difficult to depict as terrorist since they are not directly linked to a particular network or extremist background. Yet, the violence of the attacks is such that no one can totally distinguish them from the general rise of Islamophobic terrorism. It is also important to note that all the attacks mentioned here are based on anti-Muslim ideology.

In Poland, over ten men attacked three Arab students at the Katowice Central Rail Station. They hit the students’ heads and pushed them onto the train tracks. The security guards who were present did not intervene (December 21). The attack was reported to the police with the assistance of the Turkish Embassy officials but the attacker was not tracked down and the investigation was discontinued. Still in Poland, five supporters of Legia Warsaw football club attacked two passengers of Turkish background in a bus in Warsaw. They sang a racist song and shouted slurs, and then one of them hit one of the targets on the face. The attackers fled after the bus driver reluctantly called the police. The attacked man tried to report the incident at three police stations, but the officers in charge refused to file the report citing “the lack of time.” Eventually, the attackers were detained and charged. In Serbia, a brutal physical assault took place in Novi Sad, when two young men of Albanian ethnicity were beaten up by four men of Serbian ethnicity. As a result of the attack, the life of one of the Albanians was in danger (October 7). It is important to note that one of the young men who were attacked said that they were assaulted when a group of young men standing nearby heard him speak to his friend in Albanian.

51. In the present edition see: Mykhaylo Yakubovychi, “Islamophobia in Ukraine: National Report 2018”.

In France, three members of the far-right group Generation Identity (*Génération Identitaire*) physically attacked a young woman using tear gas and punched her four times (January 10). In Spain, neo-fascists attacked two Moroccan men in Denia (November 16). In Belgium, a nineteen-year-old Muslim woman was attacked and faced an attempted rape in Anderlues, near Brussels (July 3). The attackers made racist and Islamophobic comments to the victim. Anna Piela, the author of the report on Poland, reveals that a Polish-Egyptian married couple were attacked in their restaurant in Krasnystaw. The attackers repeatedly threatened them with death, spat at them, and hit them with their fists. Similarly, Alfredo Alietti and Dario Padovan mention that an Italian man threatened, insulted, and pushed a young Moroccan girl onto the metro because she was wearing the Islamic veil. Still in Italy, the keeper of the local mosque, an Italian convert, was brutally beaten and offended while walking on the street. In Ukraine, two citizens of Vinnytsia severely beat the spouses of Ukrainian women from the UAE and one of the men's sons.

Many violent attacks against Muslims occurred in the UK, too. In October 2018, a video surfaced online showing a “waterboarding”-style torture ritual carried out by a 16-year-old boy against Jamal, a schoolboy of 15 years of age whose family had arrived in the UK fleeing persecution from the Syrian regime back in 2010. As it transpired, Jamal had suffered chronic abuse since arriving in the UK, including an incident of inflicted injury to his hand only weeks before the attack recorded on the video.

Many attacks against mosques could have led to physical injuries or deaths in the UK. In Leeds, an arson attack was carried out against the Jamia Masjid Abu Huraira Mosque, causing damage to its entrance, as well as to the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara nearby (June 5). In Birmingham, the mosques Masjid Qamarul Islam and Al-Hijrah had their windows smashed after a coordinated attack carried out with catapults (August 16). In Cheetham Hill, Manchester, an arson attack was carried out against the Al-Falah Masjid (December 10). A similar incident occurred in North Macedonia, where a 350-year-old mosque in the village of Erekovci, in the municipality of Prilep, was burnt (October 2018).

All these Islamophobic acts demonstrate how violence against Muslims becomes more and more banalized in Europe. Finally, yet importantly, such incidents demonstrate how thin the line is between injury and death, between hatred, racist attack, and Islamophobic terrorism.

Threatening the Religious Infrastructure

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 2018 of the OSCE's ODIHR, “Securitarian policies continue to raise significant problems concerning the collective and insti-

tutional dimension of the right to freedom of religion and depart from the principle of equal treatment of religious communities.”⁵² Beyond the implementation of anti-Muslim legislation that threatens religious freedom, many countries are also following a policy of creating a national Islam, disconnecting the global nature of religion, and, thus, cutting transnational cooperation, when it comes to financial and organizational support. On the other hand, Christian churches and other religious communities are not facing similar restrictions.

Steps Forward and Policy Recommendations

As the year 2018 reveals, the urgent need to counter anti-Muslim racism is still there. Many of the recommendations, which were presented in the *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, are as momentous as before. In this section, we will not deal with recommendations on a national level since the authors of the national reports present their thoughts in their respective reports. Here, we especially deal with recommendations for supranational and international organizations and those that target European-wide trends:

- Today, the legal recognition of the specific form of racism targeting Muslims (or those perceived as such) is still crucial. We need a working definition of Islamophobia/anti-Muslim racism to challenge Islamophobia at a legal level. Willing national institutions as well as supranational and international institutions such as the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, the UN, and others have to work in this field. Existing efforts should be supported and enhanced.
- We have to reiterate that the European Parliament should adopt a resolution on combatting Islamophobia with concrete policy recommendations and ways forward - as it did to combat anti-Semitism, anti-Gypsyism, and Afrophobia.
- As discussed above and argued last year, 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.
- There is also a need for nation states and/or the European Commission to create spaces in which national and local governments can meet with anti-racist NGOs to share their experiences and work together on how to tackle Islamophobia.
- The EU should encourage governments and cities to adopt national and local action plans against racism with specific measures or strategies to count-

52. Bülent Şenay, “Public Civility and the Human Good Against Anti-Muslim Hatred”, *OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting*, 10-12 September 2018, Warsaw, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/394226?download=true>, (Access date: September 3, 2019).

er Islamophobia, including measures to tackle intersectional discrimination targeting Muslim women, by opening specific funding grants for the implementation of such plans. The Barcelona action plan against Islamophobia⁵³ can be used as a model.

- There is a need for more research that analyzes Islamophobia's impact on children, health, mental illness, etc.
- EU budget negotiations should support the development of funding programs enabling civil society working against Islamophobia to develop long-term projects for capacity building, advocacy for equality, strategic litigation, educational programs, etc. Facilitating access to these funds is also crucial to allow civil society to benefit from them. Improving eligibility criteria to suit the realities of small NGOs is crucial to allow them to benefit from such funds.
- Following the Council of Europe's example, the European Day against Islamophobia on September 21 should be established as a date for raising awareness across Europe on the challenges faced by Muslims and the need for their protection. Similar national initiatives, such as July 1 in Germany, should be established and used by NGOs as well as authorities to create awareness in their countries.
- With the support of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights and the ODIHR at the OSCE, governments should develop and promote the harmonization of data collection in areas of hate crime and equality, recognizing anti-Muslim bias as a category. This data should be disaggregated according to the multiple grounds of discrimination, including gender, race, ethnicity, and religion.
- In addition, in order to identify racial discrimination patterns and the groups that are most disadvantaged and most privileged in society and institutions, equality data disaggregated according to gender, disability, sexual orientation, and migration status should be collected. Member states should be obliged to collect comparable and reliable equality data disaggregated by race, ethnicity, religion, and gender.
- Given the rise of right-wing extremism and especially the increased armament of these groups, programs tackling right-wing extremism have to be implemented. The neglect of right-wing terrorism has to be counteracted. This starts with countering right-wing extremist ideology and especially its mainstreaming in a watered-down form. In particular, security agencies have to focus more on these extremist groups.

53. "Government measure Municipal plan to combat Islamophobia", Ajuntament de Barcelona, [https://www.ec-car.info/sites/default/files/document/Measure%20Plan%20against%20islamophobia%20\(eng\).pdf](https://www.ec-car.info/sites/default/files/document/Measure%20Plan%20against%20islamophobia%20(eng).pdf), (Access date: 3 September 2019).

- Given the rise of violent attacks on mosques, authorities in dialogue with the communities involved have to ensure the safety of Muslim places of worship.

Last but not least, we reiterate the following recommendations from last year's report (*EIR 2017*) which we think are still important today:

- “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. Furthermore, in order to counter the systemic discrimination in employment faced by Muslim women wearing the hijab in many EU member states, the European Commission should initiate infringement proceedings based on the Employment Directive.
- 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.”⁵⁴

54. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, “The State of Islamophobia in Europe”, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, (SETA, İstanbul: 2018), p. 26-27.

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. (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.” (EIR 2017) The diverging numbers in the countries hint to a different degree of awareness and organization.

BELGIUM

- **70** cases of **Islamophobic incidents** were recorded in **2018**
- **76%** of victims of reported Islamophobia **were female** and **24%** were male
- **84%** of reported workplace discrimination pertained to Islamophobia
- **29%** of reported Islamophobia took place **online**.

(Source: CCIB, 2018)

AUSTRIA

- **540** cases of Islamophobic incidents were recorded in 2018 compared to 309 cases in 2017, which equals **an increase of approximately 74% of anti-Muslim racist acts**.

(Source: Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus)

BOSNIA

- **12** anti-Muslim attacks were reported

(Source: The Commission for Freedom of Religion)

FRANCE

- **676 Islamophobic incidents** were documented in **2018** against **446 in 2017 (increase of 52%)**.
- **Among these 676 incidents, 20** concerned physical attacks (3%), **568** concerned dis-crimination (**84%**), and **88** concerned hate speech (**13%**).

(Source: Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France, CCIFF)

GERMANY

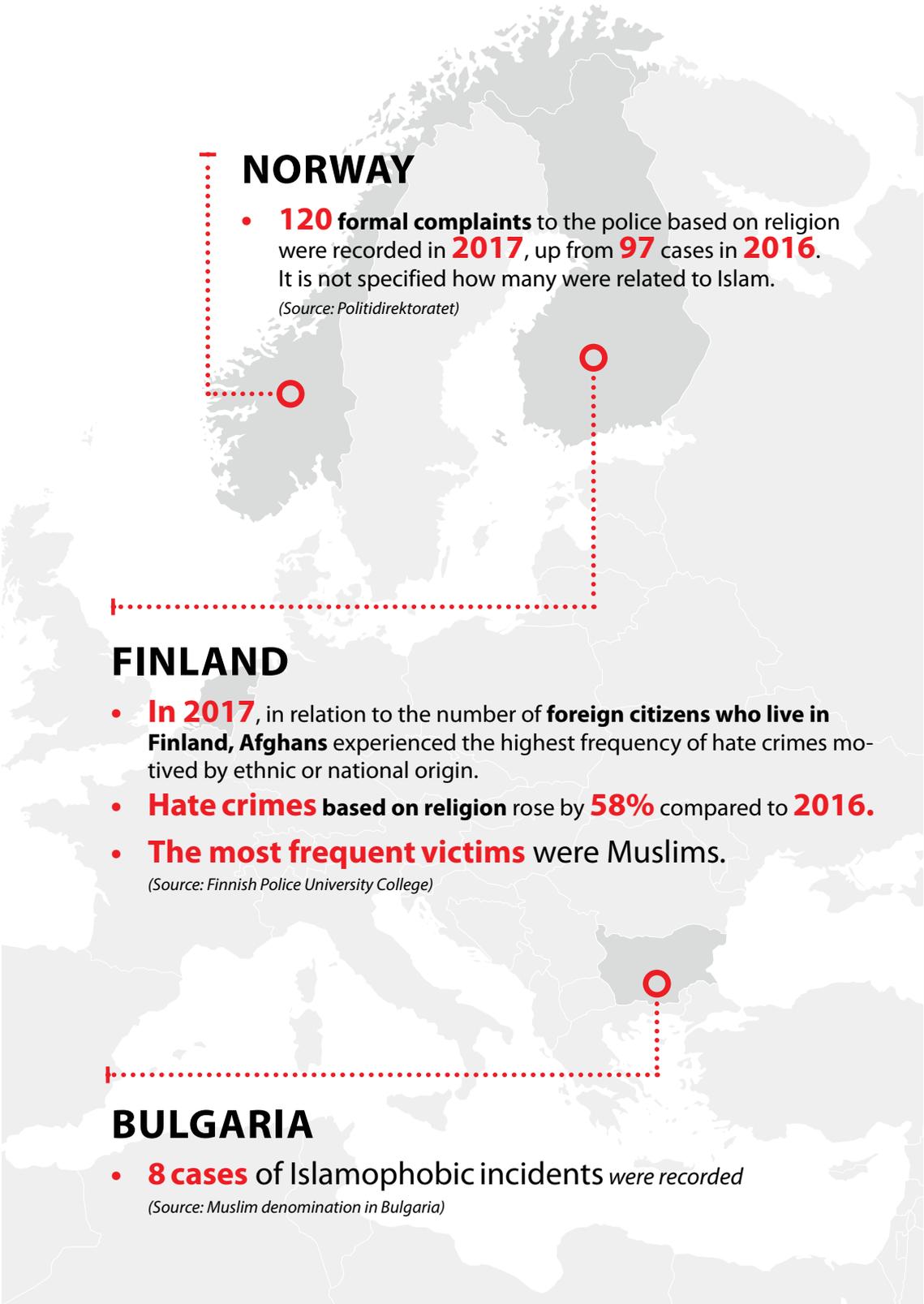
- **In 2018**, according to police statistics there were
- **678 attacks** on German **Muslims**;
- **40 attacks** on **mosques**;
- **1,775 attacks** on **refugees**;
- **173 attacks** on **asylum homes**; and
- **95 attacks** on **aid workers**.

(Source: Deutscher Bundestag, "Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten", ad "Proteste gegen und Übergriffe auf Flüchtlingsunterkünfte")

ITALY

- **According** to a report on hate speech in **social media** there has been an increase of **hate tweets in 2018** (36.93%, March - May) compared to **2017** (32.45%, May - November).

(Source: Vox Diritti report)



NORWAY

- **120 formal complaints** to the police based on religion were recorded in **2017**, up from **97** cases in **2016**. It is not specified how many were related to Islam.

(Source: Politidirektoratet)

FINLAND

- **In 2017**, in relation to the number of **foreign citizens who live in Finland, Afghans** experienced the highest frequency of hate crimes motivated by ethnic or national origin.
- **Hate crimes based on religion** rose by **58%** compared to **2016**.
- **The most frequent victims** were Muslims.

(Source: Finnish Police University College)

BULGARIA

- **8 cases** of Islamophobic incidents *were recorded*

(Source: Muslim denomination in Bulgaria)

NETHERLANDS

- **21** out of **55** respondents from **18** different mosques reported that their mosque had occasionally been the target of hostile attacks.
- **In total**, these mosques had to deal with **47** incidents, including **11** threats, the deposition of a **pig's head (7 times)**, and hurtful statements and symbols drawn on the mosques and verbal aggression towards **mosque visitors (6 times)**.
- **Only four** of the **21** respondents communicated with the media about the incident and only **1** reported the incident to **the local anti-discrimination provision**
(Source: Research office Labyrinth, 2018).
- **7%** of reported discrimination was related to **religious discrimination**.
- **91%** of a total of **151 incidents of religious discrimination** reported to the police was related to Muslims.

(Source: Discriminatie Cijfers, 2018)

UNITED KINGDOM

- **Religiously motivated crime** in England and Wales has risen by **415%** between **2011 and 2018**.
(Source: Grahame Allen, Yago Zayed, The Crime Statistics)
- **52%** of the **5,680** religiously aggravated recorded offences involved people who identify as Muslims.
(Source: Home Office)
- **Nearly half of the voters** of the governing Conservative Party believe that Islam is incompatible with 'the British way of life.'
(Source: HopeNotHate)

VIOLENT ACTS AGAINST MUSLIMS IN EUROPE

Violent acts are an outcome of the violent ideology of racist dehumanization. Muslims are increasingly becoming victims solely because of their faith.

AUSTRIA

- An 18-year-old conscript in basic military service, Mario S., fired a gun in front of a school. A pupil with an Arab background was injured, while the police excluded a racist motive.

BELGIUM

- A nineteen-year-old Muslim woman was attacked and faced an attempted rape in Anderlues. The attackers made racist and Islamophobic comments to the victim.
- In Charleroi, two Muslim women were attacked in front of a two-year-old infant. Both were verbally attacked and one had her headscarf removed.

BOSNIA

- Several shots were fired at the newly rebuilt Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka.
- The property of a Bosniak returnee in Sokolac, Hamed Vražalica, was destroyed in an arson attack.

BULGARIA

- The Muslim cemeteries of Gradnitsa village and Dobrich were desecrated.

CROATIA

- On Savudrijska Street in Borongaj, Zagreb, an unknown perpetrator placed lumps of lard on the death notices of two Muslims.

CZECH REPUBLIC

- A senior citizen, Jaromír Balda (72), chopped trees on two occasions so that they fell across a railway line. Meanwhile, he was involved in the dissemination of threatening flyers in which the perpetrator pretended to be

a jihadist planning assaults on Czech citizens. The goal of his activities was to fake terrorist attacks and Muslim infiltration.

DENMARK

- A victim was asked by three men whether he was a Muslim, to which he answered “yes.” The men attacked him by hitting him across his body.

ESTONIA

- An anti-Islam slogan was written on the façade of the Estonian Islamic Centre in Tallinn. The slogan contained the message “Bomb it! Isolated Islam, don’t remember their sins? In God we trust. Why?”

FINLAND

- A Pakistani migrant was brutally attacked in Vantaa by three white Finnish youths who stabbed the victim 20-30 times and repeatedly wounded him with an axe causing, among other injuries, a fractured skull.

FRANCE

- French police arrested several members of the far-right terrorist group Action of Operational Forces (AFO) that was planning to commit terror attacks against French Muslims such as poisoning halal foods, killing of hundreds of imams, physical attacks against Muslim women, and the degradation of what they considered “radical” mosques. Ten people were arrested, all hunters or sport shooters. Police also found weapon facilities in different locations such as explosive-manufacturing laboratories. They seized 15 handguns, some legally owned by their respective owners. According to police, the AFO is a network of around 100 members that planned terror attacks and training sessions to “resist Islam.”

GERMANY

- Over the course of several days those deemed as “immigrants” and “refugees” were chased through the streets by violent street mobs in the city of Chemnitz.

GREECE

- Afghan refugees, including women and children, gathered and protested in the central square of Lesvos about the delay in getting their asylum cards. Extreme-right groups attacked them during the night. Racist slogans like “Burn them all” were heard during the attack, which resulted in 28 people being injured and taken to hospital.

HUNGARY

- Members of the Muslim community report verbal insults, slapping, and spitting mostly targeting Muslim women wearing headscarves. These incidents remain unreported to the authorities.

IRELAND

- A Muslim doctor was subjected to repeated verbal abuse and harassment on public transport due to being identifiably Muslim.

ITALY

- An Italian citizen shot and killed a Senegalese street seller, a well-known member of his local mosque.
- Six migrants from Nigeria were wounded by gunshot in Macerata on February 3. A young Italian citizen, Luca Traini, an ex-candidate in the administrative election with the League North and who is close to neo-fascist groups, carried out the terror attack.
- A young Moroccan girl was pushed into the metro by an Italian man who threatened and insulted her for wearing the Islamic veil.
- The keeper of a local mosque, an Italian convert, was brutally beaten up and offended while walking in the street.

KOSOVO

- Graffiti was sprayed on a building of the University of Prishtina and on different mosques throughout the city. The messages stated, "There will be no Turkish mosque in Dardania [a neighborhood close to the city center]" and "Death to Naim Tërnavë [Grand Mufti of Kosovo] and Hashim the Turk [an allusion to Hashim Thaçi, Kosovo's president]."

LATVIA

- Muslim women were subjected to verbal attacks in public places, aimed at violating personal dignity, intimidation, and creating a hostile and degrading atmosphere.

MOLDOVA

- Tatiana, a Muslim convert, was confronted with repeated verbal and physical attacks in public places; one woman shouted at her in a supermarket for donning the veil, another poked her in a market for the same reason, while a group of young men threw walnut shells at her and her child on the street.

NETHERLANDS

- Vincent T, was sentenced by the court in Zutphen to 40 months of unconditional prison. The 44-year-old man is suspected of preparing a terrorist attack on Muslims.

NORTH MACEDONIA

- A 350-year-old mosque in the village of Erekovci, in the municipality of Prilep, was burnt.

NORWAY

- Incidents occurred on the streets of Oslo where Muslim women were spat on and verbally abused.

POLAND

- Over ten men attacked three Arab students at the Katowice Central Rail Station. They pushed the students onto the train tracks. The security guards who were present did not intervene.

SERBIA

- Two young men of Albanian ethnicity were beaten up by four men of Serbian ethnicity. As a consequence of this attack, the life of one of the Albanians was in danger.
- The Court of Appeals in Belgrade upheld the acquittal of the members of the paramilitary unit "Sima's Chetniks" for the demolition of a mosque and the murder of 27 Roma civilians in the village of Skočić, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1992.

SLOVAKIA

- A Muslim woman with a stroller was attacked in Bratislava. The perpetrator punched her and swore at her.

SLOVENIA

- Paramilitary groups were founded under the leadership of Andrej Šiško that gathered and performed exercises in the woods of the Štajerska region. Charges were brought against the movement with the allegation of a threat to national security. Andrej Šiško is known for his nationalistic and xenophobic views. He also announced that similar groups and activities will soon be held in other regions of Slovenia.

SPAIN

- Two Moroccan men were attacked by neo-fascists in Denia.
- Vandal attacks against the mosques of Carrús, Hernani, Barcelona, and Valencia.

UK

- A video surfaced online showing a ‘waterboarding’-style torture ritual carried out by a 16-year-old boy against Jamal, a schoolboy of 15 years of age whose family had arrived in the UK fleeing persecution from the Syrian regime back in 2010. As it transpired, Jamal had suffered chronic abuse since arriving in the UK, including an incident of inflicted injury to his hand only weeks before the attack recorded on the video.
- Three young men deliberately drove a stolen vehicle into pedestrians heading into the Al-Majlis Al-Hussain Islamic Centre on September 19 in Cricklewood, London, injuring three worshippers. The hit-and-run attack was preceded by serial verbal taunts directed at Muslim passersby.
- Arson attacks were carried out against the Jamia Masjid Abu Huraira Mosque in Leeds and the Al-Falah Masjid Islamic Centre in Cheetham Hill, Manchester.

UKRAINE

- A mosque in Bilohir’sk/Karasubazar was vandalized by unknown persons; Nazi-related inscriptions were left on the wall.



ISLAMOPHOBIC STATEMENTS OF POLITICIANS

Islamophobic language by high-ranking politicians, mostly from the far right, normalizes a dehumanizing and racist language when it comes to the portrayal of Muslims. This reduces the threshold of what is considered utterable and overall acceptable in public discourse and legitimizes discrimination of Muslims as human beings and as citizens.

AUSTRIA

- Austrian Peoples Party's (ÖVP) General Secretary Karl Nehammer: "I call for a prohibition of fasting for pupils who are clearly weakened and can no longer follow the lesson."

BELGIUM

- Bart de Wever, NVA leader: "Jews avoid conflict that is not the case with Muslims."

BOSNIA

- Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik: "Imams in Bosnia who recite the adhan are howling."

BULGARIA

- Prosecutor Nedyalka Popova: "At present, according to statistics, Muslims are 10-12% in Bulgaria, and we have no reason to think that they will become less... When they reach 30%, the state is already in danger. They are a monolithic mass, who are easy to manipulate during the elections, and they are almost like a militarized structure, if they have been told to go and vote, they go."

CROATIA

- Ivan Pernar, a member of the Croatian Parliament, accused feminist organizations in Croatia of remaining silent in the face of the UN's decision that wearing a burqa is a human right.

CZECH REPUBLIC

- Dominik Hanko, vice-chair of the SPD party in the Ústecký district: “According to them we are sinners, unbelieving dogs. The more of them there will be here, the more they will force their truth on us until it turns out like it does in their countries. They're like locusts, they destroy everything around them wherever they are.”

DENMARK

- Erik Høgh-Sørensen, regional council member in Nordjylland and parliamentary candidate for the Danish People's Party: “At Lindholm (detention center for rejected asylum seekers) pig should be on the menu. Every day. Morning, noon, evening. And for late night snack.”

FINLAND

- President Sauli Niinistö: “I read in a newspaper of an Iraqi who has lived a long time in Finland and he said that this [his culture] isn't any problem. When I leave home for work, go to the store, anywhere, I behave like a Finn, as in this society following the rules of the [cultural] game. But when I come home, I have Iraqi culture – truly impressive.”

FRANCE

- Deputy of the Republican Party (Les Republicains) Eric Ciotti: “Some French areas are in the hands of Islamists.”
- Former French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb in his resignation speech: “Today we live side-by-side... I am afraid that tomorrow we will live face-to-face.” His statement implicitly portrayed French Muslims and French non-Muslims as enemies.

GERMANY

- In the wake of racist attacks on people of color and refugees in Chemnitz, German Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer (CSU): “Migration is the mother of all problems.”

GREECE

- Ilias Kassidiaris, Golden Dawn MP: “Today we are in Propylaia [i.e. the old building of the University of Athens]: against the new religious textbooks which promote de-Hellenization and Islamization.”

HUNGARY

- Prime Minister Viktor Orbán: “We must state that we do not want to be diverse and do not want to be mixed: we do not want our own color, traditions, and national culture to be mixed with those of others. We do not want this. We do not want that at all. We do not want to be a diverse country.”

IRELAND

- Identity Ireland leader Peter O’Loughlin claimed that Islam was “destroying” cities in Europe and warned of the risk of “Sharia courts”, “rape gangs”, and “grooming gangs” should a mosque be built in Kilkenny.

ITALY

- The Minister of Interior Matteo Salvini declared that nowadays Islam is a danger and his future government would put a stop to the irregular Islamic presence in Italy.

KOSOVO

- Interviewed by a Western media outlet, Kosovo’s current Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj unequivocally expressed his loyalty to the West in July 2018 by refusing the Albanian Muslim identity (“I’m Albanian. I’m not Muslim.”)

LATVIA

- The parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Justice stated that the ministry has not abandoned the idea of face-covering restrictions in public places.

MOLDOVA

- During the mayoral elections in Chisinau, opposition candidate Ion Ceban falsely accused pro-European candidate Andrei Nastase of planning a 50-year lease of Chisinau to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) if he were to be victorious.

NETHERLANDS

- Geert Wilders broadcasted a campaign video with horror music in the background and in red letters a text which read, “Islam stands for hate against Jews, Christians, women, and homosexuals.” At the end of the video ‘Islam is deadly’ was written in red letters, this time resembling dripping blood.

NORWAY

- Per-Willy Amundsen, MP for the Progress Party and former minister of justice: "I have the right to state that the migration from Muslim countries should stop."

POLAND

- The Law and Justice Party released a fearmongering propaganda video which threatened that the rival Civic Platform Party is keen to open Polish borders to "Muslim refugees" who would cause a great deal of unrest in the country. The video presented a dystopian vision of Poland in 2020, after an imagined victory of Civic Platform: "enclaves of Muslim refugees... the tenth victim of an attack... people are afraid to leave home after dark... sexual assaults and muggings are happening everyday... Will we feel safe if Civic Platform makes this happen?"

ROMANIA

- Senator Vasile Cristian Lungu: "In European cities the 'violent crimes' - especially rape, crimes and robberies, and terrorist attacks - are committed in overwhelming numbers by Muslims."

SERBIA

- President Vučić: "Milošević was a great Serbian leader, his intentions were certainly best, but the results were bad."
- Prime Minister Ana Brnabić on Srebrenica "[it] was a terrible, terrible crime but... genocide is when you are killing the entire population, the women, children and this was not that case."

SLOVAKIA

- MP Stanislav Mizik repeatedly "warned" against the threat of Islamization to Slovakia, which may also be caused by liberal legislation in the field of abortion. He said that the opponents of the law "protect the Islamic occupants of Europe who do not recognize abortion and the first whom they will exterminate when they enforce the Shari'a law, will be the exponents of wicked NGOs."

SLOVENIA

- The president of the Slovenian National Party Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti on migrants: "They cut heads, they rape young children of all sexes, slaughter on the streets - and they will do this even more. Great. Some people seem to prefer this."

SPAIN

- Santiago Abascal, the president of VOX, shared his opinion that Islam is incompatible with Spanish traditions, distinguishing a more preferred group of immigrants (South Americans) instead of Muslims.

UK

- Boris Johnson: "If you tell me that the burka is oppressive, then I am with you. If you say that it is weird and bullying to expect women to cover their faces, then I totally agree – and I would add that I can find no scriptural authority for the practice in the Koran ... I would go further and say that it is absolutely ridiculous that people should choose to go around looking like letter boxes."



LEGALIZING ISLAMOPHOBIA

Governments and political parties implement or demand legislations that directly target Muslims as religious subjects, treating them differently than members of other religious communities

AUSTRIA

- The Austrian government introduced a hijab ban for children in kindergarten.
- The Austrian government attempted to close mosques and the Arab Islamic Community of the Islamic Religious Authority (IGGÖ).
- The general secretary of the governing ÖVP demanded to ban fasting for pupils in school.

BULGARIA

- Municipalities periodically hand out fines for the Friday sermons and calls for prayer. A member of the European Parliament and deputy chair of the VMRO party sent a formal request for control and a ban.
- The municipal council in Stara Zagora decided to resume the activity of renaming the Turkish-Arab toponyms in the territory with Bulgarian ones. As a result of the initiative, 838 toponyms of lands and sites with Turkish-Arab origin were replaced.
- Archaeologists from the National Archaeological Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences started new excavations in the local Kurshun Mosque (built in 1485) by order of the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Karlovo. According to the Office of the Grand Mufti, the new excavations in the historical mosque aimed to stop the Muslim community's attempts to reconstitute the property and to replace its function by another. As the lawsuit continued, the mosque was excavated by archaeologists, and an attempt to turn it into a museum of religions was made by the municipality.

CZECH REPUBLIC

- The SPD (Freedom and Direct Democracy) proposed a law to forbid veiling.

DENMARK

- The Danish government introduced a new set of laws to regulate life in low-income and heavy Muslim enclaves, known as the "Ghetto Package." The government may implement this package with, among others, the following initiatives: greater penalties for crime, less money from the public sector, and restrictions on how to raise children. In total, there are 22 initiatives that are believed will contribute to achieving the government's desired goals.

- Reform of the law on day care. The new law prevents Muslim parents their right to choose freely where their children will go to day care.
- Burqa ban. A violation of the ban triggers a fine of 1,000 Danish Kroner (134 €) and the fine will increase if the ban is subsequently violated again.
- Handshake with local mayor (approved in December 2018): "handshakes with the local mayor are mandatory at the citizenship ceremony if one wants to be a Danish citizen. The law has the undertones of being aimed at Muslims because a share of Muslims refuses to shake hands with the opposite sex."
- The Danish People's Party also demanded serving pork in schools and public institutions. At the same time, they wanted a ban on halal meat in public institutions; however, this was rejected by the Minister of Education Merete Riisager.

FINLAND

- The Diakonia College of Finland, located in Helsinki, bans students from wearing niqabs and burkas but allows hijabs on campus.

FRANCE

- At the French Assembly, Eric Ciotti (The Republicans) proposed to ban exterior religious signs for workers in public companies and for users of public services - today there is only a ban for workers in public services.
- The UN Human Rights Committee criticized French justice for not having condemned the dismissal of an employee wearing the hijab from the private nursery where she was working. The committee considered this dismissal as unfair and as a discrimination based on religion.
- A group of UN experts condemned France for having banned the niqab in 2010.

GREECE

- The New Right Party made a series of suggestions in order to confront immigration:
 - Ban of funding coming from foreign Islamic organizations.
 - Exclusive use of the Greek translation of the Koran.
 - Ban of religious symbols used in public places.
 - Ban of use of any kind of head covering (meaning especially the headscarf and all its variations) deriving from a religious obligation in public and private places and of all clothing that conceals the face. High fines in case of violation of this legislation.
 - Investigation on the legality of purposes and activities of every organized Islamic structure, e.g. unions, clubs, associations, etc.

- Ban of Sharia law in every part of the country. In the case of the implementation of Sharia, the consequence will be the removal of citizenship, if this is the case, and immediate deportation.
- Closure of every illegal mosque.
- Annulment of the first (official) mosque of Athens.

HUNGARY

- MP Dúró Dóra, formerly of Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary, suggested a draft law on the banning of burkas in public.
- The Fundamental Law of Hungary (known as the Constitution prior to 2011) was amended for the seventh time. Changes included that foreign populations cannot be settled in the country and that all state bodies are obliged to protect Hungary's identity and Christian culture.

KOSOVO

- Kosovo limited police officers' rights to attend prayers during their working hours.

NETHERLANDS

- The SGP (Reformed Political Party) filed a motion regarding the right to refuse participation in school trips which involve visiting religious institutions (like mosques, churches, and synagogues) which is part of the school curriculum. Parents can apply for an exemption for their children but the schools are not obliged to comply with the exemption request. By calling a ban on Muslim call for prayer, issuing the manifesto, and excluding visiting mosques, it is apparent that the SGP is attempting to split society in general and exclude Muslims in particular.
- Restrictions on ritual slaughtering have been discussed for years. According to the new law, if an animal is not insensitive to pain within 40 seconds of slaughter, based on measures called "induced eyelid reflex" and "corneal reflex," it must be shot.

NORTH MACEDONIA

- The primary school Krste Petkov Misirkov in Radovish was fined for allowing an iftar dinner to be organized on the school premises.

NORWAY

- The parliament passed a bill banning cloth covering of the face during classes at educational institutions as well as day-care centers, which included face-covering Islamic veils such as the burka and niqab.

SLOVAKIA

- Amendment of Law No. 308/1991 Coll. on Freedom of Religious Faith and the Status of Churches and Religious Communities. The law: (a) increased the number of signatures required to register churches and religious communities in Slovakia from 20,000 to 50,000; (b) determined that the signatories must be citizens of the Slovak Republic who are members of the church or the religious community; (c) the signatories must confirm their signature by submitting personal data. These conditions of registration are discriminatory because only four churches from the 18 currently registered churches and religious communities in Slovakia meet the conditions.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE MEDIA

The media plays a crucial role in the reproduction and normalization of anti-Muslim racism.

ALBANIA

In an article of the newspaper *Koha Jone*, Gjet Ndonji, the ex-director of the National Archives of Albania, described Albanian Muslims as barbarians and Asian colonists suffering from “Asiatic infection.”



AUSTRIA

Right-wing media outlet *Wochenblick* published several articles on an alleged Islamization of society. Here the article states, “Rehabilitation in Austria: Woman Has to Submit to Islamic Prayer Times.”

BOSNIA

The Serbian PRVA TV in its evening news broadcasted a story about the “Green Transversal” - a Serb propaganda about the unification of Muslims in the Balkans - a claim used by Serb nationalist leaders in order to justify the genocidal violence in the 1990s.



CROATIA

The Internet news portal *www.dnevno.hr* published an article about the supposed danger of halal food for Catholics. "Catholics Beware, This Is Being Kept from You: Stores Flooded with Food Sacrificed to Idols!"

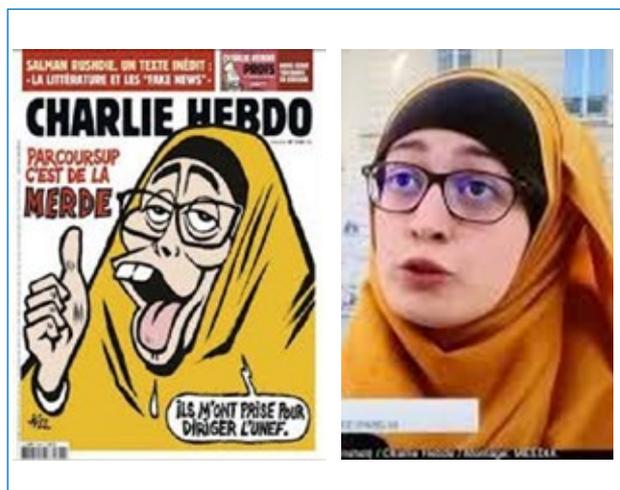


DENMARK

Danish-Iranian Jaleh Tavakoli wrote a post on her blog titled "Even Baby Sex Is Mainstream Islam". The blog post was published in *Jyllands-Posten* (right wing).

FRANCE

The satiric *Charlie Hebdo* (left wing) published a caricature of Maryam Pougetoux, one of the leaders of UNEF student union (left-wing). The cover states "French University Application Process (Parcoursup) Is Sh***, They Accepted Me as Leader of UNEF." The cartoon face has been drawn to look like a monkey.



GREECE

The newspaper *Eleftheri Ora* (far-right) published a cover with the following Islamophobic message “Hardcore Headscarves of Islam Are Shocking Piraeus.”



HUNGARY

The newspaper *Magyar Idők* warns about the so-called Islam threat: “Islam Invades Hungary with Building Mosques.”

IRELAND

The *Irish Sun* published an article titled “‘HIDING’ At least 150 Islamic Extremists Living in Ireland, Claims Friend of Terrorist Involved in Last Year’s London Bridge Attack.”



ITALY

Libero (right-wing) published an article that connects the collapse of the bridge in Genoa (August 14, 2018) with Islamophobic fake news. According to this latter, Muslims consider this collapse as Allah's will since the construction of mosques face great obstacles in Italy: "For Muslims [the collapse] came from Allah. 'The bridge collapsed because you did not build mosques'".



KOSOVO

The news portal *Insa-jderi* published an article based on the fake news that "radical" imams were visiting Kosovo. It was entitled "Radical Imam Announces His Visit and Lecture in Kosovo."

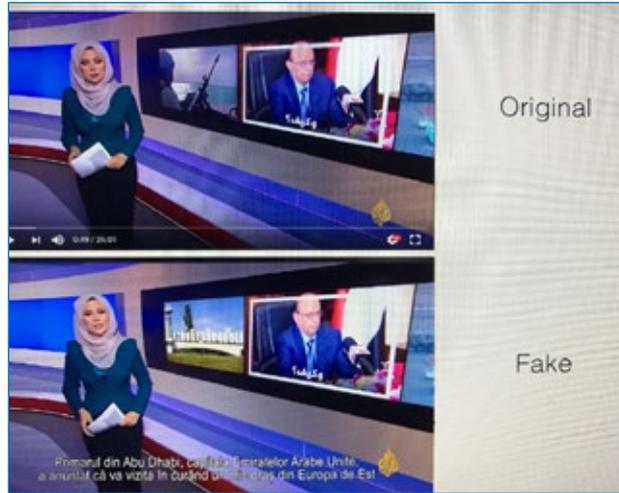
LATVIA

The online newspaper *pietiek.com* (radical populist) published the following cartoon illustrating the article entitled "UN Refugee Pact. Gambles of the Left Multiculturalists Continue."



MOLDOVA

The Moldovan newspaper *Jurnalul MD* featured a story on the fake news regarding Andrei Nastase, a candidate in the Chisinau mayoral elections, accused of leasing Chisianu to Arabs.



NETHERLANDS

De Telegraaf (right wing) published a cover page in which it explains how to recognize a “Muslim terrorist.”



De Telegraaf published an article about a doctoral research on Salafists to convince Dutch people that Salafists in the Netherlands are dangerous and are not integrated into society. The headline used for the article read, “Mosque Visitor: ‘The Netherlands Is a Venomous Snake That Is Constantly Lurking.’”

POLAND

The TV channel TVN (liberal) broadcasted a pseudo-documentary series about Muslim refugees: "Go Back to Where You Came From."



ROMANIA

The online newspaper EVZ (liberal/ tabloid) published the following article: "The Silent Jihad. Alarming Discoveries about the Muslim Immigrants, in an Undercover Investigation. Radical Islam and Hatred towards Europeans."



The online newspaper Orthodox Info (right wing) published the article: "PRO-ISLAM Manipulating Advertising Panels in Large Cities. Do the Authorities Notice to Take Them Down?"



Ucelené moslimské komunity na Slovensku sú naozaj nežiaduce

21.02.2018 | 14:05

Ideológia liberálnej demokracie trošička národnej štít a) multikulturalizmus. Problém moslimskej migrácie však ideologické poučenie nezvráti. Záchrancu je len práve pohľad realite do očí.

SLOVAKIA

The Slovak internet portal *datel.sk*, led by the head of the counterintelligence service of the Slovak Secret Service (SIS), supported former Prime Minister Robert Fico's position on Muslim community in Slovakia: "United Muslim communities in Slovakia are really undesirable".

SLOVENIA

Demokracija (centre/ right-wing) published an article on the threat of migrations and Islam for Europe and European civilization.

Anej Sam: Kdo bo v imenu Slovenije podpisal veleizdajo?

ponedeljek, 11. december 2018 07:52 | 149 ogledov, 0.0 | Komentarji: 1 | Komentari



Večkrat o temo govorijo v naši domovini, a nikoli niso enotni. Zato tukaj:

Po celotni Evropi se dviguje odpor proti levoliberalnim elitam, ki nameravajo z mednarodnimi dogovori na široko odpreti vrata množičnemu priseljevanju iz tretjega sveta ter posledičnemu uničenju naše evropske civilizacije.

CasoAislado ESPAÑA FRONTERAS INTERNACIONAL EMPLEO

Prohíben el cerdo en los colegios de Andalucía para no ofender a los musulmanes y obligan al resto de niños a comer comida 'Halal'

Los padres andaluces comienzan a protestar por esta situación.

Por **Elena Nieto** - 25 de marzo de 2018



SPAIN

Caso Aislado (extreme far right) published an article based on fake news: pork has been forbidden in Andalusian school menus in order not to offend Muslims and the rest of students are forced to eat halal food.



UK

The Telegraph (right-wing) published Boris Johnson's article on the burka.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ALBANIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

OLSI JAZEXHI

The Author

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Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.

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Executive Summary

This report shows major Islamophobic incidents and rhetoric in Albania in 2018. Islamophobia in Albania is primarily related to identity politics and historical narratives of Albanian nationalism. During the last year Islamophobia was mostly directed against local Muslims and against Turkey and Iran, due to the geopolitical implications of Albania with these two countries.

The Islamophobic hate speeches and incidents of 2018 started with a violent attack that a group of Catholic radicals made against a Turkish company and their Turkish flag in Mirdita. The attack of Mirdita was followed by statewide commemorations for the “Year of Scanderbeg” that the Albanian government organized in 2018. The government, its state agencies, universities, the Vatican, and the Catholic Church in Albania planned a number of activities to celebrate the 550th anniversary of Scanderbeg’s death. These celebrations and the commemoration of other anti-Ottoman events in the Albanian history led many Islamophobes to make disparaging remarks against Turkey, Islam, the Ottoman Empire, and present Turkish politics in the region. Some Albanian politicians used Turkey as a scapegoat when attacking each other. A number of American politicians and analysts contributed to the anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish Islamophobia by describing Turkey as a country with sinister intentions in the Balkans.

Regarding education, a project that the Ministry of Education launched in 2018 for countering extremism, upset many Muslims. They noted that the project targeted Muslims and Islam as sources of extremism while ignoring other religions and ideologies.

Even though no terrorist attack has been reported in Albania in 2018, the fear of terrorism and radical Islam was amplified by the declarations of Prime Minister Edi Rama. He accused Russia of trying to radicalize the Muslims. The Iranian Mojahedins and their supporters accused Iran of wanting to carry out a terrorist attack in the country even though no such attack ever occurred.

Përmbledhje e shkurtër

Ky raport tregon incidentet dhe retorikën kryesore islamofobike në Shqipëri gjatë vitit 2018. Islamofobia në Shqipëri ndërlidhet me politika identitare dhe rrëfimet historike të nacionalizmit shqiptar. Gjatë vitit të kaluar islamofobia u drejtua në të shumtën e rasteve kundër muslimanëve vendas por edhe kundër Turqisë dhe Iranit, si pasojë e implikimeve gjeopolitike të Shqipërisë me këto dy vende.

Fjalimet urrejtjenxhitëse islamofobike dhe incidentet e vitit 2018 nisën me sulmin e dhunshëm që një grup radikalësh katolik bënë kundër një kompanie turke dhe flamurit turk në Mirditë. Sulmi i Mirditës u ndoq nga festimet mbarëkombëtare të “Vitet të Skënderbeut” që qeveria shqiptare organizoi në 2018. Qeveria, agjencitë shtetërore, universitetet, Vatikani dhe Kisha Katolike në Shqipëri bënë një numër aktiviteteve përkujtimore për 550 vjetorin e vdekjes së Skënderbeut. Këto festime dhe përkujtime të ngjarjeve të tjera anti-osmane të historisë shqiptare çuan shumë islamofobë të lëshojnë një numër ofendimesh kundër Turqisë, Islamit, Perandorisë Osmane dhe politikave aktuale turke në rajon. Disa politikanë shqiptar përdorën Turqinë si bedel për të sulmuar njëri tjetrin. Një numër politikanësh dhe analistësh amerikanë kontribuan në islamofobinë anti-muslimane dhe anti-turke duke e përshkruar Turqinë si vend me qëllime armiqësore në Ballkan.

Islamofobia ishte prezente edhe në sistemin arsimor. Një projekt i lëshuar nga Ministria e Arsimit në 2018 për të luftuar ekstremizmin, mërziti shumë muslimanë. Ata vunë në pah sesi projekti etiketonte Islamin dhe muslimanët si burim i ekstremizmit, ndërsa injoronte fetë dhe ideologjitë e tjera.

Edhe pse në vitin 2018 në Shqipëri nuk u raportua asnjë sulm terrorist, frika e terrorizmit dhe Islamit radikal u amplifikua nga deklaratat e Kryeministrit Edi Rama i cili akuzoi Rusinë sikur kërkon të radikalizojë muslimanët. Muxhahedinët iranianë dhe mbështetësit e tyre akuzuan Iranin për kryerjen e një akti terrorist në vend, akt i cili nuk ndodhi kurrë.

Country Profile

Country: Albania

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary Democracy

Ruling Parties: *Partia Socialiste e Shqipërisë* (Socialist Party of Albania)

Opposition Parties: *Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë* (Democratic Party of Albania), *Lëvizja Socialiste për Integrim* (Socialist Movement for Integration)

Last Elections: 2017 Parliamentary Election (Socialist Party 48.34%; Democratic Party 28.85%; Socialist Movement for Integration 14.28%)

Total Population: 2.873 million (in 2017)

Major Languages: Albanian

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There are no official reports

Major Religions (% of Population): Sunni Islam (56.70%), Catholicism (10.03%), Orthodoxy (6.75%), Bektashi Islam (2.09%), Non-affiliated (5.49%), Undeclared (13.79%), Atheists (2.5%), Other Christians (0.14%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 1.7 million (60%) as of 2011

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Muslim Community of Albania (*Komuniteti Musliman i Shqipërisë*); The World Center of Bektashis (*Kryegjyshata Botërore Bektashiane*).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: None

Far-Right Parties: Demochristian Union Party (*Partia Bashkimi Demokristian*)

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No official ban
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Islamophobia was demonstrated in a number of ways in Albania in 2018. The major wave of Islamophobia was related to the policies of the government of Prime Minister Edi Rama who declared 2018 the “Year of Scanderbeg.” Scanderbeg, a mythical hero of Albanian nationalism, is celebrated in Albania for his war against the Ottoman Empire, which is framed as a war against Islam in defense of Christianity and Europe. The Albanian government, state agencies, universities, the Vatican, and the Catholic Church in Albania organized a number of events to celebrate the “anti-Muslim” wars of Scanderbeg.

These celebrations were preceded by a violent attack that a group of Catholic extremists made in Mirdita against a Turkish company which had built a hydropower plant in the village of Qafë Molla.

While the Albanian government did not punish any Catholic extremist for their actions, the deradicalization policies of the government which target Albanian Muslims in the educational system and have incarcerated many Muslims drew the condemnation of many believers and imams. They accused the government of using its state apparatus to target and demonize the Muslim community, while ignoring Christian and Islamophobic extremists.

The Islamophobic policies of the government were accompanied by a number of anti-Muslim, anti-Turkish, and anti-Iranian statements and policies, carried out by many politicians. Prime Minister Rama claimed in more than one occasion that Albania is not a Muslim-majority country and radical Islam is a threat to the country. The Iranian Mojahedins and their supporters accused Iran of wanting to carry out a terrorist attack in the country, even though no such terrorist act ever took place.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The year 2018 witnessed a number of physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks in Albania. These attacks were related to the anti-Turkish hysteria that radical Catholic groups displayed. The year started with a violent attack against the Turkish AYEN ENERJI company which had built a hydropower plant in Mirdita. Leon Molla, one of the organizers of the violent protest, called for the death of Turks, Greeks, and Slavs on his Facebook page.¹

1. “Ekstremisti Leon Molla Kerkon Vdekje Per Turqit, Greket Dhe Sllavet”, Gazeta Impakt, 9 January 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/ekstremisti-leon-molla-kerkon-vdekje-per-turqit-greket-dhe-sllavet/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).



Figure 1: Leon Molla, a France-based Catholic extremist, calling for the death of Turks, Greeks, and Slavs, and of those who work with them (9 January 2018).²

Xhabir Zejnuni, an Albanian who supported the protest against the Turkish company, proposed to bomb the hydropower plant.³ Eduart Ndocaj, leader of the Demochristian Union Party, praised the violent removal of the “Mongolian barbarian symbols” (Turkish flag) by “the sons of Mirdita” in the “land of the Arber” and asked for the removal of the Turkish company logo since “the Turkish symbols have no place here.”⁴ Kastriot Myftaraj who defended the violent action of the Mirditoris declared during a TV show that if Erdogan comes to Albania his head will be chopped off.⁵

Employment

In 2018, a number of work discrimination cases were reported in Albania. The Muslim Forum of Albania reported that a woman (known as “A.S.”) was denied an interview by a private employer in August because she was wearing the hijab. In October, a teacher (“Q.X.”) was insulted by a group of parents in the public kindergarten of Krraba in Tirana because she was wearing the hijab. The parents asked her to leave her job, because the state is secular. In November, a woman (“N.P.”) was fired from her job after her

2. Ibid.

3. “Avokat Xhabir Zejnuni Ben Thirrje Per Sulm Terrorist Kunder HEC-It Te Mirdites”, *Gazeta Impakt*, 7 January 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/avokat-xhabir-zejnuni-ben-thirrje-per-sulm-terrorist-kunder-hec-te-mirdites/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

4. Eduart Ndocaj Faqja Zyrtare, Facebook, 8 October 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/eduart.ndocaj/videos/705928753117272/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

5. “Katoliku Kastriot Myftaraj Kërcënon Live Presidentin Turk Erdogan: Do Të Iki Koka Nëse Vjen Në Tiranë”, *Gazeta Impakt*, 16 January 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/katoliku-kastriot-myftaraj-kercenon-live-presidentin-turk-erdogan-te-iki-koka-nese-vjen-ne-tirane/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

employer asked her to remove the hijab and wear the work uniform. When she refused, she was fired from work.⁶ The Muslim Forum of Albania reported that many Muslims who serve in the military have been prohibited by their superiors in the Ministry of Defense to practice their religion and pray. Many of them have expressed fears that the ministry might fire them and they will lose their jobs.⁷ Many practicing Muslims have already lost their jobs in the army. Their commanders have privately told them that they have orders to fire the practicing Muslims from the army.

Education

On 11 January, the Minister of Education Lindita Nikolla announced a project by her ministry to train teachers to fight extremism. The project would cover 2,168 schools and train 22,000 teachers across Albania. The project was directed by Agron Soyati, the national coordinator of the Center for Countering Violent Extremism in the Prime Minister's office, and was supported by the U.S. Department of State.⁸ The training material of this project caused much concern in the Muslim community. Many imams and Muslim activists denounced it by claiming it was aimed against the Sunni Muslim community.⁹ The Albanian League of Imams was one of the organizations that criticized the project. In an analysis published on its website, it showed how the materials of the project depicted the Muslims, the imams, the mosques and all the infrastructure of Muslims in the country as a source of extremism. The training materials, which were distributed to the schools, showed Islam as the only source of violent extremism.

The material depicted in negative terms events in the tradition of Islam such as the Shariah, the Caliphate, the Hegira, etc. The analysis concluded that the training materials were totally Islamophobic and biased. They stressed that the program aimed to scare the students of Islam and turn teachers into spies against their Muslim students.¹⁰

Politics

The year 2018 was declared the “Year of Scanderbeg” in Albania. The Albanian government of Prime Minister Edi Rama, which calls itself the government of *Rilindja*

6. FMSH, “Forumi Musliman I Shqipërisë, Islamofobia Në Shqipëri. Raporti Vjetor 2018”, Forumi Musliman i Shqipërisë, <http://www.fmsh-al.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Raporti-Islamofobia-2019-Forumi-Musliman-i-Shqipërisë.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

7. Ibid. pp. 10-11.

8. “Masat Kundër Ekstremizmit: 22 000 Mësues Trajohen Nesër Për Sjelljet Antishoqërore Në Shkollë,” Gazeta Tema, 11 January 2018, <http://www.gazetatema.net/2018/01/11/masat-kunder-ekstremizmit-22-000-mesues-trajohen-neser-per-sjelljet-antishoqerore-ne-shkolla/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

9. “Lindita Nikolla Nis Fushaten Kunder Muslimaneve Synite”, Gazeta Impakt, 14 January 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/lindita-nikolla-nis-fushaten-kunder-muslimaneve-synite/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

10. “Gabimi Me Trajnimin E Mësuesve Për Ekstremizmin E Dhunshëm E Vendos Theksin Tek Ai Musliman”, Lidhja e Hoxhallareve, 17 January 2018, <http://www.lidhjehoxhallareve.com/llanalize-kritike-dhe-reagim-ndaj-permbajtjes-te-cilen-trajnohen-mesuesit-e-shkollave-publike-ne-luften-kunder-ekstremizmit-te-dhunshem/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

(Rebirth),¹¹ depicts Scanderbeg as the most important symbol of present-day Albania. Scanderbeg who was turned into the ultimate hero of Albanian nationalism by the Austro-Hungarians,¹² nowadays is celebrated by the Albanian state and the Vatican as the father of Albanianism. Even though Albania is described as a secular state in its constitution, Scanderbeg is celebrated by the post-communist Albanian state and the Catholic Church¹³ as the crusader who defended Christianity against Islam and the Ottoman Empire. However, Scanderbeg is rejected by many Muslims who perceive him as hero of the *reconquista* and intolerance against Islam. His massacres against Muslims are compared to those of Ratko Mladic against Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.¹⁴

The Albanian government organized a number of events to commemorate the 550th anniversary of Scanderbeg's death. Some of the celebrations that the government organized in 2018 were: (a) the celebration of the 105th anniversary of Albania's independence from the Ottoman Empire; (b) the commemoration of Scanderbeg's 550th anniversary of death; (c) the commemoration of the 140th anniversary of the League of Prizren; and (d) the commemoration of the 110th anniversary of the Congress of Manastir. The Albanian historiography describes all these events as major developments in Albanian's fight against the Ottoman domination and its Islamic rule.

The Year of Scanderbeg started with a violent Islamophobic act in Mirdita. On 31 December, 2017, the Turkish company AYEN ENERJİ, which has built a hydropower plant in the village of Qafë Molla, was attacked. The Turkish flag which the company had placed alongside the Albanian flag was destroyed. The attack was carried out by a group of Catholic extremists led by Paulin Zefi, the director of the Cultural-Historic Office of the city of Lezha. The Catholics justified their attack against the Turkish company and the flag as a national resistance against Turkey and the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ When the Albanian authorities declared that they will prose-

11. *Rilindja* in Albanian means Renaissance. This term, which was borrowed from the Italian "Rinascimento," is used by the Albanian historiography to describe the nationalist anti-Ottoman movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries that strived to separate Albania from the Ottoman state.

12. See: Olsi Jazexhi, "Edukimi me Skënderbeun" (Educating with Scanderbeg), *Hikmet*, nr. 1 (2013), Prishtina, Kosovo, p. 83-109.

13. "Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants in the Pilgrimage from Albania", Bulletin of the Holy See, 19 November 2018, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/november/documents/papa-francesco_20181119_pellegrinaggio-albania.html, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

14. "Provokimi I Historianit: Skënderbeu Ka Bërë Masakra, Si Mlladiç Në Bosnjë", *Panorama*, 14 September 2017, <http://www.panorama.com.al/provokimi-i-historianit-skenderbeu-ka-bere-masakra-si-mlladic-ne-bosnje/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

15. "Ja Sesi Ekstremistet E Mirdites Dhunuan Flamurin Turk Ne HEC-In E Qafe Molles", *Gazeta Impakt*, 31 December 2017, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/ja-sesi-ekstremistet-e-mirdites-dhunuan-flamurin-turk-ne-hec-e-qafe-molles/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

cute the vandals, Paulin Zefi challenged the government by calling it in Ottoman “an Arnaut Sancak” which will not be able to subdue seven million Albanians.¹⁶



Figure 2: Catholic extremists destroying the Turkish flag in Qafe Molle, Mirdita (31 December 2017).¹⁷

The celebrations for the Year of Scanderbeg were accompanied by many insults that extremist Christians directed against the Turks and Albanian Muslims. The American republican politician Joseph Dioguardi sent a letter to the Albanian Catholic Church *Zoja Pajtore* in Detroit where he accused the Ottomans of “cleansing the Christians” in Albania.¹⁸ In June, in an interview given to Koha TV, Dioguardi claimed that Albanian politicians have failed to join Europe and are now left with Turkey and Erdogan. He claimed that Erdogan hated Scanderbeg and during a visit made to the office of ex-Prime Minister Sali Berisha, had ordered him to remove the statue of Scanderbeg by calling him a traitor.¹⁹ The Ottoman Turks were also depicted as enemies of Albania, the European civilization, and Christianity in another symposium that the Albanian Catholic Church *Zoja e Shkodres* organized in New York in the presence of representatives from the Albanian and Kosovar consulates in the United States.²⁰

16. “U Proceduan Se Shkatërruan Flamurin Turk, Paulin Zefi: Duke Penalizuar 75 Prej Nesh, A Do T’ia Dilni Që Të Nështroni 7 Milion Shqiptarë?”, Fax News, 4 January 2018, <https://www.faxweb.al/u-proceduan-se-shkaterruan-flamurin-turk-paulin-zefi-duke-penalizuar-75-prej-nesh-tia-dilni-qe-te-neshtroni-7-milion-shqiptare/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

17. Elvis Hila, “Mirditë, Protesta Për Vendosjen E Flamurit Turk Në HEC-In E Qafë Mollës”, Ora News, 31 December 2017, <http://oranews.tv/article/mirdite-protesta-vendosjen-e-flamurit-turk-ne-hec-e-qafe-molles>, (Access date: 1 September 2019)

18. “550 Vjetori I Skenderbeut Në Detroit”, INA, 28 January 2018, <https://ina-online.net/550-vjetori-skenderbeut-ne-detroit/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

19. “Puna Ime Për Kombin Shqiptar Nuk Ka Përfunduar”, KOHA, 8 June 2018, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/98256/dioguardi-shqiptaret-e-kosoves-duhet-te-zgjojen-nuk-po-udhehiqen-nga-politikane-te-duhur/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

20. Beqir Sina, “Meshë Dhe Simpozium Përkujtimor Në Nju Jork, Për Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeun”, Bota Sot, 18 January 2018, <https://www.botasot.info/amerika-diaspora/822230/meshe-dhe-simpozium-perkujtimor-ne-nju-jork-per-gjergj-kastrioti-skenderbeun/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Since in the past years many Albanian Muslim and secular intellectuals have rejected the myth of Scanderbeg,²¹ and asked for its scientific revision,²² in 2018, all state institutions of Albania and the prime minister rushed to his defense by threatening the refuseniks and revisionists. These threats were made public even by Sander Lleshi, the minister of interior, who declared that no one can question Scanderbeg and no intellectual debate will be tolerated about him.²³

In 2018, all state institutions, schools, and universities of Albania celebrated the myth of Scanderbeg. The government allocated money for the restoration of Scanderbeg's mausoleum,²⁴ which has been constructed inside the Selimiye Mosque of Lezha, turned into 'the grave' of Scanderbeg by the communist government in 1981. The government allocated 52,200,000 leke (479,000 USD) to the Ministry of Culture to support the activities of Scanderbeg year.²⁵ State institutions organized exhibitions with historical documents, photographs, and writings that documented the crusade of the popes and Scanderbeg against the Ottomans.²⁶ The Academy of Sciences of Albania allocated prizes for the best scientific works written about Scanderbeg.²⁷ Scanderbeg was celebrated even by the Vatican. Albanian deputies and ministers went to the Holy See to commemorate with the pope the anniversary of Scanderbeg's death,²⁸ while the Catholic Church in Albania organized a mass in the city of Lezha.²⁹

An official commemoration for Scanderbeg's death came even from the municipality of Lezha. Paulin Zefi, the director of the Cultural-Historic Office who

21. "Imami Armand Ali: Skënderbeu Hero i Evropës dhe jo i Shqipërisë", Bold News, 14 September 2017, <https://boldnews.al/2017/09/14/imami-armand-ali-skenderbeu-hero-evropes-dhe-jo-shqiperise/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

22. "Skënderbeu I Kërkimit Shkencor", Perpjekja, 14 October 2012, <http://perpjekja.blogspot.com/2012/10/skenderbeu-i-kerkimit-shkencor.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

23. Opinion Tvklan, "Kush Ulmon Skenderbeun Sulmon Kombin", YouTube, 29 October 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUOyL39BAks&feature=player_embedded, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

24. Maela Marini, "Video/ Viti I Skënderbeut, Rehabilitim I Plotë I Memorialit Të Varrit Të Heroit Kombëtar", ATSH, 12 January 2018, <http://arkiva.ata.gov.al:8080/video-viti-i-skenderbeut-rehabilitohet-memoriali-i-varrit-te-heroit-kombetar/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

25. "Viti I Skënderbeut", Rama I Kalon Kumbaros 52 Milionë Lekë Shtesë Nga Fondi Rezervë I Shtetit", Shqiptarja, 30 March 2018, <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/viti-i-skenderbeut-rama-i-kalon-kumbaros-52-milione-leke-shtesenga-fondi-rezerve-i-shtetit>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

26. "Ekspozita Për Skënderbeun Me Vepra E Antikuarë Të Rrallë", E Perditshme, 18 January 2018, <http://www.eperditshme.al/lajm/584377/ekspozita-per-skenderbeun-me-vepra-e-antikuare-te-rralle>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

27. Valeria Dedaj, "Shpallen Fituesit Për Veprën Më Të Mirë Për Skënderbeun, Rama: Po Shohim Dritë Në Fund Të Tunelit", Shqiptarja, 20 September 2018, <https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/shpallen-fituesit-per-vepren-me-te-mire-per-skenderbeun-rama-po-shohim-drite-ne-fund-te-tunelit>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

28. "Papa Françesku Pret 200 Shqiptarë: Skënderbeu S'është Vetëm I Së Kaluarës", SYRI, <https://www.syri.net/politike/211023/foto-papa-francesku-pret-200-shqiptare-skenderbeu-s-esh-te-vetem-i-se-kaluares/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

29. "Viti I Skënderbeut: Mesha Dhe Homazhi I Kishës Në Trevat Shqiptare", Radio Vaticani, http://sq.radiovaticana.va/news/2018/04/22/viti_i_skenderbeutmesha,_homazhi_kishes_në_trevat_shqiptare/1371664, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

led the attack against the hydropower plant, was one of the organizers of the commemoration. The event was attended by the Catholic Church, a number of Arbereshi Christian pilgrims from Italy, and many Islamophobic politicians and activists. One of the attendees was Eduard Ndocaj, an Islamophobe who glorified the violent actions against the Turkish flag in Mirdita³⁰ and in 2015 appealed to thugs to vandalize the Ottoman plaque of Sultan Selim I in the castle of Lezha.³¹



Figure 3: Paulin Zefi is the director of the Cultural-Historic Office of the city of Lezha who took part in the Mirdita attacks against the Turkish flag. On his right, there is a framed portrait of Father Gjergj Fishta, a quisling Catholic priest who supported Hitler and Mussolini during World War II. Fishta was an anti-Semite who blamed the Jews as enemies of Europe and defended the policies of Hitler against them. Behind Zefi stands a framed engraving of Scanderbeg fighting the Turks. On his left, there is a portrait of Mother Theresa.

30. In the following video, Eduart Ndocaj calls the Turks, barbarians and Mongols and praises the violent attack against the Turkish company in Mirdita. See: Eduart Ndocaj, Facebook, 8 October 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/eduart.ndocaj/videos/705928753117272/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

31. "Eduart Ndocaj (Kaubojsi), Thirrje Për Sulm Në Kalanë E Lezhës: Të Shporrim Prej Aty Sulejmanin E Madhër-ishëm", Te Sheshi, 23 September 2015, <http://tesheshi.com/eduart-ndocaj-kaubojsi-thirrje-per-sulm-ne-kalane-e-lezhes-te-shporrim-prej-aty-sulejmanin/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

The commemoration for Scanderbeg was organized inside the destroyed mosque of Sultan Selim I. On one of the walls of the mausoleum, the organizers had placed a picture depicting Scanderbeg killing Ottoman Turks. Imam Agim Terziu, the only Muslim cleric to attend the event, claimed that the Muslim Community of Albania has no problem with Scanderbeg, while the officials declared that Scanderbeg is a unifying figure for all the Albanians.³²



Figure 4: A picture inside the Mausoleum of Scanderbeg (Mosque of Selim I) depicting Scanderbeg and his Christian fighters killing the Turks (17 January 2018).



Figure 5: Eduart Ndocaj calls for the removal of Suleiman the Magnificent's Tughra (Seal) Plaque from the Castle of Lezha.³³

32. Elvis Hilla, “Lezhë, Ceremoni Në 550 Vjetorin E Vdekjes Së Skënderbeut, Mungon Qeveria”, Ora News, 17 January 2018, <http://www.oranews.tv/article/lezhe-ceremoni-ne-550-vjetorin-e-vdekjes-se-skenderbeut-mungon-qeveria>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

33. “Eduart Ndocaj (Kaubojsi), Thirrje Për Sulm Në Kalanë E Lezhës: Të Shporrim Prej Aty Sulejmanin E Madhërishtëm”, Te Sheshi, 23 September 2015, <http://tesheshi.com/eduart-ndocaj-kaubojsi-thirrje-per-sulm-ne-kalane-e-lezhes-te-shporrim-prej-aty-sulejmanin/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

In January, following the Albanian government's anti-Trump vote in the United Nations regarding Jerusalem, Monika Kryemadhi, the wife of President Ilir Meta censured Prime Minister Rama for siding with Turkey on the issue of Palestine. She claimed that Edi Rama's vote came because he wants to Turkify Albania.³⁴ In November, during a visit of President Ilir Meta and the Minister of Diaspora Pandeli Majko to the town of San Demetrio Corone in Calabria, Italy to commemorate the Arbereshi Christian communities who resisted the Ottomans, President Meta described Scanderbeg as a defender of European civilization and Christianity, while the Ottomans were shown as its enemies.³⁵



Figure 6: Monika Kryemadhi, the wife of President Ilir Meta, declaring that Turkey cannot decide the future of Albania (31 January 2018).³⁶

Fahri Balliu, a reborn Catholic convert who was praised by Pope Benedict XVI,³⁷ attacked the Turkish people too. In an interview with TV Klan Kosova, he described

34. "Kryemadhi: Nuk Mund Të Vendosë Turqia Për Të Ardhmen E Shqipërisë", Dritare, 31 January 2018, <http://dritare.net/kryemadhi-nuk-mund-te-vendose-turqia-per-te-ardhmen-e-shqiperise/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

35. "Fjala E Presidentit Meta Dhe Fjala E Presidentit Mattarella Në Veprimtarinë E Përbashkët Në Shën Mitër Korona", Presidenti i Republikës së Shqipërisë, 7 November 2018, <http://president.al/fjala-e-presidentit-meta-ne-veprimtarine-e-perbashket-presidentin-italian-mattarella-ne-shen-miter-korona/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

36. "Kryemadhi: Nuk Mund Të Vendosë Turqia Për Të Ardhmen E Shqipërisë", Dritare, 31 January 2018, <http://dritare.net/kryemadhi-nuk-mund-te-vendose-turqia-per-te-ardhmen-e-shqiperise/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

37. "Papa Benedikti I XVI, Mesazh Falënderimi Për Fahri Balliun", Panorama, 2 March 2013, <http://www.panorama.com.al/papa-benedikti-i-xvi-mesazh-falenderimi-per-fahri-balliun/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

the Turks as Asians, barbarians, and killers of Albanians for 500 years.³⁸ His son Klevis Balliu, an MP for the Democratic Party, described the Syrian war refugees who might come to Albania as people of Sultan Mehmet who would replace the (Albanian) people of Scanderbeg.³⁹

During a visit to Germany, in April, Prime Minister Edi Rama accused Russia of trying to radicalize the Muslims of Albania.⁴⁰ When questioned whether Albania is a Muslim-majority state, Rama responded that the religion of the Albanians is Europe.⁴¹ These statements angered many Muslims. They condemned the language of the prime minister who claimed that Islamic radicalism is a danger for the country.⁴² Armand Ali, a Tirana-based imam, censured the prime minister's declaration that "the religion of the Albanians is Europe." He explained that this declaration was in line with the government's Year of Scanderbeg agenda and the prime minister wished to make Christianity the religion of the Albanians.⁴³ However, Edi Rama himself condemned Islamophobia. In an interview given to Anadolu Agency he described Islamophobia as a curse of our time.⁴⁴

Media

Islam and Muslims were denigrated by many articles and debates in the media in 2018. The attacks against Islam, Muslims, Turkey, Iran, the Arab world, etc. came from various sources. On 22 February, RTSH (Albanian State Television) promoted a book that was published in Kosovo by Kole Krasniqi with the title *The Development and Appearance of Islamic Extremism in Kosovo and in the Region*.⁴⁵ In this book, the author writes that Islam was violently imposed on Albanians by the Turks. He writes that any Albanian Muslims who does not accept Scanderbeg and Mother Theresa as

38. Klan Kosova, "Fahri Balliu: Turqit – Aziatike Dhe Vrases Te Shqiptareve Per 500 Vjet - Zona B", YouTube, 25 April, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zng8WR6WQ>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

39. "Debat Për Kampet E Refugjatëve. Noka: Nën Thundrën E ISIS-It; PS: Mos Përhapni Panik", Top Channel, 20 June, 2018, <http://top-channel.tv/2018/06/20/debat-per-kampet-e-refugjateve-noka-nen-thundren-e-isis-it-ps-mos-perhapni-panik/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

40. "Don't Turn Your Back On Us, Albania PM Tells EU", Euractiv, 25 April 2018, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/enlargement/news/dont-turn-your-back-on-us-albania-pm-tells-eu/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

41. "Rama: Europa Është Feja E Shqiptarëve", Kult Plus, 18 May 2018, <https://www.kultplus.com/trashegimia/rama-europa-eshte-feja-e-shqiptareve/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

42. "Deklarata/ Besimtarët Myslimanë Dënojnë Gjuhën E Përdorur Nga Kryeministri Rama Ndaj Tyre", Mapo, 26 April 2018, <http://www.mapo.al/deklarata-besimtar-et-myslimane-denojne-gjuhen-e-perdorur-nga-kryeministri-rama-ndaj-tyre/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

43. "Armand Ali I Përgjigjet Kaurit Edi Rama Për Fenë E Shqiptarit", Gazeta Impakt, 28 April 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/armand-ali-i-pergjigjet-kaurit-edi-rama-per-fene-e-shqiptarit/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

44. "Kryeministri I Republikës Së Shqipërisë, Edi Rama, Intervistë Ekskluzive Për Anadolu Agency", Ambasada e Republikës së Shqipërisë ne Turqi, <http://www.ambasadat.gov.al/turkey/sq/kryeministri-i-republik%C3%ABs-s%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABris%C3%AB-edi-rama-intervist%C3%AB-ekskluzive-p%C3%ABr-anadolu-agency>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

45. "Kosovë; Botohet Studimi Mbi Ekstremizmin", RTSH, 22 February 2018, <https://www.rtsh.al/lajme/kosove-botohet-studimi-mbi-ekstremizmin/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

their heroes are radical Islamists. The book lists the Ottomans, the Muslims of central Albania who revolted against Prince Wied, the Islamic Movement of Albanians in Yugoslavia, and any political or religious movement of Albanian Muslims in history as terrorist and extremist. Krasniqi blames, among others, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Muslim communities of Albania and Kosovo, the Arab Islamic Bank, etc. as the sources that have helped the radicalization of Muslims. All the Muslim civil society organizations of Kosovo, including Turkish organizations like the Turkish Development Aid Agency TIKKA, the Turkish charity organization IHH, and a number of Iranian and Arab sponsored NGOs are labeled extremist. He claims that even the chief mufti of Kosovo, Naim Ternava, and many imams and preachers are extremists.⁴⁶



Figure 7: Gjet Ndoji describing the Orient as barbarian (16 April 2018).⁴⁷

In an article published on 16 April, Gjet Ndonji, ex-director of the National Archives of Albania, blamed the Ottomans for the Islamization of Albania. He

46. "Kolë Krasniqi Shpall Terrorist Të Gjithë Muslimanët Shqiptarë: Kërkon Fundin E Demokracisë Dhe Lirisë Së Mendimit", Gazeta Impakt, 4 March 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/kole-krasniqi-shpall-terrorist-te-gjithe-muslimanet-shqiptare-kerkon-fundin-e-demokracise-dhe-lirise-se-mendimit/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

47. A screenshot from Koha Jone newspaper. See: Gjet Ndoji, "Qytetërimi Iliro- Arbnor -Shqiptar Përballet Prej Gati 1400 Vitesh Me Orientin Barbar", Koha Jone, 16 April 2018, <http://www.kohajone.com/2018/04/16/qytet-erimi-iliro-arbnor-shqiptar-perballet-prej-gati-1400-vitesh-me-orientin-barbar/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

described them as barbarians. Albanian Muslims were also described as barbarians and Asian colonists suffering from “Asiatic infection.” He accused the Turks and the Arabs for propagating Asian culture and ideology in order to divide the Albanians from Europe.⁴⁸ Spartak Ngjela, a Tirana-based opinionist, wrote many insulting articles against different politicians in the country, including the prime minister, accusing them of collaborating with Turkey, the Russians, and the Serbs against Albania and Scanderbeg.⁴⁹

In an article entitled “Islam a Primitive Religion That Has Enslaved the Albanians,”⁵⁰ Arben Çokaj described Islam as the reason of Albanians’ tragedies. Dorian Hatibi, a lecturer at University of Durres and director in the Municipality of Tirana, wrote that before the coming of the Turks and the death of Scanderbeg, Albania had universities, cities like Florence and Venice, philosophers, etc., but after the coming of the Turks it had nothing.⁵¹

Local Albanian Islamophobes were supported on their attacks against Islam and Turkey (which is depicted as the new Ottoman Sultanate) by a number of U.S.-based Islamophobes. Arbana Xharra, a notorious Islamophobe from Kosovo, was paired to the United States where she joined two American-Israeli Islamophobes: David Phillips and Alon Ben-Meir. In her articles and interviews, Xharra praised the closing of mosques in Europe and asked for the same in the Balkans.⁵² In other articles that she wrote with Alon Ben-Meir,⁵³ she attacked Turkey for its policies in Bosnia and Herzegovina by claiming that Turkey has an Islamic agenda and appealed to Bosnians to distance themselves from it.⁵⁴ In her Facebook posts, she declared that if she could she will “cleanse” the religious radicals in Kosovo in 72 hours.⁵⁵ She described

48. Gjet Ndoji, “Qytetërimi Iliro- Arbnor -Shqiptar Përballet Prej Gati 1400 Vitesh Me Orientin Barbar”, Koha Jone, 16 April 2018, <http://www.kohajone.com/2018/04/16/qytetërimi-iliro-arbnor-shqiptar-perballet-prej-gati-1400-vitesh-me-orientin-barbar/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

49. “Ngjela: Rama, Mësues Vizatimi Pa Mend Në Kokë. Fshehu Skënderbeun Në Pyll Mos Ta Shohë Erdogani”, BalkanWeb, 23 August 2018, <https://balkanweb.com/ngjela-rama-mesues-vizatimi-pa-mend-ne-koke-fshehu-sken-derbeun-ne-pyll-te-mos-e-shohe-erdogani/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

50. Arben Çokaj, “Islami Është Fe Primitive, Që I Ka Shtypur, Nënshtruar E Skllavëruar Shqiptarët”, Bota Sot, 28 April 2018, <https://www.botasot.info/opinion/878757/islami-eshte-fe-primitive-qe-i-ka-shtypur-nenshtruar-e-skl-laveruar-shqiptaret/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

51. Dorian Hatibi, “Çfarë Kishim Para Pushtimit Turk Kishim Zhvillim”, Gazeta Liria, 17 January 2018, <https://gazetaliria.com/para-pushtimit-turk-kishim-zhvillim/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

52. “Gazetarja Arbana Xharra: Shqipëria Dhe Kosova, Satelitë Të Erdogan”, Ora News, 3 May 2018, <http://www.oranews.tv/emisionet/intervista/gazetarja-arbana-xharra-shqiperia-dhe-kosova-satelite-te-erdogan?page=25>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

53. “Arbana Xharra”, Revolv, <https://www.revolv.com/page/Arbana-Xharra>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

54. “Izraeliti Alon Ben Meir Dhe Katolikja Arbana Xharra Sulmojne Bosnjën Dhe Turqinë”, Gazeta Impakt, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/izraeliti-alon-ben-meir-dhe-katolikja-arbana-xharra-sulmojne-bosnjen-dhe-turqine/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

55. “Arbana Xharra Kruhet Me Muslimanët: Për 72 Orë I Kisha Pastru”, Gazeta Impakt, 22 December 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/arbana-xharra-kruhet-me-muslimanet-per-72-ore-i-kisha-pastru/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Albanian Muslims as “Talibans”⁵⁶ and in other racist comments wrote that (Muslims) who are with Erdogan should not sit with Angela Merkel and Sebastian Kurz, because they are the civilization and Europe.⁵⁷ Arbana Xharra and David Phillips attacked the Albanian government in many occasions. During a hearing at Columbia University, they censured the Albanian government for the permission they had granted to Turkey to build a mosque in Tirana.⁵⁸



Figure 8: Arbana Xharra declaring on her Twitter page that she can cleanse Kosovo from radicals in 72 hours (18 December, 2018).

David Phillips claimed that Turkey is anti-American, an enemy of Europe which has an Islamist agenda, and is not a friend of Albania.⁵⁹ He attacked Turkey, President Erdogan, and Prime Minister Edi Rama even on the Voice of America - Albanian Service. He censured Prime Minister Rama for allowing the Muslim Community to build a 30-million-dollar mosque in Tirana, allowing TIKA (Turkish Development Aid Agency) to organize events on Scanderbeg Square, and criticized Edi Rama for attending wedding ceremonies in Ankara.⁶⁰

56. “Islamofobja Arbana Xharra I Quan Talebanë Shqiptarët Që E Kritikuan Njëpër Portale”, Gazeta Impakt, 12 May 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/islamofobja-arbana-xharra-i-quan-talebane-shqiptaret-qe-e-kritikuan-nep-er-portale/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

57. “Arbana Xharra Ua Ndalon Muslimaneve Te Drejten Qe Te Ulen Ne Divan”, Gazeta Impakt, 13 June 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/arbana-xharra-ua-ndalon-muslimaneve-te-drejten-qe-te-ulen-ne-divan/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

58. “Ministri Bushati Sulmohet Nga Sionistët Në Columbia University Për Partneritetin Me Turqinë Dhe Ndërtimin E Xhamisë Së Madhe”, Gazeta Impakt, 29 April 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/ministri-bushati-sulmohet-nga-sionistet-ne-columbia-university-per-partneritetin-me-turqine-dhe-ndertimin-e-xhamise-se-madhe/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

59. Diamila Leka, “David Phillips: Erdogan, Një Mik I Rremë I Shqipërisë, Ai Nuk Mund Të Besohet”, Shekulli, 24 September 2018, <http://shekulli.com.al/david-phillips-erdogan-nje-mik-i-rreme-i-shqiperise-ai-nuk-mund-te-besohet/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

60. Keida Kostreci, “Phillips: Shqipëria, Kosova Duhet Ta Marrin Seriozisht Rrezikun E Ndikimit Rus Dhe Turk”, Zeri i Amerikes, 28 April 2018, <https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/phillips-ndikimi-rus-turk-ballkani/4369031.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Justice System

In 2018, the Albanian government continued its policy of blacklisting many Muslim activists and controlling their activities even though they have committed no crimes or violent acts. Many Muslim believers complained that border authorities harassed them with extra searches during their entry and exit from Albania. They claimed that their names were blacklisted by state security services. Many complained that they were not allowed to exit Albania. On 19 October, two days after Albania was visited by Nathan A. Sales, the U.S. Coordinator for Counterterrorism,⁶¹ the office of the Prosecutor of Serious Crimes in Tirana announced that his office had started the proceedings against 34 individuals on suspicion of being sponsors of terrorism.⁶²

Ergys Fasllia, Medat Hasani, Bekim Protopapa, and Xhevahir Fishti who were arrested in November 2016 under an Israeli claim that they were planning to stage a terrorist attack against the Israeli national team⁶³ were held in house arrest. The Albanian courts were not able to convict the arrested who claim they are victims and innocent. The Israeli media who in 2016 accused these Albanian Muslims and DAESH of planning the alleged attack against the Israeli team, in 2018 changed its story and now blamed Iran for the alleged attack.⁶⁴ The father of Verdi Morava, whose son was sentenced in 2016 as a supporter of terrorism, continued to ask for the innocence of his son, claiming that he was jailed by Prime Minister Edi Rama who wanted to show Germany that his government is fighting extremism.⁶⁵

While the Albanian government has jailed and blacklisted many Muslim Albanians for their supposed sympathy to violent extremism, Albania hosts on its soil members of two foreign terrorist organizations that are never prosecuted for their sympathy and involvement in violent acts and terrorism. They are the Iranian Mojahedin e-Khalq (MEK)⁶⁶ and many members of the Fetullahist Terrorist

61. "Ministrja Gjonaj Takohet Me Ambasadorin E Posaçëm Kundër Terrorizmit Në DASH, Nathan A. Sales", Ministria e Drejtësisë, 17 October 2018, <http://www.drejtesia.gov.al/newsroom/deklarata-per-shtyp/ministrja-gjonaj-takohet-me-ambasadorin-e-posacem-kunder-terrorizmit-ne-dash-nathan-a-sales/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

62. "Tiranë, Krimet E Rënda Procedojnë 34 Persona Për Financim Të Terrorizmit", Shqiptarja, 19 August 2018, <http://shqiptarja.com/lajm/tiranw-krimet-e-rwnda-procedojnw-34-persona-pwr-financim-tw-terrorizmit/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

63. "Lirohen Dy Të Akuzuarit Për Planifikim Sulmi Në Ndeshjen Ndaj Izraelit", Gazeta Dita, 7 November 2017, <http://www.gazetadita.al/lirohen-dy-te-akuzuarit-per-planifikim-sulmi-ne-ndeshjen-ndaj-izraelit/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

64. Benjamin Weinthal, "Albania Expels Iranian Agents For Plotting Attacks Against Israel", Jerusalem Post, 20 December 2018, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/Albania-expels-Iranian-agents-for-plotting-terrorist-attacks-against-Israelis-574892>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

65. "Grupi I Xhihadistëve, Flet Babai I Njërit Prej Të Dënuarve: Rama Donte Materiale Për Gjermaninë", FAX WEB, 5 January 2019, <https://www.faxweb.al/grupi-i-xhihadisteve-flet-babai-i-njerit-prej-te-denuarve-rama-donte-materiale-per-gjermanine/?fbclid=IwAR0kfaGBUr3wPESh4e4MxxlGUcVITAI84JYCXhPwUhdylWa5rs0cOwHB7M>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

66. Arron Merat, "Terrorists, Cultists – or Champions of Iranian Democracy? The Wild Story of the MEK", The Guardian, 9 November 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/nov/09/mek-iran-revolution-regime-trump-rajavi>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Organization (FETO) which according to former UK Ambassador to Turkey are responsible without doubt for the 15 July coup attempt and the killing of 250 Turkish citizens.⁶⁷

The MEK, which depicts itself as the democratic opposition of Iran, has throughout 2018 called on the Albanian government to close the Iranian Embassy in the country.⁶⁸ The MEK and its foreign supporters produced most of the Islamophobic statements against Iran in 2018. The attacks of the MEK in many cases were directed against local and international media which tried to investigate the intimidations and threats that the MEK carries against its own members. In February 2018, when Top Channel TV aired an interview with three MEK defectors,⁶⁹ the Mojahedins slandered Top Channel as being bought by Iran and described the government of Iran as “religious fascism.”⁷⁰ The journalists and specialists who analyzed and reported on the MEK were randomly insulted as agents of Iran.⁷¹

The Mojahedins distributed many anti-Iranian news in the media and sent letters to security institutions claiming that Iran was trying to carry out a terrorist attack against them.⁷² They distributed fake news by claiming that two Iranian terrorists had entered the country to carry out a terrorist attack.⁷³ Even though Albanian journalists proved this to be fake news,⁷⁴ a number of American media outlets repeated the claims of the MEK as true.⁷⁵

67. “Turqia Kërkon Mbylljen E Aktiviteteve Të FETO-S Në Shqipëri E Kosovë”, Zeri i Amerikes, 19 October 2018, <https://www.zeriamerikes.com/a/4620711.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

68. “Im Atë Do Të Më Bëjë Skllave Për Mullahët Kriminelë Të Iranit”, Vajza Muxhahedine Letër Për Babain. Akuza Ambasadës”, Panorama, 6 August 2018, <http://www.panorama.com.al/im-ate-do-te-me-beje-skllave-per-mullahet-kriminele-vajza-muxhahedine-leter-per-babain-akuza-ambasades-se-iranit/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

69. “Fiks Fare/ Dëshmia E Tre Muxhahedinëve: E Vërteta E Organizatës MEK”, Top Channel, 12 February 2018, <http://top-channel.tv/2018/02/12/fiks-fare-deshmia-e-tre-muxhahedineve-e-verteta-e-organizates-mek/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

70. “Akuza E ‘Rezistencës Së Iranit’: Fashizmi Fetar Që Sundon Iranin Bleu Një Program Në TCH”, Gazeta Dita, 14 February 2018, <http://www.gazetadita.al/akuza-e-rezistences-se-iranit-fashizmi-fetar-qe-sundon-iranin-bleu-nje-program-ne-tch/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

71. Struan Stevenson, “Një Përpjekje E Dështuar Për Të Mbuluar Fajet E Regjimit Terrorist Në Teheran”, Exit, 20 November 2018, <https://exit.al/2018/11/nje-perpjekje-e-deshtuar-per-te-mbuluar-fajet-e-regjimit-terrorist-ne-teheran/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

72. Giovanni Giacalone, “Were the Iranians Really Ready to Carry out an Attack in Europe?”, Iran Interlink, 7 January 2019, <https://iran-interlink.org/wordpress/were-the-iranians-really-to-carry-out-attack-in-europe/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

73. “Two Iranians Detained on Suspicion of Terrorism in the Capital of Albania”, National Council of Resistance of Iran, 24 March 2018, <https://www.ncr-iran.org/en/news/terrorism-fundamentalism/24520-two-iranians-detained-on-suspicion-of-terrorism-in-the-capital-of-albania?highlight=WYJhbGJhbmlhIiwYXWxiYW5pYSdzIl0>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

74. Gjergji Thanasi, “Dy ‘Terroristët’ Iranianë Aprofesionalizëm Ulëritës Apo Thjesht ‘False Flag Operation’”, CNA, 26 March 2018, <https://www.cna.al/2018/03/26/dy-terroristet-iraniene-aprofesionalizem-ulerites-apo-thjesht-false-flag-operation/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

75. Adam Shaw, “Iran Plots Terror on European Soil as EU Tries to Shield Regime from Trump Sanctions Push”, FOX NEWS, 9 August 2018, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/iran-plots-terror-on-european-soil-as-eu-tries-to-shield-regime-from-trump-sanctions-push>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

While Iran did not carry out any attack against the Mojahedins, the MEK itself attacked the journalists of the British Channel 4 and slandered almost all other journalists who wanted to independently interview and ask them questions. The excuse that the MEK used for their assaults and insults against the media who wanted to investigate them was that “the journalists were agents of Iran.”⁷⁶

Internet

The Internet has been the most prevalent space for Islamophobic comments. Many Facebook pages incite extreme hate, Islamophobia, and depict Albanian Muslims as Arabs and Turks who must be killed or expelled from Albania. Some of these pages are *Bota Arabe* (The Arab World);⁷⁷ *Shtetet e Bashkuara te Shqiperise* (The United States of Albania);⁷⁸ *Nje Komb, nje Religion* (One nation, one Religion);⁷⁹ *Nje Komb* (One Nation),⁸⁰ etc. However, the most followed and notorious page which managed to incite even government Islamophobia against Muslims in 2017 is the Facebook page *Feja e Shqiptarit eshte Europa* (The religion of the Albanians is Europe).⁸¹ The ideology that these pages convey is Islamophobia, radical Albanian – Catholic nationalism, and hatred against Turks, Greeks, Slavs, and neighbors of Albania. The people who run these pages are either Catholic extremists or ex-Muslims converted into National-Catholicism and Scanderbegism. Their ideology is similar to the ideology of the Australian terrorist Brenton Tarrant, who committed the New Zealand massacre on 15 March, 2019,⁸² and to the Mirditori groups who attacked the Turkish hydropower plant in the village of Qafë Molla.

Feja e Shqiptarit eshte Europa is one of the most notorious Facebook pages which incites hate and even death threats against Albanian Muslims,⁸³ Turks, Arabs, and all other Muslims. It continuously posts articles against Albanian imams, Muslim believers, Islam, Prophet Muhammad, Turkey, etc. Even though many Muslims and intellectuals have denounced this page and other pages for spreading fake news, hate and Islamophobia, so far Facebook has not closed them down. The Facebook page of *Feja*

76. “Skandali/ Muxhahedinët Sulmojnë Gazetarët Anglezë Në Shqipëri, Ndërhyn Policia”, LAPSI, 18 August 2018, <https://lapsi.al/2018/08/19/skandali-muxhahedinet-sulmojne-gazetaret-angleze-ne-shqiperi-nderhyn-policia/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

77. See: <https://www.facebook.com/Bota-Arabe-1976371949116530/>

78. See: <https://www.facebook.com/www.shbsh.al/>

79. See: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/508510005958656/>

80. See: <https://www.facebook.com/1komb/>

81. See: <https://www.facebook.com/ILLYROPIAN/>

82. Olsi Jazexhi, “The New Zealand Massacre and Anti-Muslim Hatred in the Balkans”, Daily Sabah, 20 March 2019, <https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2019/03/20/the-new-zealand-massacre-and-anti-muslim-hatred-in-the-balkans>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

83. “Kercenimet Terroriste Kunder Myftiut Te Tiranës U Nxiten Nga Stelian Pretashi”, Gazeta Impakt, 1 September 2017, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/kercenimet-terroriste-kunder-myftiut-te-tiranes-u-nxiten-nga-stelian-pretashi/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

e Shqiptarit eshte Europa worships right-wing European leaders⁸⁴ and Albanian Islamophobes. It praises Scanderbeg for his massacres against Muslims and the Ottomans and calls Albanian Muslims Anatolian parasites and reptilians who are a minority.⁸⁵



Figure 9: *Feja e Shqiptarit eshte Europa* Facebook page alludes to Albanian Muslims as reptilians and Anatolian parasites who are a minority thanks to Scanderbeg killing them. The above picture which depicts Scanderbeg killing Muslims is not removed by Facebook even though many Muslims have complained against it and many other violent images and comments (6 May 2018).



Figure 10: A posting by *Feja e Shqiptarit eshte Europa* containing a video of Piro Misha, who attacks Turkey and Erdogan as anti-European and anti-Albanian (30 May 2018).

84. For a Facebook post praising Sebastian Kurz for his anti-Islamic stance see: <https://www.facebook.com/ILLYROPIAN/photos/a.254095831465769/778633529011994/?type=3&theater>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

85. For a posting where the page praises Scanderbeg for killing Muslims, calling the Albanian Muslims Anatolian parasites and reptilians who are a minority in “our” lands, see: <https://www.facebook.com/ILLYROPIAN/photos/a.254095831465769/764043313804349/?type=3&theater>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Central figures in the Islamophobia network are a number of Albanian, Iranian, European, and American individuals who incite hate from within Albania, in Europe, or in the United States against Muslims, Islam, and Muslim-majority countries. In Albania, central Islamophobic figures are Paulin Zefi, Eduard Ndocaj, Tritan Shehu, Kastriot Myftaraj, Fahri Balliu, Spartak Ngjela, Piro Misha, and Arbana Xharra. The Iranian Mojahedins and their supporters like Rudy Giuliani, Patrick Kennedy, Struan Stevenson, Giulio Terzi, and Alejo Vidal-Quadras are central in inciting anti-Iranian ideas. Major American contributors who incite Islamophobia and Turkophobia are Joseph Dioguardi, David Phillips, and Alon Ben-Meir.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

There are no organized political initiatives to counter Islamophobia in Albania. However, some NGOs and news portals like the League of the Albanian Imams, the Muslim Forum of Albania, and *Gazeta Impakt* report anti-Muslim hate speech. Many Muslim and secular intellectuals and journalists challenge the Islamophobic narrative of extreme Catholic groups or organizations like the MEK.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2018, Islamophobia reached unprecedented levels in Albania. The declaration of 2018 as the “Year of Scanderbeg” by the Albanian government legitimized many Islamophobes in their attacks and insults against Muslims and Ottomans in the country. The commemoration of the anti-Ottoman wars of Scanderbeg served as a major tool which inspired hate against Muslims and the Turks in Albania - especially online. The violent acts of Mirdita and the calls for carrying acts of violence against Muslims and Turks were motivated by a Catholicized version of Albanian history and nationalism which has replaced the secularized version of nationalism which Albania developed during the era of communism.

The language that is used nowadays in Albania by Islamophobes describes the Muslims as Turks, Ottomans, Neo-Ottomans, Asiatic infection, Talibans, terrorists, etc. The same language was used by Ratko Mladic against the Muslims in Bosnia. He described them as “Turks” in order to legitimize the massacres carried out against them.⁸⁶ The Islamophobes of Albania are helped in their anti-Muslim hate speech by American Islamophobes like David Phillips, Alon Ben-Meir, and Joseph Dioguardi. These Americans are helping the Albanian Islamophobes to look normal and politically correct in Albania and justify their hate in the name of Scanderbeg, the Myth of Greater Albania,

86. Joel Gunter, “Ratko Mladic, The ‘Butcher of Bosnia’”, BBC, 22 November 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-13559597>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Europe, and civilization. On the other hand, the anti-Iranian Islamophobes demonize Iran for geopolitical reasons, which has negative effects in the Albanian public.

To stop the Islamophobia in Albania, the Albanian government and other interested parties should:

- Ask the Albanian government to start a deradicalization program in the country, where the Catholic Church and other smaller Christian churches should preach peace, tolerance, and co-existence with the Muslims.
- The Albanian government should distance itself from inciting religious nationalism and must secularize its myths and the historical narrative of the nation. A multicultural, Europeanized, and secularized approach should be found when addressing the history of Albania. The idea of united and secular Europe where Turkey and Islam are part of it should be used to replace medieval Catholic myths of war against Islam and the Turks.
- The Voice of America and other major media outlets should not air extremist American opinionists who incite Islamophobia. Facebook should censor and close extremist anti-Muslim pages that incite hate, violence, and Islamophobia.
- The Albanian government should implement its laws against violent extremism equally among all the sectors of its society. It should bring before the law Christian extremists who call for extermination of Muslims and have carried out violent acts against Turkish and Muslim symbols.
- The Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe should address the issue of terrorism and Christian extremism with the Albanian and Kosovar governments and should undertake the same measures they have taken against radical Muslim groups and individuals.
- The Albanian government should not use its programs for fighting extremism in the school system to target the Muslim community only. The U.S. Department of State and the Center for Countering Violent Extremism in the Prime Minister's office should reform their counter extremism program by including deradicalization programs for extremist Christian and nationalist groups or individuals that operate in Albania.
- The Albanian government should stop the harassment of Muslims in the workplace. The Ministry of Defense and other state institutions should allow the Muslims to freely practice their religion and should stop firing them from the workplace only because they are practicing Muslims. Muslims, who are the majority in Albania, must be more present in state institutions and ministries. The private sector must be monitored for discrimination against Muslims.
- The Albanian government should not allow its territory to be used by radical and terrorist organizations which create Islamophobia against foreign countries like Turkey, Iran, and the Arab world.

Chronology

- **01.01.2018:** The commemorations for the Year of Scanderbeg started.
- **04.01.2018:** Paulin Zefi declared that Albanian authorities cannot subdue 7 million Albanians in reference to the Catholic mob who attacked the Turkish flag in Mirdita.
- **11.01.2018:** The Minister of Education Lindita Nikolla announced a project to fight extremism. The project targeted Muslims and Islam as sources of extremism.
- **17.01.2018:** In one of the walls of Selimiye Mosque of Lezha, which has been turned into the Mausoleum of Scanderbeg, a picture of Scanderbeg killing the Ottoman Turks was displayed.
- **17.01.2018:** Dorian Hatibi, a lecturer at University of Durres and director in the Municipality of Tirana, wrote in *Gazeta Liria* that before the coming of the Turks, Albania was like Venice and Florence, but when the Turks came they destroyed everything.
- **22.02.2018:** Albanian State Television (RTSH) promoted the book of Kole Krasniqi, which describes the Muslims of Albania and Kosovo and the Ottomans as extremist Islamists.
- **16.04.2018:** Gjet Ndoji, ex-director of the National Archives of Albania, depicted Albanian Muslims as barbarians, Asian colonists, and as suffering from 'Asiatic infection.'
- **25.04.2018:** Edi Rama declared that Russia wants to radicalize the Muslims of Albania.
- **25.04.2018:** Fahri Balliu declared the Turks to be barbarians, Asians, and killers of the Albanians for 500 years.
- **27.04.2018:** David Phillips and Arbana Xharra censured the Albanian government for the permission they gave to Turkey to build a mosque in Tirana.
- **28.04.2018:** Arben Çokaj wrote in *Gazeta Bota Sot* that Islam is a primitive religion which has subdued and enslaved the Albanians.
- **28.04.2018:** David Phillips attacked Prime Minister Edi Rama in the Voice of America - Albanian Service for allowing Turkey and Erdogan to build a mosque in Tirana and organize events on Scanderbeg Square in Tirana.
- **03.05.2018:** Arbana Xharra praised the closing of mosques in Europe and asked for the same thing to be done in the Balkans.
- **20.06.2018:** Klevis Balliu, an MP of the Democratic Party of Albania, described the Syrian refugees as people of Sultan Mehmet.
- **28.10.2018:** Sander Lleshi, the minister of interior, declared that no

one can question Scanderbeg and no intellectual debate will be tolerated about him.

- **18.12.2018:** Arbana Xharra declared that if she has power she will 'cleanse' Kosovo from religious radicals in 72 hours.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
AUSTRIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.

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Executive Summary

The *Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus* (Office for documenting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism) recorded an increase of approximately 74% of anti-Muslim racist acts in its report for 2018; 540 cases of Islamophobia were recorded in 2018 compared to 309 cases in 2017.

After the ÖVP and the FPÖ formed a coalition in December 2017, several anti-Muslim laws were introduced and Islamophobic policies were implemented in 2018. First, the government implemented a hijab ban for children in kindergarten. This act was legitimized by presenting it as a measure against so-called political Islam. The symbol act was also presented as a measure to fight “political Islam.” Third, the government attempted to close mosques and the Arab Islamic Community of the Islamic Religious Authority (IGGÖ). Most of these attempts were made based on the proclamation to fight “political Islam,” while they are in fact against Muslims in general and especially against organized Muslim civil society. The general secretary of the governing ÖVP even demanded to ban fasting in school for pupils. Particularly striking is the attempt by the state-related Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) to produce knowledge in order to legitimize the anti-Muslim policies of the government.

There was little to no protest by the political opposition and civil society against Islamophobia in 2018. On the contrary, most of these measures and laws were discursively supported even by the majority of the political opposition parties.

The dehumanization of Muslims as a central characteristic of anti-Muslim racism has become even more apparent in public speaking, as can be seen in public discourse and the governing FPÖ’s discourse. The aggressive devaluation of Muslims is also reflected in public space.

In contrast to politics, media gave more space for critical intervention, although some media outlets very strongly supported the government’s anti-Muslim legislation.

Zusammenfassung

Die Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus verzeichnet in ihrem Antimuslimischen Rassismus Report für das Jahr 2018 einen Anstieg von ca. 74 % und damit insgesamt 540 Fälle von Islamfeindlichkeit im Vergleich zu 309 Fällen im Jahr 2017.

Nachdem im Dezember 2017 eine Koalition von ÖVP und FPÖ gebildet wurde, wurden im Kalenderjahr 2018 mehrere islamophobe Gesetze eingeführt und islamophobe Politiken umgesetzt. Das Kopftuchverbot in Kindergärten, die Schließung von Moscheen und der Arabischen Kultusgemeinde der IGGÖ als Maßnahme gegen den sogenannten ‚politischen Islam‘, das Symbolgesetz und die Forderung nach Fastenverboten sind konkrete Politiken und politische Forderungen, die vorgeben, den sogenannten ‚politischen Islam‘ zu bekämpfen, sich tatsächlich jedoch aber gegen MuslimInnen im Allgemeinen und insbesondere gegen die organisierte muslimische Zivilgesellschaft richten.

Protest von der politischen Opposition und Zivilgesellschaft gegen Islamophobie blieb im Jahr 2018 beinahe völlig aus. Besonders auffallend ist der Versuch des Österreichischen Integrationsfonds, Wissen zu produzieren, um die anti-muslimischen Politiken der Regierung zu legitimieren.

Die Entmenschlichung von MuslimInnen als zentrales Charakteristikum von anti-muslimischem Rassismus ist im öffentlichen Sprechen noch deutlicher zutage getreten. Die aggressive Abwertung von MuslimInnen findet sich auch im öffentlichen Raum wider, wo zahlreiche abwertende Schifftzüge gegen MuslimInnen auffindbar waren.

Im Gegensatz zur Politik waren in den Medien neben der Unterstützung von Regierungspositionen auch Gegenstimmen zu vernehmen.

Country Profile

Country: Republic of Austria

Type of Regime: Representative democracy

Form of Government: Semi-presidential representative democracy

Ruling Parties: Austrian People's Party (ÖVP, centrist-right) and Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ, right-wing)

Opposition Parties: Austrian Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), The Greens, NEOS, Liste Pilz/Liste Jetzt!

Last Elections: October 2017, Parliamentary Elections (ÖVP 62 seats [31.47%]; SPÖ 52 seats [26.86%]; FPÖ 51 seats [25.97%]; Greens 0 seats [3.8%]; NEOS 10 seats [5.3%]; PILZ 8 seats [4.41%]). Current government coalition: ÖVP and FPÖ (right-wing).

Total Population: 8.8 million

Major Language: German

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism). Federal constitution recognizes 13 churches and religious communities. Islam has been legally recognized since 1912.

Statistics on Islamophobia:

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination:

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholics 57.24%, Protestants 3.3%, Muslims 8%

Muslim Population (% of Population): 700,000 (8%) according to estimations made by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF).

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Religious Authority in Austria (*Islamische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*, IGGÖ), with the new Islam Act of 2015, all major Muslim organizations are part of the IGGÖ.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: *SOS Mitmensch*, *Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus*, *ZARA*, *Gleichbehandlungsanwaltschaft*.

Far-Right Parties: FPÖ

Far-Right Movements: Identitarian Movement, Info Direkt

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices:

- **Hijab Ban:** In kindergartens, since 2018.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** Partly banned.
- **Minaret Ban:** In the counties of Carinthia and Vorarlberg.
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Yes, since 2017.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The year 2018 can be summarized as the first year of a coalition government with a clear anti-Muslim program. With the FPÖ and ÖVP forming a coalition government, several anti-Muslim laws were introduced and Islamophobic policies were implemented in 2018 such as the prohibition of headscarves in kindergartens, and the closure of mosques and the Arab Islamic Community of the Islamic Religious Authority (IGGÖ). The government also declared its intention to extend the hijab ban to the elementary school in the coming year and also to introduce a law against what they called “political Islam.” Many of the newly introduced acts were legitimized by presenting them as measures against so-called political Islam. Also the symbol act and the demand to ban fasting in school were presented as measures to fight “political Islam,” while they are in fact against Muslims in general and against organized Muslim civil society.

As we can see in this report, many of the debates and laws from media to the Internet were strongly informed by the new government’s positions vis-à-vis Muslims.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The *Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus* recorded an increase of approximately 74% of anti-Muslim racist acts. They recorded 540 cases of Islamophobia in their report for 2018 compared to 309 cases in 2017. Most attacks occurred on the Internet (53%) and the primary victims were women (83%).



Figure 1: The graffiti “MOSLEM RATTE” (Muslim Rat) appeared in January in the third district of Vienna.¹

1. Tarafa Baghajati, Facebook, 11 January 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10155491387488439&set=a.10152022135443439.1073741836.785643438&type=3&theater>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 2: The graffiti “DRECKS ISLAM” (Dirty Islam) in the Viennese local tram, 27 March, 2018.

A Viennese district councillor from the Green Party, Barbara Neuroth, revealed that several institutions that are based on solidarity – from work on the streets to schools and social services – were vandalized with the letters “Moslems raus” (Muslims out).² *Streetwork Wieden* in Vienna also revealed that stickers with racist content were placed on their doors.³



Figure 3: Graffiti with the words “Tiere betäuben, Moslems schächten!” (Anesthetize animals, slaughter Muslims!) was sighted in the restrooms of SMZ Ost hospital in Vienna. Sent to the author by Said Ali, Vienna, April.

2. Bunke, Christian, ““Moslems raus”: Wieden wehrt sich gegen Rassismus”, *Mein Bezirk*, 15.03.2018, https://www1.meinbezirk.at/wieden/c-lokales/moslems-raus-wieden-wehrt-sich-gegen-rassismus_a2437585, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

3. Bunke, Christian, ““Moslems raus”: Wieden wehrt sich gegen Rassismus”, *Mein Bezirk*, 15.03.2018, https://www1.meinbezirk.at/wieden/c-lokales/moslems-raus-wieden-wehrt-sich-gegen-rassismus_a2437585, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

The Al-Sunnah Mosque that was publicly criticized by the government and nearly closed for allegedly spreading radical messages was subsequently graffitied with the words “Muslims out – Stay Behind” (see below).



Figure 4: The graffiti “Muslims Out – Stay Behind” on the front door of a mosque, Vienna, June.

On 9 May, an 18-year-old conscript in basic military service, Mario S., fired a gun in front of a school. A pupil with an Arab background was injured, while the police excluded a racist motive.⁴

On 27 March, a historical Viennese building was graffitied with the words “MOSLEMS RAUS” (Muslims out) (see below).

4. “Neue Details: Schul-Schütze war ein Waffen-Narr”, Österreich, 10 May 2018, <http://m.oe24.at/oesterreich/chronik/wien/Neue-Details-Schul-Schuetze-war-Waffen-Narr/333020520>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).



Figure 5: Graffiti “Moslems Out”, Vienna, 27 March.

The words “MUSLIME RAUS” (Muslims out) were also seen on a local Viennese tram (see below).

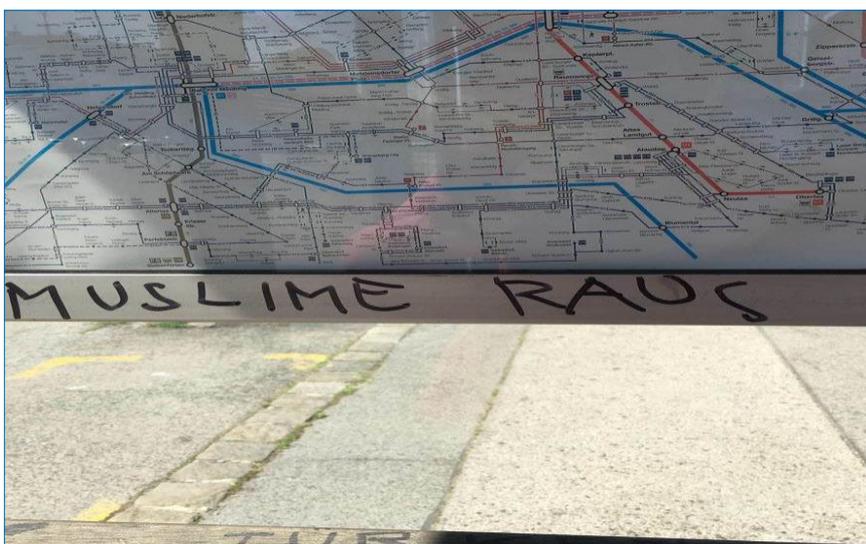


Figure 6: The words “Muslims Out” graffitied on local tram No. 6, 5 July, 2018.

On 23 December, the following photo was taken of a wall with graffiti based on a traditional Christian rhyme; it stated “Advent Advent ein Moslem brennt” (Advent Advent a Muslim burns).

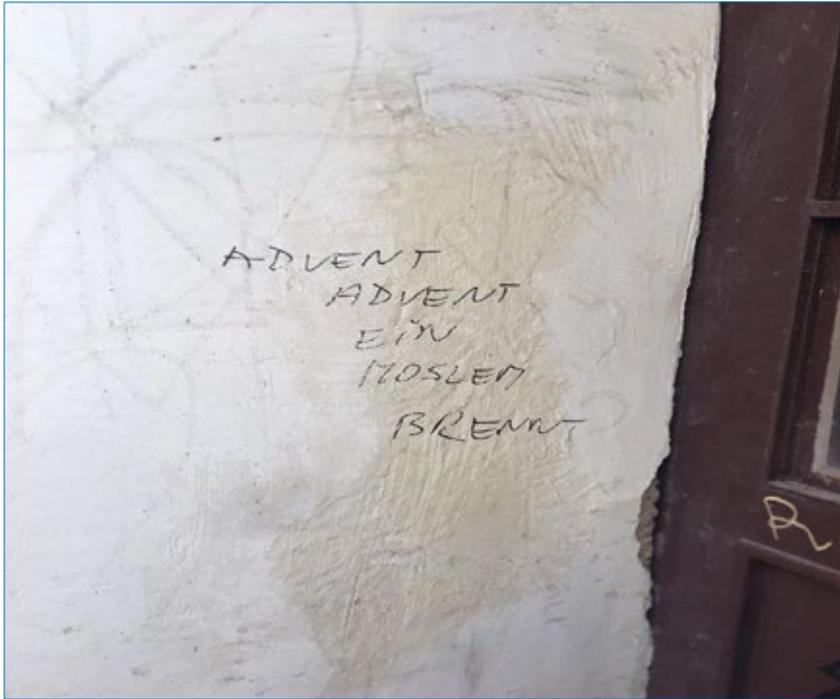


Figure 7: Graffiti with the words "Advent Advent a Muslim burns", 23 December.



Figure 8: Graffiti with the words "Muslims out", Photo: M. Rahimi, 20 March, 2018, Vienna.

Employment

The *Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus* several incidents of discrimination at the workplace. One is with three women working as security services in Salzburg. Another case of a security firm in Lower Austria reveals that the management of the security service was not sending Black people and women wearing a Hijab to do their job at the train station. They were asked to take off their Hijab while working at a stadium and were transferred to another site. Another case revealed by the *Dokustelle* reveals that a woman was told that she would not fit in the company with her Hijab. Another woman with a Hijab is denied to work at a civil institution for being a religious person in Vienna.⁵

Education

The Christian conservative Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) have been criminalizing Muslim educational institutions for some time now. Following the campaign of Sebastian Kurz to problematize kindergarten institutions that are administrated by Muslims, this trend continues. The ÖVP especially focuses on criticizing the Viennese social democratic government that is home to most of these educational institutions. The Austrian federal government has used institutions like the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) to produce knowledge about the Muslim other to legitimize their policies. One of their invited experts, the German Ahmad Mansour, who is also program director of the Brussels-based European Foundation for Democracy, which systematically tries to exclude (supposedly bad) Muslim voices from the public sphere,⁶ supported the government's claims in an interview with *Der Standard*.⁷

Also, far-right politicians regularly argue that Islam was often the reason for violence in schools. According to Maximilian Krauss (FPÖ Vienna), it is no more possible to teach evolution, the human body, or have swimming lessons due to "radicalized pupils" with "Sharia arguments." Party whip of the Viennese FPÖ argued that the Viennese government was tolerating and funding Muslim "parallel societies."⁸ He calls for a ban to distribute the Qur'an, the evaluation of Muslim kindergartens and schools, and the establishment of the German language as the compulsory spo-

5. *Dokustelle Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimischer Rassismus*, Antimuslimischer Rassismus Report 2018, 22-23.

6. Farid Hafez, "Muslim Civil Society under Attack: The European Foundation for Democracy's Role in Defaming and Delegitimizing Muslim Civil Society", *Islamophobia and Radicalization: Breeding Intolerance and Violence*, ed. Iner Derya and John Esposito (Palgrave, Switzerland: 2018), p. 117-137.

7. Lisa Nimmervoll, "Ahmad Mansour: 'Religionskritik ist kein Rassismus'", *Der Standard*, 22 August 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000085755222/Ahmad-Mansour-Religionskritik-ist-kein-Rassismus>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

8. FPÖ Wien, "Krauss: Islamisierung an Wiens Schulen droht Lehrplan zu sprengen", *OTS*, 15 May 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180515_OTS0087/krauss-islamisierung-an-wiens-schulen-droht-lehrplan-zu-sprengen, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

ken language during breaks in school. Dominik Nepp (FPÖ Vienna) frames Muslim associations as radical and not worthy of subsidization.⁹

The youth branch of the FPÖ in Upper Austria published a calendar for pupils with racist content and disseminated it in schools. It read, “You are the first generation that has to fight for their own homeland and identity. The wrong immigration policy has navigated Austria and Europe into a state of emergency.”¹⁰ The Greens and the Social Democrats protested against this publication.¹¹

Susanne Wiesinger played a central role in education issues in 2018. A long-time teacher, working for the social democratic teacher’s union, Wiesinger published a book titled *Kulturkampf im Klassenzimmer. Wie der Islam die Schulen verändert. Bericht einer Lehrerin* (The Clash of Civilization in the Classroom. How Islam is Changing Schools. A Report by a Teacher). The publishing house Edition QVV - Quo Vadis Veritas Redaktions GmbH is newly founded by the media and Red Bull-empire of Dietrich Mateschitz and was once called by *Süddeutsche Zeitung* “(right-wing, FH) Breitbart from the Alps?”¹² Part of Mateschitz’s media network is also Quo Vadis Veritas Foundation, to which belongs Edition QVV, Addendum¹³ and Talk im Hangar from broadcast *Servus TV*. In an interview with Lisa Nimmervoll (*Der Standard*), Wiesinger says, “The school is the venue for cultural, religious and national quarrels. More and more often these are violently fought. Muslims make the biggest problems.”¹⁴ And further, “Many Muslim children are torn inside. On the one hand, they are persuaded by the community how superior and special they are because of their faith, on the other hand they are confronted with their academic failure. Of course, this causes inner turmoil, tremendous tensions.”¹⁵ The tabloid press *Kronen Zeitung* also interviewed Susanne Wiesinger, giving her a lot of space for her ideas. She said, “We are powerless because the proportion of Muslim students is growing and because we, as teachers of the majority society, are simply in

9. FPÖ Wien, “Nepp: FPÖ verlangt Sondergemeinderat zur ATIB-Affäre”, OTS, 20 April 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180420_OTS0086/nepp-fpoe-verlangt-sondergemeinderat-zur-atib-affaere, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

10. Ibid.

11. “Schülerkalender der Freiheitlichen Jugend erhitzt die Gemüter“, OÖNachrichten, 20 September 2018, https://mobil.nachrichten.at/oberoesterreich/Schuelerkalender-der-Freiheitlichen-Jugend-erhitzt-die-Gemueter;art4,3012773?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1537464855, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

12. Peter Münch, “Breitbart’ aus den Alpen?“, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 26 September 2017, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/medien/neues-onlinemagazin-addendum-breitbart-aus-den-alpen-1.3683692>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

13. Addendum förderte den Diskurs entsprechend und veröffentlichte berichte, wonach Schulmädchen beim Tragen einer Haarbedeckung unter Druck gesetzt werden würden. See: “Schülerin: ‘Allah mag Mädchen mit Kopftuch lieben’“, *Kronen Zeitung*, 14 May 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1707660>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

14. Lisa Nimmervoll, “Schule und Islam: Erdoğan-Begeisterung löst Radikalisierung ab”, *Der Standard*, 10 September 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000087058010/Schule-und-Islam-Zwischen-Parallelwelten-und-gelungener-Integration?ref=article>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

15. Ibid.

the minority.”¹⁶ Wiesinger positioned herself as a leftist, who addressed the “problem of Islam.” Her approach was not only welcomed by politicians, especially from the governing ÖVP and FPÖ, but also from the press. Samuel Schirmbeck¹⁷ and Lisa Nimmervoll supported her thesis in *Der Standard*. According to Nimmervoll, “Islam is changing the schools in non-acceptable way.”¹⁸ A director in a school was interviewed to support Wiesinger’s views and the claims of the federal government, claiming that there were four problems regarding the integration of Muslims, one of them being “conservative Muslim values.”¹⁹ Some newspapers also gave space for a critical perspective.²⁰

The then president of the Islamic Religious Authority (IGGÖ), Ibrahim Olgun, criticized the fact that “all Muslim children are under general suspicion”²¹ and that “policies are made on the back of our children.”²² Alternative investigations by journalists in daily newspapers also allowed a more differentiated view on the issue.²³

The Viennese branch of the ÖVP presented an “8 Point Program against Radicalization and Islamization in the Classroom” on 19 September, 2018. The program contained various assimilationist, anti-Muslim claims arguing at the same time that the presented measures were against racism. One amongst many was the argument that “parents must make a commitment to the constitution, values, and social order when they register their kids in school.”²⁴ But even the social democratic and Green-led government in Vienna succumbed to the discursive pressure. Mayor Michael Ludwig

16. Conny Bischofberger, “Lehrerin packt aus: ‘Zu viele Muslime in Klassen’”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 9 September 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1768127>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

17. Samuel Schirmbeck, “Der fatale Umgang der Linken mit dem Islam”, *Der Standard*, 14 September 2018, <https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000087380082/Der-fatale-Umgang-der-Linken-mit-dem-Islam>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

18. Lisa Nimmervoll, “Kampf der Vernünftigen”, *Der Standard*, 10 September 2018, https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000087079461/Islam-in-der-Schule-Kampf-der-Vernueftigen?amplified=true&ref=article&__twitter_impression=true, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

19. Alexander Bischofberger-Mahr, “Integration: 4 große Probleme an unseren Schulen”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 16 December 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1825954?fbclid=IwAR0shG5ZSXPqSmQKgcHtnzKNiMzJCprsteX-GV7SwEwrsPZmo5xsbv167X8>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

20. Ida Metzger, “Glattauer: ‘Der Bub hinter dem Kulturkrieger ist ein Depp’”, *Kurier*, 16 September 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/glattauer-der-bub-hinter-dem-kulturkrieger-ist-ein-depp/400119287>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

21. IGGÖ, “IGGÖ ruft zur Versachlichung der Diskussion auf”, *OTS*, 21 September 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180921_OTS0111/iggoe-ruft-zur-versachlichung-der-diskussion-auf, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

22. *Ibid.*

23. Christian Böhmer, “Problemschüler: Wie 14-Jährige plötzlich IS-Fans wurden”, *Kurier*, 15 September 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/problemschueler-wie-14-jaehrige-plotzlich-is-fans-wurden/400119338>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

24. ÖVP-Klub, “Wölbitsch/Schwarz: 8-Punkte-Programm gegen Radikalisierung und Islamisierung in der Schule”, *OTS*, 19 September 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180919_OTS0107/woelbitschschwarz-8-punkte-programm-gegen-radikalisierung-und-islamisierung-in-der-schule?utm_source=2018-09-19&utm_medium=email&utm_content=html&utm_campaign=mailabodigest, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

countered many of the Islamophobic claims made by the conservatives, but still argued that the problems, which were made public by Wiesinger, are an effect of “social plus ethnic issues in combination with the emergence of a conservative Islam.”²⁵

Minister of Education Faßmann (ÖVP) announced his intentions to conduct a survey done by political consultant Kenan Güngör to ask school directors “what challenges they face through religious-political developments.”²⁶ Güngör had also argued that religious education in public school should be revoked from the IGGÖ, since the IGGÖ would present a vision of Islam, which does not fit in a liberal society.²⁷ Later, Wiesinger became “Ombudsman for Questions of Value and Cultural Conflicts,” a newly established position in the Ministry of Education, while still arguing that she was a leftist.²⁸ The establishment of a new Department for School and Integration was announced for 2019.²⁹ Wiesinger also became a columnist for the tabloid press *Kronen Zeitung*.³⁰

A representative of the Vienna Child and Youth Welfare Service, a department of the Viennese government, Ercan Nik Nafs further exploited fears of Islamization in the education sector.³¹ He argued that no “reasonable human can advocate hijab for small kids.”³² According to Nafs, around 3,000 children are visiting private Qur’anic courses during the summer holidays, which for him is problematic.³³ Far-right politicians speak of “Sharia schools.”³⁴ An education institution of Muslims that trained imams, which was contested in 2017, reopened again to train both chaplains and imams.³⁵

25. Wien.orf.at, “Schule und Islam: Wien richtet Hotline ein”, ORF, 10 September 2018, <https://wien.orf.at/m/news/stories/2937080/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

26. Lisa Nimmervoll, “Schule und Islam: Erdoğan-Begeisterung löst Radikalisierung ab”, Der Standard, 10.09.2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000087058010/Schule-und-Islam-Zwischen-Parallelwelten-und-gelungener-Integration?ref=article>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

27. Andreas Sator, “Österreich sucht eigenen Islam – muss aber bei null anfangen”, Der Standard, 15 July 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000083443263/Oesterreich-sucht-einen-eigenen-Islam-muss-aber-bei-null-anfangen?ref=article>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

28. “Schule und Islam: Wiesinger wird Ombudsfrau”, ORF, 20 December 2018, <https://wien.orf.at/m/news/stories/2954578/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

29. Ibid.

30. “Kämpft für Integration”, Kronen Zeitung, 16 November 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1809526>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

31. John Gerald, “Jugendanwalt Nik Nafs: ‘Krieg und Märtyrertum werden verherrlicht’”, Der Standard, 15 May 2018, derstandard.at/2000079685460/Jugendanwalt-Kriegsspielereien-in-Moscheen-kein-Einzelfall, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

32. Ibid.

33. “Koranunterricht: Kinderanwalt fordert Standards”, ORF, 30 June 2018, <http://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2921936/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

34. “Geplantes Islam-Zentrum lässt die Wogen hochgehen”, Kronen Zeitung, 17 June 2018, <https://mobil.krone.at/1724443>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

35. Bernhard Ichner, “Neustart für Imam-Lehrgang in Liesing”, Kurier, 8 January 2018, <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/neustart-fuer-imam-lehrgang-in-liesing/305.277.103>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

The Ministry of Education published a newsletter, in which it explained the educational principle of “Equality and Diversity Management.” The publication contained much Islamophobic content, especially regarding the hijab.

Academia is regularly used to legitimize political claims made by the federal government. Government-financed surveys allow the institutions to substantiate their views on certain topics. The highly controversial Ednan Aslan was commissioned by the city of Graz to conduct a study on “Religious and Ethnic Orientations of Muslim Refugees in Graz,” surveying 288 people. The study was presented on 11 January, 2018 at the City Council.³⁶ According to Aslan, a Shia majority might emerge in Graz, which could lead to a structural support by Iran. A Graz’s city councilman then argued that one had to fight anti-Semitism with Muslim associations and support women, given the findings of Aslan’s study,³⁷ while being quiet regarding the stark anti-Semitism of the coalition partner FPÖ, which is also governing in Graz with deputy mayor Mario Eustacchio, a hard-line right-wing politician, who had originally embraced the Identitarian Movement. While the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution did not document one single incident of anti-Semitism by Muslims, it did record 41 anti-Semitic and 28 Islamophobic acts.³⁸ Meanwhile, the federal government intentionally plays down anti-Semitic acts,³⁹ while focusing on Islamized anti-Semitism.

Following the highly contested “study” on Islamic kindergartens compiled by Ednan Aslan, a follow-up study was conducted by a team of academics. They announced different findings, not supporting the alarmist views that were used by the then-ministry of Sebastian Kurz from 2015 to 2017. Rather, they problematized that “since its controversial report and the resulting stigmatization, religion is being forced out of the kindergartens - especially those with a connection to Islam.”⁴⁰ In contrast to Aslan’s study, which had only examined a few institutions remotely, 698 kindergartens voluntarily completed the questionnaire.⁴¹

36. “Studie: Wertorientierung von muslimischen Flüchtlingen in Graz”, Stadt Graz, 12 January 2018, https://www.graz.at/cms/beitrag/10307649/8106610/Studie_Wertorientierung_von_muslimischen.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

37. Walter Müller, “Die Religion, ein Anker für viele junge Flüchtlinge“, *Der Standard*, 12 January 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000071990652/Die-Religion-ein-Anker-fuer-viele-junge-Fluechtlinge>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

38. Lukas Kapeller, “Muslimischer Antisemitismus: ‘Diese Weltbilder sitzen tief’”, *Kurier*, 29 December 2017, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/muslimischer-antisemitismus-diese-weltbilder-sitzen-tief/303.868.490>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

39. Nina Horacek, “Wir schaffen die siebte Million”, *Falter*, 23 January 2018, <https://www.falter.at/archiv/wp/wir-schaffen-die-siebte-million>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

40. Bernhard Ichner, “Muslime planen Gütesiegel für Islam-Kindergärten”, *Kurier*, 7 February 2018, <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/muslime-planen-guetesiegel-fuer-islam-kindergaerten/309.926.958>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

41. Bernhard Ichner, “Islam-Forscher übt Kritik an Kindergarten-Studie”, *Kurier*, 12 January 2018, <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/islam-forscher-uebt-kritik-an-kindergarten-studie/306.060.573>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

The Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF), which is financed for the most part by the Federal Ministry for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (BMEIA), plays a central role in imparting knowledge about otherized Muslims. The many events organized by the ÖIF reveal a tendency to bring people – especially from Germany – who have a clear anti-Muslim agenda. The ÖIF organized multiple panels to allow people with anti-Muslim views to disseminate their positions. To mention but a few, a panel on “The Influence of Political Islam” featured Mouhanad Khorchide, Nina Scholz, Oliver Henhapel, and Susanne Raab. Scholz argued that Muslim women wearing the hijab while positioning themselves as feminists “would mostly be in close relationship with the conservative Islamic associations and the Muslim Brotherhood.”⁴² A publication by the ÖIF was presented with articles by the Swiss Islamophobe Saida Keller-Messahli and Seyran Ates as well as law scholar Katharina Pabel (leader of the expert council on Integration at the Ministry of Foreign and Integration Affairs) and others.⁴³ Keller-Messahli was profoundly criticized on her piece on Islam in the Balkans. Florian Bieber, professor at the University of Graz and director of the Center for Southeast European Studies, argued that her publication was a “scandal [...] badly researched, written sloppily, by a person who has no idea about the subject.”⁴⁴ A panel took place entitled “What Role Mosques Play for the Integration of Muslim Immigrants in Austria” featuring Heiko Heinisch, Susanne Schröter, and Constantin Schreiber, journalist and author of the book *Inside Islam - What Is Being Preached in German Mosques*. Kamel Daoud and Anne-Catherine Simon talked on the panel “Dangers of Islamism and the Lack of Awareness of the West.”⁴⁵ At the panel “School and Islam: Challenges of Integration,” Berlin-based journalist Düzen Tekkal stated that the reasons for the lack of integration of Muslim students are “anti-Semitism, ethnic-religious conflicts, stereotypes towards classmates, overburdened teachers who have little authority, and students from non-educational backgrounds with a high proportion of migrants.”⁴⁶ Minister for Europe, Integration & Foreign Affairs Karin Kneissl opened the meeting of the integration advisory board⁴⁷ to discuss amongst other things “Integration and Identity – Girls

42. ÖIF, “ÖIF-Diskussion zu Islam in Europa: ‘Muslime müssen in Europa geltende Werte und Gesetze leben’”, OTS, 23 January 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180123_OTS0166/oeif-diskussion-zu-islam-in-europa-muslime-muessen-in-europa-geltende-werte-und-gesetze-leben., (Access date: 5 September 2019).

43. Ibid.

44. “Die Islamkritikerin und ihr umstrittener Balkantext”, Tages-Anzeiger, 31 January 2018, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/schweiz/standard/als-historikerin-durchgefallen/story/15030448>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

45. ÖIF, “Einladung zu Lesung und Gespräch mit Schriftsteller Kamel Daoud”, Integrationsfonds, 6 March 2018, <http://integrationsfonds.eyepinnews.com/eventview/?p=z2c7dd30ba732626e7bf0cd4e97f0e92b3b14aba00ed2317b175787265d21587c>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

46. APA, “Schule und Islam: Geleugnete Probleme sind nicht lösbar”, Die Presse, 9 May 2018, https://diepresse.com/home/Innenpolitik/Wien/5424000/Schule-und-Islam_Geleugnete-Probleme-sind-nicht-loesbar, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

47. ÖIF, “16. Sitzung des Integrationsbeirats: Schwerpunkte Frauen und Integration an Schulen”, Integrationsfonds, 24 May 2018, https://www.integrationsfonds.at/newsbeitrag/16-sitzung-des-integrationsbeirats-schwerpunkte-frauen-und-integration-an-schulen_3287/?L=2&cHash=81fae10d6b7ca8c786928675a49fec4e, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

and boys in the context of traditionally role models” and “Integration in Schools.”⁴⁸ The Islamophobe Zana Ramadani presented her views at events organized by the ÖIF in the cities of Salzburg and St. Pölten together with the Islamophobes Seyran Ates and Saida Keller-Messahli.⁴⁹ In June, Seyran Ates was also invited by the ÖIF,⁵⁰ where she supported the state policy regarding the hijab ban during a panel on “Equality, Islam and Patriarchy.” She stated, “If you put a headscarf on girls, you take their childhood and sexualize them. They urge them into the role of a sexual object and restrict their development, which for me is child abuse.”⁵¹ Ates was also invited to give talks on 30 July and 3 October by the ÖIF.⁵² Other ÖIF panels featured Michael Fleischhacker, as journalist for *Addendum*.⁵³

The publications and events of the ÖIF are used to legitimize the policy of the federal government. According to the *Kronen Zeitung*, a report by the ÖIF that allegedly shows that several Viennese municipal districts are home to so-called parallel societies shows the gap between cultures in Vienna. ÖVP General Secretary Karl Nehammer argued, “The poison of political Islam must not endanger our society [...] Violent clashes, territorial conflicts and parallel justice are on the agenda according to executive officials and judges.”⁵⁴ On 29 November, the Integration Advisory Board of the BMEIA met under the leadership of ÖIF director Franz Wolf. Senior Fellow of the European Foundation for Democracy Lorenzo Vidino presented a talk on “Political Islam in Austria.”⁵⁵

Minister of Interior Herbert Kickl organized an EU conference entitled “Values, Constitutional State and Security,” which discussed the security situation of Jews in the EU. According to Kickl, there is a new threat of anti-Semitism coming from political Islam.⁵⁶ Susanne Schröter declared that “political Islam is a fundamental threat

48. Ibid.

49. ÖIF, “ÖIF-Diskussion mit Zana Ramadani und Susanne Raab”, Integrationsfonds, 28 September 2017, https://www.integrationsfonds.at/newsbeitrag/oeif-diskussion-mit-zana-ramadani-und-susanne-raab_2635/?L=2&cHash=9ce12fd736b657a275083d7d95790dcf, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

50. Red., “Frauenrechtlerin Seyran Ates: ‘Kopftuch bei Kindern ist Kindesmissbrauch’”, Die Presse, 23 June 2018, <http://diepresse.com/home/5452369/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

53. ÖIF, “Migrationsforscher Koopmanns: ‘Es steht einer liberalen Gesellschaft zu, Integration zu verlangen’”, OTS, 4 October 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20181004_OTS0160/migrationsforscher-koopmanns-es-steht-einer-liberalen-gesellschaft-zu-integration-zu-verlangen, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

54. “Politischer Islam darf Bürger nicht gefährden”, Kronen Zeitung, 1 October 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1780687>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

55. ÖIF, “17. Sitzung des Integrationsbeirats: Schwerpunkt Arbeitsmarktintegration und politischer Islam in Österreich”, Integrationsfonds, 30 November 2018, https://www.integrationsfonds.at/newsbeitrag/17-sitzung-des-integrationsbeirats-schwerpunkt-arbeitsmarktintegration-und-politischer-islam-in-oesterreich_3857/, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

56. Margaretha Kopeinig, “Kickl will jüdische Gemeinde besser schützen”, Kurier, 19 November 2018, https://kurier.at/politik/inland/kickl-will-juedische-gemeinde-besser-schuetzen/400329141?fbclid=IwAR2mPALpXAGYM-DhPEKpqjZzC2KG4p_PTJWKeQvMGz_g_I5bwZUN8SMe2Yk, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

to freedom and security and our democratic societies as a whole, as it always seeks to seize power.”⁵⁷ According to Kickl, he wants to save Muslims from political Islam. Several ‘experts’ argued that one should not talk to the wrong partners,⁵⁸ meaning the official representation of Muslims in Austria. Also Chancellor Sebastian Kurz (ÖVP), who was awarded the “Jerusalem Navigator” prize by the European Jewish Congress,⁵⁹ organized a conference entitled “The Struggle against Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism.”⁶⁰ In this context, Kurz tried to equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, which the Middle East expert John Bunzl analyzed as an attempt to normalize the Israeli government’s relations with the FPÖ.⁶¹

Politics

The political debate regarding Islam/Muslims has increasingly deteriorated under the ÖVP-FPÖ government. Anti-Muslim laws such as the ban on headscarves in kindergartens, the closure of mosques and an institution of the IGGÖ as a measure against so-called political Islam, the symbol act, and the demand to ban fasting in school for pupils are concrete policies and political demands that pretend to fight so-called political Islam, but are, in fact, against Muslims in general and against especially organized Muslim civil society.

The ban of the hijab was presented by the Austrian government at an early stage in 2018 and was especially promoted by the vice-chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache (FPÖ). According to Strache, this was to assure integration. For Strache, the headscarf “plays into the hands of political Islam, which has already created dangerous parallel societies in diverse structures of associations.”⁶²

This initiative found little opposition. Journalists,⁶³ amongst them from the liberal *Der Standard*, supported the ban of the hijab in kindergartens,⁶⁴ which was especially

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Red., “Europas Juden ehren Kurz mit „Jerusalem Navigator“, ORF, 20 November 2018, <https://orf.at/m/stories/3101466/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

60. Margaretha Kopeinig, “Kickl will jüdische Gemeinde besser schützen“, *Kurier*, 19 November 2018, https://kurier.at/politik/inland/kickl-will-juedische-gemeinde-besser-schuetzen/400329141?fbclid=IwAR2mPALpXAGYM-DhPEKPqiZzC2KG4p_PTJWKeQvMGz_g-_I5bwZUN8SMe2Yk, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

61. John Bunzl, “Das seltsame Verhältnis der Kurz-Regierung zu Isreal“, *Der Standard*, 20 November 2018, derstandard.at/2000091841129/Das-seltsame-Verhaeltnis-der-Kurz-Regierung-zu-Israel, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

62. Claus Pándi, “Strache will jetzt Kopftuchverbot in Kindergärten“, *Kronen Zeitung*, 31 March 2018, <http://www.krone.at/1682481>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

63. Helmut Brandstätter, “Die billige Show um das Kopftuch“, *Kurier*, 5 April 2018, <https://kurier.at/meinung/die-billige-show-um-das-kopftuch/400016113>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

64. Eric Frey, “Kopftuchverbot: Auch Strache hat manchmal recht“, *Der Standard*, 2 April 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000077175812/Kopftuchverbot-Auch-Strache-hat-manchmal-recht>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

welcomed by Strache.⁶⁵ It was supported by foreign and integration minister,⁶⁶ political consultant Kenan Güngör, who called for a ban up to 11 years of age,⁶⁷ and scholar Mouhanad Khorchide.⁶⁸ On 4 April, a hijab ban for kindergarten was commissioned to “allow all girls equal chances to develop,”⁶⁹ said Kurz and to protect them from “political Islam.”⁷⁰ The minister of education was originally sceptical to install any dress regulations,⁷¹ but later declared that the IGGÖ would be included in the drafting of the law,⁷² which did not happen. Originally, the government urged the opposition parties to support the act,⁷³ since legislation of school affairs need a majority of two thirds.⁷⁴ Other experts on school from the conservative political milieu, who at first were against a law to prohibit the hijab, became staunch public supporters.⁷⁵

Only a few people such as the president of Austria’s municipalities (*Gemeindebund*)⁷⁶ and the president of the Catholic Women Orders were against the ban, while the opposition leader of the NEOS, Matthias Strolz, was sceptical.⁷⁷

Strache argued on 5 April on Servus TV that a hijab ban should finally be extended to the whole public school, university, and public offices, which was support-

65. “Strache im Interview: ‘Der politische Islam hat hier nichts verloren!’”, Kronen Zeitung, 5 April 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1686147>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

66. APA, “Kopftuch für Kneissl ‘nicht mit moderner Gesellschaft vereinbar’”, Die Presse, 12 July 2018, <https://diepresse.com/home/ausland/eu/5463025/Kopftuch-fuer-Kneissl-nicht-mit-moderner-Gesellschaft-vereinbar>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

67. Martina Maros-Goller, “Kopftuch beeinflusst die Identität stark’ – Soziologe Kenan Güngör im WOCHENGespräch”, Mein Bezirk, 25 April 2018, https://www1.meinbezirk.at/graz/c-politik/kopftuch-beinflusst-die-identitaet-stark-soziologe-kenan-guengoer-im-woche-gespraech_a2537082, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

68. Ebd APA, “Schule und Islam: Gelegnete Probleme sind nicht lösbar”, Die Presse, 9 May 2018, https://diepresse.com/home/Innenpolitik/Wien/5424000/Schule-und-Islam_Gelegnete-Probleme-sind-nicht-loesbar, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

69. Red., “Kurz gibt Kopftuchverbot für Kinder in Auftrag”, ORF, 4 April 2018, <http://orf.at/stories/2432799/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

70. “ÖVP & FPÖ fixieren Kopftuchverbot in Kindergärten”, Kronen Zeitung, 4 April 2018, <http://www.krone.at/1684440>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

71. Sonja Peitler-Hasewend, Günter Pilch and Norbert Swoboda, “Sommerferien werden nicht gekürzt”, Kleine Zeitung, 11 January 2018, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5351493/Bildungsminister-Heinz-Fassmann_Sommerferien-werden-nicht-gekuerzt, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

72. Red., “Kurz gibt Kopftuchverbot für Kinder in Auftrag”, ORF, 4 April 2018, <http://orf.at/stories/2432799/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

73. “Dossier zum Kopftuch: So schnell ändert sich die Meinung...”, Kleine Zeitung, 2018, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5400328/Fassmanns-Stimmungswandel#image-4E72F267-64C9-4E2D-8FE1-E09A-0BAF8E21_v0_h, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

74. Red., “Kinderschutzgesetz ‘in Auftrag gegeben’”, ORF, 4 April 2018, <http://orf.at/stories/2432832/2432833/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

75. Ibid.

76. Red., “Kurz gibt Kopftuchverbot für Kinder in Auftrag”, ORF, 4 April 2018, <http://orf.at/stories/2432799/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

77. “Dossier zum Kopftuch: So schnell ändert sich die Meinung...”, Kleine Zeitung, 2018, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5400328/Fassmanns-Stimmungswandel#image-4E72F267-64C9-4E2D-8FE1-E09A-0BAF8E21_v0_h, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

ed by Sebastian Kurz.⁷⁸ State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior Karoline Edtstadler (ÖVP) also embraced this idea.⁷⁹ Scholars of law argued that there could not be a ban only of the hijab while allowing other religious garments such as the *kippah*.⁸⁰ The president of the Constitutional Court argued that all religious communities have to be treated the same way.⁸¹ IGGÖ President Olgun announced that he would go to court against this discrimination,⁸² which according to FPÖ party whip Johann Gudenus was an “Islamist statement.”⁸³ The chief of communication of the Viennese archdiocese, Prüller, criticized Gudenus.⁸⁴

The old-time Viennese mayor Michael Häupl (SPÖ) argued that the hijab “enriches the urban image.”⁸⁵ The Viennese ÖVP integration spokesperson Caroline Hungerländer called for the installation of an advisory body for women, who want to take off their hijab, which was rejected by the Viennese government.⁸⁶ People such as Ahmad Mansour and teachers against the hijab were invited to present their ‘expertise.’ According to Mansour, the hijab is “perverse and an abuse.”⁸⁷ General Secretary of the Viennese SPÖ Barbara Novak argued to extend the ban on all schools, not only in kindergartens;⁸⁸ however, she was criticized by her own party and thus retracted her statement.⁸⁹

78. Red., “Strache will Kopftuchverbot bis zur Universität“, ORF, 6 April 2018, <http://orf.at/stories/2433133/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

79. Evelyn Peternel, “Was junge Muslimas zur Kopftuch-Debatte sagen“, Kurier, 8 April 2018, https://kurier.at/politik/inland/was-junge-muslimas-zur-kopftuch-debatte-sagen/400017736?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_campaign=Echobox&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#link_time=1523170472, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

80. Maria Sterkl, “Strache blitzt mit allgemeinem Kopftuchverbot ab“, Der Standard, 6 April 2018, derstandard.at/2000077450058/Strache-will-allgemeines-Kopftuchverbot-auch-fuer-Studierende, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

81. Marie-Theres Egyed and Peter Mayr, “Bierlein: ‘Das Kopftuchverbot ist sicher problematisch“, Der Standard, 27 April 2018, derstandard.at/2000078793119/Bierlein-Das-Kopftuchverbot-ist-sicher-problematisch, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

82. Red., “IGGÖ will Kopftuchverbot anfechten“, ORF, 9 April 2018, <http://orf.at/stories/2433535/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

83. Prüller, Michael, “Der Rechtsweg – eine Unsitte“, Die Presse, 14.04.2018, https://diepresse.com/home/meinung/cultureclash/5406046/Culture-Clash_Der-Rechtsweg-eine-Unsitte, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

84. Michael Prüller, “Der Rechtsweg – eine Unsitte“, Die Presse, 14 April 2018, https://diepresse.com/home/meinung/cultureclash/5406046/Culture-Clash_Der-Rechtsweg-eine-Unsitte, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

85. “Noch-Bürgermeister Häupl: ‘Kopftücher sind Bereicherung des Stadtbildes“, Kleine Zeitung, 28 April 2018, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5414250/NochBuergermeister-Haeupl_Kopftuecher-sind-Bereicherung-des, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

86. ÖVP-Klub Wien, “VP-Hungerländer: Beratungsstelle für Frauen, die Kopftuch ablegen wollen“, OTS, 27 April 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180427_OTS0279/vp-hungerlaender-beratungsstelle-fuer-frauen-die-kopftuch-ablegen-wollen, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

87. Bernhard Ichner, “Psychologe Ahmad Mansour: ‘Kopftuch ist Kindesmissbrauch“, Kurier, 28 June 2018, <https://kurier.at/amp/chronik/oesterreich/psychologe-ahmad-mansour-kopftuch-ist-kindesmissbrauch/400057790>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

88. Eric Frey, “Kopftuchverbot: Auch Strache hat manchmal recht“, Der Standard, 2 April 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000077175812/Kopftuchverbot-Auch-Strache-hat-manchmal-recht>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

89. Claus Pándi, “Strache will jetzt Kopftuchverbot in Kindergärten“, Kronen Zeitung, 31 March 2018, <http://www.krone.at/1682481>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Since the opposition parties did not support the envisioned “Child Protection Act,” the federal government enacted a so-called 15a-agreement, which allows the federal government to draw contracts with the nine *Länder* (states) and gives the responsibility of implementation to the state level.⁹⁰ Many of the *Länder* representatives were not informed about these plans, especially the ones that are led by the SPÖ like Vienna, Burgenland, and Carinthia. The federal government only approached the *Länder* after making its plans public.⁹¹

The main arguments on behalf of the government were to protect girls from “early sexualisation.”⁹² The opposition parties SPÖ and NEOS argued that the hijab ban was nothing but a symbolic act to distract from other policies.⁹³ Even ÖVP-lead *Länder* argued that the hijab ban did not make sense, since there are no cases of hijab-wearing girls at that age in the kindergartens.⁹⁴ At the same time, government officials clearly declared that they had to fear that the ban would be litigated at the Constitutional Court.⁹⁵ Following the public objections, the federal government declared that the funding of kindergartens would be attached to the condition of the hijab ban.⁹⁶ The 15a-agreement then declared to “prohibit children from wearing ideological or religious clothing that aims at the early sexualization of children and thus sexual segregation, and thus are incompatible with the constitutional values and educational goals of the Constitution, especially gender equality.”⁹⁷

By not explicitly referring to the hijab, the government tried to protect itself from being easily litigated at the Constitutional Court. Still, many scholars of law argued that this law would not be constitutional.⁹⁸ On 24 October, the federal gov-

90. Red., “Komplexes Thema“: Kopftuchverbot verzögert sich”, ORF, 2 July 2018, <https://news2.orf.at/stories/2445405>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

91. Red., “Wertekatalog für SPÖ „alter Hut““, ORF, 7 September 2018, <https://wien.orf.at/m/news/stories/2934533/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

92. Red., “Kopftuchverbot: Strache will Einigung mit Ländern“, ORF, 8 July 2018, <https://news2.orf.at/stories/2446079>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

93. SPÖ, “Kopftuch – Lercher: Um von dieser Regierung wahrgenommen zu werden, müssten sich Österreichs Arbeitnehmerkollektiv ein Kopftuch umbinden”, OTS, 8 July 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180708_OTS0028/kopftuch-lercher-um-von-dieser-regierung-wahrgenommen-zu-werden-muessen-sich-oesterreichs-arbeitnehmer-kollektiv-ein-kopftuch-umbinden., (Access date: 5 September 2019).

94. David Krutzler, Walter/Müller and Maria Sterkl, “Verwunderung über Straches Kopftuch-Vorstoß”, Der Standard, 9 July 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000083096740/Wien-zu-Kopftuchverbot-Es-liegt-uns-kein-Vorschlag-der-Regierung?ref=article>, (Access date: 5 September 2019). Red., “Gründliche Überarbeitung“ gefordert”, ORF, 13 July 2018, <https://orf.at/v2/stories/2446818/2446813/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

95. Raffaella Lindorfer, “VP-Lehrersprecher: Kopftuchverbot bis 14, Kinder vor Ramadan schützen”, Kurier, 25 October 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/vp-lehrersprecher-kopftuchverbot-bis-14-kinder-vor-ramadan-schuetzen/400155087>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

96. Gerald John, “Sparen bei Kindergärten, Kopftuchverbot als Bedingung”, Der Standard, 11 July 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000083248784/Bogner-Strauss-stuetzt-Kinderbetreuung-mit-110-Millionen-Euro?ref=article>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

97. Ibid.

98. Katharina Mittelstaedt, “Rechtliche Zweifel an Kopftuchverbot für Kinder”, Der Standard, 18 July 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000083651708/Rechtliche-Zweifel-an-Kopftuchverbot-fuer-Kinder>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

ernment presented the agreement as a final act and also withdrew from a first proposal to cut funds for the *Länder*, but still contained the hijab ban, which was finally agreed by all nine *Länder*. The IGGÖ declared that it was not involved in the policy-making process.⁹⁹ In Styria, the SPÖ even argued that it wants to extend the hijab ban up to 14 years of age, drawing on Susanne Wiesinger's debate.¹⁰⁰ While the IGGÖ criticized the law,¹⁰¹ the Association of the Catholic Family contested it.¹⁰² On 22 November, the new agreement was enacted.¹⁰³

The FPÖ also declared that this would include the turban of the Sikh, but not the Jewish *kippah*. According to their logic, wearing a religious sign would exclude them from the rest of the group and would thus discriminate them. Against the objection that there are no reliable numbers available, the government argued that every single case was one too many.¹⁰⁴ Austrian Sikhs objected and argued that the turban was part of their identity¹⁰⁵ and stripping them of the turban would make them feel naked.¹⁰⁶ But for the FPÖ, this hijab ban was a symbol of "hardcore Muslims."¹⁰⁷ While the hijab ban paves the way for an extension of a hijab ban in other spheres, many only criticized it as a symbolic measure.¹⁰⁸

According to the polls, 55% said the hijab ban was "very right," 24 percent said "rather right," and only 16 percent considered it was wrong. In April 2018, only 45

99. "Kopftuch: IGGÖ 'gegen inakzeptable Eingriffe', ORF, 19 October 2018, <https://religion.orf.at/m/stories/2942568/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

100. Bernd Hecke, "SPÖ und ÖVP drängen auf Verbot von Kopftuch in Pflichtschulen", *Kleine Zeitung*, 13 September 2018, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/chronik/5495992/In-der-Steiermark_SPOe-und-OeVP-draengen-auf-Verbot-von-Kopftuch, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

101. APA, "Kopftuchverbot im Kindergarten: IGGÖ ortet 'Phantomphänomen'", *Die Presse*, 19 October 2018, https://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5516101/Kopftuchverbot-im-Kindergarten_IGGOe-ortet-Phantomphaenomen, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

102. APA, "Kopftuchverbot im Kindergarten: IGGÖ ortet 'Phantomphänomen'", *Die Presse*, 19 October 2018, https://diepresse.com/home/innenpolitik/5516101/Kopftuchverbot-im-Kindergarten_IGGOe-ortet-Phantomphaenomen, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

103. Antrag "Bundesgesetz, mit dem das Schulunterrichtsgesetz geändert wird", *Parlament*, 22. November 2018, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVI/A/A_00495/fname_722909.pdf, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

104. APA, "Koalition will Kopftuch und Turban an Volksschule verbieten", *Der Standard*, 22 November 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000092004189/Koalition-will-Kopftuch-und-Turban-an-Volksschule-verbieten>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

105. APA, "Kopftuchverbot: Fast 80 Prozent der Österreicher dafür", *Der Standard*, 24 November 2018, https://derstandard.at/2000092168020/Kopftuchverbot-Fast-80-Prozent-der-Oesterreicher-dafuer?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR02kgA6AuFcFT3Eeo9ptZ7o-JWsb8NHm-RMLKihe2bWEGUij9v3LcJWx05M#Echobox=1543052758, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

106. "Kopfverhüllungsverbot: Aufregung bei Sikhs", *ORF*, 24 November 2018, <https://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2949302/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

107. FPÖ NÖ, "FP-Landbauer zum Kopftuchverbot: Niederösterreich zeigt vor wie es geht!", *OTS*, 22 November 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20181122_OTS0133/fp-landbauer-zum-kopftuchverbot-nieder-oesterreich-zeigt-vor-wie-es-geht, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

108. Hans Rauscher, "Kopftuchgesetz", *Der Standard*, 19 November 2018, derstandard.at/2000091752421/Kopftuchgesetz, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

percent thought that a hijab ban was “very right,” while 23 percent considered it “more right,” and as many as 28 percent thought it was wrong.

The government pretended to fight “political Islam.” Chancellor Kurz, his deputy Strache, Interior Minister Herbert Kickl (FPÖ) and Chancellery Minister Gernot Blümel (ÖVP) announced during a press conference that eight mosques would be closed to fight “political Islam.” They decided that the Arab Religious Community of Austria, part of the IGGÖ, and a mosque of the Turkish nationalists should be dissolved. In addition, expulsions of 40 imams of ATIB (Turkish-Islamic Union for Cultural and Social Cooperation in Austria) mosques are planned.¹⁰⁹ Kurz marketed this initiative in social media as follows, “Due to violations against the Islam Act, we will dissolve the mosque of the grey wolves as well as those of the Arab Religious Community and will deport 40 Imams from ATIB due to violations against the ban of foreign funding”.



Figure 9: A social media advertisement by Chancellor Kurz, 6 August, Screenshot.

Chancellor Kurz framed the government’s initiative as a means to protect common Muslims from political Islam.¹¹⁰ Sanctimoniously, Blümel (ÖVP) argued

109. Red., “Regierung plant Schließung von sieben Moscheen”, ORF, 8 June 2018, <http://orf.at/stories/2441928/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

110. Claudia Gigler and Michael Jungwirth “Regierung überprüft 61 Imame und schließt sieben Moscheen”, *Kleinen Zeitung*, 8 June 2018, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5442906/Jetzt-live_Regierung-plant-Ausweisung-von-40-Imamen-und, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

that it was “no contradiction to be a believing Muslim and a proud Austrian.”¹¹¹ According to Blümel, the mosques were home to Salafi people, who would not have a “positive attitude towards the state and society.”¹¹² Hence, he believed that the Arab Islamic Community with its seven mosques and the grey wolves mosque had to be shut down.¹¹³

While the president of the IGGÖ was later criticized for collaborating with the government on this issue, which ultimately led to his removal half a year later, Vice-President Memic declared that the Arab mosque in Carinthia was not part of the IGGÖ.¹¹⁴ This quarrel led to internal frictions within the IGGÖ¹¹⁵ that did not only affect the then president Olgun, but also his predecessor Fuat Sanac, who enabled the government to interfere in internal religious affairs with the Islam Act of 2015.¹¹⁶ The Islamic Theologian Mouhanad Khorchide supported the government by arguing that the mosques broke the law.¹¹⁷ He argued that the Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia had already successfully realized the threat of political Islam and systematically closed down mosques of the Muslim Brotherhood, while Austria missed the problem.¹¹⁸

The political opposition parties – NEOS,¹¹⁹ the Greens,¹²⁰ and Liste Pilz¹²¹ – welcomed the measures of the government. The general secretary of the SPÖ de-

111. Ibid.

112. Peter Temel, Lukas Kapeller and Bernhard Ichner, “Sieben Moscheen müssen geschlossen werden: Wie geht es weiter?“, *Kurier*, 8 June 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/die-wichtigsten-fragen-rund-um-die-moscheenschliessung/400047758>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

113. Ibid.

114. Red., “IGGÖ kritisiert Ausweisung von Imamen“, *ORF*, 9 June 2018, <http://orf.at/m/stories/2442145/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

115. APA, “In der IGGÖ tobt ein Machtkampf“, *News*, 11 May 2018, <https://www.news.at/a/moscheen-in-iggoe-machtkampf-10126216>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

116. Werner Reisinger, “Wir wollten Ruhe im Haus“, *Wiener Zeitung*, 11 June 2018, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/970379_Wir-wollten-Ruhe-im-Haus.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019), Bernhard Ichner, “Glaubensgemeinschaft: Muslime entscheiden über Neuwahlen“, *Kurier*, 14 June 2018, <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/muslime-entscheiden-am-30-juni-ueber-neuwahlen/400050902>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

117. Ida Metzger, “Experte: Moscheenschließung ‘goldrichtig, aber falscher Zeitpunkt’“, *Kurier*, 9 June 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/islamexperte-khorchide-moscheenschliessung-goldrichtig-aber-falscher-zeitpunkt/400048451>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

118. Peter Mayr, “Islamforscher: ‘Indirekte Wahlkampfhilfe für Erdoğan’“, *Der Standard*, 18 June 2018, <https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000081735281/Islamforscher-Khorchide-Das-war-indirekte-Wahlkampfhilfe-fuer-Erdogan>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

119. Daniel Bischof, “Graue Wölfe, Erdogan und das Islamgesetz“, *Wiener Zeitung*, 8 June 2018, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/969933_Graue-Woelfe-Erdogan-und-das-Islamgesetz.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

120. Red., “Moscheen: Grüne kritisieren Verfahren und ‘Inszenierung’“, *ORF*, 11 August 2018, <https://orf.at/v2/stories/2450606>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

121. Red., “Oppositionszustimmung, Expertenkritik“, *ORF*, 8 May 2018, <http://orf.at/stories/2442056/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

clared it to be the first “reasonable measure” taken by the government.¹²² According to MP Efgani Dönmez (ÖVP), the government’s press conference was held on the last Friday in Ramadan shortly before Kurz’s trip to Israel to give a signal of fighting Islamism.¹²³ Only few scholars of law softly criticized the measure.¹²⁴

While the mosque of the alleged grey wolves was reopened shortly after the press conference following a visit by the IGGÖ and state officials,¹²⁵ the representatives of the Arab Islamic Community of the IGGÖ litigated against the government’s attempt to dissolve the institution.¹²⁶ The Vienna Administrative Court had declared the decision’s non-suspensive character (which would have suggested to immediately implement it without any possibility of making an appeal) as unlawful and announced a final verdict for the case for the spring of 2019. Thus, all mosques of the Arab Islamic Community of the IGGÖ were back in operation. The religious lawyer Stefan Schima pointed out that “if the complainant alleges that the decision interfered with fundamental rights,” the Constitutional Court could be brought to the case.¹²⁷

One of the five pillars of Islam, fasting during the month of Ramadan, which is part of the fundamental religious practice of Muslims, was also challenged. The tabloids¹²⁸ and the right-wing media¹²⁹ began to report about allegedly grotesque situations during Ramadan narrated by teachers. Subsequently, ÖVP General Secretary Karl Nehammer demanded a ban on fasting for pupils. The measure was framed as a struggle for the well-being of children. Nehammer said, “It must not be that children’s health is risked and educators can no longer teach students. I call for a prohibition of fasting for pupils who are clearly weakened and can no longer follow the lesson. If the

122. “Regierung schließt islamistische Moscheen”, ORF, 8 June 2018, <http://religion.orf.at/stories/2917661/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

123. “ÖVP-Mandatar: Verkündung von Moscheen-Aus war Signal an Israel”, Kurier, 15 June 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/moscheen-schliessung-laut-doenmez-signal-vor-kurz-israel-reise/400051664>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

124. Katharina Mittelstaedt, “Warum die geschlossenen Moscheen offen sind”, Der Standard, 22 June 2018, <https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000082025668/Warum-die-geschlossenen-Moscheen-offen-sind>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

125. “Weiter keine Moscheen der Arabischen Gemeinde”, ORF, 18 June 2018, <http://wien.orf.at/m/news/stories/2919560/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

126. Katharina Mittelstaedt, “Warum die geschlossenen Moscheen offen sind”, Der Standard, 22 June 2018, <https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000082025668/Warum-die-geschlossenen-Moscheen-offen-sind>, (Access date: 5 September 2019) and APA, “Arabische Kultusgemeinde beschwerte sich wegen Auflösung”, Der Standard, 14 June 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000081601237/Arabische-Kultusgemeinde-beschwerte-sich-wegen-Aufloesung>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

127. Daniel Bischof, “Graue Wölfe, Erdogan und das Islamgesetz”, Wiener Zeitung, 8 June 2018, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/969933_Graue-Woelfe-Erdogan-und-das-Islamgesetz.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

128. “Vorfall im 13 A: Ramadan bringt Wiener-Linien-Fahrgäste in Gefahr”, Unzensuriert, 29 May 2018, <https://www.unzensuriert.at/content/0026948-Vorfall-im-13-Ramadan-bringt-Wiener-Linien-Fahrgaeste-Gefahr>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

129. “Fastenmonat Ramadan: Kinder ‘völlig geschwächt’”, Kronen Zeitung, 13 June 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1722870>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

guardians are not clear about this, there must be stricter rules in the respect. We do not tolerate irresponsibility with children.”¹³⁰ The minister of education was reluctant. The IGGÖ saw this ban as fully departed from the symbolic level and argued that more and more parents are revealing discriminating behavior on behalf of teachers.¹³¹

In the political realm, the minister of interior installed a new troop to protect the borders, which made a patrol border exercise based on a route called “mosque route” referring to young Muslim men.¹³² FPÖ politicians further framed Islam as a political ideology rather than a religion.¹³³ Efgani Dönmez was excluded from the ÖVP after tweeting about a Berlin politician with a Muslim background that she only got her jobs by referring to “take a look at her knees” (which was widely understood as her giving a blowjob). He has since been in the national parliament as a politically non-affiliated MP.¹³⁴ Dönmez defended his sexist suggestions by arguing that the German politician has been giving space to reactionary Muslim institutions. Following his exclusion, he has explicitly embraced the FPÖ’s politics especially regarding migration and Islam-related issues.¹³⁵

The Symbol Act¹³⁶ was proposed in October 2018 to ban not only the symbols of DAESH and Al-Qaida, but also symbol of the Grey Wolves, which is a symbol of a legal political party in Turkey, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Following the publication of a report on the Muslim Brotherhood in Austria by the Ministry of Interior, there is reason to believe that the act was designed to target Muslim civil society actors.¹³⁷ While white nationalist groups such as the Identitarian Movement are not part of this law, only organizations with a link to other countries such as the PKK terrorist organisation, Hamas, and others are mentioned in the act. People, who use these logos have to pay up to 10,000 euro, while symbols of National Socialism are fined with a maximum of 4,000 euro.¹³⁸ FPÖ party whip Gudenus announced that a new

130. “ÖVP will Ramadan-Fasten für Schüler verbieten”, Österreich, 14 May 2018, <https://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/politik/OeVP-will-Ramadan-Fasten-fuer-Schueler-verbieten/337274939>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

131. “IGGÖ weist Fastenverbot für Schulpflichtige zurück”, ÖRF, 14 June 2018, <http://religion.orf.at/stories/2918927/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

132. Ibid.

133. Dragomir Janjić, “Johann Gudenus: ‘Wir wollen keinen politischen Islam’”, Kosmo, 9 May 2018, <https://www.kosmo.at/johann-gudenus-wir-wollen-keinen-politischen-islam/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

134. Red., “Dafür kein Platz in neuer ÖVP”, ÖRF, 3 September 2108, <https://orf.at/v2/stories/2453419/2453420/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

135. Josef Ertl, “Die Migration schadet den Herkunftsländern”, Kurier, 11 November 2018, <https://kurier.at/chronik/oberoesterreich/die-migration-schadet-den-herkunftslaendern/400318920>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

136. “Symbole-Gesetz, Änderung (81/ME)”, Parlament, 3 October 2018, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/VHG/XXVI/ME/ME_00081/index.shtml, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

137. Farid Hafez, “Muslim Civil Society under Attack: The European Foundation for Democracy’s Role in Defaming and Delegitimizing Muslim Civil Society”, *Islamophobia and Radicalization: Breeding Intolerance and Violence*, ed. Iner Derya & John Esposito, (Palgrave, Switzerland: 2018), p. 117- 137.

138.Red., “Kritik an Verbot von Extremistensymbolen”, ÖRF, 20 November 2018, <https://orf.at/stories/3101355/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

act that forbids political Islam will be launched in mid-2019. He urged Minister of Justice Josef Moser (ÖVP) to do something in this regard.¹³⁹ Some journalists already embraced this initiative without any detailed information having been made public.¹⁴⁰

Restrictions regarding halal slaughter were another critical case in 2018. Following a debate on attempts to restrict kosher and halal slaughter in July 2018, which was called a “negative Aryan Paragraph”¹⁴¹ by the president of the Jewish Community (IKG) and a backpedaling by the responsible bureaucrats in the state of Lower Austria,¹⁴² a similar debate started in autumn, but this time on a federal level focusing on Muslims. While the measures to restrict kosher meals by creating lists of Jewish consumers was harshly criticized by politicians of different colors,¹⁴³ the federal government also pedaled back claiming to secure Jewish life, while not even mentioning Muslims once.¹⁴⁴ On 12 August, shortly before the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice, the federal government implemented a new rule to abolish “illegal backyard mosque slaughter.”¹⁴⁵ The decree, which was published by the Ministry of Social Affairs to become effective on August 15, aimed to end animal torture and the killing of 25,000 sheep per year.¹⁴⁶ Contrary to the debate on kosher slaughter, the public debate was comparably limited.

139. APA, “Gudenus will Gesetz gegen politischen Islam bis Mitte 2019”, Der Standard, 16 December 2018, <https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000094068620/Gudenus-will-Gesetz-gegen-politischen-Islam-bis-Mitte-2019>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

140. Oö. Volksblatt, “Oö. Volksblatt: “Klares Regelwerk” (von Harald ENGELSBERGER)”, OTS, 16 December 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20181216_OTS0031/ooe-volksblatt-klares-regelwerk-von-harald-engelsberger?utm_source=2018-12-16&utm_medium=email&utm_content=html&utm_campaign=mail-abodigest&fbclid=IwAR3yX-v4AUu0Wz_mdBBE1bY79SJWm0e1jyTqGccq627tEZF6VMo9AmQ6qo, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

141. Alexia Weiss, “Angriff auf die Religionsfreiheit?”, Wiener Zeitung, 17 July 2018, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/blogs/juedisch_leben/977446_Angriff-auf-die-Religionsfreiheit.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

142. “Debatte über Schächten: ÖVP NÖ erteilt FPÖ Absage”, ORF, 17 July 2018, <https://orf.at/v2/stories/2447344>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

143. Peter Pilz, “Zadic/Liste Pilz: Waldhäusl soll echte Tierschutzarbeit leisten, anstatt Ressentiments gegen religiöse Minderheiten zu schüren”, OTS, 18 July 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180718_OTS0095/zadicliste-pilz-waldhaeusl-soll-echte-tierschutzarbeit-leisten-anstatt-ressentiments-gegen-religioese-minderheiten-zu-schueren, (Access date: 5 September 2019). and Niederoesterreich.neos.eu (2018), “NEOS NÖ: Jenseitige Politik im „Tierschutz“ nimmt schockierende Ausmasse an”, NEOS, 18.07.2018, <https://niederoesterreich.neos.eu/neos-noe-jenseitige-politik-im-tierschutz-nimmt-schockierende-ausmasse-an/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

144. WZ Online, “Keine Registrierung beim Schächten”, Wiener Zeitung, 20 July 2018, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik/978074_Keine-Registrierung-beim-Schaechten.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

145. “Erlass betreffend die Schlachtung für den Eigenbedarf gemäß § 53 Abs.3 LMSVG”, Bundesministerium – Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Konsumentenschutz, https://www.wko.at/branchen/gewerbe-handwerk/lebensmittelgewerbe/fleischer/Fleischer-RS011-18---Erlass-betreffend-die-Schlachtung-fu_1.pdf, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

146. “Schächten: Erlass gegen illegale Hinterhofschlachtungen”, Kurier, 12 August 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/schaechten-erlass-gegen-illegale-hinterhofschlachtungen/400087880>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Media

The government was very professional in planning its communication with the media. It pre-planned when to deliver what information to which journalist to be able to shape the public discourse along its interest. Many media platforms followed the government's strategy, not contesting its selective approach in dealing with the media. The wide political approval of anti-Muslim laws is also reflected in media coverage, although the media gave a larger space for dissent views, critical commentaries, and also some Muslim voices.

The *Oberösterreichischen Nachrichten* (Upper Austrian Daily) reported to be shocked that mosques were still open, thus blindly following the government's propaganda.¹⁴⁷ Some journalists argued not only to ban the hijab in kindergarten, but also for teachers, since the hijab can "question social achievements."¹⁴⁸ The *Kronen Zeitung* argued that a mosque belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood,¹⁴⁹ which was not true. The author Necla Kelek also supported the government's hijab ban.¹⁵⁰ Scholz defended the government in *Der Standard* and argued why a ban of the hijab was necessary, while the ban of the Jewish *kippah* was not.¹⁵¹

Other media outlets such as *Biber* gave a voice to Muslims, showing the kind of discrimination they are suffering under the current circumstances.¹⁵² *Mosaik* interviewed teachers to give a picture contrary to the one spread by Susanne Wiesinger.¹⁵³ Also political scientists,¹⁵⁴ Muslim¹⁵⁵ and Christian theologians,¹⁵⁶ religious studies

147. Bernhard Ichner, "Gesperrte Moscheen weiter offen: Aber keine Polizeikontrollen", *Kurier*, 23 June 2018, <https://kurier.at/chronik/oesterreich/gesperrte-moscheen-weiter-offen-aber-keine-polizeikontrollen/400055897>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

148. Neues Volksblatt, "Neues Volksblatt: "Verschleiert" von Harald Engelsberger", *OTS*, 9 September 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20180909_OTS0032/neues-volksblatt-verschleiert-von-harald-engelsberger, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

149. Christoph Budin, "Schock-Video aus Wien: Imam unter Verdacht", *Kronen Zeitung*, 28 June 2018, <https://mobil.krone.at/1730752>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

150. Necla Kelek, "Die kritischen Geister in der Islam-Debatte", *Der Standard*, 23 November 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000092122386/Die-kritischen-Geister-in-der-Islam-Debatte>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

151. Nina Scholz, "Kopftuch und Kindeswohl", *Der Standard*, 23 November 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000092116447/Kopftuch-und-Kindeswohl>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

152. Alexandra Stanić and Salme Ali Taha Mohamed "Runter mit dem Tuch! Musliminnen haben Angst", *Biber*, 7 July 2018, <https://www.dasbiber.at/content/runter-mit-dem-tuch-musliminnen-haben-angst>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

153. Anna Draxler and Isabella Ahmed, "Lehrerinnen im Interview: Nicht Kopftücher, fehlende Ressourcen sind das Problem an Brennpunktschulen", *Mosaik*, 5 April 2018, <https://mosaik-blog.at/brennpunktschulen-kopftuch-ressourcen-islam-kultur/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

154. John Bunzl, "Antisemitismus und Islamophobie: Analog?", *Die Presse*, 8 March 2018, https://diepresse.com/home/meinung/gastkommentar/5384676/Gastkommentar_Antisemitismus-und-Islamophobie_Analog, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

155. Klaus Hämmerle, "Plädoyer für europäischen Islam", *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*, 22 April 2018, <https://www.vn.at/lokal/vorarlberg/2018/06/12/plaedoyer-fuer-europaeischen-islam.vn>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

156. Lisa Nimmervoll, "Theologin: "Religion ist nicht nur Privatsache"", *Der Standard*, 3 December 2018, https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000092959627/Theologin-Helena-Stockinger-Religion-ist-nicht-nur-Privatsache?ref=article&fbclid=IwAR245dYIo-slF8e0eVdaXH2p3nBAuIX1CMfSKkRBK_LoUgemaXqSWvS95nE, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

scholars,¹⁵⁷ anthropologists,¹⁵⁸ scholars of law,¹⁵⁹ historians¹⁶⁰ and a scholar of Jewish philosophy¹⁶¹ were given space to dissent with the widespread anti-Muslim policies. People working in culture,¹⁶² political activists,¹⁶³ as well as journalists from *Kurier* like Niki Glattauer¹⁶⁴ and Helmut Brandstätter,¹⁶⁵ from *Die Presse* like Erich Kocina,¹⁶⁶ from *Salzburger Nachrichten* like Manfred Perterer¹⁶⁷ published their critical perspectives on the government's anti-Muslim politics.

The *Kronen Zeitung* had to correct some of the false information it spread about an imam¹⁶⁸ and a mosque,¹⁶⁹ after the concerned people litigated.

157. Ernst Füllinger, "Moscheen schließen ist zu wenig", *Der Standard*, 12 June 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000081442505/Moscheen-schliessen-ist-zu-wenig?ref=article>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

158. Ingrid Thurner, "Verhüllte Missverständnisse", *Wiener Zeitung*, 20 February 2018, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/gastkommentare/948264_Verhuelte-Missverstaendnisse.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019). and Ingrid Thurner, "Ein Kopftuchverbot in der Schule kann Abschottung fördern", *Wiener Zeitung*, 28 November 2018, https://www.wienerzeitung.at/meinungen/gastkommentare/1005038_Ein-Kopftuchverbot-in-der-Schule-kann-Abschottung-foerdern.html?fbclid=IwAR0ZVY3mf9C3-R9ueJSMKBuqsELb4wcpvvlHF6vk0_1ayK7K1LGrCXJ9fRU4, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

159. Lisa Nimmervoll, "Rechtsphilosoph: 'Kreuz im Klassenzimmer ist schwer zu rechtfertigen'", *Der Standard*, 15 October 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000089317799/Kreuz-im-Klassenzimmer-schwer-zu-rechtfertigen>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

160. Martin Auernheimer, "Israelischer Experte: 'Heutige Muslime sind die Juden von früher'", *NEWS*, 20 November 2018, <https://www.news.at/a/muslime-sind-die-juden-von-frueher-10474381>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

161. *Ibid.*

162. Regina Bruckner, "Gexi Tostmann: 'Es sind die Männer, die beim Kopftuch schimpfen'", *Der Standard*, 2 December 2018, <https://mobil.derstandard.at/2000092819827/Gexi-Tostmann-Es-sind-die-Maenner-die-beim-Kopftuch-schimpfen>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

163. Barbara Blaha, "Gastkommentar von Barbara Blaha: Traut euch politischen Rock'n'Roll!", *Profil*, 24 November 2018, <https://www.profil.at/meinung/gastkommentar-barbara-blaha-spoee-krise-10483545?fbclid=IwAR3fDhiOiDY-l7a0eBfWEL58OdJ2-WaRYd1hAFy3qM9bcS79R0vuLepDaNWk>, (Access date: 5 September 2019) and Elisabeth Hofer, "Kopftuch-Protest im Iran: 'Es ist eine einseitige Solidarisierung'", *Kurier*, 7 February 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/kopftuch-protest-im-iran-es-ist-eine-einseitige-solidarisierung/309.904.093>, (Access date: 5 September 2019). and Claudia Giger, "Das ist eine Scheindebatte auf dem Rücken unserer Kinder", *Kleine Zeitung*, 5 April 2018, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/politik/innenpolitik/5400192/Kopftuchverbot-fuer-Kinder_Das-ist-eine-Scheindebatte-auf-dem, (Access date: 5 September 2019) and "Debatte um Kopftuch: 'Verbot ist diskriminierend'", *Kurier*, 10 April 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/debatte-um-kopftuch-verbot-ist-diskriminierend/400019014>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

164. Niki Glattauer, "Heute das Kopftuch (2)", *Kurier*, 15 April 2018, <https://kurier.at/kolumnen/heute-das-kopftuch-2/400021291>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

165. Helmut Brandstätter, "Rassismus der FPÖ darf nicht normal werden", *Kurier*, 16 November 2018, https://kurier.at/meinung/rassismus-der-fpo-darf-nicht-normal-werden/400325646?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1542346068, (Access date: 5 September 2019) and Helmut Brandstätter, "Kein Kopftuch ist noch keine Integration", *Kurier*, 23 November 2018, <https://kurier.at/meinung/kein-kopftuch-ist-noch-keine-integration/400332762>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

166. Tom Schaffer, "Strache gefiel Weihnachtsmarkt nicht: 'Muslimische Zeltstadt'", *Kurier*, 22 November 2018, https://kurier.at/amp/politik/inland/strache-gefiel-weihnachtsmarkt-nicht-muslimische-zeltstadt/400331814?fbclid=IwAR1DQpE0FzbAcij5N9JoutQdrUSCr8hgL7O0L9IYDEMkTsrR0dqBp8NWa2A&__twitter_impression=true, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

167. Manfred Perterer, "Wenn der Hut brennt, kommt das Kopftuchverbot", *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 20 November 2018, <https://www.sn.at/politik/innenpolitik/wenn-der-hut-brennt-kommt-das-kopftuchverbot-61147327>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

168. "Gegendarstellung", *Kronen Zeitung*, 15 June 2018, <https://mobil.krone.at/1721515>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

169. *Ibid.*

Also, there are many right-wing media that disseminate the most racist anti-Muslim views. Martin Lichtmesz (Martin Semlitsch) argued on *Info-Direkt* that Islam would destroy the European culture by the great replacement, meaning that Islam would replace European culture¹⁷⁰ Former ÖVP MP Efgani Dönmez also published an article in *Info-Direkt*, where he argued, “In fact, the majority of Muslims will not be up to date even in the next 50 years if foreign influence, be it from Qatar, Turkey or Saudi Arabia, is not contained.”¹⁷¹

Another right-wing media outlet *Wochenblick* published several articles on an alleged Islamization of the society.¹⁷² They drew on expertise by “radical leftist” people like Thomas Rammerstorfer, who criticized “Islamist activities within social democracy.”¹⁷³

Justice System

Elisabeth Sabaditsch-Wolff, a central figure in the global Counter Jihad Movement, was convicted at the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) for her statement that Prophet Muhammad was a pedophile. She had given two seminars on the “basics of Islam” at the FPÖ’s political academy back in 2009. She was convicted in 2011, but appealed to the ECHR.¹⁷⁴

The minister of interior announced that 63 organizations affiliated with the ATIB would be reviewed. He wanted to see if the local authorities are already running legal proceedings against the associations and if there were legal opportunities to dissolve the associations in case of violations of the Association Act. In 2018, however, nothing happened.¹⁷⁵ According to *Kurier*, ten imams from the ATIB received a negative decision and had to leave.¹⁷⁶ According to the ATIB, three imams had to leave in 2018, following another 32 before, which leaves 35 mosques without an imam.¹⁷⁷

170. Kathrin Quatember, “Info Direkt: Eine Spurensuche.“, *Fireredfriederike*, 5 January 2018, <https://fireredfriederike.com/2018/01/05/infodirekt/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

171. *Info Direkt*, 18, p. 19

172. Kornelia Kirchweber, “Reha in Österreich: Frau muss sich islamischen Gebetszeiten unterordnen!”, *Wochenblick*, 17 February 2018, <https://www.wochenblick.at/reha-in-oesterreich-frau-muss-sich-islamischen-gebetszeiten-unterordnen/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

173. “ÖÖ: ATIB-nahe Gemeinderätin jetzt im Landesvorstand der SPÖ!”, *Wochenblick*, 11 June 2018, <https://www.wochenblick.at/ooe-atib-nahe-gemeinderuetin-jetzt-im-landes-parteiivorstand-der-spoel/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

174. “Urteil in Straßburg: Mohammed darf nicht Pädophiler genannt werden“, *Kurier*, 25 October 2018, https://kurier.at/politik/inland/urteil-beim-egmr-in-strassburg-mohammed-darf-nicht-paedophiler-genannt-werden/400226853?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1540478093, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

175. “Jetzt wird gegen türkische ATIB-Vereine ermittelt!”, *Kronen Zeitung*, 8 May 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1704362>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

176. APA, “Atib: Ersten zehn Imamen droht die Ausweisung“, *Die Presse*, 27 June 2018, https://diepresse.com/home/panorama/oesterreich/5454348/Atib_Ersten-zehn-Imamen-droht-die-Ausweisung?from=suche.intern.portal, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

177. Interview with ATIB representative.

The Alevi Community, the *Föderation der Alevitischen Gemeinden in Österreich*, filed a complaint, because they were not allowed to organize religious gatherings because of the Islam Act of 2015, which claims that the Alevi Community in Austria (*Islamisch-Alevitische Glaubensgemeinschaft in Österreich*, which now is only the *Alevitische Glaubensgemeinschaft*, since it dropped the name Islam) was recognized as the only religious institution of Alevism.¹⁷⁸

Around 100 tourists from the Gulf were fined in the tourist region of Zell am See in Salzburg because of the Anti-Coverage Act of 2017 that bans the covering of the face.¹⁷⁹ A case was brought to the court, where a 48-year-old had posted on Facebook that Muslims were “human trash, worthless minors.”¹⁸⁰

The mosque, which was defaced in Graz in 2016, led to first charges. The public prosecutor’s office Klagenfurt announced that four persons in the district court of Graz-West were charged with the downgrading vilification of religious teachings and property damage. Three people were from a local right-wing extremist party and one was from the intelligence service of the Ministry of Defense.¹⁸¹

The FPÖ lost a case against the Austrian Muslim Youth (*Muslimische Jugend Österreich*), which had been called “Islamist,” and the FPÖ was fined and had to publish a counter statement.¹⁸² Martin Sellner, a spokesperson of the Identitarian Movement, was not allowed to enter Britain.¹⁸³

Internet

While the ÖVP-FPÖ government had announced new regulations to challenge online hate, the FPÖ went online with a racist video. A commercial, which was taken off the same evening due to critics, presented foreigners as social parasites. The secretary general of the FPÖ argued that it was “a fact” that primarily “immigrants and foreigners are abusing our social system,” hence the video featured a stereotyped and sinisterly laughing cartoon character named Ali, who could no longer abuse the

178. Aleviten Österreich, “Protestkundgebung vor dem Kultusamt! Am Donnerstag, den 18.10.2018 zwischen 12 und 17 Uhr!”, OTS, 17 October 2018, https://www.ots.at/presseaussendung/OTS_20181017_OTS0123/protestkundgebung-vor-dem-kultusamt-am-donnerstag-den-18102018-zwischen-12-und-17-uhr, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

179. “Arabische Gäste: Ärger über Fahrverhalten”, ORF, 3 August 2018, <https://salzburg.orf.at/m/news/stories/2928111/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

180. Red., “Serbin aus Österreich wegen Hetze gegen Muslime zu Haft verurteilt”, Kosmo, 18 September 2018, <https://www.kosmo.at/serbin-aus-oesterreich-wegen-hetze-gegen-muslime-zu-haft-verurteilt/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

181. Fabian Schmid, “Moscheeschändung in Graz: Informant des Abwehramts angeklagt”, Der Standard, 15 February 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000074333323/Abwehramt-Informant-wegen-Grazer-Moscheeschaendung-angeklagt>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

182. Mersiha Gadzo, “Far-right Austrian party revokes statements on Muslims”, Aljazeera, 17 February 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/austrian-party-revokes-statements-muslims-180217064717350.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

183. Michaela Reibenwein, “Österreichischer Identitären-Chef in London festgenommen”, Kurier, 10 March 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/oesterreichischer-identitaeren-chef-in-london-festgenommen/313.474.077>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

social welfare system due to the new regulation that shows a photo of the person on the insurance card. The video also includes a statement from Social Affairs Minister Beate Hartinger-Klein (FPÖ). Chancellor Kurz called the video “unacceptable.”¹⁸⁴



Figure 10: A screenshot taken from the advertisement by FPÖ TV featuring Ali, 23 April.

Politicians, especially from the FPÖ, regularly used social media to spread their anti-Muslim stereotypes. Member of the City Council in Linz, Markus Hein (FPÖ), posted a photo on Facebook with the title “Ist der Islam ein Teil Österreichs? Nein! Und er darf es auch niemals werden!” (Is Islam part of Austria? No! And it shall never become!) (see below).



Figure 11: A social media advertisement, 25 March, 2018, Screenshot.

184. Red., “Rassistisches FPÖ-Video: Hofer hat damit ‘keine Freude’”, ORF, 14 November 2018, <https://orf.at/stories/3100680/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Gottfried Waldhäusl, a member of the Council of the State of Lower Austria, advertised his Fanpage with the slogan “Islamisierung stoppen!” (Stop Islamization!) (see below).



Figure 12: A social media advertisement, 23 December, 2018, Screenshot.

Another ad by the same councillor shows a picture with a Muslim pupil saying: “Ramadan in School. No Eating. No Drinking. No Learning.”¹⁸⁵



Figure 13: A social media advertisement, 22 May, 2018, Screenshot.

185. Gottfried Waldhäusl, Facebook, 22 May 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/Gottfried.Waldhaeusl/photos/a.638423932941116.1073741828.627580790692097/1655012454615587/?type=3&theater>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

FPÖ politicians also make use of Instagram to reach a younger audience, e.g. the minister of interior affairs used a picture in front of pages of the Qur'an saying, "Whoever puts Sharia above our law has to come before the court."



Figure 14: A social media advertisement, 15 August, 2018, Screenshot.

After a yellow press article discussed Muslims praying in congregation at a playground in Lower Austria, Gudenus (FPÖ) posted on Instagram, "A playground is not for Muslim prayer. Islam is not part of Austria!"



Figure 15: A social media advertisement, 30 October, 2018, Screenshot.

The right-wing union posted an ad to support the government's new measures to cut financial support for children living abroad by showing a Black Muslim girl.



Figure 16: A social media advertisement, 30 November, 2018, Screenshot.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Most of the people actively supporting Islamophobia in the last years, have been active in 2018. The ÖIF as an institution close to the state plays a central role in the dissemination of knowledge to legitimize anti-Muslim legislation. People like Seyran Ates are regularly invited to these events. Ates even argued that Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia were financially supporting women to wear the hijab.¹⁸⁶ New people who had previously not been known publicly also emerged to support the government's anti-Muslim claims. Several Islamophobic books were published such as those by Gerhard Weinberger,¹⁸⁷ Wolfgang Rinner,¹⁸⁸ and Shams ul-Haq from Germany,¹⁸⁹ who was given huge media coverage for his investigative undercover research in mosques.¹⁹⁰

186. Johanna Hager, "Imamin Ates: 'Als Christin würde ich protestieren'", *Kurier*, 6 March 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/inland/imamin-ate-als-christin-wuerde-ich-protestieren/313.056.892>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

187. Alexander Bischofberger-Mahr, "Ohne Islam-Reform droht Islamisierung Europas", *Kronen Zeitung*, 17 June 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1724076>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

188. "Der Islam ist das Über-Drüber-Patriarchat", *Salzburger Fenster*, 20 August 2018, <https://www.salzburger-fenster.at/2018/08/20/der-islam-ist-das-ueber-drueber-patriarchat/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

189. Ingo Hasewend, "Es gibt auffällig viele radikale Imame in Graz", *Kleine Zeitung*, 8 November 2018, https://www.kleinezeitung.at/steiermark/5526130/UndercoverRecherche_Es-gibt-auffaellig-viele-radikale-Imame-in-Graz?xtor=CS1-15&fbclid=IwAR16RVEdE7BFNbp3uYR6N9uF9CDTlpolMdtLv4q33pnwSIDjpvQa-EpIxo0M, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

190. Gerald Richter, "Diese Moscheen nehme ich mir zur Brust!", *Kronen Zeitung*, 14 November 2018, <https://www.krone.at/1808111?fbclid=IwAR0UbAdY14WINmrQdpN5ODvUWU4sWsFs8AHPAX-FgLUU7gMJMmuvI8SkXfBw>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Also, the daily *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* reported about a planned tour by right-wing extremists with stops in Vienna, Salzburg, and Linz amongst others organized by the Canadian *The Rebel Media* with Ezra Levant, Daniel Pipes Katie Hopkins, and Tommy Robinson.¹⁹¹ Since the far right is now in power in Austria, Austria's anti-Islam politics also become more interesting for the international New Right and white supremacists. FPÖ politician Elmar Podgorschek gave a talk at the German right-wing AfD advising them how to gain power.¹⁹²

Former ÖVP MP Efgani Dönmez, who has a long history of Islamophobia and publishing in right-wing media, invited fellow party members to a discussion organized by the Wage Union, which is an alliance of Eastern European politicians and aims to stop Western emigration and increase the East's wage levels. The Committee of the Wage Union includes persons from the extreme right-wing Jobbik party from Hungary and Márton Gyöngyösi, who became known due to his anti-Semitic statements and was invited as a speaker at the event mentioned. Other members of the committee include right-wing extremist Croatian politician Frano Circo, an Estonian politician who praised Nazi economic policies, Jaak Madison, and a Latvian politician from the extreme right-wing All for Latvia party. His then-fellow ÖVP MPs withdrew from the event.¹⁹³

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

- The *Dokustelle Muslime* published an annual report documenting anti-Muslim racism.
- After the FPÖ went online with the advertisement showing a figure named Ali as a social parasite, social activist Muhammed Yükses organized an "Ali Demonstration" in Vienna to protest against the racism of the FPÖ.¹⁹⁴
- When blogger Asma Aiad returned from a trip to Istanbul and made a video of the ill treatment of a veiled woman by Austrian police on the border who was asked if she was married against her will back in Turkey, the video went viral¹⁹⁵ and created debates in the media. This led to a meeting with the

191. Red., "Rechtsextremisten-Kreuzfahrt: SPÖ und Grüne empört", ORF, 7 September 2018, <https://orf.at/stories/3007881/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

192. AfD-Landestags-TV, "Was die AfD von der FPÖ lernen kann! Vortrag von Elma Podgorschek, FPÖ (2018)", YouTube, 3 May 2018, <https://youtu.be/117C3ECjdi4>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

193. Klaus Knittelfelder, "Dönmez lädt als Mandatar zu zwielichtigem Event", Kurier, 7 February 2018, <https://kurier.at/politik/ausland/doenmez-laedt-als-mandatar-zu-zwielichtigem-event/309.932.755>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

194. "Ali-Demo' in Wien: Protest gegen rassistisches FPÖ-Video", Kurier, 15 November 2018, <https://kurier.at/chronik/wien/ali-demo-in-wien-protest-gegen-rassistisches-video-der-fpoe/400325697>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

195. "Frau wirft Polizisten am Flughafen Rassismus vor", Heute, 4 November 2018, <https://m.heute.at/community/leser/story/44627226>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

police, who made assurances about ending such treatment.

- The art installation *ADHINA* by Werner Puntigam and Klaus Hollinetz presented an artistic collage of city sounds and Muezzin calls during Advent time to create an awareness that Islam and Christianity are religions of peace. Their aim with the art project was to present a harmonious interplay of aesthetics.¹⁹⁶

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Given the hegemony of the anti-Muslim discourse in a country governed by two parties that have fully institutionalized anti-Muslim political claims, the lack of anti-racist initiatives is most outstanding. Hence, what is needed first and foremost is a civil society and a political opposition that recognizes the problem of Islamophobia and is ready to challenge it. Beyond the detailed recommendations given in the last years, this seems incredibly urgent and it is only the media, where interventions against this trend can be observed. Especially the political hegemony of Islamophobia has to be contested. Most important, the new laws that have been implemented since the coming to power of the ÖVP and the FPÖ, have to be challenged:

- The Islam Law has to be amended in order not to be in conflict with the Austrian Constitution. This is of utmost importance, since the new law is used to crack down on the organized Muslim community.
- The 15a-agreement that includes the hijab ban has to be appealed.
- The organized anti-Muslim network has to be uncovered.
- 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 tools to combat Islamophobia, especially in the creation of a consciousness towards the illegality of hate crimes.
- Educational institutions and stakeholders have to work towards creating an alternative narrative of Muslims in Austria which will work to dispel the widely accepted negative image of Islam.

Chronology

- **04.04.2018:** The hijab ban for kindergartens was commissioned to “allow all girls equal chances to develop” and protect them from “political Islam,” according to Chancellor Kurz.
- **14.05.2018:** ÖVP General Secretary Karl Nehammer argued that fasting in Ramadan should be banned for pupils.

196. Markus Rohrhofer, “Mit dem Muezzin durch die Linzer Vorweihnachtszeit”, *Der Standard*, 24 November 2018, <https://derstandard.at/2000092091204/Mit-dem-Muezzin-durch-die-Linzer-Vorweihnachtszeit>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

- **09.05.2018:** An 18-year-old conscript in basic military service, Mario S., fired a gun in front of a school. A pupil with an Arab background was injured, while the police excluded a racist motive.
- **08.06.2018:** The government proclaimed in a press conference that the Arab Religious Community of the IGGÖ and one Turkish mosque would be closed in an attempt to fight “political Islam.”
- **17.07.2018:** A debate was ended that attempted to restrict kosher and halal slaughter, which was called a “negative Aryan Paragraph” by the president of the Jewish Community (IKG).
- **12.08.2018:** Shortly before the Muslim Feast of Sacrifice, the federal government implemented a new rule to abolish “illegal backyard mosque slaughter.” The decree, which was published by the Ministry of Social Affairs to become effective on August 15, aimed to end animal torture and the killing of 25,000 sheep per year. Contrary to the debate on kosher slaughter, public debate was nearly absent.
- **19.10.2018:** The Viennese branch of the ÖVP presented an “8 Point Program against Radicalization and Islamization in the Classroom.”
- **22.11.2018:** The new agreement to ban the hijab for kindergarten pupils was enacted.
- **29.11.2018:** Senior Advisor of the European Foundation for Democracy Lorenzo Vidino, who is also program director of the program on extremism at George Washington University presented a talk on “Political Islam in Austria” at the Foreign Ministry’s Integration Advisory Board meeting.
- **16.12.2018:** FPÖ party whip Gudenus announced that a new act to outlaw political Islam will be prepared for 2019.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
BELARUS
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

Islam is a historical and traditional religion in Belarus; the history of Islam in Belarus covers more than 600 years. The total number of Muslims is a little more than 30,000, accounting for 0.3% of the population. Belarusian Tatars, the majority of Muslims, profess Sunni Islam. Most Muslim communities and historic mosques are located in the Grodno region (Western region of Belarus). Tourist and pilgrim tours of historical Muslim places are available in Belarus.

Belarusian society is quite tolerant; Muslim culture is part of Belarusian culture and history. Open anti-Muslim hate speech is not widespread, but structural anti-Muslim racism exists as we see with employers creating obstacles to the employment of certain Muslim women in the public sector.

According to governmental sociological polls, about 25% of respondents consider “Islam, including Wahhabism, as a harmful, destructive phenomenon.” The negative image of Muslim migrants in the media is supported by Islamophobic commentaries. There is a discriminatory rule that obliges Muslim women to be photographed for a passport without a headscarf.

The anti-discrimination Law on Equality, which the National Human Rights Institution established in accordance with the Paris Principles, is absent in Belarus. The absence of this most important legislative framework and law enforcement practice actually opens the door to the further expansion of Islamophobia.

Рэзюмэ

Ісламз’яўляецца гістарычнай і традыцыйнай рэлігіяй у Беларусі, гісторыя ісламу ў Беларусі ахоплівае больш за 600 гадоў. Агульная колькасць мусульманаў- трохі больш, чым 30000 чалавек, што складае 0,3% насельніцтва. Большасць мусульманаў складае супольнасць беларускіх татар, якія прытрымліваюцца ісламу суніцкага толку. Большасць мусульманскіх абшчын і гістарычныя мячэці размешчаны ў Гродзенскай вобласці (заходні рэгіён Беларусі). Турыстычныя і паломніцкія туры па гістарычных мусульманскіх мясцінах вельмі папулярныя ў Беларусі.

Беларускае грамадства цалкам талератнае; мусульманская культура з’яўляецца часткай беларускай культуры і гісторыі. Рэдкія антыісламскія выпадкі стрымліваюцца грамадзянскай культурай. Аднак ісламафобія працадаўцаў з’яўляецца перашкодай для працаўладкавання некаторых мусульманскіх жанчын у грамадскім сектары.

Па дадзеных сацыялагічных апытанняў, каля 25% рэспандэнтаў лічаць, «іслам, у тым ліку вахабізм, шкоднымі, дэструктыўнымі з’явамі». Негатыўны вобраз мігрантаў-мусульман у сродках масавай інфармацыі падтрымліваецца ісламафобнымі каментарамі. Існуе дыскрымінацыйнае правіла, якое абавязвае мусульманак фатаграфавання на пашпарт без хусткі.

Закон аб барацьбе з дыскрымінацыяй («Аб роўнасці»), Нацыянальны інстытут па правах чалавека, які б адпавядаў Парыжскім прынцыпам, адсутнічае ў Беларусі. Адсутнасць самай важнай заканадаўчай базы і правапрымяняльнай практыкі адкрывае дзверы для пашырэння ісламафобіі.

Country Profile

Country: Republic of Belarus

Type of Regime: Authoritarian regime with elements of democracy

Form of Government: Presidential System

Last Elections: 2015 Presidential Election (Alexander Lukashenko on 83.49% of the votes)

Total Population: 9.5million (in 2019)

Major Languages: Belarusian and Russian

Official Religion: The constitution (1996) defines the relationship between the state and the religious organizations (Article 16). Islam is recognized as a religion next to the dominant Catholic Church, the Evangelic-Lutheran Church, and the Jewish community (Law on the Freedom of Worship and the Religious Organizations 2002).

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018, 4 racist incidents (2 attacks on Roma, 2 hate speech: 1 against Russians, 1 against Belarusians) were reported to the police.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (circa 70%), Islam (0.3%), Judaism (0.2%), No religion (8%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): Official data is not available. According to the 2009 Census, the approximate population of all ethnic groups that are traditionally Muslim, amounted to less than 30,000 (0.3% of population).

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Muslim Religious Association in the Republic of Belarus, Republican Religious Association “Spiritual Administration of Muslims in the Republic of Belarus.”

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Belarusian Helsinki Committee; Advisory center on contemporary international practices and their implementation in law “Human Constanta”; FoRB (Freedom of Religion and Belief) Initiative; Civil Initiative “Journalists for Tolerance”; IPA “Center for the Study of Contemporary Religiosity”; Center of Equal Rights Expertise (Lithuania).

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: Illegal neo-Nazi groups

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** Muslim women are required to be photographed for passports without a headscarf (Regulation of Ministry of the Interior No. 200, 28 June, 2010)
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No (depends on employers)

Introduction

Islam is a historical and traditional religion in Belarus; the history of Islam in Belarus covers more than 600 years. The total number of Muslims amount to about 30,000 people, accounting for 0.3% of the population. The majority of Muslims in the country are Belarusian Tatars that profess Sunni Islam. There are 24 Muslim Sunni communities in Belarus, which are united by 2 Muslim associations, 8 mosques, and 2 prayer houses. The main mosque is located in Minsk; its official opening took place on 11 November, 2016.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

Women in Muslim headscarves who work in various places are very visible, especially in Minsk. Five interviews¹ recorded the absence of Islamophobia among employers, as well as among clients, but they said they feel the close attention of clients. Another five young women stated that they felt apprehension on the part of employers, yet they were not harassed. In the end, they decided against working in public spaces and preferred remote work (for example, in call centers). Non-Muslim employers do not support the idea of creating places for prayer, but if the employee wants to perform the daily ritual Muslim prayers, employers do not interfere. There are cases when employers provide short-term leave for Muslim employees for the period of religious holidays (for example for the *kurban bayram*).

Education

The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus recommends that schoolchildren attend school in “business style” attire (see “Recommended School Uniform Collection.”)² Muslim clothes and headscarves for girls are not allowed in school.

Loose business style is welcomed in universities; Muslim women have the opportunity to wear traditional headscarves.

Study programs have secular content, and information about the history of Islam in Belarus is included in the educational process. For example, the elective curriculum “The History of Religions and Atheism” includes a section entitled “Islam - World Religion” The following sections are included in the latter: “Preaching Mohammed and the rise of Islam in Arabia; *Hijra*: The formation of the Muslim *Ummah*; Four of the first righteous caliphs; Arab Caliphate and the spread of Islam; Fundamentals of the teachings of Islam; Mecca and Kaaba; The Koran - The

1. Ten interviews were recorded for this report, Minsk, December 2018. The five young women work respectively in a café, laundry, library, children’s clothing store, and bank.

2. “Recommended School Uniform Collection”, Ministry of Education of Republic of Belarus, <https://edu.gov.by/sistema-obrazovaniya/srenee-obr/delovoy-stil-odezhdy.pdf>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Scripture of Muslims and the *Sunnah* - The Sacred Tradition of Islam; Five “Pillars of Faith”: The confession of *shahad*, *namaz*, *zakat*, *saum*, *hajj*; Jihad and its different perceptions; Islamic morality; Sharia; Holidays and posts; Sunnism and Shiism, their features; Sufism; Islam in the modern world; Wahhabism; The history of the Muslim religion in Belarus; Modern Muslim community in Belarus.”³

Politics

The political situation for Muslims in Belarus is favourable. Belarus has friendly relations with the Muslim countries of the world; the Muslim communities of Belarus are drivers in contacts with Muslim countries. During a visit in Uzbekistan, President Lukashenko said, “If we have an election, Muslims would vote 120% for me...”⁴ portraying himself as a representative of his Muslim population.

The President of the Republic of Turkey, Erdogan, supported the construction of the Cathedral Mosque in Minsk. Muslim leaders have the opportunity of public presentations, while Mufti Abu Bekir Shabanovich was awarded the state prize “For Spiritual Revival” (2018) for his contribution to the preservation and development of the Muslim heritage in Belarus.

The Tatar Muslims’ capital in Belarus is Ivie, where the culture is a reflection of multi-religious life of Belarus. An unusual Monument of four faiths was placed in the center of Ivie: four white stela with arches. In one there is the image of Jesus Christ and an icon of the Holy Virgin. At the top, the following words are found, “I am the way the truth and the truth, and the life.” On the other, the image of Pope John Paul II calling to “Open the doors to Christ!” The third presents symbols of Islam and the Koran, and the fourth stele - a decorated candlestick –the Menorah (symbol the state of Israel), and the following words in Russian and Hebrew, “Peace be with you!” In the middle of this monumental group is the Hill of stones in the wheel, which symbolize the unity of man and nature, communication between religions, and mutual tolerance.

The heritage of Muslims and culture is subject of attention of the authorities, especially often this attention is monitored in the international sphere. On 27 March, 2015, in the course of a visit to New York, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Valentin Rybakov held a presentation of the book *Belarus and the Muslim World* by Belarusian historian Vladimir Likhodedov at the UN headquarters. The book was presented at the specially convened meeting of the heads of diplomatic missions to the United Nations of the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).⁵

3. “The History of Religions and Atheism”, National Educational Internet Portal, <https://www.adu.by/ru/uchitelyu/uchebno-metodicheskoe-obespechenie-doshkolnogo-obshchego-srednego-i-spetsialnogo-obrazovaniya/uchebny-programmy-fakultativnykh-zanyatij-v-xi-klassy-2016-god.htm>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

4. “President Lukashenko’s Visit to Uzbekistan”, *Gazeta.uz*, 13 September 2018, <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2018/09/13/uzb-bel>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

5. “Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Valentin Rybakov Meets Ambassadors of Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, 27 March 2015, http://mfa.gov.by/en/press/news_mfa/c2647645fba9a6b4.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

According to government sociological polls about 25% of respondents consider “Islam, including Wahhabism, as a harmful, destructive phenomenon.” The state sociological agency believes that the trend towards a negative perception of Muslims has been on the rise since 2015; the terrorist activities of DAESH are believed to be behind this negative perception.⁶

Internet&Media

Two images of Muslims are promoted in the Belarusian Internet media:⁷ the positive image is that of “Belarusian Tatars Muslims,” who are presented as part of the Belarusian people and traditional culture. The second group consists of the following (negative) images:

- “Muslim migrants”: “Let any niggers work in the Chernobyl zone [impact area of the Chernobyl nuclear power station] for a plate of soup. They dream of a lifetime to receive benefits in the country of white people and to do nothing.”⁸

- Muslim women: “Wearing the belt of Shahid, the girl who blew up a dozen infidels automatically becomes the bride of Allah”; “Belarusian women who converted to Islam are traitors of their ancestors and faith.”⁹

Justice System

In the Constitution of Belarus (1994) it is stated that no religion is privileged in the country and that religious discrimination is not allowed. Amendments were introduced with the text of the constitution of 1996: “Relationships of the state and the religious organizations are adjusted by the law in view of their influence on formation of spiritual, cultural and state traditions of Belorussian people” (Article 16). The Law about Freedom of Worship and Religious Organizations (2002) has placed the constitutional thesis in the preamble: “The Orthodox Church plays a decisive role in the historical development and progress of spiritual, cultural and state traditions of the Belarusian people; spiritual, cultural and historical role of the Catholic Church on the territory of Belarus is recognized, too; the inseparability from the general history of the people of Belarus and the Evangelic-Lutheran Church, Judaism, and Islam are also recognized.”

6. *Republic of Belarus in the Sociological Mirror* (Information and Analytical Center under the President of the Republic of Belarus, Minsk: 2017), p. 108, <http://iac.gov.by/sbornik/010.pdf>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

7. Media analysis was carried out on printed media: “СБ: Беларусь сегодня”, “Комсомольская правда в Белоруссии”, “Звезда”, “Народная воля”, “Наша ніва”. And the Internet media: Tut.by, Kyky.org, Onliner.by, Citydog.by, NN.by, Belaruspartisan.by, Ej.by, Svaboda.org (2018).

8. Comments section of article “Two Centers for Irregular Migrants To Be Built in Belarus”, TUT.by, 23 October 2018, <https://news.tut.by/society/612813.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

9. Comments section of article “Islam Is the Best Thing That Happened in My Life...Muslim Women Talk about Beauty, Style and Faith”, TUT.by, 26 January 2018, <https://lady.tut.by/news/life/578385.html> (Access date: 5 September 2019).

National Legislation to Prevent Discrimination¹⁰

Despite the recommendations adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Belarus has failed to include the definition of racial discrimination complying with Article 1 of The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination into the national legislation. This impedes amending the criminal and administrative legislation in order to criminalize all forms of racial discrimination, including direct and indirect discrimination.

Belarus lacks effective legal mechanisms to ensure the equality and protection against discrimination. The Belarusian legislation includes only general provisions on principles of equality and non-discrimination, which fail to provide for effective implementation measures. These provisions cannot substitute a comprehensive anti-discrimination law. It will be very difficult to implement the principles of equality and non-discrimination in Belarus without the adoption of the specific legislation.

Although Article 14 of the Labor Code was amended to expand the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination, the existing legislation still lacks a general definition of indirect discrimination and definitions of the important terms, widely recognized in the other European jurisdictions in the context of the right to equality, such as harassment, reasonable accommodation, or victimization. The legislation fails to distinguish between direct and indirect discrimination and, consequently, to differentiate between responsibility for different types of discrimination.

There is no practice of directly applying provisions of the international treaties in the Belarusian courts, although the national legislation provides for this possibility.

Belarus has no anti-discrimination case law. In rare cases, the problem of discrimination has been brought to court (the cases did not fall within the scope of the Convention), but no information is available about any cases where discrimination was found to be present.

There are no special rules to regulate the consideration of cases on discrimination in courts, similar to those that have been developed in recent years in other European jurisdictions (e.g. placing the burden of proof on the defendant). As a rule, the burden of proof lies equally with all the trial parties. According to Article 179 of the Civil Procedure Code, every party proves the facts on which the basis for its claim or objections relies. In practice, this results in the need for the victim of discrimination to justify their claim and to provide evidence of the violation of the right to equality. In one of the judgements, the judge expressly stated that the plaintiff had failed to prove the defendant's discriminatory behaviour during the employment interview.

10. "Report on Implementation of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination by the Republic of Belarus Prepared by Civil Society Organizations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Session 94", Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Human Constants, FoRB, Center of Equal Rights Expertise, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/BLR/INT_CERD_NGO_BLR_29418_E.pdf (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Victims of discrimination have no possibilities to contact the authorities specializing in the protection of human rights or in the protection against discrimination. There is no access to special and simplified procedures for the resolution of conflicts related to discrimination. Furthermore, Belarus has yet to establish the Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman, who could in practice verify allegations of discrimination and systematically collect information about the implementation of the principles of equality and non-discrimination in Belarus.

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in the concluding observations on the 2013 report on Belarus expressed its concern about the extremely broad interpretation of the Law on Extremism. In this regard, we should note that Belarus has taken no measures to clarify the provisions of the Law on Extremism, including the definition of extremism, which is still interpreted very broadly, despite the new wording. In addition, Law No. 358-3 of 20 April, 2016 added Article 361-1 to the Criminal Code of Belarus, which criminalizes creating or leading an extremist group. The article provides for seven years of imprisonment as the maximal punishment for these actions. The absence of clear criteria and the broad definition of extremism make it possible to apply this article arbitrarily, which raises concerns.

The Belarusian legislation includes a number of provisions providing for liability for actions aiming to incite hatred or discord, including on ethnic grounds. Thus, Article 130, Section 1, of the Criminal Code of Belarus provides for liability for deliberate actions aiming to incite racial, national, religious, or other social hatred or discord on racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other social grounds. Such actions are punishable by a fine or by arrest for up to six months or by restraint for up to five years, or by imprisonment for the same period.

Nevertheless, this article is not an effective deterrent to actions aiming to incite hatred or discord, including on ethnic grounds. The legislation fails to specify the actions aiming to incite hatred or to humiliate, provided for in Article 130 of the Criminal Code. To bring a person to justice under Article 130 of the Criminal Code, one needs to prove the offender's direct intent to incite racial, ethnic religious enmity or discord, or to humiliate ethnic honour and dignity, which is extremely difficult in practice.

The national legislation does not provide for direct administrative responsibility for the use of elements of hate speech, including racist expressions or actions that offend a person on racial grounds. Such actions may be punished under Article 9.3 of the Administrative Code (Insult, i.e. deliberate humiliation of a person's honour and dignity, expressed in indecent form). However, an offender may only be prosecuted under this article if they insulted the victim in an indecent manner. In addition, the case can only be initiated at the request of the victim.

In accordance with the legislation of Belarus, a citizen of Belarus who wants to obtain or replace their passport must provide photo of face without a headdress, this

regulation does not provide for any exceptions to religious beliefs. This rule applies to all citizens of Belarus, but it disproportionately affects Muslim women who cannot appear in public without the traditional Muslim woman's headscarf in line with their religious beliefs. Therefore, Muslim women are forced to take off their headscarves in order to take these photos, which causes emotional distress. This practice also makes it difficult to identify Muslim women who have been photographed without the headscarf for their passport but who wear it in their daily life.¹¹ During 2018, the Republic Human Rights Public Association "Belarusian Helsinki Committee" sent its proposals to the Ministry of the Interior to repeal the discriminatory rule (Regulation #200, dated 28 June, 2010). A reply was received from the Ministry of the Interior that the rules for photographing may be changed in the future, since biometric passports are being developed.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The situation of migrants from Chechnya (Russian Federation) in Brest was an important case.¹² The majority of migrants profess Salafism and are persecuted in Russia. Chechen migrants were going to seek asylum in Poland, but were forced to wait for a border pass on the territory of Belarus. Some local residents helped Muslim migrants, many NGOs provided humanitarian assistance, but there were frequent cases of Islamophobia on the part of local residents, which were expressed in negative statements, refusal to provide rental housing, etc. The human rights organization "Human Constanta" organized a humanitarian mission to Brest and numerous educational events in order to change the negative attitude of local residents.

In 2018, the NGO coalition "For Equality" stands out for promoting the Law on Equality, and monitoring hate crimes and hate speech.

In addition, the civil initiative "Journalists for Tolerance" monitors hate speech in media.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Belarusian society is quite tolerant; Muslim culture is part of Belarusian culture and history. Rare Islamophobic statements are held back by the culture of Belarusian cit-

11. This information was also presented in the shadow report of "Answers to the List of Issues and Questions Prior to the Submission of the Eighth Periodic Report of Belarus" Belarusian NGOs for CEDAW, ed. Tatiana Glushkova, (2017), https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/BLR/INT_CEDAW_NGO_BLR_25453_E.pdf, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

12. "Transit Refugees in Brest", Human Constanta, 1 October 2018, <https://humanconstanta.by/en/overview-of-the-situation-with-transit-refugees-in-brest/> (Access date: 5 September 2019).

izens. However, the absence of anti-discrimination legislation is the biggest problem, which actually opens the way for various forms of exclusion and hate speech.

Recommendations:

1) To develop and adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including civil society representatives.

2) To establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles.

3) To conduct special training for judges, prosecutors, police officers, other legal professionals, and civil servants in order to improve their competence in identifying and investigating hate crimes and issuing judicial decisions to ensure the equality and the protection against discrimination.

4) To ensure the implementation of educational programs for journalists and the media on the promotion of the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

5) To monitor the use of hate speech in the media and to take measures each time elements of hate speech appear.

6) To amend Regulation No. 200, dated 28 June, 2010, of the Ministry of Interior, to provide for the possibility to take pictures for a passport in a headdress, unless it hides the shape of the face, for individuals who cannot appear with a bare head in public because of their religious beliefs.

7) Partnership between the state and religious organizations is necessary, especially to preserve the historical heritage, charity, and broad social programs for vulnerable groups of the population.

Chronology

- **26.01.2018:** Negative comments posted about Muslim women in the comment section of an online newspaper (*tut.by*); for example, “Belarusian women who converted to Islam are traitors of their ancestors and faith.”
- **26.01.2018:** Negative comments posted about Muslim women in the comment section of an online newspaper (*tut.by*); for example, “Wearing the belt of Shahid, the girl who blew up a dozen infidels automatically becomes the bride of Allah.”
- **23.10.2018:** Negative comments posted about Muslim migrants in the comment section of an online newspaper (*tut.by*); for example, “Let any niggers work in the Chernobyl zone [impact area of the Chernobyl nuclear power station] for a plate of soup. They dream of a lifetime to receive benefits in the country of white people and to do nothing.”
- **2018:** The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus recommended that Muslim clothes and headscarves for Muslim girls should not be allowed in schools.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
BELGIUM
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.

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Executive Summary

As with preceding years, Islamophobia in Belgium has continued to grow and to permeate diverse aspects of Belgian society. The nature of Islamophobia in Belgium remains constant – it is based on narratives of threat and perceived alterity of Islam and Muslims. Direct manifestations of Islamophobia throughout 2018 have been widespread and have affected Islamic sites with physical attacks and graffiti on mosques, Islamic practices such as *halal* slaughter, and also presumed Muslim individuals.

During 2018, far right political and socio-political movements have had significant influence on Islamophobic narratives and action in the nation, particularly apparent in the case of the far right socio-politically-led *Marche contre Marrakech* in December which saw the overt manifestation of the intersection of traditional anti-immigrant racisms with anti-Muslim racisms. Furthermore, Islamophobia in Belgium is increasingly normalised, evident for example in the number of reported cases pertaining to Islamophobia in the police force, mainstream and popularised media narratives perpetuating Islamophobic tropes, and continued policy limiting expressions of Muslimness.

Islamophobia in Belgium during 2018 has continued to have a distinctly gendered dimension – with numerous attacks against visibly Muslim women in particular. Examples of attacks against Muslim women range from verbal aggressions, denial of access to services, Muslim women forcibly having the headscarf removed, and go as far as attempted rape. National Islamophobic debates continue to focus on the headscarf, and in this area, some gains and losses have been made – whilst some organisations have made accommodations of Muslim women's dress, key figures continue to demonise visible Muslimness in the nation.

At the heart of Europe, the Belgian capital hosts a distinct far right presence at the supranational political level. In 2018, plans for the opening of a far-right think tank in Brussels to support associated European politicians were announced by Steve Bannon in the USA – showing the globalising nature of Islamophobia and its potential to impact the nation.

Counter-Islamophobia work and activism remains strong and effective in Belgium, with increasingly comprehensive reporting and counter-action as detailed below.

Résumé

Comme les années précédentes, l'islamophobie en Belgique a continué d'imprégner tous les aspects de la société Belge. L'islamophobie en Belgique reste stable et est caractérisé par des discours de menace et d'altérité d'Islam et Musulmans. Les expressions directes de l'islamophobie à travers de l'année ont eu répandues et ont affecté des lieux Islamiques – avec des attaques physiques et des graffitis sur les mosquées, des pratiques Islamiques – comme *halal*, et aussi des individus présumés d'être Musulmans.

Pendant 2018, des mouvements politiques et socio-politiques de l'extrême-droite ont eu une influence forte sur les discours et actions Islamophobes, évident dans le cas de la manifestation menée par l'extrême-droit socio-politique la Marche contre Marrakech, par exemple, qui a souligné les intersections du racisme anti-immigrant et le racisme anti-Musulman. Nonobstant, l'islamophobie en Belgique est de plus en plus banalisée, apparent dans les cas signalés d'islamophobie au sein des policiers, au courant dominant et populaire dans les médias qui perpétue des idées Islamophobes et des mesures politiques qui continuent de limiter l'expression de l'identité Musulman.

Pendant 2018, l'islamophobie en Belgique a continué d'avoir un caractère sexiste – avec des attaques nombreuses faites aux femmes visiblement Musulmanes en particulier ; y compris des agressions verbales, refus de service, des foulards arrachés et un viol tentative. Débats nationaux continue de mettre le foulard/voile au point, et dans ce cas il y a eu des améliorations et des pertes avec quelques adaptations faites dans certaines organisations et aussi des personnages clés qui continue de diaboliser les Musulmans et leur visibilité dans la nation.

Au cœur d'Europe, la capitale Belge est hôte d'une présence des acteurs de l'extrême-droite distincte au niveau supranational. En 2018, des plans pour l'ouverture d'un groupe de réflexion de caractère extrême-droite à Bruxelles pour soutenir des politiciens associés au niveau Européen, annoncé par Steve Bannon des États-Unis – quelque chose qui démonte la globalisation de l'islamophobie et son potentiel d'influencer la nation.

Les travaux contre-islamophobie reste forts et effectifs en Belgique, avec des reportages et actions de plus en plus compréhensibles, détaillé dans cette partie de ce compte rendu.

Country Profile

Country: Belgium

Type of Regime: Federal constitutional monarchy

Form of Government: Representative democratic federal parliamentary system comprised of a bicameral parliament, consisting of the Senate and Chamber of Representatives, headed by the monarch.

Ruling Parties: The most recent Belgian governmental coalition is formed of twelve members; francophone parties include *Mouvement Réformateur* and Dutch parties are *Christen Democratische en Vlaamse* and *Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten*.

Opposition Parties: Belgian proportional representation typically gives way to numerous parties rather than a biparty system; thus, at the federal level in *Flanders Socialistische Partij Anders, Vlaams Belang* and *Groen*, and in francophone Belgium *Centre Démocrate Humaniste, Écolo, Parti Sociliste, Parti Populaire* and *Démocrate Fédéraliste Indépendant* form the opposition. This naturally changes at the local parliamentary levels.

Last Elections: Most recent federal elections took place on 25 May 2014 (these run on a five-yearly cycle, coinciding with the European Parliamentary elections). These saw NVA secure thirty-three of one hundred and fifty seats, PS won twenty-three seats, MR secured twenty, CD&V obtained eighteen, and Open VLD fourteen seats.

Total Population: 11 million counted in 2011 census.

Major Languages: Flemish in Flanders (approximately 59% of total population). Wallonia and Brussels are predominantly francophone. Finally, 0.7% of the total population is German-speaking and based in francophone Liège. English is also widely spoken.

Official Religion: There is no official state religion in Belgium. However, Christianity, Islam and Judaism are officially recognised, with much of the nation identifying as Roman Catholic.

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Counter Islamophobia Collective in Belgium (*Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique – CCIB/Collectief Tegen Islamofobie en België – CTIB*) documents statistics annually on Islamophobia in Belgium, based on evidence derived from the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (UNIA), and direct reports. Last year, the CCIB dealt with seventy cases defined as Islamophobic. Of those, 76% affected Muslim women and only 24% targeted Muslim males.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Statistics are compiled by UNIA, under seventeen of the nineteen legal bases of discrimination, including racial discrimination (presumed race, skin colour, nationality, ancestry and ethnic origin), disability-based discrimination, philosophical/religious discrimination, sexual orientation, age, wealth, civil status, political beliefs, trade union membership, health, physical/genetic characteristics, birth and social background.

During 2018, UNIA observed growing anti-Semitic discrimination, with a staggering 94% of surveyed Belgians stating that they would have an issue with having a Jewish relative. Also, in 2018, UNIA published its report on employment-related discrimination in Belgium, which revealed that 27% of reports received pertaining to discrimination in the workplace are linked to racial discrimination and 20.7% are linked to disability-based discrimination.

Major Religions (% of Population): Although there is no official state census of religious affiliation in Belgium, estimates suggest a 60.7% Christian population (predominantly Roman Catholic but also including some Protestants and Orthodox Christians), 6% Muslims, and 0.4% Jewish.

Muslim Population (% of Population): Belgian Muslims constitute 6% of the overall population, with an estimated population size of 870,000.

Main Muslim Community Organisations: The Belgian Muslim Executive (*Exécutif des Musulmans de Belgique/ Executief van de Moslims van België – EMB*) serves as the official national interlocutor on Islam and Muslim communities in the country (under the official recognition of Islam), comprising representatives from the federal regions. It oversees the registration of mosques and clergy, chaplains, Muslim/ Islamic religious education teachers in state schools, ritual slaughter certificates, and announcing religious festivals among other key details in the function of Islam in Belgium.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: CCIB, UNIA, ENAR, among others.

Far Right Parties: Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang – VB*)

Far Right Movements: *Katholiek Vlaams Hoogstudentenverbond*, *Nationalistische Studentenvereniging*, *Schild en Vrienden*, and *Voorpost*.

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: Rather than organisations being directly designated as far right terrorist organisations, far-right actions tend to be condemned.

Limitations of Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** There is no national ban on wearing the headscarf in Belgium; however, regions and individual schools have the authority to prohibit school-girls from wearing the hijab.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** Serious proposals to prohibit ritual slaughter, including halal slaughter surfaced in Belgium during 2017. A ban on ritual slaughter in Flanders has been in operation since 1 January 2019 and will come into effect in Wallonia as of September 2019.
- **Minaret Ban:** There are no documented minaret bans in Belgium; however, discussion did follow the Swiss calls for such a ban during the early 2010s.
- **Circumcision Ban:** There is no formal legal ban on circumcision in Belgium, but there are ongoing calls to ban the practice.
- **Burka Ban:** A burka ban is in place since 1 June 2011. Those found wearing the burka in Belgian public spaces are subject to monetary fines of between

€15 and €25 and imprisonment of up to seven days. The national veil ban in Belgium is preceded by regional bans previously framed under the security narrative.

- **Prayer Ban:** There is no specific national or federal ban on prayer in Belgium. However, it is linked to employment discrimination cases.

Introduction

Perhaps unsurprisingly, against a backdrop of growing and increasingly normalised Islamophobia globally, during 2018, there has been a continued intensification of Islamophobia across Belgium. The nature and manifestations of Belgian Islamophobia are comparable and increasingly influenced by neighbouring Western European contexts, as reported in this report.

This year, in Belgium Islamophobia has continued to be influenced by migration debates and often intersects with more traditional forms of racism, for example see section on politics in this contribution related to the *Marche contre Marrakech* (March against Marrakech) which took place in December 2018.

Again, the most striking feature of Islamophobia in Belgium this year has been the continued deeply gendered manifestation of Islamophobia, both in the national hegemonic narrative but also in the occurrence of Islamophobic attacks. The annual report by the CCIB (Counter Islamophobia Collective in Belgium) published in 2018 reveals that 76% of Islamophobic attacks committed in Belgium are against Muslim women.

Notwithstanding, the Belgian civil society counter-Islamophobia response has been robust, albeit perhaps overstretched, in responding to the complexities of Islamophobia in the country. For example, there has been growing consideration of intersectional responses to the phenomenon. This work on countering Islamophobia in Belgium has been mirrored by Belgian academics. However, more is needed to counter the growth of populist and Islamophobic narratives and actions across the country.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

As with previous years, physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks across Belgium have been numerous across 2018. For example, in August 2018, a mosque in Louvain was graffitied with a swastika, accompanied by calls for people to vote for the NVA and “dark-skinned people” to be expelled from the country. As discussed further in this contribution, the nature of the vandalism highlights the intersection of traditional racism with Islamophobia, and also its grounding in far-right discourses.

Also, as covered in previous years in the national reports on Belgium in the *European Islamophobia Report*, in 2018, Muslim women and in particular visibly Muslim women (i.e. those wearing the headscarf) have continued to be disproportionately affected and have faced the majority of reported physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks. In particular, the annual 2018 CCIB report states that 76% of the seventy compiled cases they dealt with in the preceding year impact-

ed Muslim women, compared to 24% affecting Muslim/perceived Muslim men in Belgium.¹

During 2018, Muslim women in the country reported verbal harassment attacked. For example, Cann'elles co-founder, Ihsane Houche, took to social media to report that whilst out walking with her young child she was verbally assaulted in May 2018 by a passer-by alleging that Houache “wanted to bring wars here”. The incident illustrates the amalgamation of the visible Muslim identity with Islamophobic narratives of an imagined violent threat posed by Muslims. Alternatively, media from Flanders report a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf being denied service at a café chain on the grounds of her perceived ethnic and religious identity. Or similarly, in February 2018, reports emerged of a visibly Muslim woman being denied service on local public transport in Brussels on the grounds of her headscarf.² The year 2018 has also seen several violent attacks perpetrated across the country; these include the violent attack on two Muslim women in Charleroi in February 2018, which resulted in one of the women having her headscarf forcibly removed,³ or the example of a young Muslim schoolgirl who had her scarf removed by an attacker during a school trip to Ostende in April 2018.⁴ Alternatively, the case of a nineteen-year-old Muslim woman being attacked by two individuals in Anderlues in July 2018; the attackers made racist and Islamophobic slurs, cut her with a sharp object and attempted to rape her, only to be dissuaded by the sound of passers-by. The event highlights the violent intersection of racism, Islamophobia and sexism in Belgian society. It led to significant community response and was taken up by local police (see Chronology section for details).

Employment

In 2018, UNIA reported that of all the discrimination cases reported to them in 2017, 572 were related to employment; this represents an increase of 13.5% on preceding years.⁵ These statistics indicate that in comparison with previous reported

1. “Collectif Contre L’islamophobie En Belgique - Rapport Chiffres 2017”, CCIB, September 2018, https://ccib-ctib.be/wp-content/uploads/CCIB_PUBLIC_PDF_RapportChiffresCCIB/CCIB_RapportChiffres2017_Septembre2018.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

2. DH, “Il Aurait Refusé De Faire Monter Une Femme Voilée: La Société De Lijn Réajit!”, Sudinfo.be, 20 February 2018, <https://www.sudinfo.be/id40172/article/2018-02-20/il-aurait-refuse-de-faire-monter-une-femme-voilee-dans-son-bus-la-societe-de>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

3. JVK, “Aggression Islamophobe À Charleroi: Ils Ont Tabassé Ma Femme Devant Mons Fils De 2an Et Lui Ont Arraché Son Voile”, DH.net, 20 February 2018, <https://www.dhnet.be/regions/charleroi/agression-islamophobe-a-charleroi-ils-ont-tabasse-ma-femme-devant-mon-fils-de-2-ans-et-lui-ont-arrache-son-voile-video-5a8c2bb6cd70f-0681dcf75df>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

4. “Une Molenbeekoise Victime D’une Aggression “Islamophobe” À Ostende”, La Capitale, 1 April 2018, <https://www.lacapitale.be/212869/article/2018-04-01/une-molenbeekoise-victime-dune-agression-islamophobe-ostende>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

5. “More Employment Discrimination Reported to Unia in 2017”, UNIA, 6 June 2018, <https://www.unia.be/en/articles/more-employment-discrimination-cases-reported-to-unia-in-2017>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

years there has been an increase in employment-based discrimination in the country (or, perhaps, alternatively levels of discrimination remain constant but instead there is improved reporting by those facing prejudice in the labour force). Also based on this evidence, the CCIB found that 84% of the cases reported to UNIA specifically concerned Islamophobic discrimination. For example, the annual CCIB report published in 2018 details an example of a Muslim woman who worked at an airport in Belgium being denied access to sections of her workplace due to an alleged flawed claim of the woman having ‘radical’ links.⁶ The case was pursued by UNIA, CCIB, and the woman’s union but highlights the pervasive nature and impact of the Islamophobic narratives that frame Muslim communities as a source of violent threat.

It is important to note that in 2017 the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled on two cases regarding the permissibility of the headscarf in the workplace: namely, in the cases of Achbita and Bounaoui.⁷ As highlighted previously within the scope of the *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, the ambiguity of these two cases and the ECJ rulings held the potential to set precedent and send the signal of the acceptability of the discrimination of visibly Muslim women working in Belgium, Europe, and beyond. Whilst it is difficult to assess the scope of the impact of the ECJ ruling one year on, it remains that the ruling may give a veil of legitimacy to discrimination of Muslim women. Additionally, it remains likely that the ruling shapes workplace Islamophobia and also Islamophobia in Belgium more broadly, especially given that we continue to see a rise in gendered Islamophobia across the nation.

Education

Whereas in previous years the field of education in the Belgian contribution of the *European Islamophobia Report* was marred with Islamophobic controversy surrounding young Muslim schoolgirls and their attire, 2018 has been comparatively less marked by scandal concerning the headscarf or long skirts (See previous editions of the national report on Belgium in the *European Islamophobia Report* for details). Instead, the primary source of Islamophobic tension in the education arena arose in relation to Muslim schoolchildren and fasting during the month of Ramadan. During May 2018, parents of fasting Muslim schoolchildren in Anderlecht were invited to take their children home during lunch breaks.⁸ The move potentially ostracises young Muslims observing Ramadan, rather than incorporating and celebrating the diversity of the student body.

6. “Collectif Contre L’islamophobie En Belgique - Rapport Chiffres 2017”, CCIB, September 2018, https://ccib-ctib.be/wp-content/uploads/CCIB_PUBLIC_PDF_RapportChiffresCCIB/CCIB_RapportChiffres2017_Septembre2018.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. For further details, see: Amina Easat-Daas, “Islamophobia in Belgium. National Report 2017”, *European Islamophobia Report*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, İstanbul: 2018).

8. JC, “Les Écoliers Qui Font Le Ramadan Invités De Rentrer Chez Eux”, *La Capitale*, 22 May 2018, <https://www.lacapitale.be/234553/article/2018-05-22/les-ecoliers-qui-font-le-ramadan-invites-rentre-chez-eux>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Additionally, as highlighted under the section of this report pertaining to physical and verbal attacks in Belgium, a young Muslim schoolgirl from Brussels was verbally attacked and had her headscarf removed whilst on a school trip to Ostende.⁹

Politics

During 2018, there has been a continued growth and normalisation of Islamophobic narrative in the mainstream Belgian political arena. Perhaps the most prominent example of this stems from the *Marche contre Marrakech* in Brussels during December 2018. The protest was organised in response to the United Nations agreement surrounding migration. The event was scheduled to take place on Sunday, 16 December 2018 and was organised by a collective of far-right youth movements, including political branches and sociopolitical movements *Katoliek Vlamms Hoogstudentenverbond (KVHV)*; *Nationalistische Studentenvereniging (NSV)*; *Schild en Vrienden (S&V)*; *Voorpost*; and *Vlaams Belang Jogerem*. The planned event came under fire and was prohibited by Brussels Mayor Philippe Close, but was strongly defended by its initiators. Filip Brusselmans, KVHV president deemed the event to be based on ‘freedom of expression’, and subsequently the Brussels ban was lifted. The protest resulted in clashes between protestors and the authorities, arrests and injured police officials. Protestors were interviewed saying “All the Arabs, all the Muslims, all the sh*t out!”¹⁰ - clearly demonstrating the racist and Islamophobic nature of the event and the amalgamation of the aforementioned with migration.

In addition to popularised far right sociopolitical movements and actions, the broader political arena too has seen a continuous presence of Islamophobia, for example as detailed further below, prominent Flemish politician, Bart de Wever, stoked inter-community tensions and problematised the Arab and Muslim presence in the nation.

In addition, the Belgian political sphere also saw significant focus attributed to the so-called Belgian ‘Islam Party’, where Islam stands for *Intégrité, Solidarité, Liberté, Authenticité and Moralité* (Integrity, Solidarity, Freedom, Authenticity and Morality). The arguably more conservative and less representative views of the party gave rise to reactive Islamophobic discourse in Belgian politics. For example, NVA politician Theo Francken in April 2018 in response to the Islam Party stated,

“A party named ISLAM grown in Belgium. They shamelessly call for the introduction of Sharia. Sharia is a violation of human rights. Pro-Sharia parties are antidemocratic. Real wolves in sheep’s clothing #submission”¹¹

9. “Une Molenbeekoise Victime D’une Aggression “Islamophobe” À Ostende”, *La Capitale*, 1 April 2018, <https://www.lacapitale.be/212869/article/2018-04-01/une-molenbeekoise-victime-dune-agression-islamophobe-ostende>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

10. “Marche Contre Marrakech: ‘Tous Les Arabes, Tous Les Musulmans, Toute Cette Merde, Dehors’”, *DH.be*, 16 December 2018, <https://www.dhnet.be/video/marche-contre-marrakech-tous-les-arabes-tous-les-musulmans-toute-cette-merde-dehors-5c168a5acd70fd91c03507d>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

11. Clément Pétreaux, “Au Coeur De L’islam, Le Parti Qui Veut Instaurer La Charia En Belgique”, *Le Point*, 14 April 2018, https://www.lepoint.fr/europe/au-coeur-d-islam-le-parti-qui-veut-instaurer-la-charia-en-belgique-14-04-2018-2210611_2626.php, (Access date: 2 September 2019).



Figure 1: Snapshot of a tweet from NVA politician Theo Francken related to the Islam party.¹²

Although the party was problematic for most for numerous reasons, Francken's comments risk an amalgamation of all Islamic values and Muslims as being anti-democratic and a threat to Belgian society, as many will omit the complexities of the issues at hand and consequently generalise.

Media

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there has been a continued intensification of Islamophobia in Belgium via the media. In their annual report published in 2018, the CCIB reported that 29% of the seventy cases it dealt with pertained to Islamophobia in the media and online. What is more, these figures represent only the tip of the iceberg; for example, as detailed in the Chronology section, the media reported that covered a then potential Open VLD alderman's, Alexander Billiet, remarks that areas within Forest (Brussels region) were Islamised.¹³ The story perpetuates the basis of the flawed Islamophobic narrative that Muslims wish to change the existing hegemonic cultural landscape and allegedly 'Islamise' the nation. This myth functions on the assumption that Muslims constitute a threat to the wider Belgian society.

Also, anti-Islamic media during the year was clearly linked to the so-called Islam Party. For example, *Le Point* ran a story in September 2018 with the headline "At the Heart of Islam: The Party That Wants to Install Sharia in Belgium".¹⁴ Although, it is most likely that the headline refers to the self-proclaimed 'Islam Party', on first sight it appears that the headline generalises and makes the claim that Islam as a faith wants to instil Sharia in Belgium, something which is incorrect. Here the issue pertains to semantics and the assumptions and the generalisations readers will make upon seeing the headline.

12. Ibid.

13. JC, "Un Futur Échevin Vld Dérape: 'Le Bas De Forest Est Trop Islamisé'", *La Capitale*, 18 October 2018, <https://www.lacapitale.be/295542/article/2018-10-18/un-futur-echevin-vld-derape-le-bas-de-forest-est-trop-islamise>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. Clément Pétreault, "Au Coeur De L'islam, Le Parti Qui Veut Instaurer La Charia En Belgique", *Le Point*, 14 April 2018, https://www.lepoint.fr/europe/au-coeur-d-islam-le-parti-qui-veut-instaurer-la-charia-en-belgique-14-04-2018-2210611_2626.php, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Also, media similarly commented on the way in which during the Flemish programme “De Afspaark”, the ‘Islam Party’ representative, Redouane Ahrouche, would not look at NVA representative, Zuhal Demir, and the way in which he had incorrectly claimed that in twelve years, Belgium would have a Muslim majority - in parenthesis the article notes how the party leader was wrong rather than contributing to tensions and fears of Muslim demographic takeover.¹⁵



Figure 2: Snapshot of *Le Point* article, with the headline “At the Heart of Islam: The Party That Wants to Install Sharia in Belgium”¹⁶



Figure 3: News article with the headline “Belgium Will Have a Muslim Majority in Twelve Years’ Warns the Head of the Islam Party (But He’s Wrong)”¹⁷

15. Wouter Verschelden, “La Belgique Aura Une Majorité De Musulmans Dans Les 12 Ans’ Prévoit Le Chef De La Parti Islam (Mais Il Se Trompe)”, News Monkey, 9 May 2018, <https://fr.newsmonkey.be/la-belgique-aura-une-majorite-de-musulmans-dans-les-12-ans-prevoit-le-chef-du-parti-islam-mais-il-se-trompe/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

16. Clément Pétreault, “Au Coeur De L’islam, Le Parti Qui Veut Instaurer La Charia En Belgique”, Le Point, 14 April 2018, https://www.lepoint.fr/europe/au-coeur-d-islam-le-parti-qui-veut-instaurer-la-charia-en-belgique-14-04-2018-2210611_2626.php, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

17. Wouter Verschelden, “La Belgique Aura Une Majorité De Musulmans Dans Les 12 Ans’ Prévoit Le Chef De La Parti Islam (Mais Il Se Trompe)”, News Monkey, 9 May 2018, <https://fr.newsmonkey.be/la-belgique-aura-une-majorite-de-musulmans-dans-les-12-ans-prevoit-le-chef-du-parti-islam-mais-il-se-trompe/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

However, despite the reproduction of normalised Islamophobic narratives via the Belgian media, the press in Belgium has also begun to engage in a degree of reflexivity over the course of 2018. For example, in April 2018, Belgian media ran a report interrogating the extent to which it had an issue with racial difference¹⁸ – perhaps this is the first step towards media accountability and increased diversity. In addition, in comparison to previous years covered by the *European Islamophobia Report*, there appears to have been increased reporting of physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks, especially those committed against Belgian Muslim women as detailed in this report. These stories have been covered across the spectrum of Belgian media, including *dh.net*, RTBF, and La Capitale. Perhaps this broad coverage is largely attributable to the often politically centric leaning of the majority of newspaper outlets in the country.

Justice System

During the course of 2018, the Belgian justice system has continued to deal with legal cases pertaining to Islamophobia. In particular, examples include a ruling in July 2018 which deemed the prohibition of burkinis (framed under narratives of hygiene or security) as unacceptable.¹⁹ Or, in 2018, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that in a case dating back to 2007 whereby a judge prohibited a headscarf-wearing spectator into the courtroom, Belgium had contravened religious liberties,²⁰ thus indicating the right of Muslim women who wear the hijab to access courtrooms. The continued apparent fixation on Muslim women's dress in Belgium demonstrates the way in which much of the national imagination regarding Muslims and Islam in Belgium is reduced to and symbolised by visibly Muslim women.

In some cases, UNIA was able to intervene and facilitate favourable outcomes. For example, in the instance whereby a Muslim woman horse rider who had wanted to join a new club was rejected on the grounds of safety, UNIA was able to step in and create understanding between both parties.²¹ Similarly, in the case of a fitness venue which had previously refused membership to a Belgian Muslim woman on the grounds of her headscarf, thanks to the intervention of UNIA, the venue has now adopted a clause of non-discrimination allowing Muslim women to join the health club and wear the hijab.²²

18. Julien Vlassenbroek, "Les Médias Belges Ont-Ils Un Problème Avec Les Noirs?," RTBF, 6 April 2018, https://www.rtbf.be/info/societe/detail_les-medias-belges-ont-ils-un-probleme-avec-les-noirs?id=9886114, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

19. Belga, "Les Jugements Sur Le Burkini Constituent Un Précédent Selon Unia," BX1, 13 July 2018, <https://bx1.be/news/jugements-burkini-piscines-constituent-precedent-selon-unia/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

20. "Unia: La Belgique Condamné Pour Son Condemnation Du Voile Du Voile Dans Les Tribunaux", UNIA, 18 September 2018, <https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/la-belgique-condamnee-pour-son-interdiction-du-voile-dans-les-cours-de-justice>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

21. "Un Manège Accepte Les Cavaliers Qui Portent Un Voile", UNIA, 11 December 2018, <https://www.unia.be/fr/jurisprudence-alternatives/solutions-negociees/un-manege-accepte-les-cavalierees-qui-portent-un-voile>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

22. "Une Salle De Fitness Accepte Le Foulard Et Introduit Une Clause De Non Discrimination", UNIA, 13 November 2018, <https://www.unia.be/fr/jurisprudence-alternatives/solutions-negociees/une-salle-de-fitness-accepte-le-foulard>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Perhaps most worryingly, 2018 has seen the emergence of, or perhaps visible surfacing of, police racism and Islamophobia across the federal Belgian landscape. In particular, cases highlighted in the Belgian media include the internal police enquiry launched into the conduct of a Brussels West transport officer, who had allegedly made Islamophobic comments on his social media account;²³ the dismissal of two metropolitan police officers following the receipt of thirteen complaints of racism;²⁴ and the case of an officer from Heist-Op-Den-Berg, Antwerp, who was dismissed from the force and sentenced to 60 hours of community service for fabricating a letter containing false threats in the name of the so-called Islamic State, following the Paris attacks. Reports indicate that the letter may have been fabricated in order to stoke Islamophobic tensions in Belgium.²⁵ The fact that these cases have become apparent in Belgium are most concerning for a number of reasons. Firstly, the police force should, in an ideal society, be seen as gatekeepers of the criminal justice system, in that they are likely to be the first responders in reported cases of physical or verbal Islamophobic attacks if there is an immediate report. The police force has the potential to influence, either consciously or subconsciously, the direction of pursuit of the case in question. Secondly, the highlighting of these cases also points to the potential existence of systematic and embedded racism and Islamophobia within the Belgian police force. Both issues paint an alarming picture of Belgian policing and Islamophobia and, in turn, have potential ramifications for the countering of Islamophobia in Belgium in the future.

Internet

In their annual report published in 2018, the CCIB points to the fact that 29% of reported Islamophobic incidents in the country pertain to Islamophobia in the media and online. In their annual report published in 2018, the CCIB details various examples of explicit Islamophobic comments made online.²⁶ For example, the image below shows two of twelve cases highlighted in the CCIB report, both inciting hate against Muslims; the first calls for individuals to ‘mow them [Muslims] down as they exit their mosques’, whilst the second, presumably in an altercation with a presumed Muslim online, states ‘go hang from the minaret of your hateful mosque, waste of

23. Belga, “Enquête Interne Sur Les Publications Islamophobes D’un Inspecteur De Bruxelles-Ouest”, RTBF, 2 January 2018, https://www.rtb.be/info/regions/detail_enquete-interne-sur-les-publications-islamophobes-d-un-inspecteur-de-bruxelles-ouest?id=9801539, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

24. Belga, “Deus Policiers Anversois Virés Pour Racisme,” *Le Soir*, 21 March 2018, <https://www.lesoir.be/146673/article/2018-03-21/deux-policiers-anversois-vires-pour-racisme>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

25. “Un Policier Anversois Fabrique Une Fausse Lettre De L’ei Et L’affichage Sur La Porte Commissariat Après Les Attentats De Paris,” *RTL Info*, 19 July 2018, <https://www.rtl.be/info/regions/flandre/un-policier-anversois-fabrique-une-fausse-lettre-de-l-ei-et-l-affiche-sur-la-porte-du-commissariat-apres-les-attentats-de-paris-1041783.aspx?dt=09:32>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

26. “Collectif Contre L’islamophobie En Belgique - Rapport Chiffres 2017”, CCIB, September 2018, https://ccibctib.be/wp-content/uploads/CCIB_PUBLIC_PDF_RapportChiffresCCIB/CCIB_RapportChiffres2017_Septembre2018.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

humanity, parasite on society, dirty cockroach to be eradicated... dirty pig.²⁷ Again, these examples represent the tip of the iceberg, particularly given the vastness of the online space. Nonetheless, the examples point to the mainstreaming and banalisation of Islamophobic hate speech in the virtual world.

7. Type : INCITATION A LA HAINE
 Domaine : MEDIAS / INTERNET
 Lieu : Espace virtuel (Internet)
 Date : 27 juin 2017

Propos islamophobe incitant à la haine envers les personnes musulmanes sur Facebook en appelant ouvertement à les faucher à la sortie des mosquées.



faite la même chose fauché les tous a la sortie de leur mosquée

Il y a 6 heures · J'aime · Répondre · 12

Après analyse, le CCIB a estimé que ce fait était bien islamophobe et en infraction avec la législation antidiscrimination.

8. Type : INCITATION A LA HAINE
 Domaine : MEDIAS / INTERNET
 Lieu : Espace virtuel (Internet)
 Date : 01 février 2017

Propos islamophobe incitant à la haine envers les personnes musulmanes sur Facebook, en comparant une personne musulmane à un « déchet de l'humanité » ou encore à une « saleté de cafard à éradiquer ».



oui mon grand , tu représente bien ta communauté
 Et apres ca il faut vous respecter??
 Mais va te pendre au minaret de ta mosquée
 hein déchet de l'humanité, parasite de la société, saleté de cafard à éradiquer
 Tu vois moi aussi j'ai des mots doux pour toi , sale porc

Il y a 7 minutes · J'aime

Après analyse, le CCIB a estimé que ce fait était bien islamophobe et en infraction avec la législation antidiscrimination.

Figure 4: Case details from the 2018 published annual CCIB report, detailing two Internet-based hate crimes that took place in June and February 2017 respectively.²⁸

The online sphere has also been influential in the coordination of wider Islamophobic activity within the nation, for example in the case of the *Marche contre Marrakech* which was attended by an estimated 5,500 individuals. Arguably, the anonymity afforded by the online arena creates an increased likelihood of expression of Islamophobia as there may be the perceived sense of impunity. In the same way that the Belgian media serves as a site of reproduction of a normalised national Islamophobic narrative, the Internet creates a reflection of society and its views.

However, the Internet also allows for the spreading and sharing of the range of counter-Islamophobia work currently pursued in Belgium. For instance, in honour of the young woman attacked in Anderlues, a community march was organised and publicised online.²⁹ Likewise, the Internet permits the vast sharing of news stories

27. Ibid.

28. "Collectif Contre L'islamophobie En Belgique - Rapport Chiffres 2017", CCIB, September 2018, https://ccib-tib.be/wp-content/uploads/CCIB_PUBLIC_PDF_RapportChiffresCCIB/CCIB_RapportChiffres2017_Septembre2018.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

29. Philippe Tison, "Marche Commune", Anderlues: La Commune, 21 October 2018, http://www.anderlues.be/evenements/marche-citoyenne?fbclid=IwAR15x4UzViPUzqPVdNcQ_1yBbSWFlaBr9KmRCk129-u3FF2JGrzct8_K4OE, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

detailing Islamophobia in the nation, thus sharing an understanding that Islamophobia is very much a real phenomenon in Belgium that affects real individuals.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Within the Belgian Islamophobia network, far right political parties and social movements have constituted the key figures in 2018. For example, in March 2018, NVA party leader, Bart de Wever, caused controversy in claiming that unlike the Jewish community in Belgium, the Belgian Muslim community created tension and conflicts through its insistence on the use of religious symbols and dress.³⁰ The incoherent Islamophobic remarks by this far right political official further problematise visible Muslimness in society.



Figure 5: *De Zondag* image of politician Bart de Wever. The caption in the image reads 'Jews avoid conflict. That is different with Muslims'³¹

The Islamophobic narrative of the NVA sparks Islamophobic action. For example, in August 2018, a mosque in Louvain was graffitied with a swastika and calls to vote for the NVA,³² thus underlying the centrality of far right politics in the Belgian Islamophobic scene.

30. "Les Propos De Bart De Wever", RTBF, https://www.rtbf.be/auvio/detail_les-propos-de-bart-de-wever?id=2324382, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

31. Ibid.

32. Joyce Azar, "Une Mosquée De Louvain Maculée D'un Message À Caractère Raciste", VRT NWS, 31 August 2018, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/fr/2018/08/31/une-mosquee-de-louvain-maculee-dun-message-a-caractere-raciste/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).



Figure 6: Image of graffiti on a mosque in Louvain.³³

On a sociopolitical level, the KVHV has been significant in promoting and normalising Islamophobic discourse and action over the course of the year, specifically via their central role in the organisation of the *Marche contre Marrakech*. Whilst there has been a continued presence of central groups and individuals in the promotion of Islamophobia in Belgium during 2018, it must be noted that the issue is increasingly normalised and cannot be reduced to key actors alone.

In addition, in 2018, Steve Bannon announced that he intended to open a far right think tank in Brussels. ‘The Movement’ was pitched as an alternative to Open Society and will offer generalised and campaign support to far-right political actors at the European level. The initiative follows Bannon’s meetings with prominent European right-wing figures such as Victor Orban, Marine Le Pen, and Nigel Farage, and has the support of Belgian politician Mischael Modriken of the ADDE group.³⁴ The group’s presence highlights the increasingly globalised nature of Islamophobia.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

Belgian civil society continues to mount a robust counter-Islamophobia movement across the country. Key players in this response in the Belgian arena include (but are not limited to) the CCIB, ENAR and UNIA. Examples of their prominent counter-Islamophobia activity during 2018 include offering victim support or bringing forward complaints regarding Islamophobia in the media at the national level. Given the nature of Belgian political and social structures, these initiatives are on the whole well-received by the wider public and well-respected in the political sphere.

33. Ibid.

34. Nikolaj Nielsen, “Bannon’s the Movement to Launch with January Summit”, EU Observer, 22 October 2018, <https://euobserver.com/political/143125>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

In addition to the activity led at, or in conjunction with, the grass-roots level in Belgium, 2018 also saw the culmination of the Counter Islamophobia Kit project, led by the University of Leeds. The case study of Belgium constituted a major component of the project.³⁵ In September 2018, a national workshop on countering Islamophobia in Belgium was held and brought together key academics, civil society activists, and policymakers from the country. The workshop provided a space for the discussion of effective counter-Islamophobia strategies within the framework of Belgium, and arguably represents in itself a form of best practice in the wider combatting of Islamophobia in Belgium.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In conclusion, during 2018, Islamophobia in Belgium has continued to grow steadily. This steady intensification of Islamophobia is comparable with the nature of the phenomenon during 2017 and differs from the clustered Islamophobic attacks seen in 2015 and 2016. This stable escalation of Belgian Islamophobia in 2018 has been marked by the continuation of Islamophobia in the virtual realm, media, education and employment. Additionally, during this year, there has been the noticeable highlighting of Islamophobia in the police force – the frontline of the Belgian justice system. Also, the influence of the far right political and sociopolitical Islamophobic narrative has been keenly felt – and particularly apparent in the *Marche contre Mar-rakech* and the generalised normalisation of populist Islamophobic ideas.

Gendered dimensions of Islamophobia in Belgium have continued to intensify and are among the most remarkable features of overall Islamophobia in Belgium in 2018. Muslim women have faced widespread Islamophobic aggressions, which vary from verbal attacks to abhorrent violence. Notwithstanding, it appears that during 2018 there has been increased mainstreaming reporting of the phenomenon. This, however, does not detract from the seriousness of the situation or the urgency for a coherent response. Based on the aforementioned points the following recommendations are imperative:

- Given the distinctly gendered dimensions of Islamophobia there must be increased mainstream documentation of the levels of hostility faced by Belgian Muslim women. This recognition is the first step in the process of highlighting that there is in fact an issue that must be collectively addressed. With regards to documentation, best practices apparent in groups such as UNIA, CCIB or ENAR, among others, must be championed.
- There must be a collective breaking down of the popular myths surrounding Muslim women and increased support of Muslim women facing Islam-

35. Elsa Mescoli, “Counter Islamophobia Kit: Key National Messages - Belgium”, *Counter-Islamophobia Kit*, ed. Ian Law, Amina Easat-Daas and S. Sayyid, (University of Leeds, Leeds: 2018). and Ian Law, Amina Easat-Daas, and S. Sayyid, *Counter Islamophobia Kit: Briefing Paper and Toolkit of Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia*, (University of Leeds, Leeds: 2018).

ophobia. Civil society movements represent potentially fruitful avenues in this regard.

- A clear governmental and legal position on the acceptability of Muslim women's dress is necessary – rather than allowing for ambiguity, controversy and furthering of the reductionist narratives surrounding Muslim women in Belgium.
- Clear nationwide condemnation of far right and generalised Islamophobic narrative and actions must be pursued. Instead Muslim presence and contribution to Belgian society must continue to be highlighted and celebrated.
- Continued awareness raising and support of the effective Islamophobia reporting and support of channels such as CCIB, ENAR and UNIA.
- Increase of the range of safe spaces and opportunities to discuss and collectively work on effective counter-Islamophobia strategies.

Chronology

- **02.01.2018:** Internal enquiry opened by Brussel West police to investigate Islamophobic remarks on Facebook by a chief inspector within the force responsible for public transport security.³⁶
- **12.01.2018:** Black Muslim woman refused service in a Panos café, Flanders. The case highlights the intersection of racism, Islamophobia and gendered discrimination in Belgium.
- **19.02.2018:** Muslim woman who wore a headscarf refused access to a *De Lijn* bus in Brussels.³⁷
- **20.02.2018:** In Charleroi, two Muslim women attacked in front of two-year old infant, both verbally, and one had her headscarf removed. Perpetrators were driving a small French registered vehicle, possibly suggesting that the attackers may not have been Belgian. The women were left in shock and injured. Reports indicate that passers-by did not intervene during the attack, nor report it to the local police.³⁸

36. Belga, "Enquête Interne Sur Les Publications Islamophobes D'un Inspecteur De Bruxelles-Ouest", RTBF, 2 January 2018, https://www.rtb.be/info/regions/detail_enquete-interne-sur-les-publications-islamophobes-d-un-inspecteur-de-bruxelles-ouest?id=9801539, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

37. DH, "Il Aurait Refusé De Faire Monter Une Femme Voilée: La Société De Lijn Réajit!", Sud Info, 20 February 2018, <https://www.sudinfo.be/id40172/article/2018-02-20/il-aurait-refuse-de-faire-monter-une-femme-voilee-dans-son-bus-la-societe-de>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

38. JVK, "Aggression Islamophobe À Charleroi: Ils Ont Tabassé Ma Femme Devant Mons Fils De 2an Et Lui Ont Arraché Son Voile", DH.be, 22 February 2018, <https://www.dhnet.be/regions/charleroi/agression-islamophobe-a-charleroi-ils-ont-tabasse-ma-femme-devant-mon-fils-de-2-ans-et-lui-ont-arrache-son-voile-video-5a8c2bb6cd70f-0681dcf75df>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

- **21.03.2018:** Two police officers from Antwerp are dismissed for racism.³⁹
- **23.03.2018:** Headscarf-wearing, women's indoor football team in Laeken, Brussels faces controversy for a second time on the grounds of the official permissibility of their hijabs in the game. Although the match was played, it was deemed that because of the Muslim women's dress, it would not officially count. The team reported their complaints to UNIA.⁴⁰
- **18.03.2018:** Bart de Wever, president of the NVA, interviewed in *De Zondag* newspaper makes Islamophobic remarks problematising Muslim attire in line with acceptance of Belgian norms.⁴¹
- **04.04.2018:** 16-year-old Muslim schoolgirl from Molenbeek is attacked, with her headscarf being pulled off by a man whilst on a school trip to Ostende.⁴²
- **15.05.2018:** Ihsance Houache, co-founder of the organisation formerly known as *Bruxelloise et Voilée*, now *Cann'elles*, reports being threatened by a woman with two dogs in Brussels. The attackers accused Houache of 'wanting to bring war here', thus highlighting a flawed conflation between visible 'Muslimness' with violence and security narratives.
- **25.05.2018:** Parents of Muslim students fasting during the month of Ramadan at the Ecole Maurice Carême in Anderlecht are invited to take their children home during lunch breaks. This move stands to forcibly ostracise practicing Muslim students.⁴³
- **01.06.2018:** Pew Research report published under the title 'What Do Europeans Really Think of Islam?' The report reveals that of the fifteen countries surveyed, Belgians are most opposed to immigration, 91% would have a problem with Muslim neighbours, and 77% would have a problem with having a Muslim family member.⁴⁴
- **14.06.2018:** UNIA annual report published; highlights centrality of religious discrimination in the workplace.

39. Belga, "Deus Policiers Anversois Virés Pour Racisme", *Le Soir*, 21 March 2018, <https://www.lesoir.be/146673/article/2018-03-21/deux-policiers-anversois-vires-pour-racisme>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

40. "Peut-on Jouer Au Futsal En Voile? Oui, Tranche La Commission Provinciale D'arbitrage", RTBF, 28 March 2018, https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/detail_peut-on-jouer-au-futsal-en-voile-oui-tranche-la-commission-provinciale-d-arbitrage?id=9878691, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

41. "Les Propos De Bart De Wever".

42. "Une Molenbeekoise Victime D'une Aggression "Islamophobe" À Ostende", *La Capitale*, 1 April 2018, <https://www.lacapitale.be/212869/article/2018-04-01/une-molenbeekoise-victime-dune-agression-islamophobe-ostende>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

43. JC, "Les Écoliers Qui Font Le Ramadan Invités De Rentrer Chez Eux", *La Capitale*, 22 May 2018, <https://www.lacapitale.be/234553/article/2018-05-22/les-ecoliers-qui-font-le-ramadan-invites-rentre-chez-eux>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

44. "Que Pensent Les Européens De L'islam?", *La Libre*, 1 June 2018, <https://www.lalibre.be/actu/international/que-pensent-les-europeens-de-l-islam-5b11018c5532858b927374cf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

- **13.07.2018:** Courts rule that it is impermissible for public swimming pools to ban Muslim women from wearing a burkini. The case specifically dealt with complaints stemming from Ter Wallen, Merelbeke and Van Eyck, Grand and explicitly outlined that the burkini could not be prohibit even on grounds of security or hygiene, as alluded to in previous debates.⁴⁵
- **19.07.2018:** A police officer, from Heist-Op-Den-Berg in Antwerp is dismissed and sentenced to 60 hours of community service for fabricating a letter containing false threats in the name of the so-called Islamic State, following the Paris attacks. Reports indicate that the letter may have been fabricated in order to stoke Islamophobic tensions in Belgium.⁴⁶
- **02.07.2018:** A nineteen-year-old Muslim woman is attacked and faced an attempted rape in Anderlues. The attackers made racist and Islamophobic comments to the victim. The attack highlights the intersection of ethnicity, gender and Islamophobia.⁴⁷
- **11.08.2018:** Two perpetrators of the Anderlues Islamophobic attack on young Muslim woman arrested.
- **14.08.2018:** A man in his fifties is sentenced following his attack on a Muslim woman outside of a mosque in Liège.
- **30.08.2018:** A Muslim woman has her headscarf forcibly removed in a parking lot in the Brussels Schaerbeek area.⁴⁸
- **31.08.2018:** A mosque in Louvain is graffitied with a swastika, calls for people to vote for NVA and “dark-skinned people” to be expelled.⁴⁹
- **07.09.2018:** CCIB annual report for the preceding year is published related to seventy cases. The report reveals the distinct gendered nature of Belgian Islamophobia with 76% of reports pertaining to Islamophobia affecting women, compared to 24% affecting men. Also, the report highlights

45. Belga, “Les Jugements Sur Le Burkini Constituent Un Précédnet Selon Unia”, Le VIF, 13 July 2018, https://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/les-jugements-sur-le-burkini-dans-les-piscines-constituent-un-precedent-selon-unia/article-belga-866091.html?cookie_check=1565274346, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

46. “Un Policier Anversois Fabrique Une Fausse Lettre De L’ei Et L’affichage Sur La Porte Commissariat Après Les Attentats De Paris”, RTL, 19 July 2018, <https://www.rtl.be/info/regions/flandre/un-policier-anversois-fabrique-une-fausse-lettre-de-l-ei-et-l-affiche-sur-la-porte-du-commissariat-apres-les-attentats-de-paris-1041783.aspx>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

47. Belga, “Enquête Interne Sur Les Publications Islamophobes D’un Inspecteur De Bruxelles-Ouest”, RTBF, 2 January 2018, https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/detail_enquete-interne-sur-les-publications-islamophobes-d-un-inspecteur-de-bruxelles-ouest?id=9801539, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

48. JC, “Schaerbeek: Son Voile Arraché Sur Le Parking D’un Action”, La Capitale, 30 August 2018, <https://www.lacapitale.be/271714/article/2018-08-30/schaerbeek-son-voile-arrache-sur-le-parking-dun-magasin-action>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

49. Joyce Azar, “Une Mosquée De Louvain Maculée D’un Message À Caractère Raciste”, VRT, 30 August 2018, <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/fr/2018/08/31/une-mosquee-de-louvain-maculee-dun-message-a-caractere-raciste/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

the principle domains of Islamophobia in Belgium with 29% of reports pertaining to Islamophobia in the media, 17% life and society, 16% education, 14% employment, and 8% politics.⁵⁰

- **08.09.2018:** Subsequent to the CCIB report, RTL publishes an article underlining that on average one reported Islamophobic attack is committed every two days in Belgium.⁵¹
- **18.09.2018:** ECJ reports that not to allow a headscarf-wearing woman into the courtroom as a spectator, as was the case in Belgium in 2007, contravenes European Human Rights legislation.⁵²
- **26.09.2018:** Five Belgian Muslim organisations submit an official complaint regarding GAIA, the prominent Belgian animal rights activist organisation, alleging racist targeting of halal slaughter.⁵³
- **12.10.2018:** A banner at the European Parliament commenting on controlled immigration juxtaposed with images of visibly Muslim women is removed, following formal complaints from European Parliamentary staff and Belgian Muslim activists, including Julie Pascoët of ENAR.
- **18.10.2018:** *La Capitale* runs a media story claiming regarding an alderman claiming that Forest is becoming increasingly ‘Islamised’. The story fits within the scheme of growing narratives concerning and alleged Muslim takeover of the nation.
- **11.12.2018:** UNIA reports on the case of two horse riders, one of whom wore a headscarf, being denied access to their local riding centre due to the suggestion that wearing a headscarf would interfere with wearing a safety helmet. UNIA successfully intervened and now the women are permitted to join the club.⁵⁴
- **16.12.2018:** The *Marche contre Marrakech* takes place in Brussels. The protest was organised by the Belgian far right, including Filip Brusselmans of

50. “Collectif Contre L’islamophobie En Belgique - Rapport Chiffres 2017”, CCIB, September 2018, https://ccib-ctib.be/wp-content/uploads/CCIB_PUBLIC_PDF_RapportChiffresCCIB/CCIB_RapportChiffres2017_Septembre2018.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

51. Justine Sow and Bruno Spaak, “Une Acte Islamophobe Ets Signalé Tous Les 2 Jours: ‘Une Jeune Femme M’a Gifflé Sur Le Quai D’une Gare Avant De Crier Que Je Devais Retirer Mon Voile’”, RTL, 7 September 2018 <http://m.rtl.be/info/1057346>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

52. “Unia: La Belgique Condamné Pour Son Condamnation Du Voile Du Voile Dans Les Tribunaux”, UNIA, 18 September 2018, <https://www.unia.be/fr/articles/la-belgique-condamnee-pour-son-interdiction-du-voile-dans-les-cours-de-justice>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

53. Philippe Carlot, “Cinq Associations Musulmanes Portent Plainte Contre Gaia Pour Racisme”, RTBF, 26 September 2018, https://www.rtbfb.be/info/societe/detail_cinq-associations-musulmanes-portent-plainte-contre-gaia-pour-racisme?id=10029546, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

54. “Un Manège Accepte Les Cavaliers Qui Portent Un Voile”, UNIA, 11 December 2018, <https://www.unia.be/fr/jurisprudence-alternatives/solutions-negociees/un-manege-accepte-les-cavalieres-qui-portent-un-voile>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

the KVHV. The event was banned by Belgian authorities, including the Brussels *Bourgmestre*⁵⁵ Philippe Close. The march was framed as being a response to the UN pact signed previously in Marrakech and as a counter-migration action; however, the event had distinct anti-Arab and Islamophobic undertones.⁵⁶ The march was countered by anti-fascist marches on the same day.

55. The *Bourgmestre* is locally nominated to office within local politics, and is responsible for local political affairs and maintenance. Although different, the role is perhaps most similar to that of 'mayor' in the anglophone context.

56. Belga, "Bruxelles: La 'Marche Contre Marrakech' Maintenu Par Les Organisateurs Malgré L'interdiction", *Le Soir*, 13 December 2018, <https://www.lesoir.be/195386/article/2018-12-13/bruxelles-la-marche-contre-marrakech-maintenu-par-les-organisateurs-malgre>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
BOSNIA
HERZEGOVINA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

Anti-Muslim bigotry and negative trends towards Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina were evident mainly in the educational, political, and media sectors. As in previous years, the main generators of Islamophobic discourse and anti-Muslim bigotry are the policymakers in the Bosnian Serb political, media, and academic fields. In 2018, Milorad Dodik, the Bosnian Serb leader and newlyelected Serb member of the B&H presidency, dehumanized Bosniak Muslims by referring to *adban* as “howling” on a show on public Serbian television. In addition, the year 2018 saw a large increase in anti-Bosnian and anti-Muslim bigotry by the Bosnian Croat and Croatian political establishments and also by regional political actors. These actors continue to present Bosnia and Herzegovina as a failed state which is harboring extremists and which needs to be territorially divided in order to secure peace and security.

This year also saw the continuation of the denial of genocide and war crimes by the Serb authorities. The local and regional media contributed to anti-Muslim bigotry with reports about terrorist threats and radical ideology, connecting them with the Bosnian political and religious establishment. The October 2018 general elections were a main focal point for Islamophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric in Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian media. Bosniaks and the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina were accused, by certain Bosnian Croat political factors, of electing the Bosnian Croat member of the B&H presidency. In addition, in 2018, the effects of the so-called migrant crisis were more pronounced compared to previous years, and the increased number of migrants became a key element in nationalists’ anti-Muslim hysteria/hysterical anti-Muslim discourse. Sensationalist media reports attempted to connect Bosniaks with “Islamic extremism” and global terrorist groups.

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

Sažetak

Anti-muslimanska netrepeljivost i negativni trendovi prema muslimanima u Bosni i Hercegovini se uglavnom ogleda u obrazovnom, političkom i medijskom sistemu. Kao i u prethodnim godinama, glavni generator islamofobije i anti-muslimanske netrepeljivosti su čelnici bosanskih Srba - politički, medijski i akademski nosioci politike. Tokom 2018. godine, Milorad Dodik, vođa bosanskih Srba i novo izabrani srpski član Predsjedništva BiH, dehumanizirao je Bošnjake muslimane tako što je ezan nazvao 'arlaukanje' na javnoj srbijanskoj TV emisiji. U 2018. 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 i teritorijalno podijeljena kako bi se očuvao mir i sigurnost.

Ove godine se nastavilo negiranje genocida i ratnih zločina od strane srpskih zvaničnika. Domaći i regionalni mediji doprinijeli su anti-muslimanskim netrepeljivostima kroz izvještavanje o terorističkim prijetnjama i radikalnoj ideologiji, povezujući ih s bošnjačkim političkim i vjerskim zvaničnicima. U oktobru 2018. godine, izbori su bili glavna fokusna tačka za islamofobiju i anti-muslimansku retoriku koja se koristila u srpskim, hrvatskim i bosanskim medijama. Bošnjaci i Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini bili su optuženi, od strane određenih političkih faktora bosanskih Hrvata, da su izabrali hrvatskog člana Predsjedništva BiH. Osim toga, u 2018. godini, migrantska kriza najviše je pogodila zemlju u posljednjih nekoliko godina, a povećan broj migranata učinio ga je ključnim elementom diskursa u anti-muslimanskoj histeriji od strane nacionalističkih faktora. Senzacionalistički medijski izvještaji pokušali su povezati Bošnjake sa "islamskim ekstremizmom" i globalnim terorističkim grupama.

Konačno, ove godine je vidljiv nastavak fizičkih i verbalnih napada na džamije i imame, većinom u bosanskohercegovačkom entitetu *Republika Srpska*. Skoro svi ovi napadi nisu procesuirani od strane policije. Dodatna anti-muslimanska mržnja bila je vidljiva na fudbalskim utakmicama i na grafitima u srpskim-dominantnim gradovima.

Country Profile

Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Type of Regime: Parliamentary representative democracy

Form of Government: Three-member presidential system

Ruling Parties: Party for Democratic Action (SDA), Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), Alliance of Independent Social Democrats (SNSD)

Opposition Parties: Social Democratic Party (SDP), Serb Democratic Party (SDS), Croatian Democratic Union 1990 (HDZ 1990)

Last Elections: 2018 Presidential Election (Šefik Džaferović won 36.61% of the vote; Željko Komšić 52.64% of the vote; and Milorad Dodik 53.88% of the vote); Legislative Election (SDA: 9 seats, HDZ: 5 seats, SNSD: 6 seats)

Total Population: 3,511,372 (in 2013)

Major Languages: Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2017, the Commission for Freedom of Religion reported 21 anti-Muslim attacks.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Islam (51,1%), Serbian Orthodoxy (31%), Catholicism (15%), Others/none/not stated (3%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 1,769,592 (50.11%) in 2013 (Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina - 2013 Final Results)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Riyasat Commission for Freedom of Religion; NAHLA

Far Right Parties: SNSD - Savez nezavisnih socijaldemokrata (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats), SDS - Srpska demokratska stranka (Serb Democratic Party), SRS - Srpska radikalna stranka (Serb Radical Party), HDZ - Hrvatska demokratska zajednica (Croatian Democratic Union)

Far Right Movements: Serb Nationalists Chetnik Movement, Croat Neo-Ustasha Movement

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a specific case of Islamophobia. Anti-Muslim bigotry has been present in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a long time. This Islamophobia reached the highest peaks with mass atrocities including genocide; Islamophobia was present 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. After the Serbian aggression and genocide of 1992-95, Islamophobia has been present in the country and in the region. Islamophobia is manifested through political statements, in the media, and in physical attacks. Most of the attacks are aimed at Bosniak returnees in Republika Srpska and in Croat-majority areas. After the end of the war, from 1996 to 2017, an estimated 13 Bosniak returnees were killed and 20 injured in hate-related crimes in Republika Srpska. Not a single murder has been prosecuted by the judicial authorities.¹ The largest concentration of Bosniaks is in the Federation where there are almost no attacks other than occasional Islamophobic statements or writings. Research for this report was based on available reports, media analysis, and interviews with important stakeholders; people and institutions were contacted in order to gain relevant information on different topics that included the media, justice, education, etc.

It is generally accepted that Islam arrived in Bosnia with the Ottoman Empire 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 were revived by the Yugoslav regime under Slobodan Milošević. During 1992-95, an international armed conflict and genocide (the aim of establishing a Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia meant dividing Bosnia and Herzegovina and getting rid of its Muslim population) caused the deaths of at least 100,000 people, 30,000 enforced disappearances, and the rape of 30,000 women and girls.² The vast majority of the victims were Bosniaks whose remains were buried in hundreds of hidden mass graves throughout the country. In

1. E. Skokić, "Višestruki ubica povratnika u bijegu umro u Srbiji 2005", Dnevni Avaz, 13 December 2017, <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/331189/cetverostruki-ubica-povratnika-u-bijegu-umro-2005-u-srbiji>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

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

addition to this, an estimated 600 mosques and a variety of Islamic religious objects were deliberately destroyed by the Bosnian Serb Army and the Croatian Defence Council. A decade of communism followed by genocidal massacres of the Bosniak population resulted in today's situation where interreligious understanding and tolerance are fragile and complex.

The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement brought an end to the war entrenching the results of genocide, and cementing the divide in the country. Annex 4 of the Dayton Agreement is the Constitution of B&H in which two separate entities (territorial units) are established: the Bosniak-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republika Srpska, each with its own president, government, parliament, police, and other bodies. Overarching these entities is the state of Bosnian government and rotating (three-member) presidency. In addition, there is the district of Brčko, a self-governing administrative unit established as a neutral area that is placed under joint Serb, Croat, and Bosniak authority. This elaborate multitiered 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.³

When it comes to the population of Muslims in B&H, according to the census conducted in 2013, 50.11% (1,769,592) of inhabitants declared themselves to be Bosniaks (out of a total of 3,531,159).⁴ 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 a large extent, this figure is usually taken as indicative of the number of adherents to Islam. Due to war-related death, expulsion, and internal and external migration in the 1992-1995 aggression against B&H, the numbers and demographic distribution of ethnic groups have significantly changed.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a secular state with no state religion. In today's post war B&H, the increased presence of religion in the public arena is evident. Some welcome the religious revival as a healthy assertion of identity after the decades-long de-Islamization process that occurred during the communist period, while others see it as a rising threat to the secular and politically fragile state.⁵

Annex 1 of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina includes 15 main documents on human rights. The constitution states that the rights and freedoms set forth in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental

3. For more information, see: CIA, *CIA Fact book*, 31 July 2019, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bk.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

4. "Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Bosnia and Herzegovina - 2013 Final Results", Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, June 2016, <http://www.popis2013.ba/popis2013/doc/Popis2013prvoIzdanje.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

5. U.S Department of State, "International Religious Freedom Report for 2015", <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Freedoms and its Protocols shall apply directly to Bosnia and Herzegovina. A special law providing for the freedom of religion and religious non-discrimination, as well as the legal status of churches and religious communities was adopted in 2004. This is the Law on Freedom of Religion and the Legal Position of Churches and Religious Communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to this law everyone has the right to freedom of religion or belief, including the freedom to publicly profess, or not, a religion. Along with this, the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination was also adopted in 2009; according to this law discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief consists of any differential treatment, including any type of exclusion, limitation or preference based on real or assumed features towards any person or group of persons on grounds of religion or belief, and every other circumstance with a purpose or a consequence that inhibits or endangers recognition, enjoyment or realization of rights and freedoms in all areas of public life (Article 2.1).

Hate crime as a specific crime is motivated by intolerance towards certain groups in society. Some of the several criminal codes in B&H contain limited provisions that allow more severe punishment to be imposed for crimes committed with a motivation of bias. Use of these provisions is inconsistent and relatively rare. For example, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FB&H) and the Brčko District Criminal Codes include aggravated forms of some criminal acts, such as murder, rape, or causing grievous bodily injury when committed with a motivation of bias. The FB&H Criminal Code also includes an aggravated form of malicious mischief. Many laws on peace and public order at the cantonal level also include minor offences, punishable with a fine, which encompass insulting behavior based on national, racial, or religious grounds. The FB&H, Republika Srpska, and Brčko District Criminal Codes also include provisions on incitement to national, racial, or religious hatred, discord or hostility. According to OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) B&H statistics hate crimes in B&H often target returnee communities (who are often isolated and vulnerable) and religious and sacred objects (mosques, churches, and graveyards), as well as private property belonging to returnees or members of minority communities. OSCE B&H also records hate crimes through the Hate Monitor.⁶ More than 85% of all hate crimes registered through the Hate Monitor are due to ethnicity/religion. Unfortunately, the statistics are not segregated by religion. When it comes to hate speech regulations, the FB&H and Republika Srpska laws do not specifically proscribe hate speech, but prohibit acts that cause ethnic, racial, or religious hatred.⁷ Nevertheless, usage of incendiary language (in the media, by politicians, and others) usually goes unpunished.⁸

6. For more information, see: <http://hatemonitor.oscebih.org/Default.aspx?pageid=10&lang=EN>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. For more information, see: <http://zalbe.vzs.ba/index.php/zakonska-rjesenja>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

8. United States Department of State, "Country Report for B&H on Human Rights Practices for 2016", Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2016/eur/265402.htm> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

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

Some of the main events that sparked Islamophobic rhetoric in Bosnia and Herzegovina were related to elections and the so-called migrant crisis. First, the October general elections saw an orchestrated campaign aimed against the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina pursued by both Croatia and Serbia. This year saw a rise in anti-Bosnian rhetoric from Croatia while the attitude of Serbia remained the same as in 2017. Bosnia and Herzegovina is portrayed as a failed state which is a safe haven for terrorists. B&H entity Republika Srpska continued its separatist policy in 2018 announcing that it is preparing ground for succession and for eventually joining Serbia.

The second event is the rising so-called migrant crisis which initially had not affected Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since Serbia and Hungary closed their borders, the migrants found their way through Bosnia and Herzegovina. In most cases, Serbian authorities encourage them to go to Bosnia and Herzegovina with the aim of easing the Serbian migrant issue. On the other hand, the migrants which the Croatian police capture are sent back over the border to Bosnia and Herzegovina. This influx of migrants was one of the main causes of Islamophobia and conspiracy theories pushed by the Bosnian Serb politicians and media.

Similarly to 2017, the Islamophobic rhetoric by political figures and media is on the rise. In relation to physical attacks, 2018 was a year in which attacks were lower than in previous years.

The following incidents were collected through media reports, direct reporting to the commission, and personal contacts.⁹ 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. When this report was being written, the data for 2018 had not yet been published.¹⁰

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On 7 January, two perpetrators threw pig intestines at a mosque in Bronzani Majdan near Banja Luka. Both of the perpetrators were apprehended by the police.¹¹ On

9. I would like to thank Muhamed Jusić, Đermna Šeta and Nihad Mehmedović for their valuable information and insight.

10. However, Igor Kožemjakin from the Interreligious Council provided valuable information about registered attacks on people and property of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

11. "Banja Luka: Dvije osobe uhapšene zbog skrnavljenja džamije", Al Jazeera Balkans, 7 January 2018, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/banja-luka-dvije-osobe-uhapsene-zbog-skrnavljenja-dzamiije>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

17 January, the property of a Bosniak returnee in Sokolac, Hamed Vražalica, was destroyed in an arson attack.¹²

On 27 June, in Rogatica, a Bosniak returnee, Nedžad Herceglja, was attacked by his neighbor with an ax. Herceglja said that the intention behind this violent act was for him to leave his village Bjelogorci again. This hate crime was committed by his neighbor who after swinging an ax toward Herceglja and his daughter, punched him. The attack happened a day before Eid, after Nedžad Herceglja and his daughter were returning from the mosque. Traumatized by this violent act, Herceglja has insomnia and experiences fear, while his daughter is seeing a psychologist after witnessing their neighbor pulling her father out of the car under threat of violence. This is the third time Herceglja has been attacked by his neighbors.¹³

On 4 March, the Hamidija Mosque in Mrkonjić Grad was vandalized by unknown perpetrators who threw rocks and broke two windows.¹⁴ On 26/27 April, an attack occurred at the central mosque in Zvornik. The same day a young Serb man (21) was detained for shattering the window of the mosque. He was accused of committing the common law offense of criminal damage.¹⁵

On 24 August, several shots were fired at the newly rebuilt Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka. Police apprehended Aleksandar Kopanja, whose gun was used in the attack. Kopanja, a man close to high-ranking Republika Srpska authorities, has apologized publicly and explained that the incident was a result of drinking. He was not in control of his gun and the person next to him took advantage of the opportunity.¹⁶

On 19 October, the mosque in Voljavica in Bratunac was vandalized. Perpetrators broke into the mosque, vandalized it, and stole a significant amount of money.¹⁷

12. "Napad na povratnike u Sokocu: Ne znam ko je ovo uradio, sa svima sam dobar", Fokus, 17 January 2018, <https://www.fokus.ba/vijesti/bih/napad-na-povratnike-u-sokocu-utuceni-hamedov-sin-poslao-snaznu-poruku-foto/982748/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

13. "Novi atak na povratnike: 'Nakon trovan ja stoke, Nedžad Herceglja napadnut sjekirom", Faktor, 27 June 2018, <https://faktor.ba/vijesti/novi-atak-na-povratnike-nakon-trovanja-stoke-nedad-herceglja-napadnut-sjekirom-301338>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. "Novi napad na džamiju: Za počiniocima ovog huliganskog čina se traga", Mahala.ba, 5 March 2018, <http://mahalla.ba/index.php/aktuelno/955-novi-napad-na-dzamiyu-za-pociniocima-ovog-huliganskog-cina-se-traga>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

15. "Priveden 21-godišnji mladić: Razbio prozor na džamiji u Zvorniku", Radiosarajevo.ba, 27 March 2018, <https://www.radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/crna-hronika/priveden-21-godisnji-mladic-razbio-prozor-na-dzamiyu-u-zvorniku/298293>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

16. "Kopanja: Čitav život se borim protiv četnika, pištolj je bio moj, čovjek je pucaouzrak", Avaz.ba, 24 August 2018, <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/408042/kopanja-citav-zivot-se-borim-protiv-cetnika-pistolj-je-bio-moj-čovjek-je-pucaouzrak>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

17. "Napad Na Vjerski Objekat U Republici Srpskoj: Provaljeno u objekat pokraj džamije, lopovi ukrali 1.400 KM", Slobodna Bosna, 19 October 2018, https://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/95176/napad_na_vjerski_objekat_u_republici_srpskoj_provaljeno_u_objekat_pokraj_dzamiye_lopovi_ukrali_1_400_km.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

On 6 December, the Genocide Memorial in Višegrad was desecrated with red paint and eggs.¹⁸

Employment

It is worrying that the number of Bosniaks living and working in Republika Srpska is decreasing. For example, in Republika Srpska institutions, out of a total of 5,066 employees, only 43 are Bosniaks.¹⁹ This trend of Bosniaks leaving Republika Srpska is a result of the permanent local atmosphere and conditions that make Bosniak employees feel uncomfortable and discriminated.

The most troubling case in 2018 was the cognition that certain Bosniak members of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina were receiving non-halal meat in their meals. Laboratory analysis showed that the meals given contained pork.²⁰

Education

The year 2018 saw a continuity in denying Bosniak returnees the right to learn the 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. As a result of this discrimination, in 2016, several Bosniak returnee communities refused to enroll their children in school. As a result, the Islamic Community provided temporary improvised schools where children are taught according to the national B&H curriculum and teachers are brought in from the Federation B&H.

The issue of discrimination in education is also visible in Croat-dominated areas where the concept of *two schools under one roof* exists. This is an apartheid-style segregation. In Kiseljak, for example, Bosniak and Croat children attend school separately.²¹

The Council (*majlis*) of the Islamic Community in Janja near Bijeljina reported that the Meša Selimović Elementary School forced Bosniak pupils to compensate school days for Eid holidays which is against state and entity laws, while Serb pupils do not need to compensate for Christmas.²²

18. "Sramno/ Oskrnavljen nišan u Višegradu: Crvenom bojom prefarbali riječ genocid", Radiosarajevo.ba, 6 December 2018, <https://www.radiosarajevo.ba/vijesti/bosna-i-hercegovina/oskrnavljen-nisan-u-visegradu-crvenom-bojom-prefarbali-rijec-genocid/320561>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

19. "Diskriminacija Bošnjaka I Srba u RS I FBiH", TV1, 11 August 2017, <http://tv1.ba/vijesti/diskriminacija-bosnjaka-i-srba-u-rs-i-fbih/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

20. "Hayat.Ba Ekskluzivno Saznaje: Svinjetina I U Grah, Potvrđeno I Prisustvo Salmonele U Hranı Pripadnika Oružanih Snaga BiH", Hayat.ba, 23 November 2018, <https://www.hayat.ba/vijest.php?id=141889>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

21. Vedrana Maglajlija, "Razdvajanje učenika u Kiseljaku: Školstvo kao ratni plijen", Al Jazeera Balkans, 16 September 2017, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/razdvajanje-ucenika-u-kiseljaku-skolstvo-kao-ratni-plijen>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

22. The IC Commission on Freedom of Religion received this complaint.

Politics

In 2018, there was a rise in statements from local and regional political actors who used Islamophobic rhetoric to undermine Bosnia and Herzegovina and portray it as a radical Muslim safe haven. This was spearheaded by Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat politicians as well as Serbian and Croatian politicians. The most dangerous and concerning statement was given by Milorad Dodik, president of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Serb-majority Republika Srpska, who said on a popular Serbian TV show that "imams in Bosnia who recite the *adhan* are howling."²³ This was the first public, dehumanizing statement given by the highest ranking Serb politician in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina. Similarly, like in previous years, the B&H entity Republika Srpska, continued to undermine and disrespect state institutions. On a regional level, 2018 saw a rise in statements which portrayed B&H as a safe haven for radicals.

On 25 January, *NI* published an article about Milorad Dodik's interview for Serbian television Happy TV. Dodik called all Serbs who work in institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina as Turkifiers (*poturice*), which is a derogatory term for Bosniak Muslims. This caused outrage and reactions from the Bosnian Serb opposition parties who stated that Dodik should be "ashamed" for making such statements.²⁴

On 24 March, Serbian tabloid *Kurir* published a video portraying Croatian parliamentarian Marijana Petir in the European Parliament talking about the threat of radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina and how such a movement is allegedly financed by other "Islamic" countries. Marijana Petir expressed her concern about the fact that Croatia has the longest border with B&H. She further says that not only young women are forced to wear hijab but men are encouraged to grow beards and pray.²⁵

On 23 June, *Večernje novosti* published Milorad Dodik's statement that Bosniak politicians together with the Intelligence - Security Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina plan to bring 150,000 migrants to the country and that these migrants will get B&H citizenship. Furthermore, Dodik blamed the British government for supposedly trying to destabilize and create chaos in Republika Srpska.²⁶

On 14 August, the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska dismissed the report of the Commission for Srebrenica from 2004. On the day, RS President Milorad Dodik

23. Ismail Cidic, "The Threat of Another Genocide in Bosnia Is Real. Who Will Act to Stop It?", *Middle East Eye*, 25 July 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/who-will-act-now-stop-next-genocide-bosnia-1979759724>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

24. Boris Brezo, "Reakcije na Dodikove optužbe: Meni da kaže da sam poturica", *N1*, 25 January 2018, <http://ba.n1info.com/a239653/Vijesti/Vijesti/Reakcije-na-Dodikove-optuzbe-Meni-da-kaze-da-sam-poturica.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

25. "HRVATSKA POSLANICA U PARLAMENTU EU: U BiH se šalje novac za radikalizaciju muslimana", *Kurir*, 24 March 2018, <https://www.kurir.rs/region/3017837/video-hrvatska-poslanica-u-parlamentu-eu-u-bih-se-salje-novac-za-radikalizaciju-muslimana>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

26. "Dodik: Bošnjaci hoće da nasele 150.000 migranata u BiH; Britanija dovela specijalce za destabilizaciju", *Večernje novosti*, 23 June 2018, http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/republika_srpska/aktuelno.655.html:734576-Dodik-Bošnjaci-hoce-da-nasele-150000-migranata-u-BiH-Britanija-dovela-specijalce-za-destabilizaciju, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

made an outrageous statement claiming that Bosniaks themselves planned the genocide with the aim of “satanizing” the Serbs and involving the United States in the war.²⁷ Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić in an interview given to *DW* stated that what occurred in Srebrenica was a “a hideous crime, it was a war crime” but not a genocide.²⁸ Bosnian Croat politician Dragan Čović stated that the election of Željko Komšić as the Bosnian Croat member of the B&H presidency was successful due to the advocacy of imams in mosques and thus blamed members of the Islamic Community for his political loss.²⁹

Media

The anti-Bosnian sentiment in the media was usually followed by Islamophobic rhetoric. The statements made in the media usually connected B&H, Bosniak politicians

or former Army officers with radical extremism. These *analytical* statements were made by a group of already well-known self-proclaimed experts.

On 16 February, Croatian newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija* published an article titled “What Is Going on in B&H? Dangerous Salafis Roam the Cities, They Hold Grenade Launchers in Their Cars, They Kidnap Girls: ‘My Wife Pulled Me into Radical Islam,’” which portrayed Bosnia as a unsecure and dangerous place.³⁰(Fig. 1)



Figure 1: An article in Croatian newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija* titled “What Is Going on in B&H? Dangerous Salafis Roam the Cities, They Hold Grenade Launchers in Their Cars, They Kidnap Girls: ‘My Wife Pulled Me into Radical Islam’”³¹

27. Dejan Šajinović, “Dodik: Bošnjaci planirali genocid da bi Amerika bombardovala Srbe”, *Nezavisne novine*, 14 August 2018, <https://www.nezavisne.com/novosti/bih/Pocelo-zasjedanje-NS-RS-o-izvjestaju-Komisije-o-dogadjanima-u-Srebrenici/492562>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

28. “Serbian PM Ana Brnabic: Srebrenica ‘a Terrible Crime,’ Not Genocide”, *DW*, 15 November 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/serbian-pm-ana-brnabic-srebrenica-a-terrible-crime-not-genocide/a-46307925>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

29. “Čović: Projekt izbora Komšića provodio se i u džamijama a finansirala ga je SDA. Da je trebalo još sto tisuća glasova...”, *Oslobodjenje*, 24 October 2018, <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/video-covic-projekt-izbora-kom-sica-provodio-se-i-u-dzami-jama-a-finansirala-ga-je-sda-da-je-trebalo-jos-100-000-tisuca-glasova-403666>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

30. “Što Se To Događa U Bosni? Gradovima Hodaju Opasni Selefije, U Autima Drže Zolje, Otimaju Djevojčice: ‘U Ralje Radikalnog Islama Uvukla Me Supruga’”, *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 16 February 2018, <https://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/novosti/bih/clanak/id/531735/sto-se-to-dogaa-u-bosni-gradovima-hodaju-opasni-selefije-u-autima-drze-zolje-otimaju-djevojčice-u-ralje-radikalnog-islama-uvukla-me-supruga>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

31. *Ibid.*

On 23 March, the webportal “Network for Building Peace” republished the article “Why Is the Word *Islamophobia* Wrong?” This was previously published on the blog “Progressive Bosnia.” The author of the article not only claimed Islam is an ideology but also maintained that the term Islamophobia cannot be considered on the same level as racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism.³²



Figure 2: The front cover of Croatian magazine *Globus* titled “Bakir’s Bosnia: Who Is Preparing “Askers” for a New War”³³

On 16 April, *Deutsche Welle* published a video and written report titled “Radicalization in Bosnia-Islamists Gaining Ground” about radicalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the influence of religious extremists. The documentary shows Bosnia and Herzegovina as a hub of Muslim radicals and portrays Arab tourists as a great problem for the country.³⁴

On 5 May, the Radio Television of Republika Srpska (RTRS) published an article stating how Bosniaks are “taking over” Serb and Croat settlements in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The article stresses that almost 520 settlements are no longer populated by Serbs, while Croats lost their majority in 214 settlements.³⁵

32. “Reakcija na tekst ‘Zašto je riječ islamofobija pogrešna’, koji je objavljen na portalu ‘Mreža za izgradnju mira’, 23.03.2018”, Mreža mira, 23 March 2018, <http://www.mreza-mira.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Reagiranjena-%C4%8Dlanak-Mre%C5%BEe-mira-Nahlini-aktivisti.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

33. “Bakir’s Bosnia: Who Is Preparing ‘Askers’ for a New War”, *Globus* magazine, 16 February 2018.

34. “Radikalizacija U BiH: Islamisti Jačaju?”, DW, 16 April 2018, <https://www.dw.com/bs/radikalizacija-u-bih-islamisti-ja%C4%8Daju/a-43400533>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). Vahidin Omanović and Amar Numanović, among others, reacted to the report. See: Resul Mehmedović, “Deutsche Welle, Elvedin Pezić I lažna radikalizacija Bošnjaka”, *Dialogos.ba*, 20 April 2018, <https://www.dialogos.ba/2018/04/20/deutsche-welle-elvedin-pezic-i-lazna-radikalizacija-bosnjaka/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

35. “Bošnjaci Preuzimaju Srpska I Hrvatska Naselja U Fbih”, Radio Televizija Republika Srpska, 4 May 2018, <https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=297222>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

On 25 May, Croatian media outlet *Vecernji list* published an article on how migrants are registered in Mostar only because Bosniak politicians want to use them as a tool of domination over other people. Furthermore, *Vecernji list* states that the influx of migrants inflicts damage to the Croatian ethnic image. According to the text, the only reason migrants come to Mostar is so that they can disrupt the balance of the Croatian majority.³⁶



On 23 August, Serbian media outlet *Večernje novosti* published an article claiming that Bosniaks are fond of the fact that more migrants are coming to Bosnia and Herzegovina. The author wrote that the influx of immigrants is not accidental since the aim is to populate the country with Muslims. According to the article, the arrival of migrants is not due to their difficult situation at home but because of a plan by Bosnian politicians. The article also stated that it is alarming that three babies were born to migrant parents.³⁷

Figure 3: Article by *Večernje Novosti* titled "It Suits the Bosniaks to Have More Migrants in Bosnia"³⁸ (Source: *Večernje Novosti*).

On 23 August, the Serbian PRVA TV in its evening news broadcasted a story about the "Green Transversal" - a Serb propaganda about the unification of Muslims in the Balkans - a claim used by Serb nationalist leaders in order to justify the genocidal violence in the 1990s.³⁹

36. Marko Karačić, "Migrante Registriraju U Mostaru Da Bi Ih Ostavili U HNŽ-U", *Večernji List*, 25 May 2018, <https://www.vecernji.ba/vijesti/migrante-registriraju-u-mostaru-da-bi-ih-ostavili-u-hnz-u-1247695>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

37. Srđan Mišljenović, "Bošnjacima Odgovara Više Migranata U Bih", *Večernje Novosti*, 23 August 2018, http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/republika_srpska/aktuelno.655.html:745445-Bosnjacima-odgovara-vise-migranata-u-BiH, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

38. Ibid.

39. Zvonko Komšić, "Reakcije Na Prilog O 'Bošnjačkoj Zelenoj Transverzali'", N1, 23 August 2018, <http://ba.n1info.com/Vijesti/a280686/Prilog-o-bosnjackoj-zelenoj-transverzali.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

On 11 October, *Glas Srpske* published an article stating that Bosniaks, two days before the elections, were instructed, in mosques, to vote for Bosniak presidential candidate Šefik Džaferović and Croat presidential candidate Željko Komšić. Allegations were made that the reason behind this tactic was to eliminate all legitimate Croatian representatives so that the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina can become a homogeneous Bosniak entity.⁴⁰

On 17 October, Bosnian Croat politician Mario Karamatić alleged that Željko Komšić was elected as the Bosnian Croat member of the B&H presidency due to votes given to him by Islamic extremists who want to establish an Islamic state.⁴¹

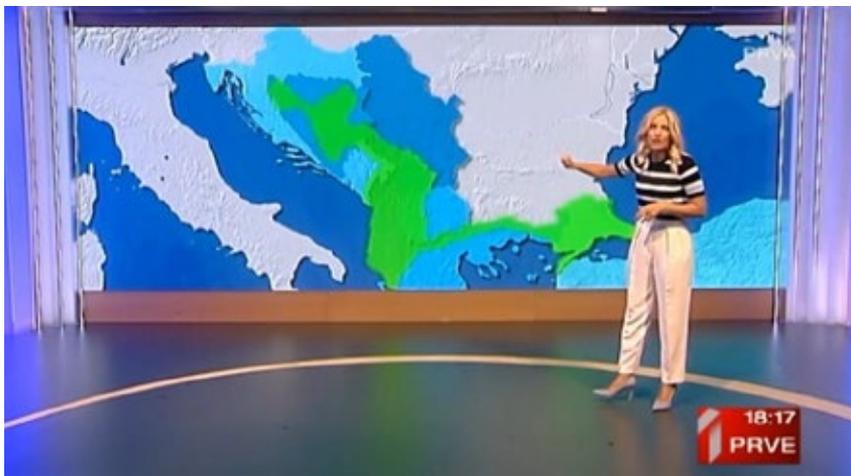


Figure 4: A screenshot of the Serbian PRVA TV news report about the supposed “Green Transversal” in the Balkans.⁴²

Justice System

On 7 April, the Municipal Court in Livno sentenced seven Croat men to one-year conditional sentence of imprisonment for causing “national, racial, and religious hatred.” In 2015, these seven men brought a gas tank in front of a mosque in Tomislavgrad and with curses and threats damaged several cars and physically attacked two local Bosniak men.⁴³

40. “Večernji List: Bošnjacima U Džamijama Preporučeno Da Glasaju Za Komšića”, *GlasSrpske*, 11 October 2018, https://www.glassrpske.com/novosti/vijesti_dana/Vecernji-list-Bosnjacima-u-dzamijsima-preporuceno-da-glasaju-za-komsica/lat/271263.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

41. “Karamatić: Komšića Su Izabrali Islamski Ekstremisti I Dio Glasaca SDA, Federacija Je U Krizi, A Hrvati Više Nemaju Razloga Da Opet Spašavaju BiH”, *Oslobodjenje*, 17 October 2018, <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/karamatic-komsica-su-izbarali-islamski-ekstremisti-i-dio-glasaca-sda-federacija-je-u-krizi-a-hrvati-vise-nemaju-razloga-da-opet-spasavaju-bih-401714>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

42. Zelena Transverzala, “Prva Srpska Zelena Transverzala”, Youtube, 24 August 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYPTrkS-cUw>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

43. “Tomislavgrad: Osam Mladića Osuđeno Zbog Napada Na Džamiju”, *Bljesak.info*, 7 April 2018, <https://www.bljesak.info/vijesti/crna-kronika/tomislavgrad-osam-mladica-osudeno-zbog-napada-na-dzamiyu/232181>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

In November, the court in Zagreb decreased the sentence of a wartime Bosnian Croat commander Marko Radić from 21 to 12.5 years in prison for crimes against humanity committed in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in 1993 and 1994. The court in Zagreb lowered his sentence because the Croatian law does not recognize the concept of joint criminal enterprise. Thus, Radić, who was detained in 2006 and was supposed to stay behind bars until 2027, was released at the end of 2018.⁴⁴

Internet

Social media remain the main source of anti-Muslim bigotry and Islamophobic rhetoric online. Several Facebook pages, mainly representing Serb nationalistic groups, published articles which spread fear of Bosniaks and included genocide denial. These social media pages remain the same as in previous years. Additionally, several Bosnian Croat web portals increased their anti-Bosniak discourse using Islamophobic rhetoric.

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 (such as Predrag Ceranić, Miroljub Jevtić, Dževad Galijašević, and Darko Trifunović). Second, several high-ranking officials from the Serb Orthodox Church such as Bishops Amfilohije and Kačavenda, and Patriarch Irinej, who have made nationalistic comments. The third category is politicians and include local Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, such as Milorad Dodik and Mario Karamatić as well as Croatian and Serbian politicians such as Ana Brnabić and Marijana Petir. In the 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.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The Commission on Freedom of Religion (*Komisija za slobodu vjere*) is a commission of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina which is active in helping secure religious freedoms and battling Islamophobia. Members of the commission took an active role in monitoring cases of violation of religious freedoms and have provided legal advice to several appellants.

44. “Zagreb Court Reduces Bosnian Croat’s War Crimes Sentence”, N1, 3 November 2018, <http://ba.n1info.com/English/NEWS/a294977/Zagreb-court-reduces-Bosnian-Croat-s-war-crimes-sentence.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

On 25 July, Grand Mufti Husein Kavazović attended the conference “Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom” in Washington, at the invitation of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. The aim of this conference was to contribute to the promotion of religious tolerance and freedom of religion or belief. Grand Mufti Husein Kavazović talked about the dangers of hate speech and Islamophobia and how they can harm Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁴⁵

Other NGOs also took part in similar activities. A Facebook page titled “Ne u moje ime” (Not in my name) was started by Radio Free Europe as a “dialog about radicalism and extremism in the real world”; however, some of their work is questionable since it only deals with Muslim “issues.”⁴⁶ NGO Nahla held several training sessions for young people about monitoring Islamophobia. In December, the 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.⁴⁷

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2018, the number of Islamophobic attacks on people and property was lower than in 2017. Similarly to 2017, there was an overall increase in regional political anti-Bosniak and anti-Muslim activities. Bosnia and Herzegovina was once again presented as an unstable state which harbors extremists. This rhetoric was spearheaded by the Serbian and Croatian political establishments and certain regional political figures.

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.

45. “Kavazović U Washingtonu: Islamofobija I Govor Mržnje Opasne Prijetnje U Bih I Regiji”, Faktor, 25 July 2018, <https://faktor.ba/vijest/kavazovi-u-washingtonu-islamofobija-i-govor-mrnje-opasne-prijetnje-u-bih-i-regiji-304904>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

46. Ne U Mojeime, Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/pg/RSE.NeUMojeIme/about/?ref=page_internal (Access date: (Access date: 2 September 2019).

47. “OSCE/ODIHR Workshop in Belgrade Focuses on Improving Identification and Reporting of Hate Crimes against Muslims”, OSCE, 18 December 2017, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/363181>, (Access date: (Access date: 2 September 2019).

- Awareness of hate crimes against Muslims, and 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 (prayer, *jumaah*, and the headscarf) and available ways to accommodate this in education and employment should be raised. Regulations should be adjusted accordingly.
- Laws that stipulate that public officers or officials “shall refrain from public manifestation of their religious beliefs,” which discriminate against Muslim employees in fasting, taking a break for daily prayers, or wearing the headscarf, should be amended. The most flagrant cases should be referred to the HJPC (High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council).
- Awareness of citizens and NGOs about reporting offensive media language to the Press Council in B&H and the 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

- **07.01.2018:** Two perpetrators threw pig intestines at a mosque in Bronzani Majdan.
- **17.01.2018:** The property of a Bosniak returnee in Sokolac, Hamed Vražalica, was destroyed in an arson attack.
- **25.01.2018:** Milorad Dodik called all Serbs working in institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina “Turkifiers” (*poturice*).
- **04.03.2018:** The Hamidija Mosque in Mrkonjić Grad was vandalized by unknown perpetrators who threw rocks and broke two windows.
- **24.03.2018:** Croatian parliamentarian Marijana Petir accused Bosnia and Herzegovina of being financed by “Islamic” countries.
- **26/27.05.2018:** An attack occurred at the central mosque in Zvornik.
- **07.05.2018:** The Municipal Court in Livno sentenced seven Croat men to a one-year conditional sentence of imprisonment for causing “national, racial, and religious hatred.”
- **27.06.2018:** Bosniak returnee in Rogatica, Nedžad Herceglija, was attacked by his neighbor with an ax.

- **19.07.2018:** Milorad Dodik stated that “imams in Bosnia who recite the *adhan* are howling.”
- **24.08.2018:** Several shots were fired at the newly rebuilt Ferhadija Mosque in Banja Luka.
- **19.10.2018:** The mosque in Voljavica in Bratunac was vandalized.
- **15.11.2018:** Ana Brnabić in an interview given to *DW* stated that what occurred in Srebrenica was not a genocide.
- **06.12.2018:** The Genocide Memorial in Višegrad was desecrated with red paint and eggs.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
BULGARIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Bulgaria in 2018. The methodology used in this report is based on data collection from electronic media, the press, Internet, and communication with NGOs, interviews with Islamic community representatives in the country, and reports from international institutions and non-governmental organizations.

The primary outcome of the 2018 report is that Islamophobia continues to exist in different fields across the country. It remains manifested primarily on the level of hate speech towards Muslims and Islam and to a lesser extent on the level of hate crime and discrimination. Among the most important issues are the unwillingness of the prosecutor's offices and the courts to deal with cases of discrimination and anti-Muslim manifestations.

Speeches made by high-ranking civil servants and academics that may be classified as Islamophobic, actions of representatives of certain nationalist parties, contradictory actions of some state and municipal administrations against the Muslim community and its properties, and anti-Muslim hate incidents, are among the most significant cases of Islamophobia in the country.

In 2018, anti-Muslim rhetoric became more acceptable in some mainstream media organs, in an intellectual way, as well as in a highly derogatory, racist, and vulgar style. The prosecution and the judiciary's activities with regard to anti-Muslim acts and Islamophobia continue to be ineffective. In general, the vast majority of perpetrators of Islamophobic attacks remain unsanctioned.

Some international organizations, and in particular the European Union, have made a number of recommendations to improve the local legislative system and laws like the Antidiscrimination Law and the Penal Code. Also, the Bulgarian legislation falls short of addressing the anti-Muslim hatred in Bulgarian society.

Резюме

Този доклад изследва ислямофобията в България през 2018 г. Методологията, използвана в доклада се основава на информацията, събрана от електронните медии, пресата, интернет, комуникацията с НПО, интервюта с представители на ислямската общност в страната и доклади на международни институции и неправителствени организации. Основният резултат от доклада за 2018 г. е, че ислямофобията продължава да съществува в различни области в страната. Тя се проявява преди всичко на нивото на словото на омразата към мюсюлманите и исляма и в по-малка степен на дискриминация и престъпления от омраза. Изказванията, които могат да се окачествят като ислямофобски, направени от високопоставени държавни служители, академици, действията на представители на някои националистически партии, противоречивите действия на някои държавни и общински администрации спрямо мюсюлманската общност и техните имоти, както и антимюсюлманските инциденти от омраза, са сред най-значимите случаи на ислямофобия в страната през 2018 г. Анти-мюсюлманската реторика е станала по-приемлива в някои от основните медии, както по интелектуален начин, така и в силно унижителен, расистки и вулгарен стил. Дейността на прокуратурата и съдебните власти по отношение на антимюсюлманските прояви и ислямофобията продължават да бъдат неефективни. Като цяло, по-голямата част от извършителите на ислямофобски деяния остават ненаказани. Също така, българското законодателство не е достатъчно, за да се справи с анти-мюсюлманската омраза в българското общество. Някои международни организации, както и Европейският съюз, отправят редица препоръки за подобряване на законодателната система и закони като анти-дискриминационния закон и Наказателния кодекс.

Country Profile

Country: Bulgaria

Type of Regime: Democracy

Form of Government: Unitary Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: GERB and United Patriots (Right-Centrist, Conservative, Nationalistic-Patriotic)

Opposition Parties: BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party), MRF (Movement for Rights and Freedom) – a centrist political party, `Volya` (Will) – a populist political party.

Last Elections: 26 March, 2017 (Parliamentary Election):

GERB won a plurality of 33.54% of the vote with 95 of the 240 seats in the National Assembly. The second power is the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) with 27.93% and 80 seats, followed by the United Patriots (IMRO, NFSB, ATAKA) with 9.31% and 27 seats; the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS) party 9.24% and 26 seats; and the VOLYA party with 4.26% and 12 seats. The GERB party formed a coalition with the United Patriots. Boyko Borisov (GERB party) was elected prime minister.

Total Population: 7,364,570 (in 2011)

Major Languages: Bulgarian

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism). The constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the “traditional” religion.

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2018, the Office of the Grand Mufti reported 2 anti-Muslim attacks and 6 cases of Islamophobia.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There is no special statistics and database on Racism and Discrimination.

Major Religions (% of Population): Eastern Orthodox Christianity (76%), 4,374,135 followers or 76% of the population. The Protestant religion has 64,476 followers (1.1%), and the Catholic religion has 48,945 followers (0.8%) according to respondents. 1,162 persons were recorded as Jews (0.015%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 577,139 (10%) in 2011.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria (Office of the Grand Mufti)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: No specific NGO combating Islamophobia.

Far Right Parties: In Bulgaria, the political parties are nationalistic and patriotic (IMRO, NFSB, ATAKA, and BNU-ND). They are not defined exactly as far right or extreme left. But they combine left and right beliefs.

Far Right Movements: Bulgarian National Union, National Resistance (NS), Blood and Honor

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices:

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Law of Prohibiting the Wearing of Clothing Concealing One's Face in Public Spaces, so-called Anti-Burqa Law was adopted on 30 September, 2016 in the National Assembly.
- **Prayer Ban:** No.

Introduction

When talking about Islamophobia in Bulgaria, it is crucial to have in mind that debates on Islam are deeply rooted in and strongly intertwined with the experience of a long Ottoman past and its collective interpretations during the post-Ottoman period. The Ottoman rule was a serious trauma and crucial juncture in the creation of the collective identity of the Bulgarians and the Ottoman past is still present in the predominant memories of the national self and ‘other.’

It’s also important to have in mind the significant Turkish-Muslim minority in its capacity as a remnant of the Ottoman period, which has always been perceived as a threat to the national security of Bulgaria. Particularly during the totalitarian period before 1989, the authorities conducted an assimilation policy and policy of reducing the number of the Turkish-Muslim population, which subsequently led to restrictive measures and even to changing Muslims’ names with Slavic ones, which was called the “Revival Process.” After the collapse of the regime in 1989, the country became part of the democratic world. However, some political parties, mostly nationalistic ones, still continue to treat Turks and Muslims as a major threat for society. This can be observed by the party policies, the statements and behavior of politicians related to them, media publications, etc. As a consequence, alongside all contemporary developments associated with the rise of ‘radical Islam,’ this historical past should always be taken into consideration when it comes to the issue of Islamophobia in the country.

On the other hand, the Muslims and Turks have always been loyal Bulgarian citizens. Concepts such as radicalism or fundamentalism are totally untypical of them. Furthermore, there is no single case of participation of Muslims from Bulgaria in terrorist organizations such as DAESH or in any aggression inside the country. However, almost all Islamophobic political and legislative initiatives target Muslims with motives for the prevention of radical Islam, terrorism, and protection of the national security.

Despite the existence of a good institutional and legal framework, practice shows that there is no tangible, effective functioning of the institutions and law enforcement practice. 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, media, and the Internet. This report is based on various data that was collected during 2018. However, it is almost impossible to cover every aspect of the issue and moreover collect every single existing material on Islamophobia especially when it comes to the Internet. This report’s main goal is to map Islamophobia in Bulgaria covering the main fields pointed out in the report.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Nedyalka Popova, prosecutor, made Islamophobic statements in an interview for the media on 22 March 2018. She defined the Muslim community in Bulgaria as a threat to the national security and to the future of the nation. In her interview, she called for measures to reduce the number of Muslims and limit their civil and political rights.¹ Statements by Prosecutor Nedyalka Popova were qualified by the Muslim community in the country as an anti-Muslim hate speech and crime. The Supreme Muslim Council to the Muslim Denomination penned an open letter to the main institutions in the country, and to European and international organizations, in which it appealed for adequate measures.² The President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker sent a written response to the Supreme Muslim Council, in which he assured the Supreme Muslim Council that the case would be taken into consideration and that the open letter was forwarded to the Justice Commissioner Vera Yurova, who was expected to undertake the issue.³ Bulgaria's chief prosecutor told the media that Popova's statement would be inspected by the Inspectorate of the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office.⁴ In April, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination announced that it initiated proceedings against Popova.⁵ But on 19 June, the newspaper *Dnevnik* published news claiming that the Commission for Protection against Discrimination will not start a proceeding against the prosecutor. According to the newspaper, this was implied by the committee's answers to their questions whether any of the nine members of the commission was interested in the case.⁶

Since 2012, a permanent masjid is functioning in the 'Lyulin 6' residential district in Sofia. In 2016, nationalist parties, mainly the VMRO, initiated a protest

1. Traffic News, "Прокурорът по делото 'Муса' със зловеща прогноза: Когато мюсюлманите станат 30%, държавата е застрашена", 22 March 2018, <https://trafficnews.bg/komentari/prokuratorat-po-deloto-musa-sas-zloveshta-prognoza-kogato-99437/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

2. Open Letter, "На Висшия Мюсюлмански Съвет По Повод Ислямофобското И Антимюсюлманско Изказване На Прокурор Недялка Попова", Grand Mufti, 3 April 2018, <http://grandmufti.bg/bg/home/newsroom/novini/5696-otvoreno-pismo-ot-vms.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

3. Muslim Denomination, "Отговор от председателя на Европейската комисия Жан-Клод Юнкер по повод отвореното писмо на ВМС", Grand Mufti, 4 May 2018, <http://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/home/newsroom/novini/5910-otgovor-ot-predsdatelya-na-evropeiskata-komisiya-zhan-klod-yunker.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

4. Boris Mitov, Mediapool.Bg, 3 April 2018, <https://www.mediapool.bg/prokuraturata-proveryava-kolezhkata-si-obyavila-islyama-za-zaplaha-news277601.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

5. News.Bg, "КЗД проверява прокурора по делото за 13-те имами", 5 April 2018, <https://news.bg/crime/kzd-proveryava-prokurora-po-deloto-za-13-te-imami.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

6. Dnevnik, "Как комисията по дискриминация избегна да провери прокурор, нарекъл мюсюлманите 'военизирана структура'", 19 May 2018, https://www.dnevnik.bg/bulgaria/2018/06/19/3201888_kak_komisiyata_po_diskriminacia_izbegna_da_proveri/, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

against the masjid. In addition, a group opposing its existence called “Liulin” was initiated in social media. In this Facebook group, a number of publications and comments contained threats, anti-Muslim, and anti-Turkish hate speech. Some of these calls for violence and threats were directed against Mustafa Izbistalli, the regional mufti of Sofia. On June 6, 2016, supported by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), Mustafa Izbishtali filed a complaint with the Prosecutor’s Office and to the court. Following the refusal of both to investigate and initiate legal proceedings against the perpetrators, in November 2018, the complainant lodged an application with the European Court on Human Rights.⁷

On the night of 6 September, 2018, the Muslim cemetery in Dobrich was desecrated. The gravestones of nearly 40 graves were overturned and damaged. The incident was reported in the media and was referred to the Prosecutor’s Office.⁸ The mayor of Dobrich municipality Yordan Yordanov suggested to the municipal council to vote in favor of offering financial support for the damages. The Muslim denomination condemned the attack.⁹



Figure 1: On September 6, 2018 nearly 40 graves were vandalized, overturned, and damaged at the Muslim cemetery in the town of Dobrich. Photo: Dariknews.bg

On 2 July, the Muslim cemetery of Gradnitsa village, Sevlievo municipality, was vandalized. Dozens of graves were desecrated, some of them were excavated, and tombstones were damaged. The incident was reported in the media. The police

7. Interview with Mustafa Izbishtali, “Regional mufti of Sofia, and the complainant”, held on 27 November 2018

8. Valya Yaneva, “Вандали поругаха паметници в турските гробища”, 7 September 2018, <https://dariknews.bg/regioni/dobrich/vandali-porugaha-pametnici-v-turskite-grobishta-2118653>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

9. Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria, “Декларация От Главно Мюфтийство На Мюсюлманско Изповедание В Република България”, Grand Mufti, 10 September 2018, <http://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/6512-deklaraziya-ot-glavno-myuftiistvo-na-myusyulmansko-izpovedanie-v-republika-balgariya.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

in Gabrovo detained two people against whom pre-trial proceedings were started. The mayor of Sevlievo Ivan Ivanov condemned this act. The regional mufti of Veliko Tarnovo, in his turn, met with the village residents and urged them to remain calm.¹⁰



Figure 2: On July 2, 2018, dozens of graves were desecrated at the Muslim cemetery in the village of Gradnitsa. Photo: Dr. Ivan Ivanov.

Employment

The Protection Against Discrimination Act (PADA)¹¹ is the main anti-discrimination law, enacted in 2003. It is a single equality law banning discrimination on a range of grounds, including race, ethnicity, sex, religion, belief, disability, age, and providing uniform standards of protection and remedies. The Protection Against Discrimination Commission (CPAD)¹² is the national specialized equality body. It was established under PADA as an independent collegiate semi-judicial authority with adjudicating powers. There have not been any reports of Islamophobic attitudes in the field of employment in Bulgaria. Muslims themselves mentioned in the interviews conducted for this report that they don't face such issues in their workplace. The only issues raised are related to the lack of flexibility from the part of their employers regarding the exercise of their religious duties, namely prayer and especially the Friday prayer. It is highly possible that discriminations in the workplace are mostly related with the migrant identity first and foremost and secondly, if any, with

10. Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria, "Осквернени гробищни паркове в село Градница", Grand Mufti, 4 July 2018, <http://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/6240-oskverneni-grobishtni-parkove-v-selo-gradnitsa.html> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

11. "Protection Against Discrimination Act (PAFA)", Legislation Online, <https://www.legislationline.org/topics/country/39/topic/84>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

12. Commission for Protection Against Discrimination, <http://www.kzd-nondiscrimination.com/layout/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

the religious identity of the person involved. According to Baki Huseinov, deputy chair of the Protection Against Discrimination Commission, numerous complaints of discrimination in employment have been received in recent years, including on the ground of religion, ethnicity, disability, etc.¹³

Education

Although there have been some changes in the school curriculum, especially in history and literature textbooks, Islam and Muslims are still portrayed in a negative way. In 2018, there was again a debate about whether the assimilation policy of the totalitarian communist regime against Muslims and Turks, the so-called “Revival Process,” should be included in the history textbooks. This, on the one hand, was a positive development, and, on the other, it turned out that there were many opponents of the idea.¹⁴

In 2016, 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. The Bulgarian judiciary rejected Emine Shamatareva’s appeal, and in 2018 an application was filed with the ECHR in Strasbourg.¹⁵

The Muslim community in the town of Kurdzhali, including parents of young children, has been requesting from the municipality and government institutions that Muslim children have access to halal food in municipal kindergartens, but their demands have been rejected. The initiative committee “Halal Food for Our Children” decided to lodge a complaint with the ECHR in Strasbourg after the Administrative Court (in 2017) and the Commission for Protection Against Discrimination in Bulgaria rejected its complaints.¹⁶

Politics

Regularly, in different towns of the country, representatives of nationalistic parties and organizations oppose the call for prayer using loudspeakers by calling on the institutions to ban it. According to the Chief Secretary of the Office of the Grand Mufti despite the low-frequency the municipalities periodically hand out fines for the Friday sermons and calls for prayer. In this regard, in August 2018, a member of the European Parliament and deputy chair of the VMRO party warned the capital

13. Diana Jelyazkova, “Баки Хюсеинов: Появиха Се Нови Уязвими Групи, Които Са Застрашени От Дискриминация”, Radar.Bg, 31 October 2018, <http://radian.bg/2018/10/31/baki-hyuseinov-rouyavi-ha-se-novi-uyazvimi-grupi-koito-sa-zastrasheni-ot-diskriminatsia/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

14. Anisia Ivanova, “Възродителният процес – в учебниците, а как ще се интерпретира?”, Dnes.Bg, 20 March 2018, <https://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2018/03/20/vyzroditelniat-proces-v-uchebnicite-a-kak-shte-se-interpretira.371224>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

15. Interview with Resim Shamatarev, the father of Emine Shamatareva, held on 27 November 2018.

16. “Том Хайнс в Кърджали: Кмета Хасан не е ли турчин?”, Rodopite, 5 December 2018, <http://rodopite.net/blog/tom-chajns-v-krdzali-chasan-nie-ie-li-turtchin/>, (Accessed: 5 September 2019).

municipality, the Health Inspectorate, and the Directorate of Religious Affairs by sending a formal request for control and ban.¹⁷

Two years ago, a law prohibiting the wearing of the burqa in public places was passed. Alexander Sidi, a member of parliament from the VMRO party, which was the initiator of the law, publicly threatened women who wear the burqa with police harassment. He made the following statement for the media: “Stopping the burqas by law is not the only solution of the problem with radical Islam ... We definitely have to work actively in this direction and all those people who have strange dependences, traveling and contacts must at least be stricken with awe by our security services, in order to understand that all their actions are being monitored... I hope we will see serious police action soon... I even think that Bulgarian citizens would be willing to pay fines because of police harassment on these people in order to stop them, because we know very well that when the police has come in and started to rummage, some human rights defenders will come and will say that people’s rights are being violated...”¹⁸

Periodic attempts by local authorities and nationalistic parties to change geographical names with a Muslim-Turkish origin are a cause of serious concern among the Muslim community in Bulgaria. In May 2018, on the suggestion of the United Nationalists, the municipal council in Stara Zagora decided to resume the activity of renaming the Turkish-Arab toponyms in the territory of the municipality through forming a temporary commission for the elaboration of a strategy for changing the “foreign” names with Bulgarian ones. As a result of the initiative, 838 toponyms of lands and sites with Turkish-Arab origin were replaced.¹⁹ The Office of the Grand Mufti made a statement according to which the change of names suggested that racism and intolerance against Muslims was at very critical levels.²⁰

In October 2018, archaeologists from the National Archaeological Institute at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences by order of the Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Karlovo started new excavations in the local Kurshun Mosque (built in 1485). For years the Muslim community in the country has taken legal proceedings for the restitution of Kurshun Mosque as a community property. According to the Office of the Grand Mufti, the new excavations in the historical mosque aimed to stop the Muslim community’s attempts to reconstitute the property and to replace its function by

17. Interview with chief secretary of the Office of the Grand mufti, held on 2 November 2018.

18. Kamelia Tsvetanova, “Пазарджик, след закона ‘Антибурка’ – вкъщи или с медицинска маска”, Dnes.bg, 20 July 2018, <https://www.dnes.bg/obshtestvo/2018/07/20/pazardjik-sled-zakona-antiburka-vkyshti-ili-s-medicinska-mask.382737>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

19. “The Bills”, National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, 19 October 2018, <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/78252>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

20. “The Bill”, National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, 9 May 2018, <http://www.parliament.bg/bills/44/854-01-35.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

another. As the lawsuit continued, the mosque was excavated by archaeologists, and an attempt to turn it into a museum of religions was made by the municipality.²¹

Media

Before referring to the Islamophobic discourse that has been reproduced through the media in Bulgaria during 2018, the lack of an observatory authority that would monitor all media (TV, radio, Internet, and the press) and document possible cases of anti-Islamic discourse, has to be noted. The mainstream media hosts the views of public figures and politicians who reproduce Islamophobic discourse. Especially in 2018, when there was a broad debate on the changes to the Religion Act, Muslims were portrayed by the media as threats to the national security of the country. Besides the obvious negative portrayal of Islam in general, media outlets also provided their audiences with a number of issues linked to an alleged Islamization of Bulgaria. One of the most notorious examples of this segment was the television channel SKAT TV, owned by the political party NFSB. Some of the channel's programs like "Razbulvane" (Unveiling), specialized in Islamic and multicultural subjects, portraying the Muslim and Turkish community living in the country in a negative manner.

Justice System

Islamophobia is often manifested in parliament when MPs debate or propose laws related to religious denominations. Their main motives are that the Muslim community represents a danger to the state and should, therefore, be controlled. One such example can be observed in the official grounds for amendments to the Law on Religions in May and October 2018, when the parliamentary parties GERB (the main party in the government), the BSP, and the MRF (both of the latter are opposition parties) made a bill proposal for an amendment to the Law of Religions. In parallel, another bill was submitted by the United Patriots, a coalition partner in the government.²² The grounds of both bills were to protect the national security and stop dangerous influences from abroad. The bills proposed financial support for Orthodox Christianity and Islam. But at the same time, the United Patriots' project introduced a ban on occupying religious positions for persons who have graduated abroad; religions are obliged to use only the Bulgarian language during worship and religious rituals; a prohibition on donations from abroad or foreign citizens; and a prevention of foreign citizens from conducting religious services. The bill of the nationalists noted that the proposals have been caused by religious radicalism, terrorist acts, indications of religious politicization, dissemination of religious doctrines

21. 21Muslim Denomination in Bulgaria, "Несековаштите опити за промяна предназначението на 'Куршум джамия' в Карлово", Grand Mufti, 19 October 2018, <http://www.grandmufti.bg/bg/home/news-room/novini/6677-nesevashitite-opiti-za-promyana-prednaznachenieto-na-kurshum-dzhamiya-v-karlovo.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

22. "The Bills", National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, 19 October 2018, <http://www.parliament.bg/bg/bills/ID/78252>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

to change the state order and the secular character of the state, etc.²³ According to experts, the law was made solely in respect to the Muslim community and this was known to everyone. Their main grounds were that the Muslim denomination was a danger to the state and should therefore be under its control.

Internet

During the recent years the emotions of nationalistic, xenophobic Internet portals, news sites publishing fake news on Muslims, etc. have increased. The level of anti-Muslim sentiment on social media is beyond the capacity of this report; it is impossible to document all occurrences that involve people in Bulgaria or relate to the Bulgarian context.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In Bulgaria, there are few main fields that have played a crucial role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public domain: the political field, mainly extreme nationalist political parties and organizations such as VMRO, ATAKA, NFSB, and the social media.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The only organization, dealing with religious issues is the Office of the Grand Mufti in Bulgaria (*Muslimansko izpovedanie* or Muslim denomination), which periodically reports anti-Muslim incidents and rhetoric. The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee also deals with and reflects serious violations in this respect. There are a number of NGOs working to protect refugees and their rights, such as the Foundation for Access to Rights (FAR), but none of these organizations deal explicitly with Muslims, Islam, or Islamophobia.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The main conclusion of this report is that despite the high degree of integration and relatively good legislation, Islamophobia in Bulgaria can be observed in the public sphere. Although the Criminal Code contains elements against hate crimes, these are rarely applied in practice. Furthermore, Bulgaria's law enforcement authorities do not acknowledge the biased motives of hate crimes. Public understanding of issues such as social marginalization of minority groups and the difficulties faced by refugees and victims of hate speech and crime, remains very limited. Many Muslim individuals are unaware that biased attacks and discrimination against them are ille-

23. "The Bill", National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria, 9 May 2018, <http://www.parliament.bg/bills/44/854-01-35.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

gal. Combating Islamophobia and intolerance of Muslims in Bulgaria is a slow and difficult process. It's related to the change of perceptions and prejudices and their deep-rooted manifestation in decision making of politicians or media. In general, the lack of adequate knowledge about Islam, the tendency to spread false and distorted information about Islam and Muslims in the public domain by pseudo-experts on Islam and malevolent public figures seem to have created the space for an increasing number of Islamophobic utterances that remain uncontested in the country's current political atmosphere. On a positive note, although there is no organization to combat Islamophobia except the Office of the Grand Mufti, some segments of civil society are conducting relatively large efforts to combat racism, xenophobia, and related discrimination. There is also a relatively good interfaith dialogue in Bulgaria. Representatives of the major religious organizations, including the Muslim leaders, maintain a good dialogue and try to set a good example to society.

Chronology

- **22.03.2018:** Anti-Muslim statements of prosecutor Nedyalka Popova.
- **31.05.2018:** Changing the toponyms in Stara Zagora.
- **02.06.2018:** Muslim cemetery of Gradnitsa village was desecrated.
- **11.06.2018:** The issue of anti-loudspeakers of the mosques.
- **20.07.2018:** Anti-Muslim comments of Alexander Sidi (VMRO party) in Pazardzhik.
- **06.09.2018:** Muslim cemetery in Dobrich was desecrated.
- **15.10.2018:** The case of `Kurshun Mosque` in Karlovo.
- **05.11.2018:** The regional mufti of Sofia lodged a complaint with the ECHR.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
CROATIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

The so-called migrant crisis divided the European political scene and provided certain public figures with material for developing anti-Islam and anti-Muslim rhetoric to incite Islamophobia and win political points that would give them power. There is now fear of a similar scenario in Croatia. Croatian nationalism is not anti-Islamic, but includes Muslims in its construction of identity. It used to call Muslims the “flowers of the Croatian people.” Unlike in other countries, in Croatia it is not easy to present Muslims as a foreign, enemy body. That is why this sentiment is not as prevalent here as it is elsewhere, but it’s important to continuously work on ensuring that the current European and world trend in politics does not overpower the inclusive Croatian tradition.

It is interesting to note that at some point, the so-called refugee crisis was replaced with the term ‘migrant crisis’ in the Croatian public space and media; the terms are not synonyms but antonyms, and different in terms of eliciting empathy and understanding. The use of proper and correct terminology in the media and public space in Croatia is still lacking.

People are reluctant to speak up when they feel discriminated on the basis of religion, because of vulnerability when expressing religious belief in public and respecting religious customs. This is the reason we don’t have true insight into the frequency of this type of discrimination in Croatia.

In the political sphere, the arrival and short-term accommodation of refugees was spoken of in terms of a humanitarian crisis. However, later emphasis shifted to framing it as a security issue, underlining the differences intended to make citizens wary or even afraid of refugees.

According to the European Court of Human Rights, political speech has the highest level of protection, but this protection is not absolute and does not include the right to hate speech. Social networks and the Internet are still spaces that contain the most hate speech. Spreading fabricated news that encourages hatred and fear appears to be the election strategy for the upcoming 2019 elections, the elections for the European Parliament, and the presidential elections in the Republic of Croatia.

In the world, conflicts that include violence of any kind are often linked to Islam, i.e. Islam is portrayed as a religion based on an intolerance towards everything that is not Islamic. However, in Croatia, we can still note the absence of any negative impact from the rise of Islamophobia in Europe.

Sažetak

Migrantska kriza podijelila je političku pozornicu Europe i određenim političkim figurama dala materijala da razvijaju antiislamsku i antimuslimansku retoriku kako bi na taj način potakli islamofobiju i time stjecali određene političke bodove i osvajali vlast. Sad postoji bojazan da bi se takvo nešto moglo dogoditi i u Hrvatskoj. Hrvatski nacionalizam nije protumuslimanski. On je, naime, muslimane svojevremeno zvao “cvijećem hrvatskog naroda”. Za razliku od nekih drugih zemalja, u Hrvatskoj nije lako predstaviti muslimanke i muslimane kao neko strano, neprijateljsko tijelo. Zato taj sentiment u Hrvatskoj ne cvjeta kao u nekim drugim sredinama, ali treba kontinuirano raditi da ta neka vrsta europske i svjetske političke mode ne nadjača tu inkluzivnu hrvatsku tradiciju.

Zanimljivo je da je u jednom trenutku takozvana ‘izbjeglička kriza’ u javnom prostoru i medijima u Hrvatskoj zamijenjena pojmom ‘migrantska kriza’, što nisu sinonimi već upravo suprotno, sadržajno se jako razlikuju u izazivanju empatije i razumijevanja. Uporaba korektnog i ispravnog govora u medijima i javnom prostoru hrvatskog društva i dalje izostaje.

Pojedinci, kada smatraju da su diskriminirani temeljem vjere, nerado o tome progovaraju, zbog ranjivosti kojoj su izloženi prilikom javnog očitovanja religijskih uvjerenja i poštivanja vjerskih običaja, a to je razlog zašto izostaje pravi uvid u kvantitet ove diskriminacije u Hrvatskoj.

O dolasku i kratkoročnom zbrinjavanju izbjeglica u Hrvatskoj u političkom spektru se u početku uglavnom govorilo kao o humanitarnoj krizi, no naglasak s vremenom preteže ka sigurnosnom problemu i sve se češće naglašavaju razlike zbog kojih bi građani trebali biti oprezni, pa i u strahu od izbjeglica.

Prema Europskom sudu za ljudska prava politički govor uživa najveći stupanj zaštite, ali nije apsolutno zaštićen, niti je sloboda političkog izražavanja opravdanje za govor mržnje. Društvene mreže i prostor na internetu prostori su koji još uvijek najviše trpe govor mržnje. Širenje lažnih vijesti kojima se potiče na mržnju i kojima se sije strah gotovo je postalo predizborna strategija za nadolazeće izbore u 2019., izbore za Europski parlament i predsjedničke izbore u RH.

U svijetu, sukobi koji uz sebe vežu i nasilje svake vrste neizostavno se povezuju s islamom, odnosno islam se prikazuje kao religija u čijoj osnovi je netrpeljivost prema svemu što nije islamsko. Međutim, u Hrvatskoj i dalje možemo svjedočiti izostanku negativnog utjecaja rasta islamofobije u Europi.

Country Profile

Country: Croatia

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary System

Ruling Parties: HDZ – Croatian Democratic Union

Opposition Parties: SDP - Social Democratic Party

Last Elections: 2014 Presidential Election (Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović won 50.74% of the vote against 49.26% that went to Ivo Josipović in the second round); 2016 Legislative Election (HDZ, HDS, HSL: 61 seats; SDP, HNS, HSS, HSU: 54 seats; MOST: 13 seats; ŽIVI ZID, PH, AM: 8 seats; IDS, PGS, RI: 3 seats; STRANKA RADA I SOLIDARNOSTI, REFORMISTI, NOVI VAL, HSS-SR, BUZ: 2 seats; HDSSB, HKS: 1 seat; NL-ŽELJKO GLASNOVIĆ: 1 seat; National Minorities: 8 seats)

Total Population: 4,284,889 (in 2011)

Major Languages: Croatian

Official Religion: No official religion

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (86,28% Catholics and 4,44% Orthodox), No religion (3,81%), Islam (1,47%), Others (less than 1%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 62,977 (1.47%) in 2011

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Community in Croatia (Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS); Human Rights House Zagreb; Are You Serious; International Organization for Migration (IOM); The International Red Cross; Save the Children; Center for Missing and Abused Children; Centre for Peace Studies (CMS; CPS); Croatian Legal Center; Center for Cultural Dialogue (CCD).

Far Right Parties: N/A

Far Right Movements: N/A

Far Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

During 2018, the Islamic Community in Croatia proved to be an integrative factor of Croatian society. Their activities included open dialogue with representatives of different religions, and they used every opportunity in the country and abroad to promote the well-organized and good relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Islamic Community as a minority religious community in the Republic of Croatia. In 2018, the construction of the Islamic Cultural Center in Sisak continued, and a mosque was opened in Bogovolja, Karlovac County. It is the fourth mosque in the Republic of Croatia, after the ones in Zagreb, Rijeka, and Gunja. The Islamic Community in Croatia published the first halal cookbook, a book of recipes that meet halal standards of food preparation and the use of food products. The community has managed to be successful in preventing radical behaviors since there are no members from the Republic of Croatia on battlefields around the world.

Hate speech in general, and towards Islam in particular, is present on social networks as well as other online content. The tragedy the migrants are experiencing contributes to the strengthening of Islamophobia and anti-Islamism. Although these phenomena are more present in Europe than in Croatia, it can still be claimed that they are experiencing a rise in Croatia as well. Politicians and other public figures are often responsible for this due to cherry-picking negative behavior and attributing extreme behavior to migrants and followers of Islam. This year, fabricated news and photographs were used to achieve this as well. People who use hate speech often call on their freedom of expression, which is wrong.

On the other hand, some media such as Internet portal *Index.hr* and political analysts such as Višeslav Raos and Žarko Puhovski warn that such behavior and attitudes of politicians are merely political populism, and that these statements by Croatian politicians and professors are xenophobic. One positive initiative was aimed at eliminating religious prejudice as an incentive to hate and gathered representatives of four religious communities for a debate; the representatives came from the Islamic, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities. An important message from the debate came from the Bishop of Dubrovnik and President of the Council of Croatian Bishops' Conference for Life and Family Mate Uzinić who stated, "Christianity will not be endangered by the migrants whom we will treat as Christians should. Christianity will be endangered by us Christians who will not behave as Christians."¹

At the same time, an independent American institute, the Pew Research Center, known for its research on religious demography, conducted a survey between 2015 and 2017 in 34 countries among 56,000 adults over 18 years of age. According to the

¹ Branimir Pofuk, "Ponovimo Poruku Biskupa: Ne Ugrožavaju Kršćanstvo Migranti, Nego Kršćani Koji To Zapravo Nisu", *Večernji List*, 31 October 2018, <https://www.vecernji.hr/premium/ponovimo-poruku-biskupa-ne-ugrozavaju-krscanstvo-migranti-nego-krscani-koji-to-zapravo-nisu-1279832>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

published data, Croatia is the most tolerant country in Central and Eastern Europe. As much as 57% of respondents in Croatia said they would accept a Muslim as a family member. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this percentage is 42%, in Serbia 43%, in Hungary only 21%, and in Italy 43%.² (Fig. 1)

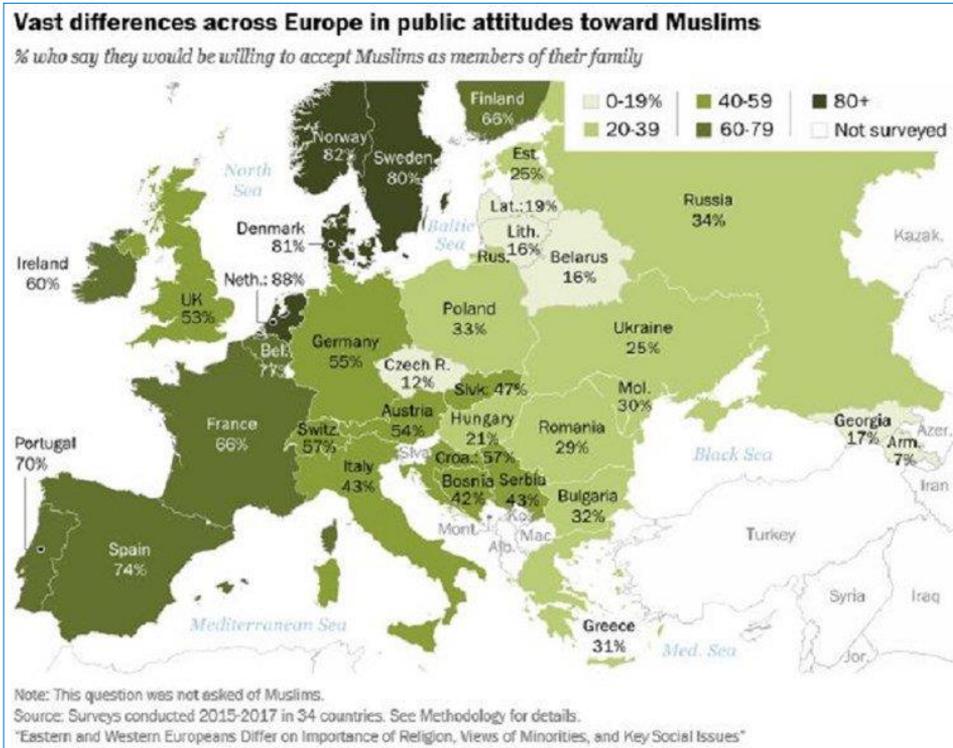


Figure 1: A map of Europe presenting the results of research by the Pew Research Center, an independent American institute, on differences across Europe in public attitudes toward Muslims.³

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On Savudrijska Street in Borongaj, in 2018, an ugly sight appeared. An unknown perpetrator placed lumps of lard on death notices of two Muslims. The Islamic Community in Croatia issued a statement condemning this individual act.⁴ (Fig. 2)

2 R.I. Hina, "Veliko Istraživanje: Hrvatska Je Najtolerantnija Država U Ovom Dijelu Europe", Index.hr, 31 October 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/veliko-istrazivanje-hrvatska-je-najtolerantnija-drzava-u-ovom-dijelu-europe/2036181.aspx>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

3 Ibid.

4 24sata, "Borongaj: Stavili Svinjsku Mast Na Dvije Osmrtnice Muslimana", 24sata, 29 March 2018 <https://www.24sata.hr/news/borongaj-stavili-svinjsku-mast-na-dvije-osmrtnice-muslimana-566786>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 2: Lumps of lard placed on death notices of two Muslims in Zagreb (Savudrijska Street).⁵

According to the Ombudswoman's Report, there were 17 complaints of discrimination on the basis of religion that were processed under the Anti-Discrimination Law in 2017 by the Ombudswoman, two by the Ombudswoman for Children, one by the Ombudswoman for Gender Equality. Seventeen percent of prosecutors claim that complaints include multiple discriminations (on several grounds); one fifth of the complaints include discrimination on the basis of religion or political and other beliefs. The Ombudswoman received complaints of discrimination based on religion (6.1%), social status (5.4%), and education (5.4%). When it comes to discrimination based on ethnicity, it is the most frequent for Serbs, Roma, and asylum seekers.⁶ (Fig. 3)

5 Sara Jahić Zelić, Twitter, 29 March 2018, <https://twitter.com/cunculica> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

6. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, "Report of the Ombudsman for 2017", April 2018, <http://ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesca-2017/izvjesce-pp-2017/send/82-izvjesca-2017/1126-izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2017-godinu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

BASIS OF DISCRIMINATION	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS	%
Race, ethnicity, skin color, nationality	47	17
Age	33	11.9
Sex	18	6.5
Religion	17	6.1
Social position	15	5.4
Education	15	5.4
Political or other beliefs	12	4.3
Health condition	9	3.2
Disability	8	2.9
Financial status	5	1.8
Membership in a union	4	1.4
Marital or family status	3	1.1
Sexual orientation	3	1.1
Language	1	0.4
Gender identity or expression	1	0.4
Multiple	47	11
No discrimination pursuant to the law	39	14.1
TOTAL	277	100

Figure 3: Table of statistics of received complaints on different basis of discrimination collected by the Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Croatia.⁷

The NGO Center for Peace Studies brought criminal charges against unidentified perpetrators (law enforcement officers) suspected of illegal actions that occurred at the border between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in November 2019. The charges were brought on International Migrants Day, after Border Violence Monitoring published videos showing Croatian law enforcement overstepping their authority and in an organized and violent way turning away refugees attempting to enter Croatia.⁸

Three complaints made to the Islamic Community come from women in hijabs, and concern verbal provocations and the message “Go home!” The implication of the message is that they should return to their own country, somewhere other than Croatia. These incidents occurred on the street, and it is interesting to note that the provocations came from other women.

7. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, “Report of the Ombudsman for 2017”, April 2018, <http://ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesca-2017/izvjesce-pp-2017/send/82-izvjesca-2017/1126-izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2017-godinu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

8. “Međunarodni Dan Migranata: Nova Kaznena Prijava Zbog Sumnje Na Nezakonito Postupanje Policijskih Službenika”, Centar Za Mirovne Studije, December 2018, <https://www.cms.hr/hr/azil-i-integracijske-politike/međunarodni-dan-migranata-nova-kaznena-prijava-zbog-sumnje-na-nezakonito-postupanje-policijskih-službenika>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

A Gallup poll from August 2017 placed Croatia among countries whose citizens are the least friendly towards migrants and refugees. Forty percent of respondents in Croatia do not want Syrians in their country, and 39% believe that the country could accept some of them.⁹

Are you afraid of migrants?	
Yes, they pose a great danger.	37%
No, they are people who need help.	17%
I'm not afraid, but they shouldn't cross the border illegally.	46%

Figure 4: Questionnaire on the fear toward migrants made by news portal *Index.hr*.¹⁰

Political figures such as Ivan Pernar, a member of the Croatian Parliament representing the political party *Živi zid*, charges asylum seekers perceived as Muslims of having accommodation and financial assistance while Croats are leaving the country due to poverty or are homeless and depend on public transportation for warmth. Mate Mijić, a Croatian communicologist, also tries to entice public hatred of migrants and Muslims by writing columns that judge migrants for taking state money that he believes should be given to veterans.

Employment

The number of complaints made to the Ombudswoman, according to the report for 2017, was the highest, for the first time, for violations of labor and public servant relations (11.8%), while labor and employment - in line with previous trends - remained the most frequent areas for complaints concerning discrimination.

The Ombudsperson also emphasized the complaints regarding active employment policies, and the lack of an adequate integration policy that would make it easier for workers from third countries, asylum seekers, or seekers of international protection to find employment in Croatia.

The Ombudswoman received inquiries from citizens of Islamic faith about the right not to work on Ramadan and Eid. Namely, the Law on Holidays, Memorial Days and Non-Working Days in the Republic of Croatia stipulates that followers of Islam are entitled to having the days of Ramadan and Eid as non-working days. However, since each of these Islamic holidays lasts for several days, the linguistic structures used in the law are imprecise and leave room for interpretation of whether

9. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, "Report of the Ombudsman for 2017", April 2018, <http://ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesca-2017/izvjesce-pp-2017/send/82-izvjesca-2017/1126-izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2017-godinu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

10. R.I., "Bojite Li Se Migranata?" Indeks.hr, October 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/bojite-li-se-migranata/2034798.aspx>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

the right relates to only one day for each of the two holidays; in other words, the duration of the holidays are under question.¹¹

Education

During 2018, the Islamic Community in Croatia published a book entitled *Razumjeti Islam (Understanding Islam)* by Aziz Hasanović Effendi, PhD, mufti and president of the Mesihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia. The book includes the most important themes, discussed on the basis of the source of this faith, offering readers basic information about Islam.

Ivana Šojat, one of Croatia's most famous writers, is the author of a book *Ezan – ezan* is the Muslim call to prayer. Her intention was to use this book to remind readers of the cultural and spiritual dimensions of Islam, in today's age when Islam is perceived very tendentiously. The author discusses how Islam respects the right of women to get an education, own land, engage in trade, etc.

According to the Ombudsman's report, there is still no comprehensive policy for integrating foreigners, especially those seeking international protection, and inclusion in society is already made difficult for them in the very beginning by the lack of Croatian language courses.¹²

Politics

Intolerance of various groups remained a prominent feature of the public space in 2018 as well. The apparent apathy and social stagnation is caused by the lack of dialogue and quality, constructive debates, and the lack of adequate and timely public condemnation of unacceptable content.

The President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović in an interview with the Vienna daily *Kleine Zeitung* stated, "Croatian Muslims live in great fear. They fear for their position. They are worried that they will become outcasts in society because of individuals who come to us for fabricated reasons to agitate for radical ideas." The title of the interview was "Europe Was Too Laid-Back and Too Naive." The president explained her claim that Croatian Muslims live in fear by referencing a recent conversation with the "Croatian Mufti." In her words, he was "completely exhausted from the effort to include migrants into the Croatian Muslim community, which is integrated into Croatian society."¹³

She also stated that she visited Afghanistan several times, and that not everyone who comes to Europe has a democratic frame of mind, substantiating this claim by

11. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, "Report of the Ombudsman for 2017", April 2018, <http://ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesca-2017/izvjesce-pp-2017/send/82-izvjesca-2017/1126-izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2017-godinu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

12. Ibid.

13. Boris Pavelić, "Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović: Nisi Smjela Reći Da Si Hrvatica Nego Si Morala Reći Da Si Iz Hrvatske", *Novi list*, 11 September 2018, http://www.novilist.hr/Vijesti/Hrvatska/Kolinda-Grabar-Kitarovic-Nisi-smjela-reci-da-si-Hrvatica-nego-si-morala-reci-da-si-iz-Hrvatske?meta_refresh=true, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

describing the oppression of women in Afghanistan. This statement contributes to Islamophobia by reinforcing the prejudice of oppression and disrespect for women in Islam.

The Islamic Community in Croatia reacted to the president's claim and stated that Muslims in Croatia fear no one but God, and the President of the Mesihat Mufti Aziz Effendi Hasanović stated that people can be divided only into two groups, good and bad people, and not into Muslims and others, and that he is certain the president agrees with him on the issue.¹⁴

The president denied giving the above statement, claiming that it was taken out of context, a key part of the sentence was left out, and she never claimed that Muslims in Croatia live in fear.¹⁵

Politically, Islam is often subject to non-constructive debates, verbal conflicts, and polemics in the media between different agents - most often politicians. One of the three former members of the BIH Presidency, Dragan Čović, had the support of the Croatian government for his new candidacy in the 2018 presidential elections in BIH. However, he lost the election race to another Croat, Željko Komšić, which caused additional tensions between Croatia and BIH. Croatian leaders in both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina all agree that Komšić was elected by the Bosniak electorate and that he is not a legitimate Croatian representative in the BIH Presidency. Political clashes triggered by these elections resulted in different statements that placed Islam in a negative context. One such statement was from Čović himself who said, "In BIH, if you say 'civil state,' this means unitarism in some form and in theory, which basically means an Islamic state."¹⁶

Thus, the general elections in BIH in 2018 were the subject of a debate during a session of the European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs. The Croatian MP in the European Parliament labeled the Islamic community in BIH and Turkey the main culprits for the victory of Željko Komšić in the elections.¹⁷ The Islamic Community in BIH reacted to this by stating that Croatian extremists were campaigning against Muslims.¹⁸ MP Zovko's statement elicited a response from the member of the BIH Presidency Željko Komšić who stated, "This is nothing but lies and nonsense,

14. R.I., "Kolinda Rekla Da Su Hrvatski Muslimani U Velikom Strahu, Muftija Joj Odgovorio", Indeks.hr, 12 September 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/kolinda-rekla-da-su-hrvatski-muslimani-u-velikom-strahu-muftija-joj-odgovorio/2023427.aspx>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

15. Ibid.

16. "Čović U Zagrebu: Građanska Bih Znači Islamska Država", Aljazeera Balkans, 6 February 2018, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/covic-u-zagrebu-gradanska-bih-znaci-islamska-drzava>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

17. "Zovko: Turska I Islamska Zajednica Odigrali Su Ključnu Ulogu U Izboru Komšića", Jabuka TV, November 2018, <https://www.jabuka.tv/zovko-turska-i-islamska-zajednica-odigrali-su-kljucnu-ulogu-u-izboru-komsica/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

18. Hina, "Islamske Muftije U Bih: Hrvatski Ekstremisti Vode Kampanju Protiv Muslimana", Indeks.hr, 29 November 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/islamski-muftije-iz-bih-hrvatski-ekstremisti-vode-kampanju-protiv-muslimana/2046484.aspx>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

unbecoming of a member of the European Parliament. Also, this statement has all the trappings of chauvinism and Islamophobia.”¹⁹

Hate speech regarding the relationship of Bosniaks and Croats was a mainstay in the statements of Croatian intellectuals and academics, who are given substantial attention by the media, without any censorship or limitations.

One such example is the philosopher, political analyst, and professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb and Mostar Nino Raspudić, who writes for the Zagreb daily *Večernji list* and Banja Luka’s *Nezavisni list*. He stated that Bosniaks voted for Komšić out of pure hatred towards Croats.²⁰

The run-up to the general elections in 2018 was also characterized by media displays of intolerance between these two peoples, where Islam is mentioned in negative contexts, as something detrimental to Croats. The then-member of the BIH Presidency Čović claimed that the demographic domination of Bosniaks poses a threat of turning BIH into an Islamic state, which prompted a response from Izetbegović, also a member of the BIH Presidency at the time, who refuted the existence of an Islamic state in BIH and affirmed the existence of the Croatian radical right.²¹

Relations became more tense after the Croatian Parliament adopted a declaration on the position of Croats in BIH and the European path of BIH.²² From the Croatian perspective, the adopted declaration warns of Croats being marginalized in BIH and calls for amendments on the Constitution of BIH and the electoral law in BIH. The declaration was mostly criticized by the left wing political party SDP which stated that it was proposed because Željko Komšić was elected as a Croat member of the BIH Presidency. From the perspective of BIH and the Bosniaks living in Croatia, the adopted declaration is an instance of interfering in the internal affairs of BIH. The declaration elicited responses from representatives of the Bosniak national minority in the Republic of Croatia, and added to their displeasure with the Albanian representative who also represents Bosniaks in the Croatian Parliament, Erminom Lekaj Prljaskaj, who expressed a favorable view of the declaration.

The extreme right are not the only ones talking about the alleged danger to Croatia and Europe posed by migrants. Ivan Pernar, a member of the Croatian Parliament from the party *Živi zid*, judging by his Facebook profile which he uses as his main communication tool, seems obsessed with the idea of migrants as barbarians from the East intent on conquering Europe. Pernar, among others, engaged in po-

19. “Komšić Žestoko Napao Zovko, Optužio Je Za Šovinizam I Islamofobiju”, *Direktno*, November 2018, <https://direktno.hr/eu-i-svijet/komsic-zestoko-napao-zovko-optuzio-ju-sovinizam-i-islamofobiju-139984/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

20. “Raspudić: Komšića Su Izglasali Iz Čiste Mržnje Prema Hrvatima”, *Jabuka TV*, October 2018, <https://www.jabuka.tv/raspudic-komsica-su-izglasali-iz-ciste-mrznje-prema-hrvatima/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

21. “Izetbegović: Nije Prijetnja BiH Uspostava Islamske Države Nego Radikalna Hrvatska Desnica”, *Indeks.hr*, February 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/izetbegovic-nije-prijetnja-bih-ustopostava-islamske-drzave-nego-radikalna-hrvatska-desnica/1024633.aspx>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

22. “Usvojena Deklaracija O Položaju Hrvata U BiH”, *HRT*, December 2018, <https://glashrvatske.hrt.hr/hr/aktualno/hrvatska/usvojena-deklaracija-o-polozaju-hrvata-u-bih/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

lemics to explain Islam; accused feminist organizations of remaining silent in the face of the UN's decision that wearing a burqa is a human right; warned about the media being corrupt; led readers to believe that migrants are sexually assaulting women across Europe; shared foreign media news about violence and offenses committed by migrants; and criticized the Croatian government for providing financial assistance to asylum seekers when there are homeless Croats.

Media

In their report *Human Rights in Croatia: Overview of 2017*, the Human Rights House Zagreb stated that the underrepresentation of minority religious communities in the program content of the Croatian national TV and radio station HRT leads to their media ghettoization. Minority religious communities are represented in only two shows aired in low-ratings slots and are not represented in other programs, such as the news. This means that the HRT is in direct violation of their duty to encourage pluralism.²³

There is a notable lack of knowledge or understanding of certain minority religious communities, and topics that concern them are afforded very little space in the media.²⁴ Citizens should be more familiar with Islam, while the media should accept more social responsibility and share accurate and verified information about Islam and Muslims.

At the same time, informative texts must relay correct information about religion and religious communities to avoid fostering prejudice. Lack of correct reporting contributes to fostering intolerance towards certain religious groups.²⁵

Since the migrants' tragedy is used to reinforce Islamophobia and anti-Islamism, the media has an extremely important role in correct and professional reporting on migrants.

The reporting style used by the media portrays refugees mostly as migrants, as if it is their profession or the only noteworthy thing about them, depriving them of their humanity and dignity. Joint efforts are necessary to change this prevalent narrative, replace "crisis" with "opportunities" and portray "rivers of people" as individuals with their own stories, hopes, and talents.

Religious ceremonies held on the occasion of the two holidays in Islam, Ramadan and Eid, were broadcast live on the HRT TV station. The message of Mufti Hasanović on the occasion of these holidays was published and printed in traditional media such as TV and newspapers, and non-traditional media such as Internet portals.

23. "Ljudska Prava U Hrvatskoj: Pregled Stanja U 2017. Godini", Kuća Ljudskih Prava Zagreb, March 2018, from <http://www.kucaljudskihprava.hr/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Ljudska-prava-u-Hrvatskoj-pregled-stanja-u-2017.-godini.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

24. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, "Report of the Ombudsman for 2017", April 2018, <http://ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesca-2017/izvjesce-pp-2017/send/82-izvjesca-2017/1126-izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2017-godinu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

25. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, "Report of the Ombudsman for 2017", April 2018, <http://ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesca-2017/izvjesce-pp-2017/send/82-izvjesca-2017/1126-izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2017-godinu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

“Ekumena” and “Duhovni izazovi” are TV shows that promoted interreligious dialogue, and portray Islam as a religion of peace and dialogue. Their segments and guest appearances by representatives of the Islamic Community promoted Islam in a positive way, along with the coexistence of Muslims and Christians in the Republic of Croatia.

“Otvoreno,” broadcast by HRT, is among the TV shows with the highest ratings, whose format entails appearances of relevant speakers on a certain topic. Islam was often discussed on this show, both in positive and negative contexts.

Justice System

After the previous government ended in 2013, in 2017, the current government adopted the new National Plan for Fighting Discrimination 2017-2022, in accordance with the Action Plan 2017-2019.

In April 2018, the Ombudswoman published a report for 2017, containing an analysis and evaluation of the protection of rights and freedoms, some examples of violations of rights of individuals or social groups, and 231 recommendations aimed at preventing violations of citizens’ rights.

There was an isolated incident in 2015 concerning a young Franciscan monk who published online content that was extremely negative towards Islam, and that prompted the Ombudswoman to demand that the public prosecutor take steps to address this, and requested the Croatian Bishops’ Conference to issue a statement. This instance of inappropriate speech was prosecuted in 2018 on the grounds of Article 25, Paragraph 1 of the Anti-Discrimination Law, resulting in a final verdict citing violation of dignity (harassment) based on religious differences.²⁶

Individuals accused of discrimination are most frequently prosecuted for harassment, and ordered to pay a fine. There are instances of harassment aimed at Muslims of Bosniak origin, who were called derogatory terms (*balije*) and associated with “Islamists.” The injured parties were often victims of verbal harassment accompanied by physical violence, which indicates a high level of intolerance aimed at certain groups of citizens.²⁷

The Republic of Croatia ratified the Marrakesh Compact²⁸ that caused an uproar among the Croatian public and politicians. Upon signing, there were some doubts and misconceptions about its intent, significance, and implications.²⁹

The last National Program for Protecting and Promoting Human Rights was

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”, July 2018, https://refugeemigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

29. “Marakeški Sporazum - Pravno Neobvezujući Dokument Kojim Se Želi Utjecati Na Uzroke Migracija”, Office of the Ombudsman of RC, November 2018, <https://ombudsman.hr/hr/npm-novosti/cln/1474-marakeski-sporazum-pravno-neobvezujuci-dokument-kojim-se-zeli-utjecati-na-uzroke-migracija-modulnaslovna>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

valid for the period 2013-2016, and the new National Program has not been adopted yet.

Banning clothing items that include clothing traditionally worn by Muslims is not codified in Croatian law. Women can cover their face and body however they want; there is no headscarf ban. Women can wear the headscarf in public places, and they also have official citizens' documents and IDs with photos with the headscarf. So far, there is no registered case of violation of this right.

Internet

The public space contains discriminatory and hate speech; this is especially true for the Internet. Evidently, the presumption of anonymity emboldens individuals to direct threats and entirely inappropriate speech at people with opinions different to theirs.

"Catholics Beware, This Is Being Kept from You: Stores Flooded with Food Sacrificed to Idols!" was the title of an article published at the end of the year on an Internet portal. The article espouses the idea that halal food and beverages are inappropriate for Catholics and that eating food sacrificed for the Muslim holiday Eid is dangerous. The Center for Halal Quality Certification, which operates as a part of the Islamic Community in Croatia, was also referenced in the article, in a negative context.³⁰ (Fig. 5)



Figure 5: An article on Internet news portal www.dnevno.hr about halal food being food that was sacrificed to idols and warning of the danger that it represents to Catholics.

30. "Katolici Oprez, O Ovome Se Šuti: Trgovine Preplavljene Hranom Žrtvovanom Idolima", Dnevno.hr, December 2018, <https://www.dnevno.hr/vjera/vjera-kultura-i-znanost/katolici-oprez-o-ovome-se-suti-trgovine-preplavljene-hranom-zrtvovanom-idolima-1261838/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

One of the Facebook pages that spreads Islamophobia is the “Ministry of Truth,” which is constantly warning the Croatian people about the danger posed by migrants and shares news published by foreign media where migrants are portrayed as violent and prone to crime. For instance, the page claims that the guilty verdict of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of the Austrian accused of blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad and their directive stating that any criticism of the Prophet constitutes Islamophobia actually affirmed Sharia law in the EU and circumvented the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The same Facebook user also raised the question of the article of the Marrakesh Compact concerning the reunification of migrants’ families. Ironically, he raised the question of how Croatia would recognize the marriage of a Muslim from Afghanistan, for instance, if he is married to a girl under 16 years of age, implying that by doing so Croatia would legalize pedophilia. (Fig. 6)



Figure 6: The post of Facebook profile user “Ministry of Truth” ironically questioning whether migrants and their marriage traditions legalize pedophilia in the Republic of Croatia.³¹

31. Ministarstvo istine, Facebook, December 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/minist.istine>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

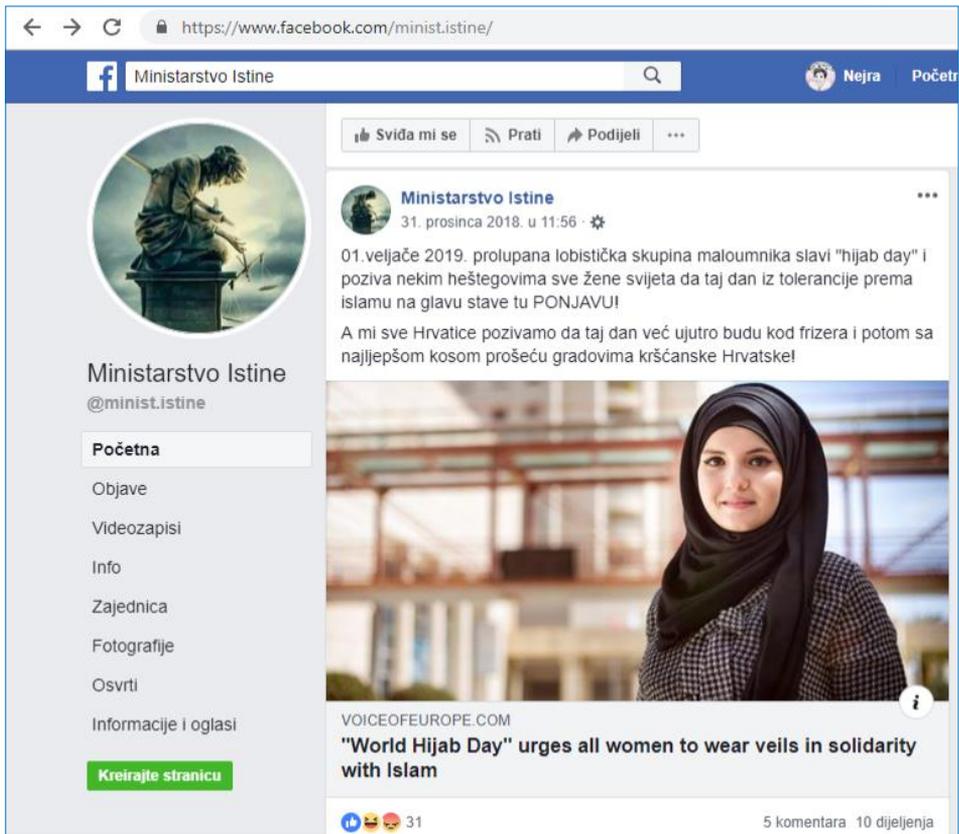


Figure 7: The post of Facebook profile user “Ministry of Truth” talking about Hijab Day uses an inappropriate word for headscarf, insults all women wearing the headscarf and other women supporting them, and invites all Croat women not to support the occasion of World Hijab Day.³²

The Facebook page “Pokret Naroda ‘Vrijeme je’ organized a Facebook event called “Mass protest against the forced Islamization of Croatia” inviting Croatian citizens to gather and protest at one of the squares in Zagreb.³³ (Fig. 8) It remains to be seen what will come of this, since this occurred at the end of 2018.

32. Ministarstvo istine, Facebook, December 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/minist.istine/> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. Ministarstvo istine, Facebook, December 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/events/2044578715607314/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

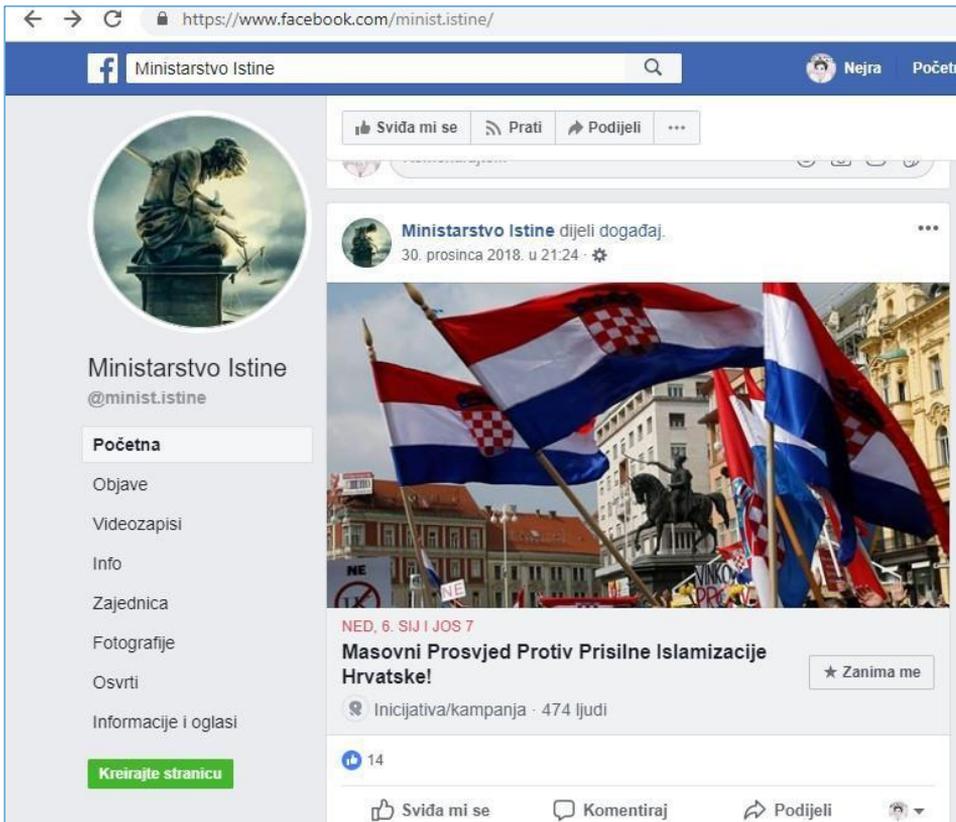


Figure 8: Public invitation to participate in a mass protest against the “forced Islamization of Croatia” organized by Facebook group “Ministry of Truth.”³⁴

Index.hr, the leading leftist Internet tabloid in the Republic of Croatia, published the observation of political analysts Višeslav Raos and Žarko Puhovski who warned about the media spin and use of migrants to draw attention away from real problems in the Republic of Croatia that have been unaddressed for years, such as the failure to prosecute war crimes in Vukovar. They also warn that the hysteria over migrants is disproportionate to the true extent of the problem, and that there is a problem with migrants, although the situation is far from any kind of “Islamic invasion” that the right-wing pundits and populists write about. Some journalists such as Ana Benačić from the Internet news portal *Faktograf* spoke about politicians using lies about migrants to raise political points. (Fig. 9)

34. *Ministarstvo istine*, Facebook, 30 December 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/minist.istine> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

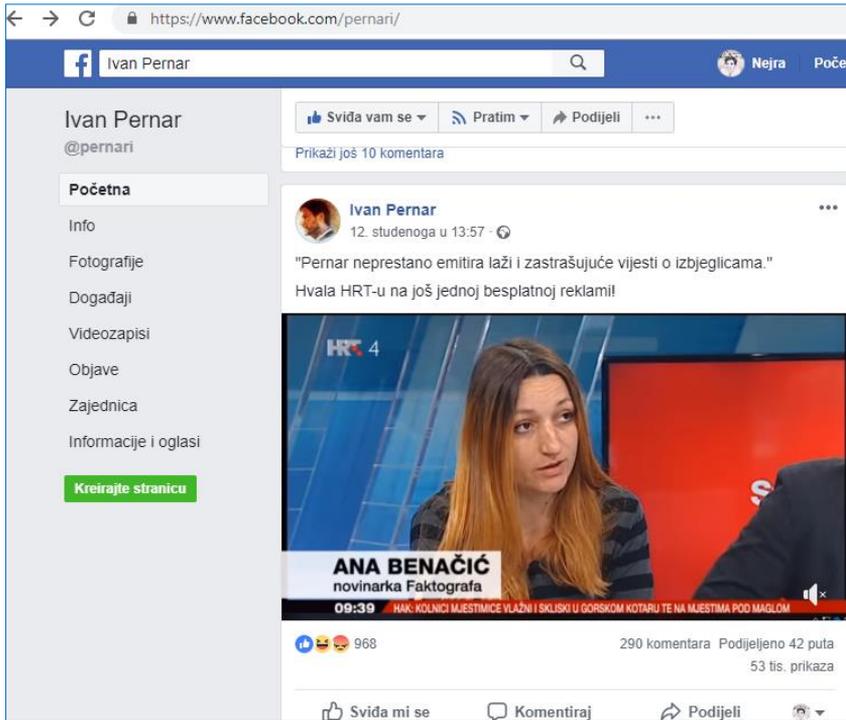


Figure 9: Ana Benačić, journalist of Internet news portal *Faktograf.hr*, on Croatian national TV and radio station talking about Ivan Pernar, a member of the Croatian Parliament, using the so-called migrant crisis for political populism. Ivan Pernar ironically thanked her for the free publicity.³⁵

Fabricated news is spread about mass rapes that according to Internet portals such as *Večernji list* and politicians' social networks profiles such as the Facebook profile of Ivan Pernar are perpetrated exclusively by migrants. Columnists of right-wing mainstream newspaper *Večernji list* compare migrants to venomous snakes,³⁶ call them criminals, and claim that “funds are taken from veterans and given to migrants.”³⁷

Migrants are portrayed as soldiers conquering Europe and being useless for Croatian society on the official Facebook profile of a parish in Mrkopolje called “Mrkopaljska župska kronika.” This profile is edited by parish priest Ante Zovko. A parishioner, referring to migrants, comments the following, “Throw a bomb at them, make them go away.”³⁸ (Fig. 10)

35. Ivan Pernar, Facebook, November 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/minist.istine> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

36. “Maženje Poskoka I Vabljenje Migranata”, *Večernji List*, October 2018, <https://www.vecernji.hr/premium/mazenje-poskoka-i-vabljenje-migranata-1278701>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

37. “Uzmi Braniteljima, Daj Migrantima”, *Večernji List*, October 2018, <https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/uzmi-braniteljima-daj-migrantima-1278567>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

38. “Stranica Župe U Mrkopolju Puna Objava Protiv Migranata: Baci Bombu, Goni Gamad”, *Indeks.hr*, October 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/stranica-zupe-u-mrkopolju-puna-objava-protiv-migranata-baci-bombu-goni-gamad/2035288.aspx>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 10: A post on Facebook page of user “Mrkopaljska župska kronika” led by parish priest Ante Zovko from Mrkopolje.³⁹

Boris Havel, professor at the Faculty of Political Science and external associate of the Faculty of Philosophy, Scandinavian Studies Section, is somewhat of a social media star. He regularly comments on current events; as can be surmised by one of his tweets refugees bother him, especially Muslims: “Croatia was taken over by a clique of untouchable Brussels servants. Their main project is mass settlement of Middle Eastern Muslims in Croatia.” The faculty’s administration discussed Professor Havel’s statements and concluded that there is no need for initiating proceedings on this matter by the Political Science Ethics Committee.⁴⁰ (Fig. 11)



Figure 11: Twitter message by Boris Havel, Croatian professor and political analyst: “Croatia was taken over by a clique of untouchable Brussels servants. Their main project is mass settlement of Middle East Muslims in Croatia. Or I’m wrong?”⁴¹ The sarcastic use of hashtags #RefugeesWelcome and #ReligionOfPeace followed.

39. Ibid.

40. “Docent Ksenofor: Pitali Smo Fakultet Političkih Znanosti Što Misle O Siviljanju Svog Profesora Na Internetu A Odgovor Će Vas Rastuziti”, Net.hr, November 2018, <https://net.hr/danas/hrvatska/docent-ksenofob-pitali-smo-fakultet-politickih-znanosti-sto-misle-o-divljanju-svog-profesora-na-internetu-a-odgovor-ce-vas-rastuziti/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

41. Boris Havel, Twitter, 3 November, 2018, <https://twitter.com/BorisHavel> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

One of the fabricated news that spread across Croatian Internet portals alleged that the Greek police confiscated 52 tons of firearms and ammunition in cargo containers that entered Greece as furniture containers and were intended for Europe-bound migrants. This news was accompanied by photographs that were later determined to date from 2015 and depict the confiscation of smuggled firearms.⁴²



Figure 12: Croatian news portal *Index.hr* illustratively showing the spread of false news about migrants from Ivan Pernar, member of the Croatian Parliament.⁴³

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Central figures that portrayed Islam in a negative context, spreading hatred towards this religion, can be divided into two groups. It is interesting to note that they include members of the academic community in the Republic of Croatia, mostly political analysts, philosophers, communicologists, and professors at Croatian universities such as Boris Havel, Ive Lučić, Mate Mijić, and Ivica Šole however inappropriate given the public nature of their professions. They write columns for *Večernji list*, a news portal of a conservative daily owned by Styria and Globus, a national weekly published by the Hansa Media. One of the individuals who attempted to revolutionize the exercise of rights and better treatment of teachers and professors is the English language teacher Bernarda Jug, who propagates and reinforces Croatian nationalism that includes only Christianity.

42. "Kako Se Uz Pomoć Lažnih Slika Širi Mržnja Prema Migrantima", Indeks.hr, November 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/kako-se-uz-pomoc-laznih-slika-siri-mrznja-prema-migrantima/2036671.aspx>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

43. "ANKETA Histerija Oko Migranata: Treba Li Kaznjavati Širenje Lažnih Vijesti?", Indeks.hr, November 2018, <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/anketa-histerija-oko-migranata-treba-li-kaznjavati-sirenje-laznih-vijesti/2041066.aspx>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

On the other hand, there are right-wing politicians such as EU MP Željana Zovko (HDZ) who comments on national matters of a neighboring country while implicating Muslims and their religious institutions, which certainly does nothing to prevent hatred of Muslims. There are also politicians such as Ivan Pernar (Živi zid) who use this issue for garnering media attention and scoring political points.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The Ombudswoman, under the high patronage of the Chairman of the Croatian Parliament, organized an international conference entitled *Protection of Human Rights and Strengthening Democracy in Europe: Fighting Terrorism - Free Speech - Living Together*.⁴⁴ The Ombudswoman Lora Vidović also organized a roundtable on the topic “Hate Speech in Croatia - Where to Go from Here?”⁴⁵

During 2017, civil society organizations (CSO) warned about the difficult communication with executive bodies, in particular through participation in working groups of ministries or government offices, as well as the lack of understanding of their work.⁴⁶ The lack of funds and public calls intended to advocate in favor of the protection and promotion of human rights and the elimination of discrimination caused a drop in CSO activities.

During 2018, the Office of Human Rights and Rights of National Minorities of the government of the Republic of Croatia held several conferences intended to fight hate speech and hate crimes, and integrate persons under international protection. In 2018, they completed the implementation of a project entitled “Support to the Integration of Third-Country Nationals to Whom International Protection Approval Applies.” The project contributed to the process of integration of these people by raising the awareness of the expert and the general public on the challenges of integration in the Republic of Croatia, strengthening the capacities of the stakeholders in the integration system, and strengthening coordination activities.

The Islamic Community in Croatia continues to offer free legal assistance to all members of the community, including migrants. Legal assistance is organized within the legal service of the Islamic Community and entails general legal information and legal advice. During 2018, they managed about 20 cases.⁴⁷

44. “Zaštita Ljudskih Prava I Jačanje Demokracije U Europi: Suzbijanje Terorizma – Sloboda Govora – Živjeti Zajedno”, Office of the Ombudsman of RC, June 2017, <https://ombudsman.hr/attachments/article/1083/Koncept%20konferencije%20-%20Za%C5%A1tita%20ljudskih%20prava%20i%20ja%C4%8Danje%20demokracije%20u%20Europi.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

45. “Govor Mržnje U Hrvatskoj: Kako Naprijed”, Office of the Ombudsman of RC, November 2018, <https://ombudsman.hr/hr/dis/cld/1489-govor-mrznje-u-hrvatskoj-kako-naprijed>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

46. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, “Report of the Ombudsman for 2017”, April 2018, <http://ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesca-2017/izvjesce-pp-2017/send/82-izvjesca-2017/1126-izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2017-godinu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

47. “Besplatna Pravna Pomoć Mešihata Članovima Islamske Zajednice”, Medžlis Sisak Islamske Zajednice U Hrvatskoj, March 2016, <http://www.medzlis-sisak.net/wordpress/besplatna-pravna-pomoc-meshihata-clanovima-islamske-zajednice/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

During 2018, the Islamic Community in Croatia both organized and participated in numerous conferences promoting Islam in a positive atmosphere and contributing to the prevention of extreme behavior unjustified by religion. The most significant of these were the 25th international symposium *Religion and Politics*;⁴⁸ the signing of the Berlin Declaration on dialogue;⁴⁹ promoting Croatia at the World Tolerance Summit in Dubai;⁵⁰ hosting the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs; and the membership of Mufti Hasanović in the Governing Board of the World Peace Forum.⁵¹

The Center for Promotion of Tolerance and Holocaust Remembrance organized a cycle of debates on the topic “Why Do We Hate Each Other?” One of the debates concerned religious prejudice as a cause for hatred. The guests were representatives of four religions.⁵²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

While most countries in the world today guarantee the protection of human rights, none of them are free of violations of human rights. Some have bigger, some smaller discrepancies between the letter of the law and reality - theory and experience; the challenges and obstacles that citizens face every day remain. Croatia, of course, is no exception.

The Migration Policy for 2013 - 2015 has not been supplemented with the new one, and many questions remain about migration in the Republic of Croatia, which is compounded by the fact that the Republic of Croatia does not have a special integration policy as of yet. Although the Action Plan for the Integration of Persons Provided International Protection from 2017 to 2019 contains concrete, useful, and measurable tools that can improve their integration, it targets a very small group of people.⁵³

Censoring hate speech on social networks and the Internet would certainly contribute to preventing Islamophobia, and prevention is also necessary in the form of

48. “Završen 25. Međunarodni Simpozij”, April 2018, <http://www.islamska-zajednica.hr/vijesti/završen-25-medunarodni-simpozij>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

49. “Konferencija U Berlinu O Unapređenju Dijaloga Za Bolju Suradnju”, November 2018, <http://www.islamska-zajednica.hr/index.php/izdvojeno/konferencija-u-berlinu-o-unaprjednju-dijaloga-za-bolju-suradnju>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

50. “Muftija Na Svjetskom Samitu Tolerancije U Dubaiju, UAE”, Islamska Zajednica U Hrvatskoj, November 2018, <http://www.islamska-zajednica.hr/index.php/izdvojeno/muftija-na-svjetskom-samitu-tolerancije-u-dubaiju-uae>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

51. “Muftija Dr. Aziz Ef. Hasanović Izabran Za Člana UO Svjetskog Mirovnog Foruma”, Islamska Zajednica U Hrvatskoj, October 2018, <http://www.islamska-zajednica.hr/vijesti/muftija-dr-aziz-ef-hasanovic-izabran-za-clana-uo-svjetskog-mirovnog-foruma>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

52. “O Religijskim Predrasudama”, HRT, October 2018, <https://vijesti.hrt.hr/468891/o-religijskim-predrasudama>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

53. Office of the Ombudsman of RC, “Report of the Ombudsman for 2017”, April 2018, <http://ombudsman.hr/hr/izvjesca-2017/izvjesce-pp-2017/send/82-izvjesca-2017/1126-izvjesce-pucke-pravobraniteljice-za-2017-godinu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

educating individuals responsible for protecting the rights of citizens or informing them about their rights - state and public officials, social workers and law enforcement officers, judges and state attorneys, and others - especially with regards to fighting discrimination. Education on human rights and equality is also necessary to improve media literacy. Cases must be prosecuted in order to test the currently questionable limits of the law. It is necessary to conduct research and build the capacities of civil society organizations and independent institutions. It would also be beneficial if the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior provided more intensive trainings for judicial and law enforcement officials, judges, and state attorneys.

Prompted by inquiries of Muslim citizens, the Ombudswoman recommended that the Ministry of Labor and Pension System put forth a proposal of changes that should be made to the Holidays, Memorial Days and Non-Working Days Act of the Republic of Croatia to ensure that the rights of religious communities are clearly regulated and that the need to observe holidays particularly important for certain religious traditions is respected.

Chronology

- **06.02.2018:** The media in Croatia published a statement by the Croatian member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Dragan Čović when he was visiting Zagreb alleging that the term “civil state” in BIH means an Islamic state.
- **08.02.2018:** The media in Croatia reported the reaction of Bosniak member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina Bakir Izetbegović who refuted the existence of an Islamic state in BIH and affirmed the existence of the Croatian radical right.
- **29.03.2018:** Lumps of lard placed on death notices of two Muslims in Zagreb.
- **11.09.2018:** Electronic and print media published the statement by the President of the Republic of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović alleging that the Croatian Muslims live in great fear.
- **12.09.2018:** Electronic and print media published the reaction of Mufti and President of the Mesihat of the Islamic Community in Croatia Aziz Hasanović Effendi alleging that the Muslims in Croatia fear no one but God.
- **12.09.2018:** The president of the Republic of Croatia reacted and sent a message through the media explaining that journalists took her message about Muslims in Croatia living in fear out of the context.
- **25.10.2018:** The media shared the message by Mate Mijić, a communicationologist, about the state taking the funds from veterans and giving them to migrants.

- **28.10.2018:** Migrants are portrayed as soldiers conquering Europe on some official Facebook profiles of parishes, with parishioners commenting: “Throw a bomb at them, make them go away.”
- **03.11.2018:** Boris Havel, a Croatian professor and political analyst, posted on his Twitter account, “Croatia was taken over by a clique of untouchable Brussels servants. Their main project is mass settlement of Middle East Muslims in Croatia. Or I’m wrong?” with the sarcastic use of the hashtags #RefugeesWelcome and #ReligionOfPeace.
- **22.11.2018:** The media published the statement by Željana Zovko, a Croatian MP in the European Parliament, in which she labeled the Islamic community in BIH and Turkey as the main culprits for the victory of Željko Komšić in the presidential elections in BIH.
- **23.11.2018:** MP Zovko’s statement elicited a response from the member of the BIH Presidency Željko Komšić who stated, “This is nothing but lies and nonsense, unbecoming of a member of the European Parliament. Also, this statement has all the trappings of chauvinism and Islamophobia.”
- **29.11.2018:** The Islamic community in BIH reacted to the statement of Zovko by stating that Croatian extremists were campaigning against Muslims.
- **November 2018:** The spreading of false news about migrants’ movement and location, and false photographs about migrants.
- **21.12.2018:** The Internet news portal *www.dnevno.hr* published the Islamophobic article espousing the idea that halal food and beverages are inappropriate for Catholics and that eating food sacrificed for the Muslim holiday Eid is dangerous.
- **30.12.2018:** The Facebook group “Ministry of Truth” organized a public event on Facebook that invited the wider public to join them in mass protest against the “forced Islamization of Croatia.”
- **2018:** Verbal attacks and messages like “Go home!” addressed to women wearing the hijab in Zagreb.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
**CZECH
REPUBLIC**
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

According to available studies intolerance towards Muslims in general and Arabs in particular is prominent in the Czech Republic. The longitudinal study found that Islamophobia is on the rise, becoming stronger over the years. This phenomenon is closely related to the strong anti-immigrant sentiments of the Czech voters and the corresponding policies of accepting not a single refugee.

Since 2015, in the Czech Republic, we have witnessed the full normalization of Islamophobia in public discourse, in media, in the Parliament, the Office of the President and Prime Minister and, most notably on the Internet. The content that would be considered extreme or fringe a couple of years ago is now given a platform in the Czech Senate and other public spaces. The monitoring exercise carried out by ROMEA found that incidents of xenophobia, including anti-migrant hate, followed by Islamophobia are the most frequent types of illegal hate speech on the Czech Internet.

The proliferation of fake news and hoaxes related to Muslims is on the rise. It leads to the radicalization of individuals. That is what contributed to the first case in the Czech Republic of a person being convicted of terrorism for chopping down trees which fell onto train lines while spreading flyers in poor Czech so as to fake a Muslim terrorist attack.

The election success of the Party of Direct Democracy led by one of the most prominent figures in the Islamophobia network, Tomio Okamura, opened space for the full-blown mainstreaming of Islamophobia through announced initiatives to ban Islam as a non-religion.

On the front of combating xenophobia and Islamophobia we find NGOs that are often exposed to the same degree of hate as the groups whose rights they try to uphold. The existence of a voluntary informal network of citizens who help refugees (often seen as Muslims only) is encouraging. So is the only party in the Parliament with a moderate view of the issue of tolerance to different groups and cultures, the Pirate Party.

Shrnutí

Dle dostupných studií je netolerance zaměřená na muslimy obecně a na Arabů konkrétně v České republice významná. Longitudinální studie zjistila, že je islamofobie na vzestupu a že posiluje v průběhu zkoumaného období. Tento jev úzce souvisí se silnou proti-uprchlickou náladou českých voličů a voliček a s ní spojenou politikou nepřijímání žádných uprchlíků. Od roku 2015 pozorujeme celkovou normalizaci islamofobie ve veřejném diskurzu, v médiích, v Parlamentu, z Kanceláře prezidenta, z Úřadu vlády skrz výroky premiéra a zejména na internetu. Obsah, který by dříve byl považován za extrémní či okrajový nyní dostává platformu na půdě Senátu a v jiných veřejných místech. Hodnocení kodexu chování internetových platforem, které za Českou republiku provedla ROMEA, umožnilo zjistit, že xenofobie, včetně nenávisti vůči migrantům, a islamofobie představují nejčastější typy nelegálního chování z nenávisti na českém internetu. Proliferace falešných zpráv a hoaxů týkajících se muslimů stoupá a vede k radikalizaci občanů. Tento fenomén přispěl i k v prvním případě odsouzení za teroristický čin v ČR. Penzista totiž byl odsouzen za kácení stromů na železniční trať za účelem vyvolání dojmu, že se jedná o teroristický čin spáchaný muslimy. Volební úspěch Strany přímé demokracie, vedené jednou z hlavních postav na české islamofobní scéně, Tomio Okamurou, otevřel prostor pro zcela otevřený mainstreaming islamofobie skrz iniciativu za zákaz islámu jakožto ne-náboženství. Pokud jde o odpor vůči islamofobii, ten zůstává doménou neziskového sektoru, jehož zástupci jsou často vystaveni stejně intenzivní nenávisti jako skupiny, jejichž práva se snaží chránit. Existence dobrovolných neformálních sítí občanů, které pomáhají uprchlíkům (kteří jsou často vnímáni jako muslimové) je povzbuzující, stejně jako působení jediné strany v Parlamentu s mírněnými názory na toleranci k odlišným skupinám a kulturám, Pirátské strany.

Country Profile

Country: Czech Republic

Type of Regime: Parliamentary representative democracy

Form of Government: Unitary parliamentary constitutional republic

Ruling Parties: ANO 2011 (centrist, populist) and Czech Social Democratic Party (center-left, populist)

Opposition Parties: Civic Democratic Party (center-right), Czech Pirate Party, Freedom and Direct Democracy (far right), Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (far left), Christian Democratic Union (center-right), TOP 09 (center-right), Mayors and Independents (local issues party)

Last Elections: 2018 Presidential election (Miloš Zeman won 51.37% of the vote in the second round); 2017 Legislative election (ANO 2011 78 seats; Civic Democratic Party, center-right 25; Czech Pirate Party 22; Freedom and Direct Democracy, far right 22; Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, far left 15; Czech Social Democratic Party center-left 15; Christian Democratic Union, center-right 10; TOP 09, center-right 7; Mayors and Independents, local issues party 6)

Total Population: 10.58 million people (in 2017)

Major Languages: Czech

Official Religion: No official religion

Statistics on Islamophobia: In 2017, the Czech police registered 3 criminal acts motivated by hate towards Muslims, 4 less than in 2016. At the same time, it registered two criminal acts motivated by hate towards Arabs, 6 less than in 2016.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Statistics of the Public Defender of Rights for 2017: 384 complaints (113 less than in 2016), discrimination found in 13 cases (direct, indirect, cases of harassment). Grounds for complaints in descending order: other; disability; race, ethnicity; sex; age; nationality.

Major Religions (% of Population): According to the census of 2011: no religion (34.5%), Catholics (10.5%), Protestants (1%), believers with no affiliation to religious institutions (6.8%), undeclared/no answer (44.7%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): According to the census 3,358 persons (0.03%); according to estimates 22,000 (0.2%).

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Center of Muslim Communities, General Union of Muslim Students in the Czech Republic, Muslim Union

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: ROMEA, Multicultural Center, Organization for Aid to Refugees, Czech Helsinki Committee, Association for Integration and Migration

Far Right Parties: Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD)

Far Right Movements: We Do Not Want Islam in the Czech Republic, 7. Republika, National Resistance

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic practices

- **Hijab Ban:** Limitations at schools and work regulated by dress codes of the given institutions
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No specific regulations but there are no burqa-clad women residing in the country as of yet
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

According to the longitudinal study “European Values Study” carried out by the Faculty of Social Studies at Masaryk University in Brno, general trust in the Czech Republic is on decline and intolerance towards certain minorities is on the rise. According to a report by ROMEA, while in the year 1991 roughly 20% of respondents did not want a Muslim as a neighbor, in 2017 58% of respondents felt that way. Experts have noted similar developments for the categories of foreign workers and immigrants.¹ When asked how they felt about individual nationalities, the respondents from the survey gave the worst marks to Arabs and Roma. The experts who produced the study explain the intolerance towards Muslims and Arabs (frequently confused terms in the Czech Republic) by incidents of Islamic terrorism and the so-called migration wave. It should be added that the “migration wave” has not affected the Czech Republic much but it did produce enormous fear and served as a slogan for the mobilization of populists and extremists.

Pew Research Center’s 2018 report on differences between Western and Eastern Europeans’ attitudes to religion, minorities, and key social issues found that “Czechs are highly secular, generally favor same-sex marriage and do *not* associate Christianity with their national identity, similar to most Western Europeans. But Czechs also express low levels of acceptance toward Muslims, more closely resembling their neighbors in the East.”²

Given the results of the studies and the evaluation of the security situation in the Czech Republic in the Ministry of Interior’s 2017 report, which is discussed below, we may conclude that Islamophobia is not part of fringe fractions, groups, or individuals but has gone full-blown mainstream. It happens in the open and dominates the public scene. It happens in the Parliament, through the Presidential Office and most notably on the Internet. According to the *Annual Report on Extremism*, the Internet is increasingly used as a tool for spreading hate towards various groups and by those who would not be traditionally understood as members or supporters of extremist groups.³

1. Jitka Votavová and Česká Tisková Kancelář, “Survey Shows People in the Czech Republic Trust Each Other Less and Have Less Tolerance for Minorities”, ROMEA, 30 June 2018, <http://www.ROMEA.cz/en/news/czech/survey-shows-people-in-the-czech-republic-trust-each-other-less-and-have-less-tolerance-for-minorities>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

2. “Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views on Minorities and Key Social Issues”, Pew Research Center, 24 October 2018, p. 6. http://www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues/pf-10-29-18_east-west_-00-02/, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

3. “Zpráva O Extremismu Na Území České Republiky V Roce 2017”, Ministerstvo Vnitřní, p. 6, <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/extremismus-vyrocní-zpráva-o-extremismu-a-strategie-boje-proti-extremismu.aspx>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

According to the *Annual Report on Extremism* by the Ministry of the Interior for the year 2017, which was approved by the government in 2018, the right-wing scene, which is the main source of Islamophobia, has become fragmented and less prominent. However, it is partly because of the rise of the Party of Direct Democracy (SPD) and its leader Tomio Okamura, who own the agenda of anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attacks. Because the SPD was so successful in the 2017 general election, it is now in the position to monopolize and mainstream the issues that were previously the domain of non-parliamentary extremist movements. The SPD gained 10.64% of votes, which translates into 538,574 actual votes. The Ministry of Interior does not classify the SPD as an extremist party but stresses in its report that “[I]n some cases the statements by SPD representatives are even more radical than the statements by representatives of extremist parties on the right as traditionally understood.”⁴ It is exactly such speech, according to the Ministry of the Interior that could contribute to radicalizing Muslims residing in the Czech Republic.⁵ For example the video on the page of the president of the SPD is entitled “Islam as Hitler’s Nazism.”⁶

According to the same report by the Ministry of Interior, the Muslim community in the Czech Republic is moderate and well integrated. However, considering the increase in rhetoric fueling hate, it might become radicalized.⁷

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The most prominent Islamophobic incident in the Czech Republic happened in 2017. The culprit was discovered and put on trial in 2018. In June and July 2017, a senior citizen, Jaromír Balda (72), chopped down trees on two occasions so that they fell across a railway line. He was also involved in the dissemination of threatening flyers in which the perpetrator pretended to be a jihadist planning assaults on Czech citizens. The goal of his activities was to fake terrorist attacks and Muslim infiltration. In a recorded telephone call with a local representative of the SPD (Party of Direct Democracy), Balda said that he is willing to “go after migrants” who in his view are “spreading through Europe like worms” – whereupon Blanka Vaňková, the local district coordinator, express-

4. Ibid., p. 14.

5. Česká Tisková Kancelář and Zdeněk Ryšavý, “Czech Government Approves Extremism Report, Rhetoric of Some MPs Is More Radical Than Neo-Nazis’ Now“, ROMEA, 27 December 2018, <http://www.ROMEACZ.cz/en/news/czech/czech-government-approves-extremism-report-rhetoric-of-some-mps-is-more-radical-than-neo-nazis-apos-now>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

6. Tomio Okamura, “Islám jako Hitlerovský Nacismus“, Tomio Okamura, 6 October 2017 <http://www.tomio.cz/aktuality/islam-jako-hitlerovsky-nacismus/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

7. “Zpráva o extremismu na území České republiky v roce 2017“, Ministerstvo Vnitřní, (2018), p. 19, <https://www.mvcr.cz/clanek/extremismus-vyrocnizpravy-o-extremismu-a-strategie-boje-proti-extremismu.aspx>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

es her agreement with the sentiment. “Like one goes after pests, after rats, after vermin in the forest,” the man says in the recording. “As for those pussies that wear those Arabic cowls here, all it takes is a little tiny Molotov cocktail, throw it right beneath their feet until their cunts and their asses catch fire, they’ll change their mind about walking around here like that. It’s easy, all it takes is two deciliters of gasoline,” he said as she again expresses agreement.⁸ The recording of this conversation was presented to the court. In neither incident were there victims, but in both cases the trains hit the trees. This case is significant from many points of views: the pensioner went through a process of radicalization as he became a fanatical supporter of Tomio Okamura so much so that he plastered Okamura’s portrait on his house. Even though Okamura and his followers operate under the Islamophobic trope of “Muslims are terrorists,” Balda was ironically accused of terrorism himself. Despite the fear of a non-existent “Muslim invasion,” which is central to all Islamophobic activists in the Czech Republic, the first conviction of terrorism actually involved an indigenous Czech. However, because he was Czech and not “the other,” he received lower punishment than that envisaged by the law, namely he received only 4 years. And again, significantly, unlike cases involving Muslims, his sanity while committing the attacks was questioned and used as a mitigating factor. Apparently he was taking blood pressure medicine which influenced his capacity to reason during the incidents. Journalist for ROMEA, an NGO specializing in human rights and focused on journalism and media literacy, called the verdict a mockery saying, “A brief note on this idea of reduced sanity. Let’s ask ourselves this question: if a similar crime had been committed by a Muslim, would the assertion that the perpetrator had allegedly been in a state of reduced sanity prevent the prosecutor from proposing a lengthy sentence as punishment?”⁹ Additionally, the journalist pointed out that those who are responsible for flaming hate and fear, most notably, politicians of the SPD and the president of the Czech Republic, should be held responsible too. In a further Islamophobic twist, an MP for the SPD in a heated debate in February 2019 in the Parliament accused other, not so immigrant-hostile, parties of Balda’s radicalization by saying “You, welcomers [i.e. those who welcome immigrants], you created Mr. Balda. You scared him with the realistic possibility of a terrorist attack in the Czech Republic.”¹⁰ The SPD originally supported Balda calling

8. Zdeněk Ryšavý, “Czech Court Releases Recording of Phone Call in Terrorism Case Capturing Defendant’s Hate Speech”, ROMEA, 10 January 2019, <http://www.ROMEACZ.cz/en/news/czech/czech-court-releases-recording-of-phone-call-in-terrorism-case-capturing-defendant-apos-s-hate-speech>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

9. František Kostlán, “Four Years of Terrorism Is a Mockery – And Others Should Have Been Tried”, ROMEA, 14 January 2019, <http://www.ROMEACZ.cz/en/news/czech/commentary-four-years-for-terrorism-is-a-mockery-and-others-should-have-been-tried> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

10. Domáci and Česká Tisková Kancelář, “Poj’ven! Vystoupení Poslance Volného Ve Sněmovně Provázelo Bouchání Do Lavic”, Zprávy Aktuálně, 1 February 2019, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/pojd-ven-vyzval-poslanec-volny-kolegu-birkeho-pri-vyhrocener-10f81112260911e99182ac1f6b220ee8/?fbclid=IwAR03oiCDFdaK9Y6ejunXVRWsyZiY1NUBNHGNgQ1VN2D2ifdVmFU1wbNkNyM&redirected=1549624285> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

him even a “modern-day Jan Palach”¹¹ but later deleted the Facebook status distancing himself from him. Despite a lenient punishment for Balda, due to his reduced sanity and advanced age, Judge Wažík in his verdict stressed, “He should have been far more aware of the fact that hatred just yields more hatred.” In the judge’s opinion, what makes Balda’s crimes even more dangerous is the fact that he committed them because he himself was motivated by religious hatred.¹²

Other SPD representatives have also been active in verbal attacks on various groups but most prominently on Roma, Muslims, and immigrants. Thus, Dominik Hanko, vice-chair of the SPD in the Ústecký region, published the following remark on a social network: “According to them we are sinners, unbelieving dogs. The more of them there will be here, the more they will force their truth on us until it turns out like it does in their countries. They’re like locusts, they destroy everything around them wherever they are.”¹³

Petr Hampl, the anti-immigration and anti-Islam activist and sociologist, launched his new book, *Breaking Walls*, about Islam and the alleged “Islamization” of society on the premises of the Czech Chamber of Deputies in March 2018. Although Hampl himself is not in the Parliament, he drew support from various MPs both on the left and on the right. A Czech Radio moderator Jan Moláček, on his Facebook page commented on the incident as follows, “An open racist is launching his book directly inside the Chamber of Deputies and an MP for a party that calls itself ‘civic’ and ‘democratic’ (i.e. the ODS, Civic Democratic Party) is boasting (on Facebook) about the author dedicating the book to him as his favorite politician. Czechia, 2018.”¹⁴ The spokesperson for the Czech president, Jíří Ovčáček, publically voiced his support for the hate group Angry Mothers when a library in Liberec refused to host their event where they were supposed to promote another book by Hampl. He defended the group again from the perspective of freedom of speech.¹⁵ In *Breaking Walls*, Hampl claims that if we allow jihadists from the Middle East who were beheading people to move to Europe, we have to know that we are accepting

11. The Czech student famous for self-immolation in 1969 in protest against the Warsaw Pact countries’ invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

12. František Bikár, “Czech Terrorist Gets Four Years, Judge Says He Was Influenced by the Public Dissemination of Extremism”, ROMEA, 15 January 2018, <http://www.ROMEA.cz/en/news/czech/czech-terrorist-gets-four-years-judge-says-he-was-influenced-by-the-public-dissemination-of-extremism>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

13. Tereza Heková, “Czech Politician Spreads Hateful Racist Hoaxes Online against Dark-Skinned Footballers, Muslim and Roma”, ROMEA, 16 July 2018, <http://www.ROMEA.cz/en/news/czech/czech-politician-spreads-hateful-racist-hoaxes-online-against-dark-skinned-footballers-muslims-and-roma>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

14. Jana Baudyšová, “Czech Anti-immigration Activist Launches Book on the Premises of the Lower House, Ultra-conservatives Support It”, ROMEA, 18 March 2018, <http://www.ROMEA.cz/en/news/czech/czech-anti-immigration-activist-launches-book-on-the-premises-of-the-lower-house-ultra-conservatives-support-it>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

15. Martina Heroldová, “Pošlapali Jste Svobodu, Obvinil Ovčáček Knihovnu, Která Zrušila Besedu S Protiislámským Sociologem”, Zprávy Aktuálně, 5 June 2018, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/poslapali-jste-svobodu-obvinil-ovcacek-knihovnu-ktera-zrusil/r-9976deac689911e89f2fac1f6b220ee8/> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

people who will be beheading us too. His book was somewhat scandalously offered for purchase on the website of the Charles University bookstore.¹⁶

The representative of the same party (ODS) in the Czech Senate, Tomáš Jirsa, has proposed Klára Samková for the position of Deputy Ombudswoman. Samková is infamous for equating Islam with Nazism and cursing the Turkish ambassador in the Czech Republic. She was investigated for her statements but it was decided that it is a case of freedom of speech.¹⁷ However, the Czech Bar Association, of which Samková is a member, fined her CZK 25,000 for defaming the respectful behavior in public expected of legal professionals. At the same time, Samková accused the association of a “modern witch hunt” and said that the association is afraid of the Turkish ambassador.¹⁸

Employment

Even though we cannot rule out individual cases of discrimination on the job market, it is not a significant phenomenon related to Islamophobia. The number of Muslims is low, they tend to be educated, and hold professional jobs, and are often employed in ethnically run businesses.

Education

Islamophobia is not officially promoted in the school curriculum. However, we should mention that attempts to diversify views on Muslims undertaken by NGOs or individuals are often blocked. As a recent example we can refer to the case of the “gymnasium” teacher Antonín Kolář from Pilsen. After 17 years teaching at the same school, he decided to resign because the school management joined some other groups and individuals who condemned the teacher for welcoming first year students in jellaba. Asked whether the reaction would have been the same 5 years ago, the teacher said, “No, a few years ago I taught a whole lecture on Islam and the Arab world...now some of the commentators wanted to castrate or hang me. This is something deep inside the people and it is suppressed. But as soon as a crisis comes, all frustrations show.”¹⁹

16. Barbora Němcová, “Džihádisté Budou V Evropě Řezat Hlavy” Univerzitní Knihkupectví Čelí Kritice Za Protiislámský Tekst”, Zprávy Aktuálně, 28 March 2018, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/dzihadiste-budou-v-evrope-rezat-hlavy-univerzitni-knihkupectvi-5709cc8c328911e89509ac1f6b220ee8/> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

17. Radek Dragoun, “Samková Srovnává Íslám S Nacismem. Senátor ODS Ji Chce Za Zástupkyni Ombudsmana”, Zprávy Aktuálně, 22 January 2019, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/samkova-srovnava-islam-s-nacismem-senator-ods-ji-chce-za-zas/r-447d5ce21e4111e9a0090cc47ab5f122/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

18. Česká Tisková Kancelář, “Umřete Drív, Než Zplodíte Syny, Proklela Samková Tureckého Velyysance. Dostala Pokutu 25 Tisíc”, Zprávy Aktuálně, 17 May 2018, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/umrete-driv-nez-zplodite-syny-proklela-samkova-tureckeho-vel/r-acf1246659ca11e8b8310cc47ab5f122/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

19. Magdalén Daňková, “Mladí Lidé Nepotřebují K Cestování Skoro Žádné Peníze, My Jsme Vybírali Kašny, Říká Učitel Z Plzně”, Zprávy Aktuálně, 2 January 2018, <https://magazin.aktualne.cz/cestovani/mladi-lide-nepotrebuji-k-cestovani-skoro-zadne-penize-my-jsm/r-2621b622ea5211e7af7dac1f6b220ee8/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Politics

The interaction between Islamophobia and politics was described in the previous report as pertains to the 2017 national elections. In 2018, the Czech Republic held local elections where the issue of Islamophobia holds less importance.

Islamophobia is not a phenomenon related only to certain politicians and parties. We may say that the SPD (Party of Direct Democracy) is leading the way in this sense but we find Islamophobes both in the left (Communist Party, Social Democratic Party) and the right (Civic Democratic Party). Particularly encouraging for Islamophobes is that the Czech president himself supports and promotes such views. His attitudes to Islam are now internationally known.

Most politicians use anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant statements in order to mobilize further their voters who share these views. It is almost impossible to hold a political post and advocate for positive attitude to some groups, most notably Muslims. The only party currently in the Parliament with moderate views regarding migration and its related issues is the Pirate Party.

Media

Increasingly in the Czech Republic we see the phenomenon of supporting hate speech as an issue related to freedom of speech. The proponents of such views claim that they are victims of the prohibition of freedom of speech and that they are the only ones who dare to tell the truth. This is true for their views on Muslims; in such instances they often frame their posts and videos as revealing some big secrets that the mainstream media are hiding from the public. Their target is not only left-wing or moderate media but mainstream media, such as Czech TV, which they accuse of hiding the truth and propagating multicultural ideas. Although such views have been present in the public space for a long time, the new aspect is that they are advocated by the offices of the president, the prime minister, and party representatives. Particularly after the election of SPD representatives, whose core agenda is to combat against Islam and immigrants, the events and promotion of hate speech have been given formal and institutionalized support. There is a great proliferation of media spreading Islamophobia. Some such media outlets are listed below: Parlamentní listy is a news outlet without any editorial policy - basically, anyone can publish on their website and the site does not employ fact-checking; Nová buržoazie; Protiproud; euRabia; We Do Not Want Islam in the Czech Republic (Islám v ČR nechceme), etc.

Particularly prominent in spreading hate speech is the media outlet TV Barrandov and its moderator Jaromír Soukup, who has recently announced his political ambitions and who is supported by President Zeman. In a pre-election debate, he asked his guests to choose who they would not like to have as a neighbor. They could choose among Roma, Muslim, Black, and a politician who Soukup disliked (Miroslav Kalousek).²⁰

20. "Vadil By Vám Soused Muslim, Černocho, Nebo Rom? Ptal Se Soukup Politiků. Žádný Rasismus, Naopak, Říká", Zprávy Aktuálně, 30 March 2018, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/vedle-koho-nehcete-zit-ptal-se-soukup-politiku-debata-vyzne/r-61ef1ae2340211e88b47ac1f6b220ee8/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

On euRabia, as part of the election campaign, we find the claim by Klara Samková, one of the most prominent Islamophobes and a lawyer by profession, that while politicians care only about the horizon of elections, Muslims have been planning to conquer Europe for centuries.²¹

An MP for the ruling party ANO, Bohuslav Chalupa, writes for *Parlamentní listy* that the real threat is not Russia but Islam. He adds that the goal of political Islam is “total and definitive elimination of all non-believers and our way of life.”²²

Most mainstream media could be described as improving balanced reporting on Muslims. However, sometimes unconscious bias plays a role in their reporting. For example, an article describing white right-wing terrorist attacks was illustrated by a picture of a group of visibly identifiable, angry Muslims.²³

Justice System

The former Prague imam Samer Shehadeh was accused of supporting terrorism. He left the Czech Republic in 2017 but was allegedly deported from Jordan and is currently in detention. He was accused of supporting terrorism after his brother and sister-in-law traveled to Syria, allegedly to fight in an Al-Qaeda-affiliated organization. Shehadeh was accused of helping them. The former imam was elected by Prague Muslims to head the Muslim Community in Prague and serve the function of imam of the Prague mosque. However, because of internal disputes, he left the position and some representatives of the Muslim community later publically distanced from him.²⁴ In relation to this event, the sociologist Karel Černý from Charles University was interviewed. He said that the former imam was part of his research on Muslims in the Czech Republic and that during an interview Shehadeh had said that he would intervene if someone in the community became radicalized, he would try to talk him out of it, pointing that such activity is against Islam.²⁵

The SPD has not given up on its promise to try to legally ban Islam on the ground that it is not a religion but a violent ideology. Given the Czech Constitu-

21. Klára Samková, “Evropané Uvažují Na Jedno Volební Období, Ale Muslimové Plánují Dobítí Evropy Celá Staletí”, euRabia, 10 March 2019, <https://www.eurabia.cz/Articles/32938-evropane-uvazuji-na-jedno-volebni-obdobi-ale-muslimove-planuji-dobiti-evropy-cela-staleti.aspx> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. Bohuslav Chalupa, “Naší Největší Hrozbou Není Rusko, Ale Politický Islám”, *Parlamentní Listy*, 26 November 2018, <https://www.parlamentnilisty.cz/politika/politici-volicum/Chalupa-ANO-Nasi-nejvetsi-hrozbou-neni-Rusko-ale-politicky-islam-560903>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

23. Remy Vlachos, “Vraha Muslimů Bavily PC Hry, Bál Se Žen. K Masakru Vedla Prohra Le Penové”, iDNES, 20 March 2019, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/zahranicni/novy-zeland-terorismus-mesita-video-socialni-site.A190318_095902_zahranicni_remy?, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. iDNES and Česká Tisková Kancelář, “Bývalého Pražského Imáma Převezli Do Česka. Viní Ho Z Podpory Terorismu”, iDNES, 8 November 2018, https://www.idnes.cz/zpravy/domaci/imam-terorismus-samer-shehadeh-obvineni.A181108_191259_domaci_evam, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

25. Markéta Jakicová, “Říkal, Že By Zakročil, Pokud By Se Někdo Radikalizoval, Říká O Imámovi Sociolog Černý”, *Zprávy Aktuálně*, 19 November 2018, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/riikal-ze-by-zakrocil-pokud-by-se-nekdo-radikalizoval-rika-o/r-a291df2cce-43c11e8b474ac1f6b220ee8/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

tion it is currently difficult to imagine this initiative would come into force. The SPD is currently proposing a law to forbid veiling. It has, however, clashed with Minister of Justice Jan Kněžínek, who said that no law can pass if it is focused on a particular religion. He added also that veiling must be allowed in some situations anyway i.e. during carnivals. Finally he questioned the necessity and urgency of such a law given that there are almost no veiled women in the Czech Republic and if they are, they tend to be foreign tourists, who “shop in expensive shops in Prague and spend money.”²⁶

Martin Konvička, the original propagator of Islamophobia in the Czech Republic, who was sided and somewhat forgotten when Islamophobia became mainstream, was investigated by the public prosecutor for two years for his statements about putting Muslims in concentration camps. The prosecution was stopped in 2018 with the explanation that it is not possible to prove that it was him who posted the statements online.²⁷

Internet

According to experts on extremism, both from the nongovernmental and governmental background, the biggest hotbed for spreading all forms of hate including Islamophobia is the Internet. It develops in two forms: one is threatening or humiliating individuals and groups online, the other is spreading false news and hoaxes.

According to ROMEA, Czech police officer Marek Chrastina of Šumperk while on vacation in Crete, Greece posted online that he had allegedly filmed journalists staging the drowning of migrants and that his footage was proof of how the media is manipulating the public about such matters. In reality, the people he filmed were part of a docudrama crew staging a re-enactment of a 1922 fire which Greeks had to flee. The Czech Police Inspectorate didn't find that his behavior damaged the image of the Czech police.²⁸

On the Internet, the Facebook pages of “We Do Not Want Islam in the Czech Republic” have been deleted but the local chapters remain. The Islamophobic, xenophobic, and anti-feminist page “Angry Mothers” has been deleted from Facebook but is present now under the name “Anti-feminist Punch.” The page “We Are Here

26. Jakub Zelenka and Lukáš Prchal, “Zákaz Zahalování Nesmí Mířit Proti Náboženství, Říká Ministr Spravedlnosti. Hledá Se Obecný Paragraf”, *Zprávy Aktuálně*, 16 August 2018, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/zakaz-zahalovani-nesmi-mirit-proti-nabozenstvi-rika-ministr/r-d166c46a9fbe11e8b295ac1f6b220ee8/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. Česká Tisková Kancelář, “Konvička Za Nenávistné Výroky O Muslimech Potrestán Nebude. Není Důkaz, Že Je Psal On, Tvrdí Žalobce”, *Zprávy Aktuálně*, 14 May 2018, <https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/konvicka-nejde-stihan-za-nenavistne-vyroky-o-muslimech-na-f/r-c5eec4d4576111e89509ac1f6b220ee8/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

28. Eva Zdařilová, “Czech Police Officer Claims to Have Filmed Journalists ‘Staging’ Migrants Drowning, His Superiors See Nothing Wrong with That”, ROMEA, 15 October 2018, <http://www.ROMEA.cz/en/news/world/czech-police-officer-claims-to-have-filmed-journalists-staging-migrants-drowning-his-superiors-see-nothing-wrong-with-that>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

at Home” has also been banned from Facebook but its version “I Am Here at Home” and *Zpray.cz* resurfaced.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Islamophobia has become a norm in the Czech public space. There is thus no need to look for fringe groups and websites, behind-the-scene think tanks, and advocacy groups since the loudest Islamophobes are to be found in the Parliament, the Senate, the Office of the President, and in various parties, while some of the Prime Minister’s statements are also Islamophobic. It is legally financed through tax payers’ money, which keeps the political establishment going. Currently there is synergy between the voters’ and politicians’ attitudes when it comes to Muslims.

Besides President of the Czech Republic Miloš Zeman, leader of the SPD party Tomio Okamura, and virtually all its members, there are other persons espousing Islamophobia openly. Jaroslav Foldyna from the Czech Social Democratic Party is a Srebrenica genocide denier. Eva Hřindová from the initiative Angry Mothers is particularly active in protecting Western women from the dangers of a Muslim men invasion. The mission of Klara Samková, who has been mentioned before, is to educate the Czech about the dangers of Islam. Petr Hampl, a self-described “private sociologist,” publishes extensively on the defense of Western civilization from Islam.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

Given the described strong climate of Islamophobia it is no surprise that anyone who publically supports diversity in the images of Muslims and tries to advocate building bridges is exposed to relentless attacks mostly online but sometimes also offline.

It is thus a miracle that the government through its Agency for Social Inclusion with the support of grants from Nordic countries and Czech TV run an initiative called “Hate Free Culture.” Its scope is broad but it also focuses on Muslims, on diversifying their image and on news about Muslims, as well as supporting showing compassion to refugees.²⁹

The other group of counter-Islamophobia initiatives come from NGOs, such as Multicultural Center or ROMEA. They debunk hoaxes related to Muslims and develop programs to fight hateful content online in cooperation with platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.

Finally, particularly amazing are the informal initiatives, funded by the contributions of their supporters, which help refugees who are often Muslims. Of such we should mention Initiative Central Train Station, which is an entirely voluntary

29. Hate Free, <https://www.hatefree.cz/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

initiative by a group of people who help refugees that are stuck in the Czech Republic while on their way to Western countries. The initiative provides them with food, buys them tickets to Germany or Austria, and buys them temporary phones. The other such initiative is Czechs Help, which collects clothes, shoes, and other necessary supplies and transports them to refugees stuck in Bosnia and Serbia.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Fighting anti-Muslim hate in the Czech Republic remains difficult because of the normalization of Islamophobia in society, on the Internet, in media, and in politics. The only front of resistance is the NGOs, informal initiatives by citizens, individuals who dare to speak publically against Islamophobia, and the current moderate approach of the Pirate Party. The other vein to rely on are EU-funded programs that tackle intolerance generally and are transferred to the NGO and academic sector via the Czech national institutions. In the light of that the following recommendations should be considered:

- It is of utmost importance to secure continuous funding for civil society, which promotes dialogue, fosters a fact-checking approach to Internet content, and reminds society of the benefits and necessity of developing tolerance.
- It is necessary to establish the norms for the acceptable range of free speech online. This should not be done only through enforcement but also by cooperation with commercial platforms which profit from the content online (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram but also the comment sections of individual media outlets).
- Politicians should be held to the highest standard when caught spreading hoaxes and fake news.
- The EU should develop tailor-made programs for tackling Islamophobia in the Czech Republic but also in Central Europe, where it is one of the most prominent types of hatred.
- A diversified curriculum on understanding differences and similarities in culture, including Islam-related content, should become the norm.

Chronology

- **18.03.2018:** Petr Hampl, the anti-immigration and anti-Islam activist and sociologist, launched his book about Islam and the alleged “Islamization” of society on the premises of the Czech Chamber of Deputies.
- **06.07.2018:** A photograph of the interior of a bus used by Czech police to transport activists arrested after a protest against the surface mining for brown coal at the Bílina mine in the Most district shows a sticker for the

hatemongering Ortel band and an anti-Islam sticker with a red line crossing out a mosque above the driver's seat.

- **10.07.2018:** Dominik Hanko, vice-chair of the SPD party in the Ústecký district, posted on social media that Muslims are like locusts, who destroy everything around them wherever they are.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
DENMARK
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

In the autumn of 2018, SOS Racism described how the negative discourse on Muslims has created a differentiation between “Us vs. Them” in Denmark, where “Them” refers to Muslims in particular. The discrimination has also become visible in the employment area, since a research confirmed that job applicants with Middle Eastern-sounding names have to send 52% more applications to be invited for a job interview, even though they are as qualified as an applicant with a Danish name. The Danish version of the international movement SOS Racism anticipates that the increasing number of discriminatory bills and approaches, do not treat Danish Muslims equally compared to non-Muslim Danes. In the past year, the Muslim minority was once again highlighted as contradictory with Danish values and incompatible with “Danishness.” This was visible in the political agenda, the media, and the legislation. Accordingly, many bills and initiatives were aimed at Danish Muslims such as the ban on the wearing of face veils in public, also known as the burqa ban, and the mandatory handshake. The demonised image of Muslims has infiltrated parts of the population which resulted in 67 reported incidents of hate crimes in 2018 - the highest number ever recorded.

Although the negative discourse about Danish Muslims dominates the political agenda, as well as parts of society, and the efforts to balance the stigmatising rhetoric are not adequate, several NGOs, politicians, and enthusiastic civilians are trying to change the Islamophobic rhetoric and create a peaceful coexistence. The insistence of civilians on tolerance and multiculturalism is an attempt to handle cultural diversity through various initiatives and to contribute with a positive approach - as opposed to hate preachers and their idea of a homogenous Denmark.

In the struggle to combat Islamophobia in Denmark, it is particularly important to recognise the presence of the problem. It is possible to see this through evidence-based research and documentation of hate preachers’ attempts at creating fear and hatred of Danish Muslims. The lack of facts indicates that the attitude towards Muslims is based on prejudices created through the negative media picture, which is why it is extremely important that Muslims are actively involved as sources on topics connected to Islam.

Sammendrag

SOS Racisme beskrev i efteråret 2018, hvorledes den negative diskurs om muslimer har skabt en differentiering mellem ”os-og-dem”, hvor ”os” er den danske majoritet, mens ”dem” udgøres af især muslimer. Diskriminationen er også blevet tydelig på arbejdsmarkedet, hvor en nylig undersøgelse bekræftede, at ansøgere med et mellemøstligt navn skal sende 52% flere ansøgninger for at blive indkaldt til en jobsamtale, selvom de kvalificerer sig ligeså vel som en ansøger med et dansk navn. Den danske udgave af den internationale bevægelse (SOS Racisme) foregriber, at det stigende antal af diskriminerende lovforslag og tiltag, som flere majoritetsdanskere knytter sig til, ikke holder danske muslimer lige for loven. I året der gik blev den muslimske minoritet endnu engang fremhævet som modstridende med danske værdisæt og ufornelige med danskhed, hvilket både var synlig i den politiske agenda, medierne samt lovgivningen. Således var mange lovforslag og tiltag rettet mod danske muslimer, hvilket bl.a kom til udtryk igennem maskeringsforbuddet og kravet om håndtryk. Det dæmoniserede billede af muslimer er infiltreret hos dele af befolkningen, der i 2018 i højere grad end registreret før udsatte danske muslimer for hadforbrydelser.

Selvom den negative diskurs rettet mod danske muslimer optager den politiske dagsorden samt andre dele af samfundet og indsatsen mod den stigmatiserende retorik ikke synes balanceret, eksisterer der en række NGO'er, et antal politikere og entusiastiske borgere der forsøger at ændre den islamofobiske retorik og skabe fredelig sameksistens. Befolkningens insisteren på tolerance og multikulturalisme i forsøget på at håndtere kulturel diversitet gennem forskellige initiativer, bidrager med en positiv tilgang som modpol til hadprædikanter og deres ide om et homogent Danmark.

I forsøget på at bekæmpe Islamofobi i Danmark er det særdeles magtpåliggende, at problemet anerkendes som tilstedeværende. Det kan gøres igennem evidensbaseret forskning og en dokumentering af hadprædikanternes forsøg på at skabe frygt og had mod danske muslimer. Manglen på fakta indikerer, at holdningen til muslimer baseres på fordomme skabt gennem den negative mediefremstilling, hvorfor det er særdeles vigtigt, at muslimer aktivt inddrages som kilder i emner, der berører Islam.

Country Profile

Country: Denmark

Type of Regime: Constitutional Monarchy

Form of Government: Parliamentarism

Ruling Parties: Danish Liberal Party, Liberal Alliance, and Conservative People's Party

Opposition Parties: Social Democratic Party, Danish Social-Liberal Party, Red-Green Alliance, Socialist People's Party, and Alternative.

Last Elections: Parliamentary election in June 2015. The Danish Liberal Party Venstre won the Prime Ministry post as the result of the win of the right-wing parties with 90 mandates and rules with a majority in the parliament with 52,3% of the votes.

Total Population: 5,8 million people (2018)

Major Languages: Danish

Official Religion: Protestant-Lutherans

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to the National Crime Prevention Centre, 67 religiously motivated incidents targeted Muslims in 2017. There is an increase of 11 incidents compared to 2016 and it represents almost half of all reported religiously motivated incidents in 2017.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the National Crime Prevention Centre, 223 incidents based on racism were reported in 2017, compared to 140 in 2016.

Major Religions (% of Population): Protestant-Lutheran members of the church (83,1 %), Islam (5,3 %), Catholics (0,6 %).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 306.000 people, 5,3%.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Dansk Islamisk Center (DIC), Dansk-Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse, Det Islamiske Trossamfund (DIT), Muslimske Ungdom i Danmark (Munida).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Centre for Danish Muslim Relations, Danish Documentation Centre for Discrimination of Muslims, Sameksistens.dk, SOS Racisme

Far Right Parties: Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti), Nye Borgerlige (The New Right), Stram Kurs (Tight line - it is not approved as a party yet).

Far Right Movements: Generation Identitær, SIAD (Stop Islamisation of Denmark), For Frihed (For Freedom, former PEGIDA).

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No. However the Danish People's Party wanted a ban on

halal meat in institutions; this was rejected by the Minister of Education Merete Riisager.

- **Minaret Ban:** No. The Danish People's Party suggested a minaret ban; however, it was rejected by voting in 2017.
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Yes. It went into effect on 1.08.2018.
- **Prayer Ban:** No. The proposal for a parliamentary resolution prohibiting prayer rooms in public educational institutions was rejected by voting in 2018.

Introduction

The concept of Islam and the mentioning of Muslims in 2018 were once again - and perhaps even more - presented as in contradiction with the unity of Danish society. This was witnessed in politics, legislation, and in the media discourse. The inflammatory rhetoric on Muslims in the political debates has created a demonising image of Muslims, which in recent years has contributed to a hateful approach to Muslims in the public sphere. The rhetoric has thus led to legalisation against the verbal assault of Muslims. Furthermore, the media's focus and use of unsuitable sources contribute to an imbalance in the representation of Islam.¹ Thus, there is a lack of nuance in both politics and media coverage.

The Danish Parliament introduced a new scheme for quota migration in 2017, which implies that the Minister of Immigration and Integration Inger Støjberg determines the number of refugees that can be resettled each year in Denmark. The minister used this decision in 2018, when she announced that for that year Denmark would not accept any refugees selected according to the United Nations quota.² Although quota refugees are not necessarily Muslims, it can be assumed that there is correlation due to the association between refugees and Muslims, since the majority of refugees in Denmark originate from Muslim countries. Accordingly, in 2017, a member of the Danish People's Party said that if quota refugees were to be received again, Christian refugees would be selected.³

Related to the inflammatory rhetoric it could be relevant to add some considerations on the negative discourse and the injudicious use of terminology in the public debate. This is discussed in the latest edition of the journal *SOS Racism* where it is claimed that populism maintains a picture of a divided society when terms like "Us vs. Them" are used. "Us" refers to the Danish people as a homogeneous group and "Them" is especially related to Muslims and is presented negatively. The division does not advocate for democracy, but for ethnocracy. In democracy, all citizens are equal in the eyes of the law, while in ethnocracy the power is placed in the hands of one particular group. Denmark is ruled by democracy, but ethnocracy grows in the form of discriminatory legislation (e.g. the "Ghetto Package")⁴ and the exaltation of the Danish ethnic group's culture by the law⁵ (e.g. hand-

1. Christian Birk, "Redaktør: Medierne Er For Dårige Til At Tale Med Muslimer I Debatten Om Islam", *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 21 April 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/debat/medierne-er-daarlige-til-tale-med-muslimer-i-debatten-om-islam>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. "Danmark Tager Ikke Imod Kvoteflygtninge I 2018", Udlændinge-og integrationsministeriet, <http://uim.dk/nyheder/2018/2018-10/danmark-tager-ikke-imod-kvoteflygtninge-i-2018>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

3. Frederik Fogde, "Hellere Kristne End Muslimske Flygtninge", *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 17 September 2017, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/df-oensker-kristne-kvoteflygtninge>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

4. Regeringen, "Regeringen Vil Gøre Op Med Parallelsamfund", 1 March 2018, <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/ghettoudspil/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

5. "Sprog og Handling", *SOS Racisme – Lige værdighed for alle*, p. 41.

shake)⁶ details on both examples will be given in later sections. This differentiation in the social debate and referring to Muslims with negative and exclusionary terms could be a problem for the cohesion of the Danish society. With the tendency to show Muslims in negative contexts, a normalisation of everyday discrimination of Muslims in Denmark has occurred.

Although the negative discourse gets extensive attention, and dialogue does not appear to be on the agenda, which contributes to a distorted picture of Muslims, there are many organisations and enthusiasts who are challenging the Islamophobic rhetoric. In particular, civil society, certain politicians, NGOs, and state-founded institutions appeared once again from a humanistic point of view and presented new ways to counter the hate.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In September 2018, the National Crime Prevention Centre published the third annual report on hate crimes. The report overviews episodes connected to hate crime reported in 2017; however, the Institute for Human Rights claims that victims rarely report hate crimes. One of the reasons for this is that they do not trust that the allegation will be taken seriously.⁷ Out of 142 registered religiously motivated violations, 67 incidents targeted Muslims, which represents almost half of the incidents in that category.⁸ It is a large proportion despite the fact that Muslims make up only 5,3% of the population.⁹ The report shows an increase of 11 incidents compared to 2016. A large share of the hate crimes against Muslims appeared in the form of hate speech and threats on the Internet.¹⁰ It is assumed that hate crimes categorised under ethnicity and hence motivated by racism could contain a proportion of incidents that may also have undertones of Islamophobia.

The annual report on hate crimes gives a few examples of some of the incidents that Danish Muslims have reported in 2017. For instance, a victim explains how he was asked by three men whether he was a Muslim, to which he answered “yes”. The

6. Christoffer Badse, “Misforhold Mellem Håndtrykkrav Og Tildeling Af Statsborgerskab”, Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 8 October, 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/misforhold-mellem-haandtrykkrav-tildeling-statsborgerskab>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

7. Nanna Magrethe Krusaa, “DEBAT: Ofre for hadforbrydelser er mere end tal. Der er mennesker bag”, Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 22 March 2018, p. 1, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/debat-ofre-hadforbrydelser-mere-tal-mennesker-bag>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

8. Nationalt Forbyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser I 2018”, Rigspolitiet, September 2018, p. 12.

9. Brian Arly Jacobsen, “Hvor mange muslimer bor der I Danmark”, Religion.dk, 8 February 2018, <https://www.religion.dk/religionsanalysen/hvor-mange-indvander-lever-i-danmark>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

10. Nationalt Forbyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser I 2018”, p. 15.

men attacked him, hitting him across the body. On a bus, another victim was told that he would be killed because he was a “fucking Muslim.”¹¹



Figure 1: Screenshots of a private video. Here one of the men can be seen, exhibiting threatening behaviour while pointing at the young woman in a niqab.

Another example of a religiously motivated incident took place in October 2018, when a young woman in a niqab was verbally assaulted and pushed by several men in a Danish supermarket (Figure 1). She was told that she was ugly and had to go home to her own country.¹² Subsequently, she was asked to leave the supermarket by an employee. She reported the case to the police; however, the investigation stopped in November on the basis that it would not be possible to identify the perpetrators (Figure 2). In a correspondence with the victim she stated that the reason for ending the investigation seems strange to her because the police are in possession of the original video where all faces are visible and uncensored.



Figure 2: Letter from the police declaring the case is closed.

In connection with another episode, in which a Muslim woman was verbally assaulted due to her hijab, Brian Arly Jacobsen, associate professor at the Department of Multicultural and Regional Studies at the University of Copenhagen, explains how it is especially Muslim women who are victims of hate crimes. He further believes that the public debate is pushing boundaries of what is acceptable to say. In particular, he believes that Danish politicians are responsible for the expansion of

11. Nationalt Forbyggelsescenter (NFC), “Hadforbrydelser I 2018”, p. 18.

12. Henrik Lund, “Kvinde I Niqab Overfuset I Århusiansk Varehus: Tag Lortet Af, Du Er Grim”, Århus Stiftstidende, 1 December 18, <https://stiften.dk/aarhus/Kvinde-i-niqab-overfuset-i-aarhusiansk-varehus-Tag-lortet-af-du-er-grim/artikel/546865>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

boundaries. Last year's legislative proposals related to Muslims contributed to the aggressive discourse.¹³

The Danish Human Rights Institute calls for a national action plan to ensure co-ordinated and long-term efforts to prevent and combat hate crimes. They refer to Sweden and Britain that already launched such a plan.¹⁴ At the same time, the police states that hate crimes have high priority with increased focus on registration and management in order to conduct operational efforts to minimise that type of crime. Police officers are educated in hate crimes as well. Hate crime has become a part of training in police education and is also offered as continuing education for employed police officers.¹⁵

Employment

Official data collecting based on religious belonging is illegal in Denmark, which makes it impossible to collect data from the state equality bodies about the discrimination of Muslims. Neither has civil society made any research on the topic. As a result, evidence of the discrimination of Danish Muslims is only to be found in reports and research about general discrimination in Denmark. Danish Muslims are primarily categorised as non-Western immigrants and descendants, because most Danish Muslims originate from non-Western countries including Turkey, Syria, Palestine, etc.

A research by Malte Dahl and Niels Krog that included 800 fictive job applications to 400 actual job postings, with an equal amount of fictive minority and majority male and female names, revealed the inequality in hiring based on ethnic stigma in Denmark. The paper that was published in the *European Sociological Review* in 2018 shows that the fictive job applicants with Middle Eastern-sounding names have to send 52% more applications to be invited for a job interview, even though they are as qualified and suitable for the job position as a fictive applicant with a 'Danish' name.¹⁶ The findings made big headlines such as "Danish Employers choose 'Mads' Instead of 'Muhammed'" when the research was just published; the headlines used the applicants' names to indicate their religious differences.¹⁷ Furthermore, the paper shows that for jobs that are

13. Olav Fonager, "Ekspert Efter Overfusning Af Hibba: Der Er Sket En Stigning I Antallet Af Hadforbrydelser", TV2/Fyn, 22 August 2018, <https://www.tv2fyn.dk/artikel/ekspert-efter-overfusning-af-hibba-det-er-sket-en-stigning-i-antallet-af-hadforbrydelser>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

14. Nanna Magrethe Krusaa, "DEBAT: Ofre For Hadforbrydelser Er Mere End Tal. Der Er Mennesker Bag", Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 22 March 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/debat-ofre-hadforbrydelser-mere-tal-mennesker-bag>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

15. "Langt Flere Sager Med Hadforbrydelser", Dansk Politi, <https://www.dansk-politi.dk/artikler/2018/september/langt-flere-sager-med-hadforbrydelser>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

16. Malte Rokkjær Dahl and Niels Krog, "Experimental Evidence of Discrimination in the Labour Market: Intersections between Ethnicity, Gender, and Socio-Economic Status", Department of Political Science, University of Copenhagen, 2018.

17. Kenneth Lund and Poul Aarøe Pedersen "Danske Arbejdsgivere Vælger 'Mads' Frem For 'Muhammed'", Politiken, 9 December 2016, <https://politiken.dk/debat/art5731006/Danske-arbejdsgivere-vaelger-'Mads'-frem-for-'Muhammed'>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

male-dominated, men with minority background are only invited to 19,5% of the applied postings, while 36,5% of the men with majority background and an equally qualifying application are invited. For job postings that are female-dominated, females with majority names are invited 34,5% of the time, while females with minority names are invited 29,1% of the time. This shows that prejudice and discrimination is worse for men with non-Western names than it is for the women of the same group.¹⁸

While discrimination in employment based on non-Western names is visible in research in Denmark, it is difficult to measure concrete discrimination based on Islamophobia. However, personal reports about Islamophobic experiences by Danish Muslims show that discrimination in employment is widespread among Danish Muslims. An article in *Information*, which was published in November 2018, shows examples of discrimination against Muslim workers in the health sector, where patients refuse to be treated by employees with darker skin, hijab, or Middle Eastern names.¹⁹ One of the examples in the article is based on a woman with Turkish roots, who works as a laboratory technician and has experienced Islamophobic discrimination because of her hijab. Several times her patients refused treatment, called her names, and provoked her with questions like why she is choosing “to choke herself” with reference to her hijab.²⁰ Another male doctor with Iraqi roots was told by a patient that “she’d rather die than get treated by him”, while another female patient didn’t want to shake his hand saying, “I can’t shake hands with someone like you”.²¹ The article also points out that incidents like these are ignored because racism and discrimination are not covered by official research. Furthermore, it claims that researchers in this field are turned down by research institutions because it is assumed that discrimination and racism are not big problems – yet experiences show that discrimination, racism, and Islamophobia are big and growing problems in Denmark.

Education

While there have not been any major issues about Islamic content in educational material at schools, a novel written by the former MP Özlem Cekic drew negative attention in January 2018. The novel for school children introduces the younger brother of the main character, who is going to be circumcised. This was heavily criticised by Danes for creating a “very circumcision-friendly and circumcision-positive picture” and was evaluated as being almost like propaganda.²²

18. “Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke – ActionAid Danmark: ”Dokumentation: Diskrimination i Danmark”, <https://www.ms.dk/arbejde/danmark/antidiskrimination/dokumentation>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

19. Merle Baere, “Jeg Vil Ikke Behandles Af Sådan En Som Dig”, *Information*, 24 November 2018, <https://www.information.dk/moti/2018/11/behandles-saadan>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*

22. Sally Frydenlund Larsen, “Den Blonde Pige Er Ikke Alene: Fire Gange Vi Diskuterede Krænkelser I 2018”, DR, 19 December 2018, https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/den-blonde-pige-er-ikke-alene-fire-gange-vi-diskuterede-krænkelser-i-2018?cid=soc_facebook_drnyheder_ddoastq9&fbclid=IwAR2VtIjbpAX_MTR7RY1g0ITFt9QN-PHQbauDFjHSdWfpyUU6OwcPr5F8QGNM, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

In January 2018, the Danish People's Party petitioned to ban prayer rooms in public educational institutions again. The motivation behind the petition was that Marie Krarup from the Danish People's Party claimed that prayer rooms support radical environments that impose social control on Muslim students.²³ The petition was not supported by other parties, but from specific politicians. The Danish People's Party reopened the petition in February 2018, when it was turned down again.²⁴ The Minister of Education Merete Riisager from the Liberal Alliance, and other politicians like Mattias Tesfaye from the Social Democrats, agreed with the petition, while several principals emphasised that there are no signs of group pressure, radicalisation, or social control.²⁵ The reason behind the petition was not seen as an actual problem by the educational institutions, where only 10 out of 37 universities answered positively to having a prayer room, and most of them were primarily used by Christian student organisations. A ban for Krarup means that Muslim students would not be able to have a room to pray in, while Christian students would be able to borrow a classroom during the breaks to eat together followed by communal prayer.²⁶

Later in the year, the focus on prayer rooms moved on to budget cuts in state aid for Free Muslim Schools where the majority of students have foreign background.²⁷ Since the federal inspection claimed to have found "Jihad-themed material" in the copy room at one of the schools, Muslim Free Schools were subjected to heavy surveillance.²⁸ Since then, the specific school was shut down, and other Free Schools have been subjected to austerity measures. In May 2018, the government inserted background checks and deprived state aid from several Free Schools that were not meeting the requirements of the Free School Law. This meant the closure of certain Muslim Free Schools.²⁹

In January 2018, the Ministry of Education published the *Knowledge-Supporting Report* about the democratic formation at youth education institutions, which was

23. Elisabeth Yskes, "DF Sætter Bederum På Dagsordenen", *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 24 January 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kirke-tro/df-saetter-bederum-paa-dagsordenen>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. Danish Parliament, "Motion B 57, Turned Down", 17 April 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/afslutningsforslag/b57/tidsplan.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

25. Morten Munkholm, "DF Foreslår Igen At Forbyde Bederum: At Skyde Myg Med Kanoner". *Berlingske*, 3 February 2018, <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/df-foreslaar-igen-at-forbyde-bederum-at-skyde-myg-med-kanoner>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

26. *Ibid.*

27. Danish Parliament, "Motion B 68, Lapsed", 28 March 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/afslutningsforslag/B68/bilag.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

28. Jens Anton Bjørnager and Henrik Jensen, "Københavns Skole Med Jihadbøger Blev Lukket – Nu Åbner Ny Friskole I Samme Lokaler", *Berlingske*, 14 July 2018, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/koebenhavns-skole-med-jihadboeger-blev-lukket-nu-aabner-ny-friskole-i-samme>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

29. Jens Anton Bjørnager, "Lukning Af Tre Muslimske Friskoler Bekymrer", *Berlingske*, 6 August 2018, <https://apps-infomedia-dk.ep.fjernadgang.kb.dk/mediarkiv/link?articles=e6d912ce>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

based on a survey conducted in September 2017 that was heavily criticised.³⁰ Many, both Muslim and non-Muslim students, teachers and principals denied any existence of such a problem and boycotted the survey claiming that it was made to examine social control targeting Muslim students.³¹ The survey was criticised because of controversial and one-sided questions like whether students experience that Muslim students are victims of social control and exclusion if they do not follow Islamic rules.³²

Politics

The majority of the current parliament constantly contributes to creating suspicion around Muslims and Islam; when politicians simultaneously choose words like ghettos and parallel societies, they use negative associations, thus linking them to the Muslim minority.³³ The year 2018 was marked by abusive opinions, negative terms, and exclusionary political campaigns targeting Muslims. Steen Petersen, former chairman of the Employment and Integration Committee in Faxe Municipality, urged the Spanish police to shoot migrants coming into Europe. After the controversial posting, he chose to resign.³⁴

Inger Støjberg, the Danish Minister for Immigration and Integration, created fear among the population when she wrote a blog post in summer 2018, where she claimed the Danish population was at risk when the Muslim minority was fasting during Ramadan. She claimed that it would cause practical, safety, and productivity challenges to modern Danish society when the Muslim minority would abstain from drinking and eating during the day. The news received a lot of attention, both in Denmark and internationally, and created debate and criticism as her claims were without scientifically substantiated data.³⁵

One of 2018's most controversial political campaigns originated from the Danish People's Party. A cartoon campaign had the following exclusionary message: "Drop your headscarf and become a member of Denmark" (Figure 3). The person on the drawing represents Martin Henriksen, a member of the Danish Parliament and one

30. Ministry of Education, "Ledere På Ungdomsuddannelserne Oplever Udfordringer Med Elever Med Udemokratiske Værdier", 31 January 2018, <https://www.uvm.dk/aktuelt/nyheder/uvm/2018/jan/180131-ledere-paa-ungdomsuddannelserne-oplever-udfordringer-med-elever-med-udemokratiske-vaerdier>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

31. Christian Birk, "Indsats Mod Religiøs Kontrol Møder Kritik", *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 14 March 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/danmark/indsats-mod-religioes-kontrol-moeder-kritik>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

32. Ministry of Education, "Vidensunderstøttelse af Dialogforum Om Demokratisk Dannelse På Ungdomsuddannelserne", Rambøll Management Consulting, (January 2018), p. 9, <https://gymnasieskolen.dk/sites/default/files/180131-Tabelrapport---demokratisk-dannelse-paa-ungdomsuddannelserne.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. Jette Møller, "Sprog og Handling", *SOS Racisme – Lige værdighed for alle*, Tidsskrift nr. 119, p. 6-8.

34. Thomas Albrektsen, "DF'er Trækker Sig Efter Kontroversielt Facebook-Opslag", *TV Øst*, 27 August 2018, <https://www.tv2east.dk/artikel/dfer-traekker-sig-som-formand-efter-kontroversielt-opslag-paa-facebook>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

35. Charlotte Price Persson, "Hvad Siger Forskningen Om Støjbergs Ramadan-Påstande?", *Videnskab.dk*, 23 May 2018, <https://videnskab.dk/kultur-samfund/hvad-siger-forskningen-om-stoejbergs-ramadan-paastand>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

of the most visible members of the Danish People's Party. In response, Jens Rohde, a member of the European Parliament for the Danish Social-Liberal Party, reposted the picture and wrote on his Twitter post, "Throw away your inner racist and join the Danish Social-Liberal Party."³⁶ Martin Henriksen participated in the TV program *Debatten* (The Debate) in December 2018 on the state-funded TV station DR2, where he stated that people should stop making it sound as if immigrants from Muslim countries have been an enrichment to the Danish economy.³⁷ The above-mentioned statement is discriminatory and contributes to the formation of a generalising, negative image of Muslims. In 2018, the Danish People's Party also demanded serving pork in schools and institutions. At the same time, they wanted a ban on halal meat in institutions;³⁸ however, this was rejected by the Minister of Education Merete Riisager.³⁹

In the September edition of the Danish People's Party's magazine, words related to Muslims, such as halal, Islam, Muslim were mentioned more than 12 times. The reference to Muslims occurs in a context of negative terms.⁴⁰ The New Right, a right-wing party founded in 2015, also does not hold back from negative terms about Islam and the Muslim minority in Denmark. Pernille Vermund, the chairman of the New Right, stated that no one who originates from a Muslim country that is over-represented in crime statistics should be able to obtain Danish citizenship.⁴¹ She also made it clear that assimilation is the criterion for obtaining Danish citizenship.⁴²



Figure 3: One of the pictures from the campaign of the Danish People's Party with the message "Drop your headscarf and become a member of Denmark".

36. Jens Rohde, Twitter, 4 September 2018, https://twitter.com/rohde_jens/status/1036897770253295617?lang=da, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

37. *Debatten*, "En Helt Ny Asylpolitik", DR2, 6 December 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/debatten/debatten-dr2/debatten-2018-12-06#!/37:01>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

38. "DF: Skoler Skal Servere Svinekød", *Folkeskolen.dk*, 30 May 2018, <https://www.folkeskolen.dk/636204/df-skoler-skal-servere-svinekoed>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

39. Undervisningsministeriet, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/spoergsmaal/s836/svar/1495292/1905579.pdf>, 2017-18 S 836 endeligt svar, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

40. *Dansk Folkeblad*, September 22. årgang, 5/2018, https://danskfolkeparti.dk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/DANSK-FOLKEBLAD-5-2018_web.pdf, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

41. Pernille Vermund, "Islam Er Ikke En Dansk Værdi", *Nye Borgerlige*, 24 August 2018, <https://nyeborgerlige.dk/islam-er-ikke-en-dansk-vaerdi/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

42. Pernille Vermund, "De Vil Ikke Være Danske", *Nye Borgerlige*, 19 December 2018, <https://nyeborgerlige.dk/de-vil-ikke-vaere-danske/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

A discussion took place when Kenneth Kristensen Berth, a member of the Danish People's Party, posted a picture of a cake that was made for the Muslim Eid and was for sale in Bilka (Danish chain of hypermarkets) on Facebook (Figure 4). He regarded the cake as an expression of an increasing Islamisation of Denmark, where Islam is increasingly occupying the public space. Several public figures and politicians responded to the criticism and expressed disagreement.⁴³



Figure 4: Kenneth Kristensen Berth's Facebook post on an Eid cake.

Media

In the wake of a new analysis in 2017 which concluded that the media lack nuances in dealing with Danish Muslims and Islam in general, Bent Dahl Jensen, who authored a study on the appearance of Muslims in the media, stated the need for Muslims to contribute to the debate. The Internet-based newspaper *Sameksistens.dk* compared seven newspaper articles about Islam and Muslims. The analysis concluded that it is more likely for politicians to be used as sources instead of Muslims. Similarly, organisations that represent only a very small proportion of Muslims get attention and, therefore, the majority of Muslims are not represented. Even though Bent Dahl Jensen encourages Muslims to participate in the debate, he also explains that some Muslims do not feel fairly treated: they are good enough to contribute when it comes to distancing from terrorism but not good enough in other contexts.⁴⁴

43. Emil Eller, "Bilka Efter Ballade Om Ramadan-Kage: Vi Har Kager Til Enhver Anledning", DR.dk, 18 June 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/bilka-efter-ballade-om-ramadan-kage-vi-har-kager-til-enhver-anledning>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

44. Christian Birk, "Redaktør: Medierne Er For Dårlige Til At Tale Med Muslimer I Debatten Om Islam", Kristeligt Dagblad, 21 April 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/debat/medierne-er-daarlige-til-tale-med-muslimer-i-debatten-om-islam>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Danish-Iranian Jaleh Tavakoli is known for her criticism of Islam, but when she wrote a post on her blog titled “Even Baby Sex Is Mainstream Islam”⁴⁵, she was met with resistance from certain media (Figure 5). The blog post was published in *Jyllands-Posten*, which is known for its anti-Muslim bias and their contribution to the Prophet Muhammed cartoons controversy in 2005. The news manager of Tv2 claimed, among others, that the post was generalising and deeply insulting to Islam. At the same time, he also emphasised that news platforms are responsible for the published posts containing a minimum of truth and complying with certain standards.⁴⁶

The image shows a screenshot of a blog post. At the top, there are two tabs: 'FORSIDE' and 'PREMIUM'. The title of the section is 'Debat'. Below this, the date and time are '03.10.2018 KL. 20:39' and the number of comments is '91'. A profile picture of Jaleh Tavakoli is shown next to her name. The main title of the post is 'Selv babysex er mainstream islam'. Below the title is a short paragraph: 'Når babysex er tilladt i mainstream islam, når en kvindes samtykke aldrig er nødvendig, og når det at blive voldtaget er en forbrydelse, har det betydning for muslimske mænds syn på kvinder.' At the bottom of the post, there are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Email, and Print. To the right of these icons are 'AA' and a folder icon. Below the social media icons, there are two tags: 'ISLAM' and 'LIGESTILLING'.

Figure 5: Jaleh Tavakoli’s blog post “Even Baby Sex Is Mainstream Islam”.

One of the major media events in 2018 that concerned Muslims was when a group of Muslims celebrated the Muslim Eid with a bonfire. The episode went viral in the news where it was alleged that they had violated a fire ban, which at the time was valid throughout parts of Denmark. The story became even more dramatic as the Muslims supposedly attacked the police with wooden sticks. “Den Korte Avis”, a

45. Jaleh Tavakoli, “Selv Babysex Er Mainstream Islam”, *Jyllands-Posten Debat*, 2 October 2018, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/blogs/jalehtavakoli/ECE10914384/selv-babysex-er-mainstream-islam/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

46. Lise Mailand, “Blogger Kæder Islam Og Pædofili Sammen: - Det Er Groft Formærmende”, *TV2 Presselogen*, 7 October 2018, <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2018-10-07-blogger-kaeder-islam-og-paedofili-sammen-det-er-groft-fornaermende>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Danish news blog, added fuel to the fire with fake news. The rhetoric they use about Muslims contributes to the alienation of the Muslim minority in Danish society. Many have claimed that the language is exclusionary when they use alienating terms and expressions in their articles such as “now it turns out that the ban obviously applies only to ordinary Danes and not to Muslims” and “so there is a difference between people in Denmark”. Aggressive Muslims can obviously break the rules that all of us must comply with”.⁴⁷ Subsequently, it appeared that the police had not been attacked and that the group of Muslims actually had been granted permission to have the bonfire.⁴⁸

The DR program *Debatten* (The Debate), which hosts debates about current news between several people with different attitudes to a given subject on a weekly basis, is one of the news platforms challenging anti-Muslim racism by letting people with a Muslim background present a fact-bound contribution. News debates like these help shed light on the image of Islam and Muslims in Denmark, and more and more highly educated and eloquent Muslims emerge in the debate - contrary to the media’s Muslim-critical propaganda.

Justice System

There has been a significant increase in legislative proposals, with the intention of restricting Muslim citizens’ freedom in recent years and 2018 was no exception. According to the Danish Documentation Centre for Discrimination of Muslims, a proposal or law is considered discriminatory against Muslims and restrictive towards Muslim citizens’ freedom - and human rights - when the background or purpose of the proposal or law is aimed at Muslims. This is expressed through political statements in the media in connection to the proposal’s presentation or by the proposal’s consideration in the parliament.⁴⁹

Since 2017, more than ten resolutions aimed at Muslims have been put forward in parliament. The majority of the resolutions were proposed by the Danish People’s Party. The resolutions cover different aspects of Muslim lifestyle, and include, for example, religious garments: “that citizens may not wear a headscarf on their driving license photograph for religious reasons” (rejected in 2018), “prohibiting the use of significant religious symbols for students and teachers in primary and lower secondary school” (rejected in 2018), and “a ban on all public employees from wearing religious headwear at work”. Some of the other resolutions are based on the limitation of Muslim citizens’

47. Poul Erik Andersen, “Rasende Muslimer Jog Politi Og Brandvæsen På Flugt – Trods Afbændingsforbud Havde De Tændt Bål For At Fejre Muslimsk Eid”, *DenKorteAvis.dk*, 17 June 2018, <https://denkorteavis.dk/2018/rasende-muslimer-jog-politi-og-brandvaesen-paa-flugt-trods-afbaendingsforbud-havde-de-taendt-baal-i-gribskov-for-at-fejre-muslimsk-eid/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

48. Ritzau / Nyheder, “Muslimer Tændte Bål Trods Forbud: Nu Kommer Politiet Med En Overraskende Indrømmelse”, *Ekstra Bladet*, 6 July 2018, <https://ekstrabladet.dk/112/muslimer-taendte-baal-trods-forbud-nu-kommer-politiet-med-overraskende-indroemmelse/7225255>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

49. “Den Lovgivende Magt”, *Dansk Dokumentationscenter for Diskrimination af Muslimer*, <http://dokumentationscenter.dk/dansk-lovgivning/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

freedom rights, such as “change of rules for student distribution at upper secondary schools”⁵⁰ and “a ban on prayer rooms at public educational institutions”.⁵¹

In addition, several new legislative proposals concerning Muslims and new adopted laws were presented in 2018. One of the more remarkable proposals was the proposal for changes to the law on day care. The substance of the proposal is based on the discrimination against Muslim children due to the deprivation of Muslim parents’ right to choose freely where their children will go to day care.⁵² The proposal was adopted by favourable vote in December.⁵³

Probably, the most discussed law was the burqa ban, which was put into practice in August 2018. The parties which supported the ban and voted for it include the Liberal Party of Denmark, the Conservative People’s Party, the Danish Social Liberal Party, the Danish People’s Party, and the Social Democrats.⁵⁴ However, it is estimated that only between 100 and 200 women wear burka/niqab in Denmark.⁵⁵ A violation of the ban triggers a fine of 1,000 Danish Kroner (134 EURO), and the fine will increase if the ban is subsequently violated again.⁵⁶ The Danish Institute for Human Rights views the ban as an intervention of the right to self-determination and freedom of religion.⁵⁷

In early 2018, the Danish government introduced a new set of laws to regulate life in low-income⁵⁸ and heavy Muslim enclaves, known as the “Ghetto Package”. Some of the proposals were rejected as being too radical, such as one saying that “ghetto children” should have curfew after 8 p.m. and should be fitted with electronic ankle bracelets.⁵⁹ The purpose of the Ghetto Package is claimed to be to reduce

50. “B 48 Forslag Til Folketingsbeslutning Om Ændring Af Reglerne For Elevfordeling På Gymnasierne”, Folketinget, 26 January 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/ beslutningsforslag/b48/index.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

51. “B 57 Forslag Til Folketingsbeslutning Om Forbud Mod Bederum På Offentlige Uddannelsesinstitutioner”, Folketinget, 22 February 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/ beslutningsforslag/b57/index.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

52. “Den Lovgivende Magt – Lovforslag”, Dansk Dokumentationscenter for Diskrimination af Muslimer, <http://dokumentationscenter.dk/dansk-lovgivning/lovforslag/2018-2019/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

53. “L7 Forslag Til Lov Om Ændring Af Dagtilbudsloven Og Lov Om En Børne- Og Ungeydelse”, Folketinget, 13 December 2018, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20181/lovforslag/l7/beh3/forhandling.htm#t68924C542233449782137DDB-3807CA3Atab2>(Access date: 3 September 2019).

54. “Afstemning nr. 452, 2017-18”, Folketinget, <https://www.ft.dk/samling/20171/afstem/452.htm>, (Access date: 3 September).

55. Jon Hornemann Hahn, “Få Muslimske Kvinder I Danmark Bærer Niqab Eller Burka”, *Bias*, 8 December 2018.

56. Rikke Gjøøl Mansø, “Nu Er Det Vedtaget: Fremover Udløser Det En Bøde At Bære Burka Og Niqab På Gaden”, *DR*, 31 May 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/nu-er-det-vedtaget-fremover-udloeser-det-en-boede-baere-burka-og-niqab-paa-gaden>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

57. Christoffer Basde, “Lovligt, Men Problematisk Tildækningsforbud”, *Institut For Menneskerettigheder*, 6 March 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/lovligt-problematisk-tildaekningsforbud>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

58. Regeringen, “Regeringen Vil Gøre Op Med Parallelsamfund”, 1 March, 2018, <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/ghettoudspil/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

59. Ellen Barry and Martin Selsø Sørensen, “In Denmark, Harsh New Laws for Immigrant Ghettos”, *The New York Times*, 1 July 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/01/world/europe/denmark-immigrant-ghettos.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

the effects of parallel society and create better integration. This should be done with, among others, the following initiatives: greater penalties for crime, less money from the public sector, and restrictions on how to raise children (school and day care, etc.) In total, there are 22 initiatives that are believed will contribute to achieving the government's desired goals.

Just before the end of the year, two new decisions were reached. The autumn's major political debate on the handshake was approved in December 2018. The government and the Danish People's Party voted for a change of law, which means that handshakes with the local mayor are mandatory at the citizenship ceremony if one wants to be a Danish citizen.⁶⁰ The law has the undertones of being aimed at Muslims because a share of Muslims refuse to shake hands with the opposite sex. The Danish Institute for Human Rights estimates there is risk of the European Court of Human Rights considering the handshake law as an indirect discrimination based on religion.⁶¹

By the end of 2018, a majority consisting of the Liberal Party of Denmark, the Liberal Alliance, the Conservative People's Party, and Danish People's Party voted for a new proposal to be adopted. In the future, the island of Lindholm is going to house deported criminal asylum seekers. Although the adoption does not directly concern Muslims, members of the Danish People's Party have referred to the island's new residents in a very unfortunate way. Erik Høgh-Sørensen, regional council member in Nordjylland, and parliamentary candidate for the Danish People's Party, wrote on a debate that "at Lindholm, pig should be on the menu. Every day. Morning, noon, evening. And for late night snack".⁶² The Danish People's Party also made a controversial video with an animated figure of a man with a dark complexion and Muslim headwear sailing to the island (figure 6).⁶³ The video was criticised and was accused of being indecent. Subsequently, the newspaper *Berlingske* published an article claiming that the government's plans for Lindholm have a poor prospect of being upheld by the Supreme Court's normal practice in this matter, and, in addition, will be contradictory to the European Convention on Human Rights.⁶⁴

60. Rasmus Lindegård and Johan Blem Larsen, "Håndtryk For Statsborgerskab: De Første Ni Vil Alle Give Hånd Ved Ny Ceremoni", DR, 20 December 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/politik/haandtryk-statsborgerskab-de-forste-ni-vil-alle-give-haand-ved-ny-ceremoni>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

61. Christoffer Badse, "Misforhold Mellem Håndtrykskrav Og Tildeling Af Statsborgerskab", Institut for Menneskerettigheder, 8 October 2018, <https://menneskeret.dk/nyheder/misforhold-mellem-haandtrykskrav-tildeling-statsborgerskab>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

62. Morten Madsen, "DF-Regionsrådsmedlem: De Skal Servere Svin Morgen, Middag Og Aften På Lindholm", Information, 17 December, 2018, <https://www.information.dk/indland/2018/12/df-regionsraadsmedlem-servere-svin-morgen-middag-aften-paa-lindholm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

63. Dansk Folkeparti, Twitter, 30 November 2018, <https://twitter.com/danskd1995/status/1068528638834798593?lang=da>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

64. Helene Kristine Holst, "Højesteret Trækker Tæppet Væk Under Regeringens Ønske Om At Gøre Tålte Ophold Utålelige", *Berlingske*, 30 December 2018, <https://www.berlingske.dk/politik/hojesteret-traekker-taepet-vaek-under-regeringens-oenske-om-at-goere>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 6: Screenshot of the video by the Danish People's Party showing an animated figure of a man with a dark complexion and Muslim headwear on an island.

Internet

“Danishness” has been and is still a very discussed subject. Especially in the last few years, it became a popular and an important topic for politicians, citizens, and minorities in Denmark.⁶⁵ The term is being used by politicians as a goal for the integration strategy, and minorities are being measured on their “Danishness” in order to be recognised as Danes. Non-Western minorities are specifically targeted, especially because some right-wing politicians are claiming that Muslim culture and religion is incompatible with “Danishness”. Therefore, the Internet is a very important tool for both the demand for “Danishness”, but also for the minorities who want to prove its proponents wrong by creating inclusive campaigns, hashtags, and other initiatives. While some of the hate is spread on different social media platforms, it is also cultivated in international forums like *4chan*, where “Danes share their hateful utterances and calls for violence” against minority groups including Muslims (figure 7 and 8).⁶⁶

65. Andreas Marklund, “Analyse: Der Har Aldrig Været Konsensus Om Danskheden Og De Nationale Værdier”, DR.dk, 3 November 2016, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/kultur/historie/analyse-der-har-aldrig-vaeret-konsensus-om-danskheden-og-de-nationale>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

66. P1 orientering, “Udryd Jøder, Muslimer Og Homoer’ - Her Dyrker Danske Unge Vold Og Had På Nettet”, DR.dk, 27 November 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/udryd-joeder-muslimer-og-homoer-her-dyrker-danske-unge-vold-og-had-paa-nettet>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 7: Headline from the homepage of the online newspaper of Denmark's Radio's: "Destroy Jews, Muslims and Gays".



Figure 8: Screenshot from anti-Islam pages on Facebook, where followers utter comments like "Tear the whole shit down with its content, thanks", with allusion to Muslims who may be inside the mosques.

Also, right-wing politicians like Pernille Vermund use their party websites to regularly share their othering opinions about Islam and Muslims, pointing out that neither Islam or Muslims are welcome in Denmark.⁶⁷ Mette Thiesen – also a politician from the New Right – used the Internet to share a false story on her Facebook page, claiming without any evidence that there were "armed sharia guards" at the annual open *iftar* event in the Town Square in Copenhagen (figure 9).⁶⁸ The story was shared by the wider public and created a negative atmosphere against Muslims until Thiesen was reported to the police by the security company for spreading false information about them. By that point in time, her Facebook post had already created a big storm among many citizens who did not question her story.

67. Pernille Vermund, "Det Har Alt Med Islam At Gøre", NyeBorgerlige www.nyeborgerlige.dk, 14 December 2018, <https://nyeborgerlige.dk/det-har-alt-med-islam-at-goere/>, (Access date: 17 December 2018).

68. Michael Højgaard and Oliver Kjaerhauge Okkels, "FAKTATJEK: Ingen Bevæbnede Sharia-Vagter På Rådhuspladsen", DR, 14 June 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/indland/faktatjek-ingen-bevaebnede-sharia-vagter-paa-raadhuspladsen> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

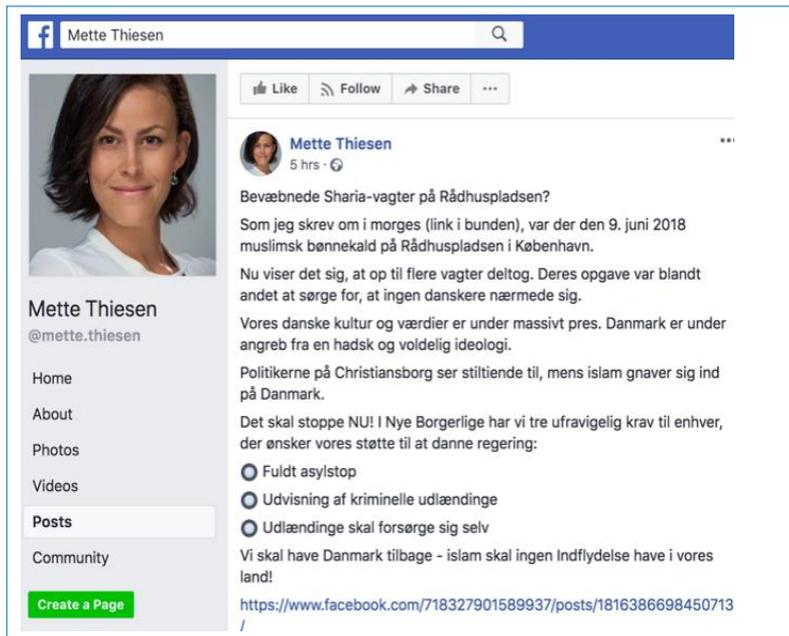


Figure 9: Mette Thiesen's Facebook post about "armed sharia guards".

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Lawyer Rasmus Paludan is behind the political wing Tight Line (Stram Kurs) with the motto, "There is no need to restrict immigration. There is a need for a big amount of Muslims to leave the country every year".⁶⁹ Paludan is known for his many provocative demonstrations with few participants where he openly insults Muslims, and has many viewers on his Muslim-targeting videos on social media.⁷⁰

The New Right politician Mette Thiesen is well known for her Islamophobic statements and postings on social media. In March 2018, she posted a video of (who she claimed to be) "young Muslim men who are making noise late on a Sunday night", followed by the headline "Harassment by Muslims has become an everyday thing!".⁷¹ Thiesen was later criticised by other politicians and the wider public for assuming without any proof that the event had a Muslim motive, simply on the basis of the ethnic appearance of the men.

The Minister of Immigration and Integration Inger Støjberg is another central figure who is known for her far right political views especially towards non-West-

69. Stram Kurs homepage, www.stramkurs.dk, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

70. Davis Buch and Keld Vrå Andersen, "Indvandrerkritisk Parti Går På Gaden Igen Og Igen - Med Det Er På Nettet, De Bliver Set", Tv2, 5 September 2018, <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2018-09-05-indvandrerkritisk-parti-gaar-paa-gaden-igen-og-igen-men-det-er-paa-nettet-de>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

71. Daniel Seistrup, "Dansk Politiker Delte Videoer På Facebook: Nu Føler Hun Sig Truet – Og Har Et Budskab Til Ukendte Unge Muslimske Mænd", BT, 27 March 2018, <https://www.bt.dk/danmark/dansk-politiker-delte-videoer-paa-facebook-nu-foeler-hun-sig-truet-og-har-et-budskab>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

ern immigrants and the controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed that is the wallpaper on her electronic devices.⁷² In December 2018, it emerged that Inger Støjberg together with the Minister of Education Merete Riisager from the Liberal Alliance “ordered an analysis of non-Western children of immigrant descendants from their officials, that doesn’t fulfil scientific standards”. It was revealed later in the same week that the report was misinterpreted and that they made the results of the report appear worse for the newspaper *Berlingske*, despite warnings by the officials.⁷³

SIAD (Stop the Islamisation of Denmark) is an organisation that is described as “extreme” by the Danish Security Service (PET). It is working diligently on creating hate against Danish Muslims since 2005 through demonstrations, flyers, blogposts, etc.⁷⁴ Their latest performance was when the former politician Özlem Cekic was going to give a speech at a church in January 2018, where she was met with a protests including banners, because of the fact that her new book included the concept of circumcision.⁷⁵

Another congregation that comes together on the notions of Islamophobia and xenophobia is the youth movement Generation Identitær that originates from the French movement Génération Identitaire. In August 2018, Rikke Louise Peters, who holds a PhD on the topic of political movements, analysed Generation Identitær as a movement aiming to make Islamophobia and xenophobia mainstream, targeting youth, and playing on anxiety about the demise of the European culture.⁷⁶

For Freedom (For Frihed) - former PEGIDA that was shut down because of its violent acts against Muslims - is another organisation that is mainly visible on Facebook with different supporter groups. For Frihed hosts demonstrations that are supported by Rasmus Paludan, the founder of Tight Line.⁷⁷ Groups on Facebook play an active role in spreading Islamophobia because they are open to a wide segment of society and are supported by thousands of followers and likes. An example among the many hate-mongering Facebook groups that agree with the purpose of For Free-

72. Astrid Mortensen, “Støjbergs Ipad-Baggrund Har Aflyst Vigtigt Møde”, Ekstra Bladet, 11 December 2018, <https://ekstrabladet.dk/nyheder/politik/dansktopolitik/stoejbergs-ipad-baggrund-har-aflyst-vigtigt-moede/7433393>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

73. Steffen Groth, “Et Politisk Bestillingsarbejde – Berlingske Som Megafon For Inter Støjberg”, POV, International. 12 December 2018, <https://pov.international/berlingske-megafon-stoeyberg/?fbclid=IwAR0SrSdnlQghLhXmLU-uCvYL6NPQaPLZ7bo9xKFzCdxpt9EGsqbK9SQ-7vHk>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

74. “Stop Islamisingen Af Danmark”, Siaddk Wordpress, <https://siaddk.wordpress.com/hvem-er-siad/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

75. Mette Skov Hansen, “Dannebrogflag Og Tilråb: Islamkritisk Forening Demonstrerede Mod Özlem Cekic Foran Kirke”, Kristeligt Dagblad, 20 January 2018, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kirke-tro/islamkritisk-forening-i-aktion-foan-kirke>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

76. Simon Valeur and Anna Gottschalck, “Indvandrerkritisk Bevægelse Sender Unge Danskere I Træningslejr I Frankrig”, Berlingske, 4 August, 2018, <https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/indvandrerkritisk-bevaegelse-sender-unge-danskere-i-traeningslejr-i-frankrig>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

77. For Frihed, www.forfrihed.dk (Access date: 3 September 2019).

dom is the group “NEJ Tak til moskeer I Danmark” (NO Thanks to mosques in Denmark), which is followed by more than 20.000 people (figure 10).⁷⁸

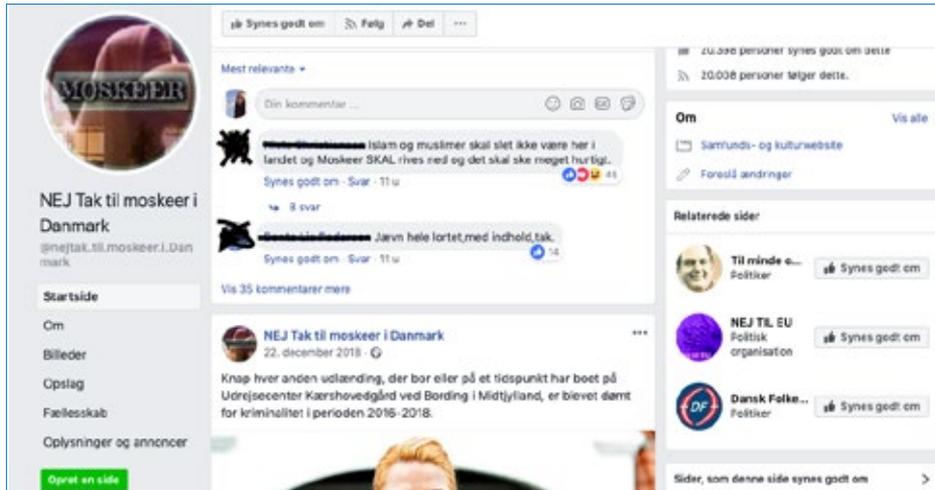


Figure 10: A screenshot from the “NO Thanks to Mosques in Denmark” Facebook group, with comments that encourage Danes to “tear down the mosques”.

There are also other individuals who are making an effort to create discriminatory, generalising, and stereotypical pictures of Islam and Muslims. Jaleh Tavakoli, mentioned previously, an Iranian-born author, debater, and blogger, often shares blogposts about Islam and Muslim immigration being “the death of Europe” on her blog or in her articles.⁷⁹ Others are the anonymous writers behind blogs like “Free Speech Blog”⁸⁰ (figure 11) or “Kulturradikalisme smadrer Danmark” (Cultural Radicalism Destroys Denmark).⁸¹ Free Speech Blog shares hate speech on its blogposts about Muslims with headlines like “It is okay to be Nazi-hipster, even though you live on Nørrebro” (a part of the city of Copenhagen that is known for its multiculturalism), while Kulturradikalisme I Danmark reposts negative, discriminating, and excluding articles and stories about Muslims in Denmark, attaching supportive comments from the blogger like “Islam does not stop before the Danes are destroyed” (figure 12).

78. NEJ Tak til moskeer i Danmark, Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/nejtak.til.moskeer.i.Danmark/?ref=py_c&eid=ARBhneGaTuxy_4tUmGAQgw7BiCVjyIxUMaltVx3aPMRzY5Emwffx2doapyIHIpvm1Qo-Qno5CeqhNj-U-, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

79. Jaleh Tavakoli, www.jaleh.dk (Access date: 3 September 2019).

80. Free Speech Blog, <https://fightthepowerwithfreespeech.blogspot.com>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

81. Kulturradikalisme smadrer Danmark, “Mette Thiesen: Hvorfor Tillader Politikerne Den Massive Muslimske Indvandring? Islam Stopper Ikke, Før Danskere Er Tilintetgjort.,” 5 May 2018, <https://ksdha.wordpress.com/2018/05/05/mette-thiesen-hvorfor-tillader-politikerne-den-massive-muslimske-indvandring-islam-stopper-ikke-foer-danskere-er-tilintetgjort/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

A central figure who is counteracting the negative staging of Muslims is the politician Zenia Stampe from the Danish Social-Liberal Party. She regularly shares on social media how some politicians like Pernille Vermund, Mette Thiesen, and Inger Støjberg target Muslims and creates awareness of the injustices against Muslims that are taking place in parliament (figure 13).⁸²



Figure 13: An example of Zenia Stampe's posts, where she encourages the Prime Minister to fire Inger Støjberg because of her hate preaching.

Another politician from the same party, Samira Nawa, started the #BarnAfEn-Flygtning (#ChildOfARefugee) campaign that was created to bring attention and recognition towards the many prosperous, well-educated, and contributing non-Western and Muslim children of refugees, as opposed to the negative picture spread by hateful politicians.⁸³

Denmark's Radio aired several documentaries about Islam and Muslims in 2018, which create a nuance to the general discourse about Muslims. One of the documentaries, "Why Do Muslims Celebrate Ramadan?", offered an objective understanding of the nature of Ramadan.⁸⁴ Another documentary program was "My Friend's Wild Transformation", which focused on two Danish high school friends. One of them converted to Islam and the other one tries to understand his transfor-

82. Stampe, Facebook, 21 May 2018, https://www.facebook.com/search/str/zenia+stampe+muslimer/keywords_bleneded_posts?esd=eyJlc2lkIjoiUzpfSTEyNz0NDM2MDYxNTA3NDoyMTc3MzczNTQ4OTQ1NDY4IiwicHNpZCI6eyIxMjczNDQzNjA2MTUwNzQ6MjE3Nz0ODk0NTQ2OCi6IIIV6cGZT-VEV5TnpNME5ETTJNRFl4TIRBM05Eb3INVGMzTXpjk5UUTRPVFEtKRZNCj9LCjJmN0IjoidG-V4dCIsImNzaWQiOiIwMDVmNTEzNWFmNWNjZWQ0NTk2M2ZkMTYwMwVjNzgzOCJ9, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

83. Samira Nawa, Facebook, 20 November 2018, https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/barnafenyflygtning?source=feed_text&cpa=HASHTAG&__tn__=*NK-R (Access date: 3 September 2019).

84. "Hvorfor fejrer muslimerne Ramadan?", Denmark's Radio, 18 May 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/ligetil/ligetil-paa-tegensprog/hvorfor-fejrer-muslimerne-ramadan> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

mation, while bringing in aspects that show the peace connected to Islam and the insider-perspectives of a Muslim.⁸⁵

Another initiative that aims to make coexistence possible is the website *Sameksistens.dk*. It publishes analyses with a focus on integration, coexistence, and barriers for freedom of religion.⁸⁶ The online newspaper publishes news and interviews about violations of freedom of religions, including the many civil and political violations against Muslims that occur in Denmark.

There are different initiatives on the Internet that create awareness of Islamophobic incidents. “Hate crimes against Muslims in Denmark” is a homepage created by the two journalists Julia Friis Jørgensen and Mikkel Sølvberg Abildgaard, who investigate why Muslims are the victims of hate crime in Denmark and focus on hate crimes against Muslims as a societal problem.⁸⁷

Another page is the “Danish Documentation Centre for Discrimination against Muslims” that aims to monitor and document the visible discrimination and hate crimes against Muslims in Denmark.⁸⁸ “SOS Racism” is a Danish NGO and a partner of international cross-political movements against racism in Europe.⁸⁹ The organisation prepares journals and events that aim to create compassionate understanding and bring attention to Islamophobia in Denmark. In this spirit, they published a journal in the fall of 2018.

The CFE (Centre for Prevention of Exclusion) is another NGO that works to create coexistence through integration and active citizenship.⁹⁰ They created the hate report portal *anmeldhad.dk* that includes both laws, rights, records, and personal stories connected to hate crimes.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2018 saw a significant increase in legislative proposals and new laws such as the burqa ban, the mandatory handshake, and the Ghetto Package, which are all laws that in practice restrict the freedom of Danish Muslims - an already stigmatised minority group in Denmark. The official statistics still show that Muslims are the most targeted minority group for religiously motivated hate crimes. The Islamophobic rhetoric, the negative portrayal of Muslims, their exposure to

85. “Min Vens Vilde Forvandling”, Denmark’s Radio, 7 December, 2018, <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/min-vens-vilde-forvandling/min-vens-vilde-forvandling-2/min-vens-vilde-forvandling-1-2>, <https://www.dr.dk/tv/se/min-vens-vilde-forvandling/min-vens-vilde-forvandling-2/min-vens-vilde-forvandling-1-2#1/00:00> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

86. Sameksistens.dk, <https://sameksistens.dk/om-os/> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

87. “Hadforbrydelser Mod Muslimer I Danmark”, Forbrydelser mod Muslimer, <https://friisjulia.wixsite.com/hadforbrydelser?lipi=urn%3Ali%3Apa>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

88. Dokumentationscenter.dk, <http://dokumentationscenter.dk/om-dcm/> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

89. SOS Racisme, <https://sos-racisme.org/>, http://sosracisme.dk/?Om_os (Access date: 2 September 2019).

90. Anmeld Had, www.anmeldhad.dk (Access date: 3 September 2019).

derogatory and insulting statements by politicians have spread to wider society by the media and the Internet, which bring to the forth certain politicians as leading figures in the Islamophobic discourse in Denmark. One of the best ways to challenge the Islamophobic rhetoric occurs when civil society unites and presents new ways to counter the hate; 2018 witnessed several such moments through different initiatives. Another effective way is when various organisations and scientists make an effort to create research and expose evidence-based facts countering the prejudices of populism and the attempts to create fear and hatred. This also indicates the need of an informed society that can act responsibly against the hate speech amplified by the media and politicians. Talking *about* Muslims and mocking them through politics, media, and society should be replaced by cooperative solutions brought *with* Muslims included in the process, both academics and members of civil society.

Some solution-oriented policy recommendations are the following:

- The focus should be shifted from talking *about* Muslims to talking *with* Muslims by including them actively as a source of knowledge when dealing with different aspects of Islam. The media must take responsibility and involve the Muslim minority in nuanced and knowledge-based media coverage, instead of contributing to an “Us and Them” division of society where Muslims are incompatible with “Danishness”.
- Muslims should be encouraged to participate in debates. It is necessary for Muslims to take responsibility and seek to contribute by bringing nuances to the debates. This is desirable in order to create a debate based on facts instead of prejudices.
- Society must recognise the presence of Islamophobia, and the fact that Muslims are being stigmatised and discriminated in Denmark. An action plan must be implemented to counter the hate.
- Academic studies on Islamophobia in Denmark in different fields such as employment, education, and the justice system, and its effects on society should be researched, so the hatred can be identified, articulated, and countered.
- Challenges associated with Islamophobia should be studied by national agencies so that the negative discourse of hatred against Muslims and the effects of this hatred on Muslims, can be combated or prevented, aiming to make peaceful coexistence possible.
- The focus on discrimination and hate crimes with Muslims as victims should be intensified by the national police so that the problem can be addressed and not neglected by politicians. More funds should be allocated in order to pursue the cases, which may indirectly encourage more people to report hate crimes, as it creates a message that there are consequences for this sad trend.

- Initiatives that may contribute to changing the negative public discourse on Muslims and non-Western minorities should be supported and co-founded by the Danish state.
- Civil society should unite in order to counteract Islamophobia; unity between Muslim and non-Muslim civilians will counteract the stereotyping and prejudices against Muslims.
- Finally, a clear encouragement is necessary both towards the Danish majority society and the Muslim minority to meet each other and interact with each other so that the views on each other are based on facts and not prejudices. There should be a vigorous attempt to create tolerance and understanding of each other's differences.

Chronology

- **09.01.2018:** Özlem Cekic is criticised for including content about circumcision in her new educational children's book.
- **24.01.2018:** Marie Krarup requests to ban prayer rooms in educational institutions by claiming they impose social control.
- **31.01.2018:** The Ministry of Education publishes a *Knowledge-Supporting Report* regarding youth education institutions, which includes stigmatising questions about Muslims.
- **22.03.2018:** The Human Rights Institute calls for a national action plan to ensure co-ordinated and long-term efforts to prevent and combat hate crimes.
- **08.05.2018:** The Ghetto Package's financial framework is set. Its purpose is declared to be to reduce parallel society and create better integration with, among others, the following initiatives: greater penalties, less money from the public sector, and restrictions on how to raise children (school and day care, etc.).
- **21.05.2018:** Inger Støjberg claims that it is a risk for the Danish population when the Muslim minority fasts during Ramadan.
- **14.06.2018:** Mette Thiesen makes a false accusation against the Muslim *iftar* event claiming armed sharia guards are participating.
- **16.06.2018:** A group of Muslims who have lit a bonfire are accused of violating a fire ban and of attacking the police. The media goes crazy. It turns out that the police were not attacked and the Muslims had been granted permission to light the fire.
- **17.06.2018:** Kenneth Kristensen Berth considers an Eid cake sold in supermarkets as a sign of the increasing Islamisation of Denmark.
- **01.08.2018:** The burqa ban enters into force.

- **26.08.2018:** Steen Petersen urges Spanish police to shoot migrants coming into Europe.
- **03.09.2018:** The Danish People's Party launched a new political campaign with the exclusionary message: "Drop your headscarf and become a member of Denmark".
- **24.09.2018:** The third edition of the annual report on hate crime by the National Crime Prevention Centre is published.
- **04.10.2018:** A woman wearing a niqab is verbally assaulted and pushed by several men in a Danish supermarket.
- **12.12.2018:** Inger Støjberg and Merete Riisager deliberately misinterpreted, worsened and misrepresented the results of an analysis of non-Western children of immigrant parents.
- **13.12.2018:** A proposal to change the law on day care is adopted by voting. The law means a deprivation of Muslim parents' right to freely choose where their children go to day care.⁹¹
- **19.12.2018:** Pernille Vermund states that assimilation is the criterion for obtaining the Danish citizenship.
- **19.12.2018:** It is decided, by voting, to allocate money to Lindholm, which should house deported criminal asylum seekers in the future.
- **20.12.2018:** Law requiring handshakes in citizenship ceremonies passes.

91. "Den Lovgivende Magt – Lovforslag", Dansk Dokumentationscenter for Diskrimination af Muslimer, <http://dokumentationscenter.dk/dansk-lovgivning/http://dokumentationscenter.dk/dansk-lovgivning/lovforslag/2018-2019/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ESTONIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

SILVER STÖUN

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Executive Summary

According to the latest census in Estonia, there are 1.508 people who define their religious affiliation as Muslim. Thus, Estonia has one of the smallest Muslim communities in Europe. Although the Muslim community in Estonia has a long history and is open to new members and people interested in Islam, the community activities are generally not so well known to the public.

The Muslim community is mainly reflected in the media within the framework of various events aimed at introducing Islamic culture and religion to the wider public. To a lesser extent, it is featured in cases where an act of vandalism has been committed against the community or its individual members. However, as the Estonian Islamic community is small, such attacks are not frequent. Verbal and physical attacks are also exceptional and they are usually committed by people under the influence of alcohol, rather than by members of extreme right movements.

In 2018, there were no significant Islamophobic incidents highlighted in the media or registered by the authorities. The most serious incident in 2018 was an act of vandalism on the building of the Estonian Islamic Centre in which the facade of the building was covered with incomprehensible text that could be considered Islamophobic.

Local law allows the practice of Islam without imposing any special restrictions. There are no bans on wearing a hijab or a burka. According to the legislation, in order to slaughter a farm animal for a religious purpose, a religious association must have the relevant permit.

Although the media doesn't represent the local Muslim community in a negative or Islamophobic way, the articles about the attacks or incidents committed by Muslims in other European Union member states still sow mistrust in the general population. In addition, the attitude of the public towards Muslims is influenced by the negative statements made by opinion leaders and politicians on general migration issues, which often refer to immigration problems in other member states. Although such statements are not necessarily hostile and are not directed directly at Muslims living in Estonia, they do indirectly affect the welfare and sense of security of the local Muslim community.

Kokkuvõte

Eestis elab viimase rahvaloenduse järgi 1508 inimest, kes määratlevad enda religioosset kuuluvust moslemina. Seega on Eestis üks väiksemaid moslemikogukondi Euroopas, mille liikmed on enamjaolt tatarlased, aserid, kasahhid ja usbekid. Kuigi Eesti moslemikogukond on pika ajalooga ning avatud liitujatele ja huvilistele, ei ole kogukonna tegemised üldsusele reeglina teada. Peamiselt leiab moslemikogukond kajastust erinevate ürituste raames, mille eesmärk on tutvustada islami kultuuri ja religiooni laiemale avalikkusele. Vähem aga nendel juhtudel, kui kogukonna vastu on toime pandud vandalismiakt või rünnatud selle liikmeid. Kuna Eesti islamikogukond on väike, ei ole sellised rünnakud aga sagedased. Mõnedel juhtudel on soditud näiteks Eesti Islami Keskuse maja fassaadi. Ka verbaalsed ja füüsilised rünnakud on erandlikud ning need on toime pandud pigem alkoholihoobes inimeste, mitte aga paremäärmuslike liikumiste poolt. Islamofoobseid intsidente üldiselt viimase aasta jooksul esinenud ei ole, või siis ei ole nad olnud sedavõrd tõsised, et neid oleks eraldiseisvalt registreeritud. Samuti lubab kohalik seadusandlus praktiseerida islami usku ilma erilisi piiranguid seadmata. Kuigi meedia otseselt kohalikku moslemikogukonda negatiivses ega islamofobses valguses ei kujuta, heidavad selle siiski varju artikkelid, mis käsitlevad moslemite poolt toime pandud rünnakuid või intsidente teistes Euroopa Liidu liikmesriikides. Lisaks sellele mõjutavad üldsuse hoiakut moslemite osas arvamusiidrite ning poliitikute rändeteemalised negatiivsed väljaütlemised, mis pahatihti viitavad teiste liikmesriikide immigratsioonialastele probleemidele. Kuigi sellised väljaütlemised ei ole vaenu õhtuavad ega otseselt suunatud Eestis elavate moslemite vastu, mõjutavad nad siiski kaudselt ka kohaliku moslemikogukonna heaolu ja turvatunnet.

Country Profile

Country: Republic of Estonia

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: Centre Party, Social Democrats, Pro Patria (coalition),

Opposition Parties: (up to 29.04.2019) Estonian Reform Party, Conservative People's Party of Estonia, Estonian Free Party

Last Elections: 2015 Legislative Election (Estonian Reform Party: 30 mandates, Centre Party: 27 mandates, Social Democratic Party: 15 mandates, Pro Patria and Res Publica Union: 14 mandates, Estonian Free Party: 8 mandates, Conservative People's Party of Estonia: 7 mandates – Total: 101), 2016 Presidential Election (Kersti Kaljulaid was elected president of the Republic of Estonia with 81 votes in the parliament in the first round of election); 2017 Municipal Council Elections (Centre Party: 27,3%, Reform Party: 19,5 %, Social Democratic Party: 10,4%, Pro Patria and Res Publica Union: 8%, Conservative People's Party of Estonia: 6,7%, Estonian Greens: 0,8%)

Total Population: 1,3 million people (estimated in 2018)

Major Languages: Estonian

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: There are no available statistics on Islamophobia.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (29 %), No religion (54 %)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 1.508 (0,14%) in 2011 (according to Statistics Estonia) (estimated maximum in 2018: 3.000)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Estonian Islamic Centre, Estonian Islamic Congregation

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: NGOs that focus, amongst other things, on equal treatment of Muslims and other minorities in Estonia are the Estonian Human Rights Centre, the Estonian Refugee Council, and the Integration Foundation.

Far Right Parties: N/A

Far Right Movements: Soldiers of Odin

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No. According to the Animal Protection Act, to slaughter a farm animal for a religious purpose, a religious association must obtain the relevant permit.
- **Minaret Ban:** No

- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The Estonian Muslim community is relatively small. Historically the biggest Muslim minority have been the Tatars, who migrated to Estonia in the early 18th century under the rule of Tsarist Russia. Mostly they were military men who settled in the country after their army service had ended. During the Soviet rule, practicing Islam publicly was strongly prohibited. It was only in the end of the 1980s that the Islamic community re-established the Estonian Islamic Congregation. The congregation mainly comprises of Tatar, Azerbaijani, Kazakh, and Uzbek minorities and also of native Estonians. Moreover, it is one of the few congregations where both Sunni and Shia Muslims coexist side by side.

According to the 2011 census, there were 1.993 Tatars living in Estonia, which is slightly less than in the beginning of the 20th century. The census indicated that there are 1.508 people in Estonia who describe themselves as Muslims; however, it is highly probable that the actual number is somewhat higher (around 2.000). This situation can partly be explained by the fear of local Muslims to share the information about their religious convictions or by the reluctance to give out personal details to public officials. Also there is a significant number of Muslim students and persons with temporary residence permits who are not included in the statistics and who visit the local Islamic Centre rarely due to lack of time, fear of publicly showing their religious convictions, or weak religious ties.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

There is no precise statistical data which would give a profound and comprehensive overview of anti-Muslim hate crimes. In most of the cases, incidents that concern the entire Muslim community in Estonia or refugees and asylum seekers from Muslim countries are covered by mainstream media. Incidents that occur on a personal level may easily stay unreported and therefore undocumented. In such cases, the local Muslim community can only refer to separate incidents and attacks against their community members that they are aware of. According to the representative of the Estonian Islamic Centre, there have been only few unrelated cases of verbal discrimination based on religious beliefs and one physical attack that was reported several years ago. Verbal discrimination in public space is considered also rare and the perpetrators are usually drunk individuals. Inappropriate and anti-Muslim comments can mostly be found in the commentary sections of different online media outlets, but not in the articles themselves.

In 2018, an anti-Islam slogan was written on the front façade of the Estonian Islamic Centre in Tallinn. The slogan contained the message, “Bomb it! Isolated Islam,

don't remember their sins? In God we trust. Why?" The Islamic Centre personnel notified the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board which started the procedures in order to find the perpetrator of the act of vandalism.¹

Employment

According to the representative of the Estonian Islamic Centre, there have been no reported cases of discrimination of Muslims in the job market. On the contrary, business owners are willing to employ foreigners including those with a Muslim background. The major issue in finding a job is not related with the "Muslimness" of a person but with sufficient Estonian language skills. It has been noted, however, that it is more difficult for beneficiaries of international protection with Muslim background to find rental apartments.² Those have also been cases dating back to the migration crisis in Europe in 2015 and 2016.

Education

There is no Islamophobic content that has become part of any curricula, textbooks, or any other educational materials. The educational material composed and provided by state authorities (e.g. Ministry of Education and Research) is unbiased and aims to give information without any prejudice towards Islamic teachings and religion.

Politics

There have been no comprehensive political campaigns directly aimed against the Estonian Islamic community nor Islam in general. The Conservative People's Party of Estonia, however, has used anti-Islamic rhetoric highlighting the negative incidents involving Muslims in other EU member states. Also among the party's public meetings and rallies there have been signs that could be considered anti-Islamic in their nature. Such a case was detected at a public demonstration against the UN's Global Compact for Migration. A supporter of the Conservative Party held a banner with a silhouette of a Muslim city with several minarets. Next to the image was written "Is this the new Tallinn?"³ The message strongly indicates the fear of the Islamisation of Europe. In this manner, it spreads discord and mistrust among the Estonian population, and is, therefore, highly deplorable.

1. Hanneli Rudi, "Piltuudis: Vandaalitsemine Eesti Islami Keskuse Juures", Postimees, 17 November 2018, <https://www.postimees.ee/6456040/piltuudis-vandaalitsemine-estis-islami-keskuse-juures>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

2. Samal Teemal, "Eestis Vohab Rassism? Moslemid Hädas Eestis Korterit Üürimisega", Õhtuleht, 7 July, 2015, <https://www.oh tuleht.ee/684779/eestis-vohab-rassism-moslemid-hadas-estis-korterit-uurimisega>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

3. Tõnis Saarts, "Keskerakond ja Reformierakond Loovutavad EKRE-Le Kaptenisilda", Postimees, 7 January 2019, https://arvamus.postimees.ee/6493625/tonis-saarts-keskerakond-ja-reformierakond-loovutavad-ekre-le-kaptenisilda?_ga=2.115707712.75813530.1546950428-2134964196.1476700320, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Media

The main topics covered by the Estonian mainstream media in 2018 concentrate predominantly on incidents in other member states. The topics concerning Islam focused mainly on migration from Islamic countries and terrorist attacks committed by Muslims. There was also coverage of Islamophobic incidents in other member states, e.g. right-wing extremists' attacks on Muslims. Such articles are mostly objective and in coherence with good journalism practice or "code of ethics". There are only a few online media publications that can be considered biased when it comes to covering migratory and Islamic content. One such is *Uued Uudised* (New News) which covers migration and Islamophobic issues mainly from the viewpoint of the Conservative People's Party. The second conservative online news portal is *Objektiiv* (Objective), which concentrates on the Islamisation of Europe and threats of uncontrolled migration to Europe and Estonia. Most of the Islamophobic content can be found in the commentary sections of different online news portals covering migratory and Islamic topics. Such comments are usually posted by individual readers as reactions to the articles and may contain anti-Islamic slogans or viewpoints.

Justice System

There have been no changes in legislation nor regulations in Estonia in 2018 that are connected to Islamophobic ideology.

Internet

There are no Internet webpages or initiatives that regularly spread Islamophobic content. Islamophobic content can only be found in the commentary sections of different online news portals and public and/or private social media accounts e.g. Facebook page "Женщины Против Исламизации Прибалтики"⁴ (Women against the Islamisation of the Baltics).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

There are no central figures nor institutions that concentrate *per se* on Islamophobic campaigns or stir up anti-Islamic debates. The figureheads of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia use Islamophobic statements in public debates and interviews, but mostly do so in the context of general anti-migration issues. The agenda of the party foresees a conservative and controlled migration policy. In defending their political views on migration issues, the members of the party often use extreme examples of crimes committed by Muslims in other EU member states, such as terrorist attacks, sexual assaults, and alleged practicing of Sharia law while ignoring

4. Женщины Против Исламизации Прибалтики (Women against the Islamisation of the Baltics), Facebook, [https://facebook.com/ Женщины-Против-Исламизации-Прибалтики-1570880219869723/?fref=nf](https://facebook.com/Женщины-Против-Исламизации-Прибалтики-1570880219869723/?fref=nf) (Access date: 3 September 2019).

national legislation. The most active members who use such examples are the party leader Mart Helme, and Martin Helme and Jaak Madison who the party's board members are elected to the Estonian Parliament. Although not in 2018, Kristiina Ojuland, who is the chairman of the Party of People's Unity, has also stood out with her anti-Islamic statements mostly speaking out against mass migration to Estonia and other EU member states. In 2016, she started a Facebook page “Женщины Против Исламизации Прибалтики”⁵ (Women against the Islamisation of the Baltics) aimed at the Russian-speaking population and mostly containing Islamophobic articles and comments in the Russian language.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

There are no distinguishing initiatives in Estonia that are specifically designed to combat anti-Muslim racism. Nevertheless, there are general integration initiatives and measures which, among other things, aim to increase the cohesion of people with different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

The general objective of the integration policy in Estonia is to increase social cohesion and ensure the social inclusion of people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. The development plan “Integrating Estonia 2020”⁶ serves as the basis for the integration policy that will be carried out in the period 2014–2020. Its aims are:

- To increase the cohesion of society
- To increase the competitiveness of the Republic of Estonia
- To ensure security
- To preserve the Estonian language and culture
- To preserve the culture and language of the ethnic minorities
- To ensure increasing tolerance towards different groups of society
- To ensure a stronger civic identity

There is also the possibility for newcomers (including Muslim immigrants) to participate in the adaptation programme⁷ (also referred to as “welcoming programme”) which is offered to support the migration process of newly arrived immigrants in Estonia, their rapid and convenient adaptation, and the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for independent living.

Such measures and programmes have a crucial part not only in integrating newcomers to Estonian society, but also helping to increase tolerance in society and, among other things, reducing anti-Muslim sentiment.

5. Ibid.

6. “Integrating Estonia 2020”, Ministry of Culture, <https://www.kul.ee/en/integrating-estonia-2020>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

7. “Welcoming programme”, Riigi Teataja, <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/525062015003/consolide>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Since there is no strong anti-Muslim sentiment in Estonia, it is difficult to give definitive recommendations that would specifically tackle the issue of Islamophobia.

According to the representative of the Estonian Islamic Centre, the local Muslim community lives quite peacefully and is open to everyone who wishes to know more about Islamic culture and religion. Although the Islamic Centre does not hold public information campaigns about Islam, the representative highlights the necessity of dialogue between the general population and the local Muslim community in order to increase awareness.

The main recommendation in the context of Estonia - also mentioned by the representative of the Islamic Centre - is to stop generating artificial problems and stop using anti-Islamic statements as a means of promoting populist ideas regarding anti-immigration agendas by conservative political parties. Such populist statements cause discord and mistrust in the general population not only towards the historical Estonian Muslim community but also towards Muslim newcomers, e.g. students, researchers, specialists, asylum seekers, etc.

Chronology

- **15.11.2018:** An anti-Islam slogan was written on the front façade of the Estonian Islamic Centre in Tallinn. The slogan contained the message “Bomb it! Isolated Islam, don’t remember their sins? In God we trust. Why?” The Islamic Centre personnel notified the Estonian Police and Border Guard Board who started the procedures in order to find the perpetrator of the act of vandalism.⁸
- **12.12.2018:** Minister of Justice Urmas Reinsalu stated, “European security must be protected and Islamic extremism that exacerbates violence must be rooted out of Europe!”⁹

8. Rudi, “Piltuudis: Vandaalitsemine Eesti Islami Keskuse Juures”, Postimees, 17 November 2018, <https://www.postimees.ee/6456040/piltuudis-vandaalitsemine-est-iislami-keskuse-juures>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

9. Käämer Lennart, “Reinsalu: Islamiterror Tuleb Euroopast Välja Juurida! Helme: Vastutus Lasub Euroopa Poliitikutel”, Oeobjektiv, 12 December 2018, <https://objektiiv.ee/reinsalu-islamiterror-tuleb-euroopast-valja-juurida-helme-vastutus-lasub-euroopa-poliitikutel/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
FINLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

A number of studies, surveys, and news in 2018 tell us that Islamophobia continues to be widespread in Finland. One of these surveys published in May by the Pew Research Centre, revealed that almost two-thirds (62%) of those surveyed felt that Islam is incompatible with the culture and values of Finland. The knife attack in August 2017 by a Moroccan asylum seeker, continued to impact the Muslim community negatively. Last year's hate crime report, published by the Finnish Police University College, confirms that Muslims and Afghans were the most frequent victims. Other factors that have fuelled anti-Muslim sentiment is the entry of 32,476 mostly Iraqi and Afghan asylum seekers to the country. The Muslim community was also impacted by sexual assault cases in Oulu by suspected **people of Muslim origin**. A case in point is the city of Kemi, located about 100 kilometres north of Oulu, where the small Iraqi community, numbering between 50 and 70, alleges that they are too scared to leave their homes alone in the evening. Kemi is also the founding home of the far right vigilante group, the Soldiers of Odin. A Red Cross official told asylum seekers two years ago not to leave their homes on Saturdays after 8 p.m. After the Christchurch attack on March 15, the **Islamic Society of Northern Finland** of Oulu, decided to place guards from their congregation outside the mosque during Friday prayers since the police would not grant such protection.

Despite these matters, there have been some positive developments. In October, the former editor of Islamophobic news portal MV-lehti Ilja Janitskin was sentenced to a 22-month prison term and forced to pay compensation for fake news, copyright infringement, racist harassment, and defamation. Another important matter that will impact anti-racism positively is a decision by the Turku appeal court to uphold an earlier court decision to ban the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL) and Pohjoinen Perinne, the fund-raising arm of the neo-Nazi group. Moreover, the National Board of Education has taken steps to combat hate speech by tackling social exclusion at schools. Even so, the jury is still out on how effective these measures are in tackling the ever-rising Islamophobia.

Tiivistelmä

Useat tutkimukset, mielipidetutkimukset ja uutiset vuodelta 2018 osoittivat, että islamofobia on yhteiskunnallinen sairaus myös Suomessa. Yksi näistä tutkimuksista, jotka PEW- tutkimuskeskus julkaisi toukokuussa 2018, osoitti, että lähes kaksi kolmasosaa (62 %) tutkituista suomalaisista katsoi, että islam on ristiriidassa Suomen kulttuurin ja arvojen kanssa. Elokuussa 2017 nuori marokkolainen turvapaikanhakija puukotti siviilejä Turussa, ja vaikeuttaa yhä muslimien ja suomalaisten rinnakkaiselo. Poliisiammattikorkeakoulun viime vuonna julkaisema viharikosraportti osoitti, että muslimit ja afgaanit ovat suurin viharikoskohde. 2015 Suomeen saapui ennätyksellisen paljon, 32476 Irakin ja Afganistanin turvapaikanhakijoita, ja heidän tulonsa ruokki islamofobiaa Suomessa. Suomi yrittää ryhtyä konkreettisiin toimiin tämän ongelman ratkaisemiseksi, varsinkin vihapuheiden osalta. Lokakuussa 2018, islamofobisen MV-lehden sen aikaiseksi omistajaksi oikeudessa tulkittu Ilja Janitskin tuomittiin vankilaan 22 kuukaudeksi, ja pakotettiin maksamaan isoja korvauksia valeuutisista, tekijänoikeusrikkomuksista, rasistisesta häirinnästä ja kunnianloukkauksista. Toinen tärkeä asia, joka vaikuttaa myönteisesti muslimiväestöön Suomessa, on Turun hovioikeuden päätös vahvistaa aikeisempi käräjäoikeuden päätös lakauttaa Pohjoismainen Vatsarintaliike ja Pohjoinen perinne, jotka määrittelevät itsensä kansallissosialistisiksi ja vallankumouksellisiksi tahoiksi. Myös Opetushallitus on ryhtynyt toimiin puuttuakseen kouluissa vihapuheisiin, torjumalla sosiaalista syrjäytymistä. On vielä katsottava, kuinka tehokkaita nämä toimenpiteet ovat islamofobian torjumisessa.

Country Profile

Country: Finland

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Form of Government: Republic

Ruling Parties: Centre Party, National Coalition Party, and Blue Reform

Opposition Parties: The centre-right coalition government resigned on March 8 after it failed to push healthcare reforms through parliament. Formerly, the Social Democrats, Finns Party, Green League, Left Alliance, Swedish People's Party, Christian Democrats and Åland Coalition were in the opposition.

Last Elections: 2018 Presidential Election (Sauli Niinistö won the first round with 62.6% of the vote against Green League candidate Pekka Haavisto, who gained 12.4% and came in second); 2019 Parliamentary Election (Social Democrats: 40 seats, Finns Party: 39 seats, National Coalition Party: 38 seats, Centre Party: 31 seats, Green League: 20 seats, Left Alliance: 16 seats, Swedish People's Party: 9 seats, Christian Democrats: 5 seats, Movement Now: 1 seat, and Åland Coalition: 1 seat)

Total Population: 5,513,130 million (in 2017)

Major Languages: Finnish and Swedish

Official Religion: N/A

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to the latest Police University College hate crime report of 2017, the most affected groups were Muslims. Afghans were the group that reported the most hate crimes according to nationality and ethnic background; 69.8% of all hate crimes were due to national and ethnic background. The second group, who were targeted on religious basis, accounted for 20.2% of all hate crime. The most affected group were Muslims. The rise in hate crimes due to religion surged by 58% when compared with 2016.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There were 1,165 hate crime cases reported to the police in 2017, up 7.97% compared to 1,079 cases in the previous year. The majority of hate crime cases (69.8%) were due to ethnic-national background and 20.2% were motivated by the person's religion. Other reasons included disability (4.9%), sexual orientation (4.1%), and transgender cases (1%).

Major Religions (% of Population): Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church 4,004,369 (72.6%); Islam est. 100,000 (1.8%); Finnish Orthodox Church 61,690 (1.12%); Finnish Free Church 15,409 (0.3%); Catholic Church 13,069 (0.24%); Pentecostals 8,762 (0.13%); Seventh Day Advent Church 3,458 (0.06%); Baptist Church 2,657 (0.05%); United Methodist Church 1,415 (0.03%); and Judaism 1,133 (0.02%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): Estimated at 100,000 (1.8%).

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Federation of Islamic Organisations of Finland (Suomen Islamilainen Yhdyskunta), which comprises 25 organisations; Is-

lamic Council of Finland (Suomen Islamilainen Neuvosto) with 22 organisations; and Helsinki Islam Keskus.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Finland does not have a specific NGO that combats Islamophobia. Some that address the issue are: Islamic Council of Finland, The National Forum for Cooperation of Religions in Finland, Nuoret Muslimit, Anti-Racist Forum, and Migrant Tales.

Far Right Parties: The Finns Party, Suomen Kansa Ensin, Reformi puolue (not a registered party yet).

Far Right Movements: Kansallinen Vastarinta, Soldiers of Odin, Finnish Defence League, Suomen Sisä.

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No, but if approved, a draft of the Animal Welfare Act that was given to parliament at the end of September aims to ban halal slaughter from 1 January, 2021.
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** Former Finns Party (PS) member and parliamentary aide Terhi Kiemuki, who was convicted of ethnic agitation in 2018, unsuccessfully launched a citizen's initiative in 2017 to ban the burka and niqab. An unsuccessful draft bill was introduced to parliament in 2016 by PS MP Vesa-Matti Saarakkala to ban the burka and niqab in public places. No new draft bills prohibiting the use of the burka and niqab have been introduced to parliament. There is concern, however, that the April 2019 parliamentary elections will bring up calls for the "burka ban" in Finland. The Diakonia College of Finland of Helsinki banned the use of the niqab and burka on campus.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

One of the aims of the Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä is to make Finland a welcoming and international country by 2025. He envisages Finland as a country that is “rich with different languages and cultures” and portrays a positive attitude towards its inhabitants and the rest of the world.¹ However, the Council of State’s 2025 objectives don’t mention Islamophobia and only mention the term racism once. This is no surprise considering that the Islamophobic Finns Party (PS) were members of the government with the Centre Party and National Coalition Party in the period 2015-2017, and later Blue Reform (2017-2019). The PS split into two parties in June 2017.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

A new study by the European Agency of Fundamental Rights (FRA), *Being black in the EU*,² concluded that out of the 12 EU countries surveyed, Finland was the most hostile to blacks. The Somalis are Finland’s largest African group and are Muslims, accounting for about a third of all Africans living in Finland.

The Islamic Society of Northern Finland (Pohjois-Suomen Islamilainen Yhdyskunta), which is located in Oulu, was vandalized four times in 2018 and up to eight times since September 2017.³ The most recent attacks against the mosque occurred on Christmas Eve⁴ and on 6-7 December. (Fig. 1 and 2) The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Oulu condemned the latest attack and expressed their solidarity with the Islamic Society of Northern Finland.⁵ As a positive sign, Prime Minister Juha Sipilä said in his New Year’s speech that hate speech was a crime and those suspected of sexual assault against minors in Oulu are individuals and do not represent a religious group.⁶ The sexual assault cases involve about 20 Muslims suspected of abusing minors.

1. “Finland, A Land of Solutions – Strategic Programme of the Finnish Government”, Finnish Council of State, 27 May 2015, https://valtioneuvosto.fi/documents/10184/1427398/Hallitusohjelma_27052015_final_EN.pdf/f1071fae-a933-4871-bb38-97bdfd324ee6, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. “Being Black in the EU”, EU Midis II: Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/eumidis-ii-being-black>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

3. Telephone interview with Abdul Mannan of the Islamic Society of Northern Finland on 13 December 2018.

4. “Oulun Moskeijan Ikkuna Rikottiin Säpäleiksi Pyörätelineellä Jouluyönä,” Kaleva, 26 December 2018, <https://www.kaleva.fi/uutiset/oulu/oulu-moskeijan-ikkuna-rikottiin-sapaleiksi-pyoratelineella-jouluyna/812616/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

5. “Statement by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Oulu”, 26 December 2018, http://www.oulunseurakunnat.fi/uutiset/-/news/45998769?fbclid=IwAR0rwf-XJa2XdyzAFmEYI2r1ffP9dyvtUaeuV_4rVCMrE20jWiQV_E_0bnM, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

6. “Sipilä Uudenvuodentervehdyksessään: Vihapuheen Viljeleminen On Rikos”, Yle, 31 December 2018, https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10576237?utm_source=facebook-share&utm_medium=social&fbclid=IwAR3gs1EdpcaAsE1BW-MahjgLB1yEK3b1u6L--MM6F6T_eBm1eSy29AabUSBY, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

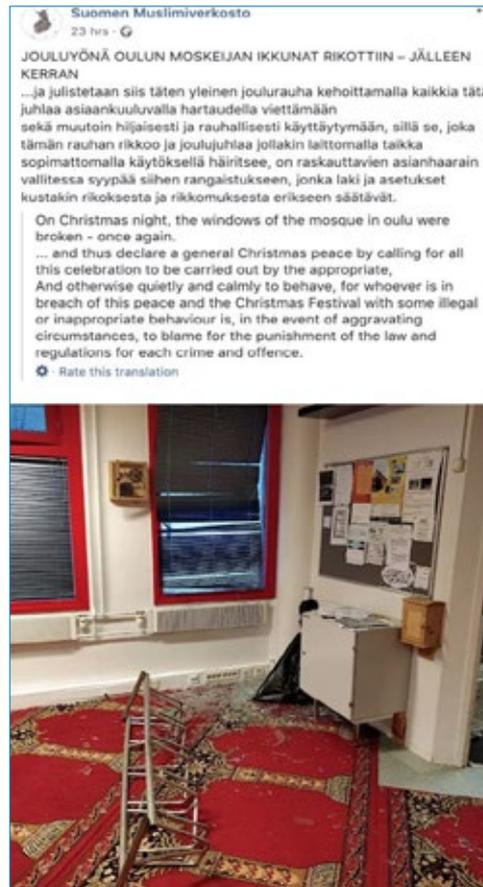


Figure 1: The mosque in Oulu was vandalized for the fourth time in 2018 on 24-25 December.⁷



Figure 2: The mosque in Oulu was vandalized for the ninth time since September 2017 on 26 February.⁸

7. Suomen Muslimiverkosto, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/muslimiverkosto/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019)

8. Dr. Abdul Mannan and Migrant Tales. (Access date: 1 September 2019)

Last year's hate crime report published by the Finnish Police University College, showed that hate crimes had risen in 2017 by 7.97% to 1,165 suspected cases compared with 1,079 the previous year.⁹ Two suspected hate crimes cases involving Muslims became public in 2018: (1) A Pakistani migrant was brutally attacked on 23 February by three Finnish youths in Vantaa, a suburb of Helsinki;¹⁰ (2) A ten-year-old Muslim girl was attacked by four of her classmates after they insulted and bullied her for wearing a hijab.¹¹ The girl started to get bullied about half a year before the incident, when she started to wear a hijab to school. The picture was taken by her brother on the same day she was attacked physically by one of her classmates. The Pakistani migrant's attackers were given 9.5-year sentences in May for attempted murder, while the case of the girl is still inconclusive. The police and school, however, claim that racism did not play a role in what happened but it's believed that the girl's Muslim background did play a role.¹²



Figure 2: The picture of a ten-year-old girl that was allegedly physically attacked by one of her classmates in December in Espoo went viral. It reads: "What do they teach [children] at Finnish homes? That Muslims are terrorists? The little girl [in the picture above] is spending a normal day at school when four boys [classmates] tried to rip off her hijab from her head and kicked her unconscious. We are not talking now about a migrant but about a victim. @iltalehti [tabloid] I want you to write out loudly that racism must stop once for all, this girl is an angel!"¹³

9. Jenita Rauta, "Poliisin Tietoon Tullut Viharikollisuus Suomessa 2017", 26 November 2018, Poliisiammatikorkeakoulun raportteja 131, https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/154780/POLAMK_Rap131_web.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

10. "Pakistani Immigrant Stabbed in Vantaa, Finland", Helsinki Times, 26 February 2018, <http://www.helsinki-times.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/15357-pakistani-immigrant-stabbed-in-vantaa-finland.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

11. Enrique Tessieri, "10-year-old Muslim Girl of Espoo: The Police Say One Thing While Others Say Another", Migrant Tales, 20 December 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/10-year-old-muslim-girl-of-espoo-the-police-say-one-thing-while-others-say-another/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

12. Enrique Tessieri, "What About If What Happened to a 10-year-old Muslim Girl Last Month Is True?", Migrant Tales, 5 January 2019, <http://www.migranttales.net/what-about-if-what-happened-to-a-10-year-old-muslim-girl-last-month-is-true/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

13. Iltalehti, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/Iltalehti.fi>, (Access date: 1 September 2019)



Figure 3: A Pakistani migrant recovering in hospital after he was stabbed up to 30 times, and suffered a fractured skull among other injuries after he was attacked in February by three white Finnish youths. Photo: Enrique Tessieri.

In April, the findings of the country's first study on ethnic profiling were published.¹⁴ Prior to its release, the police had repeatedly denied that they engage in ethnic profiling even if the Council of Europe's anti-racism body had warned of such a problem as early as 2013.¹⁵ The new study on ethnic profiling sheds light on a long-overdue problem that visible migrants and minorities, such as Muslims, face in Finland. The sample, which were interviewed between 2015 and 2017, comprised mostly of "Middle Eastern, Turkish and African" individuals and Somali speakers (88 individuals/24.4% and 21 individuals/10.8%, respectively), followed by Finnish (107/29.9%), Swedish (41/11.4%), Former Soviet Union (71/19.7%), and others (15/4.2%). Apart from stopping "Arab-looking" men without beards, women wearing hijabs can be stopped at airports. The study pointed out that even babies might face "intense scrutiny and bodily investigation."¹⁶

The Puhos Shopping Mall in Eastern Helsinki is a popular destination for Muslim shoppers. In early February, the police, National Border Guard, Regional Adminis-

14. Suvi Keskinen, Aminkeng Atabong Alemanji, Markus Himanen, Antti Kivijärvi, Uyi Osazee, Nirosha Pöyhölä and Venla Rousku, *The Stopped – Ethnic Profiling in Finland*, Swedish School of Social Science, University of Helsinki, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

15. Enrique Tessieri, "Council of Europe Concerned about Ethnic Profiling by Police in Finland", *Migrant Tales*, 9 July 2013, <http://www.migranttales.net/council-of-europe-concerned-about-ethnic-profiling-by-police-in-finland/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

16. Keskinen, Atabong Alemanji, Himanen, Kivijärvi, Osazee, Pöyhölä and Rousku, *The Stopped – Ethnic Profiling in Finland*.

trative Agencies (AVI), Customs, Rescue Department, and health inspectors of the City of Helsinki carried out spot checks at the shopping mall.¹⁷ According to some bystanders, the police entered restaurants and asked people for their IDs. One person mentioned that the police had attempted to enter the mosque with shoes and a dog.¹⁸ Helsinki-based migrant youth associations like Badbaado¹⁹ and others accused the authorities of ethnic profiling, which the authorities denied.²⁰ At the end of November, some 30 members of the far right vigilante group Soldiers of Odin were seen at the Puhos Mall provoking shoppers with their presence.²¹ The vigilante group has close ties with neo-Nazi groups like the Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL).

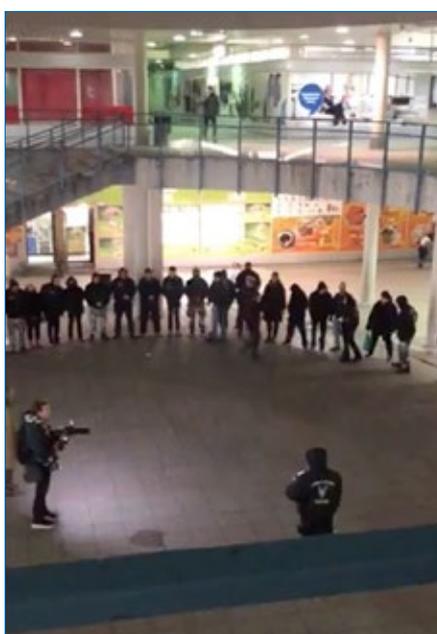


Figure 4: Some 30 members of the far right vigilante group Soldiers of Odin appeared in November at the Puhos Mall of Eastern Helsinki where Muslims shop. The picture is a still from a video taken by Finnish Somalimedia Warsan.

17. Enrique Tessieri, “Police and Other Authorities Carry out Identification Checks at that Puhos Shopping Center of Eastern Helsinki”, *Migrant Tales*, 4 February 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/police-and-other-authorities-carry-out-identification-checks-at-the-puhos-shopping-center-of-eastern-helsinki/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

18. Xassan–Kaafi Mohamed Halane and Enrique Tessieri, “UPDATE: Police Were Told That They Cannot Enter the Mosque at the Puhos Shopping Center with a Dog and Shoes”, *Migrant Tales*, 4 February 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/update-police-were-told-that-they-cannot-enter-the-mosque-at-the-puhos-shopping-center-with-a-dog-and-shoes/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

19. “Globalikasvatus”, Finnish Development NGOs – Fingo, <https://www.gloaalikasvatus.fi/english>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

20. Marja Salomaa, “Kansalaisjärjestö syyttää Helsingin poliisia etnisestä profiloinnista Puhoksen ostoskeskuksen valvontaiskussa – Henkilöpäpaperit tarkastettiin kaikilta ulkomaalaisen näköisiltä asiakkailta”, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 19 February 2018, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005573827.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

21. Enrique Tessieri, “Far-Right Vigilante Group Soldiers of Odin Provokes Migrants in East Helsinki”, *Migrant Tales*, 27 November 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/far-right-vigilante-group-soldiers-of-odin-provokes-migrants-in-east-helsinki/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

According to a source, far right groups like Suomi Ensi (Finland First) and the Reformi puolue have visited the Puhos Mall 6-7 times in 2018.

Employment

If unemployment and employment statistics are anything to go by, Finland's employment markets are highly racialized and segregated. If we look at the unemployment rates of people on the basis of their mother tongue, there is a much higher rate of unemployment for Muslim women than for men. At the end of 2017, the unemployment rate for Arabic speakers was 50.9%, for Somali speakers 43.5%, and for Persian-Farsi speakers 36.5%.²² The unemployment rate for male Arabic speakers was 45.5% and 65.4% for women; the corresponding figures for Somalis were 39.7% and 49.5%; and for Persian-Farsi speakers 31.97% and 43.9%. That compares with a national unemployment rate of 11.33% for the period under review.

The general perception in Finland among Muslims is that the chances of getting employment are worse if you have a Muslim name. One of the most popular jobs sought by migrants in Finland is in the cleaning business, where 60% of all men are foreigners.²³ Other professions where migrants are overrepresented include domestic helpers, kitchen helpers, and in the service sector. Other factors like gender, age, length of residence in Finland, Finnish language skills, and motive for moving to the country play a role in the person's employment prospects. Considering the high unemployment rates and segmented jobs, it should not come as a surprise that there are significant wage gaps between migrants and white Finns. In Helsinki and the Greater Helsinki area, migrants make on average 35.8% (22,286 euros/year versus 36,239 euros/year by Finnish nationals) less, and nationally 27.3% (21,479 versus 29,550 euros) less than Finns.²⁴ Lower wages also mean lower social welfare payments and retirement pensions.²⁵

Four employment cases involving Muslims:

Case 1: An Iranian engineer with a Master's degree who has lived in Finland for about 20 years claimed that he has applied for 4,000 jobs. From all those applications, only one prospective employer asked him for an interview, which was done online. He wasn't hired. The person believes that his Muslim name worsens his

22. "Population By Main Type Of Activity, Language, Occupational Status, Sex, Age And Year 2000-2017", Statistics Finland, http://pxnet2.stat.fi/PXWeb/pxweb/fin/StatFin/StatFin__vrm__tyokay/statfin_tyokay_pxt_006.px/?rxid=8b67c4f0-7fa4-4927-9722-9ea777caf007, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

23. Tarja Nieminen, Hanna Sutela, Ulla Hannula, "Ulkomaista Syntyperää Olevien Työ Ja Hyvinvointi Suomessa 2014", Työterveyslaitos, Terveuden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, Tilastokeskus, Helsinki: 2015, https://www.stat.fi/tup/julkaisut/tiedostot/julkaisuuttelo/yyti_uso_201500_2015_16163_net.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

24. Pasi Saukkonen, "Maahanmuuttajien Kotoutuminen Helsingissä," *Helsingin Kaupungin Tietokeskus*, (Helsinki: 2016), https://www.hel.fi/hel2/Tietokeskus/julkaisut/pdf/16_12_01_Tutkimuskatsauksia_12_Saukkonen.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

25. Enrique Tessieri, "Finland Is Not a Land of Opportunity But a Land of Poverty for Most Migrants", Migrant Tales, 28 April 2014, <http://www.migranttales.net/finland-is-not-a-land-of-opportunity-but-a-land-of-poverty-for-most-migrants/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

prospects of finding work. He became an entrepreneur and established a translation company and claims to have a lot of work these days.²⁶

Case 2: An Iraqi asylum seeker who came to Finland in 2015 and converted to Christianity stated that after over two-and-a-half years and sending hundreds of job applications, he was finally hired by Posti, the post company, to deliver newspapers to homes between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m. His hourly salary was 9 euros and he claimed to make about 900 euros a month. The asylum seeker, after over three months, quit his job and in July voluntarily returned to Iraq.²⁷

Case 3: An Afghan asylum seeker who lives in a small town in Eastern Finland, worked for a year as a full-time apprentice at a local garage. Since apprentices don't get paid in Finland and their time at work may last for a few weeks, the asylum seeker said he was never hired as a staffer despite his year-long internship. He was paid daily 5-20 euros and was sometimes offered free lunches.

Case 4: A Syrian who wanted to establish a car wash with a countryman in November 2017 has faced an uphill battle. He started to look for a garage to begin his business but discovered that this was easier said than done. Most of the 20 places he wanted to rent in Mikkeli, and later in Tampere, Oulu, Nokia, Järvenpää, Kerava, Vantaa, and Tuusula turned him down. He believes that nobody would rent him a garage because he is from the Middle East. Some landlords even asked him personal questions about his wife, what she did for a living, and if he had a Finnish business partner. Getting a bank loan was just as difficult.

Education

There are programs to counter hate speech and radicalization²⁸ but their effectiveness is put into question by studies that show that children and adolescents with migrant origin face greater discrimination at schools. One study showed that discrimination is widespread at schools due to ethnic background and language, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and disability.²⁹ The Diakonia College of Finland, located in Helsinki, bans students from wearing niqabs and burkas but allows hijabs on campus.

26. Enrique Tessieri, "Quote Of The Day: Migrants Face Abuse on Both Sides of the Labor Market", Migrant Tales, 4 October 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/quote-of-the-day-migrants-face-abuse-on-both-sides-of-the-labor-market/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

27. Enrique Tessieri, "Asylum Seeker Ibrahim Has Found Work Delivering Newspapers for Posti", Migrant Tales, 15 March 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/asylum-seeker-ibrahim-has-found-work-delivering-newspapers-for-posti/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

28. "Väkivaltaisen Radikalisoitumisen Ennaltaehkäisy Koulussa Ja Oppilaitoksissa", Opetushallitus 2018, https://www.oph.fi/download/189180_OPH_Ekstremismi_esite_210x210_suomi_VERKKO.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

29. "Education for Tomorrow Report: Policy Implications from Phase 1", Nordforsk 2018, https://www.nordforsk.org/en/publications/publications_container/education-for-tomorrow-report-policy-implications-from-phase-1, (Access date: 2 September 2019).



Figure 5: The Diakonia College of Finland (Diak) in Helsinki forbids women from wearing niqabs and burkas on campus but allows hijabs.

Politics

The Finns Party (PS) is the first modern party in Finland that aims to directly capitalize politically on anti-immigration and especially anti-Muslim sentiment. Somalis aren't the only target of the PS, visible minorities such as people of African descent and black Europeans rank high on their list of undesirable individuals. The PS has proposed radical changes to immigration policy when in government; they did not see the light of day, however, because they were unconstitutional.³⁰ One of the principles of Finnish law is that everyone is equal before the law. Even so, people like Finnish economist Bengt Holmström, who received the Nobel Prize in economics in 2016, said that migrants should be paid less and should have lower social welfare benefits “since it would not irritate Finns so much.”³¹

30. Enrique Tessieri, “The Finnish Government Shrinks in the Face of the Humanitarian Crisis in Europe”, Migrant Tales, 12 September 2015, <http://www.migranttales.net/the-finnish-government-shrinks-in-the-face-of-the-humanitarian-crisis-that-europe-faces/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

31. Enrique Tessieri, “Finland’s Nobel Prize in Economics States That White Finns Must Not Share Power and Privileges with Migrants and Their Children”, Migrant Tales, 25 October 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/finlands-nobel-prize-in-economics-states-that-white-finns-must-not-share-power-and-privileges-with-migrants-and-their-children/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Blaming only the PS for fuelling Finland's Islamophobic and xenophobic environment would be too simplistic, even if the populist party has exploited voters' fears of migrants and of the country's ever-growing cultural diversity and Muslim community.

Finland held presidential elections in January with incumbent Sauli Niinistö easily winning the first round of voting with 62.6% of the votes. While the other candidates were no match for Niinistö, PS hopeful Laura Huhtasaari used her campaign to spread anti-Islam soundbites. She secured third place in the election with 6.9% of the votes. At a Lutheran Church gathering in November, Huhtasaari said, "I honestly hope that the church defends Christian values, Christians, Christian traditions, otherwise Muslims will wipe out [our Christian way of life]."³² President Niinistö has said that asylum seekers pose a challenge to Western values.³³ Even if Finland's official policy towards migrants is two-way adaption (integration), some experts see it as assimilation (one-way adaption).

Another worrying development has been the PS and its alignment with far right Islamophobic groups like the Soldiers of Odin, and the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (PVL). In August, on the first anniversary of the Turku stabbings by an asylum seeker, a PS MP and two party members participated in a march organized by the Soldiers of Odin, the PVL, and other neo-Nazi groups like the Nationalist Alliance (*Kansallismielisten liittouma*).³⁴

Media

When topics about Muslims and migrants appear in the Finnish media, the reporting is often unbalanced. The media in Finland continue to play an important role in giving Islamophobic parties like the PS a platform.

There are various reasons why news coverage of Muslims is unbalanced:

- Muslim sources and experts are rarely used as authorities in a balanced news story.
- The media too often paint Muslims with a single brush and underline a narrative of "Us" versus "Them."
- There are no Muslim editors and there is an underwhelming number of visible minorities working in newsrooms as staffers.
- Some media continue to give inflated respectability, importance, and space to Islamophobes and xenophobes.

32. Enrique Tessieri, "Laura Huhtasaari and Ville Tavio: How Some Sectors of the Finnish Lutheran Church Promote Racist Discourse", *Migrant Tales*, 14 October 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/laura-huhtasaari-and-ville-tavio-how-some-sectors-of-the-finnish-lutheran-church-promotes-racist-discourse/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

33. Enrique Tessieri, "The Anti-immigration Narrative of Politicians, the Police and President Sauli Niinistö Is No Mistake", *Migrant Tales*, 6 February 2016, <http://www.migranttales.net/the-anti-immigration-narrative-of-politicians-the-police-and-president-sauli-niinisto-is-no-mistake/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

34. Enrique Tessieri, "Neo-Nazis and the Perussuomalaiset: Where Do They and We Draw the Line?", *Migrant Tales*, 20 August 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/neo-nazis-and-the-perussuomalaiset-where-do-they-and-we-draw-the-line/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

- When it comes to fighting Islamophobia and racism, the media in Finland are part of the problem.



Figure 6: Reporting about Muslims by the Finnish media is often one-sided. The above story appeared on the state-run Finnish Broadcasting Company (Yle). The story was a poll about different parties' views on migration and migrants. In the picture that went with the story, all the leaders of the political parties in parliament appear along with a woman wearing a niqab - she does not represent any party except her religion. The headline stated that two parties in Finland would ban the burka.³⁵

Stories published in the national media about Muslims and migrants may range from claims there was “no rape wave [in the summer caused by Muslim asylum seekers]”³⁶ to sensationalist headlines that claim that sexual assault cases have risen during the first quarter of 2017 in Turku by over 400%, or from a mere 4 to 21 cases reported to the police. On contacting the editor of *Turkulainen*, a community paper of Turku that made the above claim, he said that such headlines had to be published

35. Yle, 26 September 2018, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

36. Sara Rigatelli, “Poliisi: Kesällä ei tullut pelättyä raiskausaaltoa.”, Yle, 31 August 2016, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9133557>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

since they attracted readers and advertisers.³⁷ Helsingin Sanomat, Finland's largest daily, is also responsible for spreading stereotypes about migrants and Muslims.³⁸

An ongoing story that received wide media attention at the end of last year is the sexual abuse cases of minors by about 20 Muslim suspects of Oulu. Finland does not group people by race or ethnic backgrounds but by place of birth, nationality, and mother tongue. In the Oulu sexual abuse cases, however, coverage by the media and statements by the police have been racialized. With the suspects in police custody, one may ask why we need to know their ethnic or national background? In Yle's "A-talk" show,³⁹ the program went as far as to make public the suspects' nationality, which were Iraqi, Syrian, Afghani, and Eritrean. When I asked Yle why this was important to know, the state broadcaster responded in an email⁴⁰ stating that since men "came from countries where women are oppressed" and "from warzones," where the risk of sexual abuse is higher, reporting their nationality was justified. The police have also gone as far as to warn girls to take special care on social media sites when they contact people of foreign origin. The police have warned white local residents not to take the law in their hands and admitted that some migrants have already been harassed in Oulu.

A positive piece of news this year was when Ilja Janitskin, the founder and editor of MV-lehti, an online publication that spreads fake news, and hate speech especially about Muslims, was sentenced in October by the Helsinki District Court to a twenty-two-month prison term and ordered, together with two others, to pay 136,000 euros in damages.⁴¹ The 16 crimes that the former MV-lehti editor was convicted of included three counts of aggravated defamation; two counts of aggravated incitement against an ethnic group; three counts of copyright infringement; and three other convictions, which included, among other things, illicit fundraising charges.

Justice System

The knife attack in Turku in 2017 by a Muslim and the call to beef up counterterrorism measures are paving the way for greater intelligence and surveillance powers for the police and Finnish Security Intelligence Service (SUPO).⁴² Such new powers

37. Enrque Tessieri, "Sensationalist Stories in Finland about Migrants Based on Exaggeration and Lies", Migrant Tales, 4 November 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/sensationalist-stories-in-finland-about-migrants-based-on-exaggeration-and-lies/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

38. Marjatta Varmavuori, "Kuka Tahansa Ei Kelpaa Suomalaiseksi – Suomalaisen Poikkeuksellisen Kielteinen Suhtautuminen Somaliväestöön Nousi Esiin Kansainvälisessä Tutkimuksessa", Helsingin Sanomat, 3 June 2018, <https://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/art-2000005705030.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

39. "A-studio: Talk: 'Maahanmuuttajien seksuaalirikokset'", Areena.Yle, 13 December 2018, <https://areena.yle.fi/1-4233726#autoplay=true>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

40. Email December 20, 2018, from YLE producer Tuomas Kerkkänen.

41. Aleksi Teivainen, "Frontman of MV-lehti Jailed for One Year and 10 Months," Helsinki Times, 19 October 2018, <http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/15895-frontman-of-mv-lehti-jailed-for-one-year-and-ten-months.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

42. "Parliament to Vote on Expanded Surveillance Powers," Yle News, 21 September 2018, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/parliament_to_vote_on_expanded_surveillance_powers/10417781, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

may even include access to a person's medical records. Former Interior Minister Kai Mykkänen⁴³ said that in light of the Oulu sexual abuse cases, the state should have the right to take away a person's citizenship if one is convicted of terrorism or a serious crime like sex offenses.

Internet

In March 2017, the police founded a task force that monitors hate speech on the Internet. While these types of announcements are welcome and long overdue, some questions remain about how seriously the police service wants to challenge structural racism and racism among its ranks. A survey published in 2016, revealed that 25.1% of 2,489 policemen surveyed voted for the conservative National Coalition Party and 24.4% for the Islamophobic PS.⁴⁴ Long Play, an investigative online website, revealed in June 2017⁴⁵ a secret Facebook group comprised of mostly police officers who made racist comments⁴⁶ about Muslims, minorities, and migrants. A police officer wrote that Islam is an expansive religion and that Europe is its victim. The group was believed to have over 2,800 police officers, or one third of the total of the police service. No charges were brought against any of the participants of the group except for one police officer.⁴⁷ National Police Commissioner Seppo Kolehmainen said that in light of the secret Facebook group, the police will take steps to curtail racism among its ranks. Some of these measures include: a new equality and diversity plan approved in June 2017; an "ethical channel" where police can anonymously report racism; and mandatory social media training for the police to reinforce rules of good conduct.

Despite such assurances, a seminar titled "Lost in Helsinki,"⁴⁸ and organized by the police department in charge of immigration matters, showed that the police service's plans to challenge its prejudices and racism fell on deaf ears. Helsinki Police Inspector Heli Aaltonen gave a PowerPoint presentation depicting their "most

43. "Minister Urges Deportation, Loss of Citizenship for Immigrant Sex Offenders", Yle News, 13 December 2018, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/minister_urges_deportation_loss_of_citizenship_for_immigrant_sex_offenders/10552905, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

44. Enrique Tessieri, "Close to 80% of the Police Service of Finland Sees Asylum Seekers as the Greatest Threat to Security", Migrant Tales and Yle, 7 March 2016, <http://www.migranttales.net/close-to-eighty-percent-of-the-police-service-of-finland-sees-asylum-seekers-as-the-greatest-threat-to-security/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

45. Kati Pietarinen, "Rasismi Rehottaa Poliisien Salaisessa Facebook-Ryhmassä", Long Play, 3 June 2017, <https://www.longplay.fi/sivu%C3%A4%C3%A4net/rasismi-rehottaa-poliisien-salaisessa-facebook-ryhmassa>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

46. "Finland Probes 'Racist' Police Comments on Facebook," BBC, 5 June 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-40159392>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

47. Enrique Tessieri, "The National Police Board Lets Itself off the Hook Concerning a Racist Facebook Group", Migrant Tales, 20 February 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/the-national-police-board-lets-itself-off-the-hook-concerning-a-racist-facebook-group/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

48. Linda Hyökki, "The Structural Islamophobia and Racism Embedded within Finnish Police", Migrant Tales, 10 October 2018, <http://www.migranttales.net/the-structural-islamophobia-and-racism-embedded-within-finnish-police/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

typical customers,” which included Russians and Estonians being pictured as alcoholics; Africans as drug dealers; and Timo from Somalia, who has three wives, drinks alcohol constantly, and got to live in Finland because his wife is a Finnish citizen. “Timo’s” third wife got to live in Finland because she used his Somali wife’s identity. Another person in the presentation was an Iraqi called “Eero,” who lied about his real age, got his asylum application rejected, and was classified by SUPO as a threat to national security. Police inspector Aaltonen said that the media had taken her PowerPoint slides out of context and that they had nothing to do with ethnic profiling. Her presentation received a lot of criticism on social media and in the media.

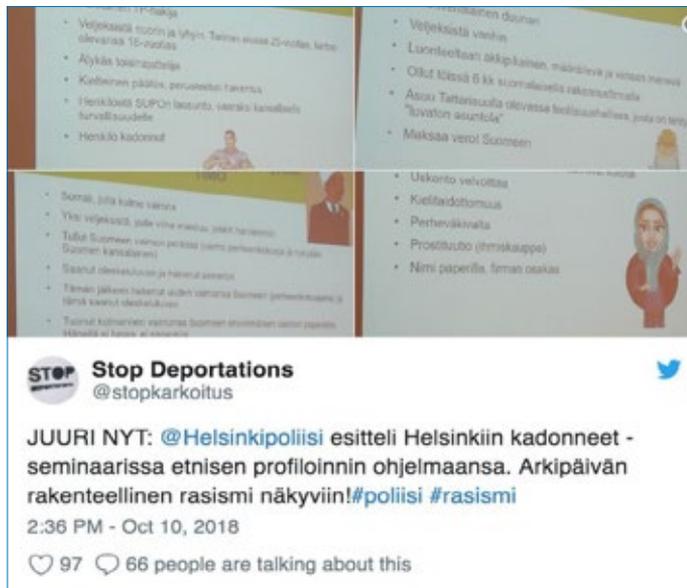


Figure 7: A seminar organized in October by the police was criticized for reinforcing stereotypical views of migrant and reinforcing ethnic profiling.⁴⁹

Tighter rules by Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media platforms against hate speech may have encouraged Islamophobic sites like Hommaforum, Junnes Lokka, and Tiina Wiik to clean up their language. Even so, Marco de Wit, the head of Finland First, now heads the far right Suomen Kansa Ensin party that publishes Islamophobic material similar to that published when MV-lehti was run by Janitskin.

Other social media sites aggressively spreading Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of racial hatred are the neo-Nazi Phjoismainen Kansallinen Vastarinta⁵⁰ and Magneettimedia.⁵¹

49. Stop Deportations, Twitter 10 October, 2018.

50. “Kansallinen Vastarinta,” <https://www.vastarinta.com>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

51. “Magneettimedia,” www.magneettimedia.com, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Greater scrutiny of anti-Muslim rhetoric has forced Islamophobes to change their tactics. Instead of using online platforms, more and more Islamophobic politicians are turning to publishing individually on social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, and others. They hope that their posts will be picked up by the media.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As in previous years, Laura Huhtasaari, PS vice president and MP, ranks high on the Islamophobic network together with the president of the party, Jussi Halla-aho, who was convicted in 2012 of ethnic agitation and breaching the sanctity of religion. Others include: Teuvo Hakkarainen, Sebastian Tynkkynen, Atte Kallela, Matias Turkkila, Marco de Wit, Marko Mäki, Junes Lokka, and Tiina Wiik. Even if Muslims account for an estimated 1.8% of the total population and non-EU migrants from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Africa amount to 16.9% (63,362 in 2017) of Finland's foreign-born residents, Halla-aho, Huhtasaari, and other Islamophobes like the neo-Nazi PVL make a big deal about Muslims being a threat to society. Huhtasaari, who supports U.S. President Donald Trump and Hungary's strongman Viktor Orbán, is worried about the "Islamization" of Europe. In a recent post on social media, she expressed her three greatest concerns: "no substitution for Finland's population and culture; we don't want Finland taken over by Islam; and we don't want people in our streets to be substituted for women and girls wearing veils."⁵²

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

A concrete step to counter Islamophobia in Finland was the creation in 2017 of a police group that monitors hate crime on the Internet. Another important blow to Islamophobia was the conviction of Ilja Janitskin, former editor of *MV-lehti*, to a 22-month prison term. Together with two other people, Janitskin was forced to pay 132,000 euros in compensation for harassment and defamation charges. Another important milestone that should impact anti-racism positively is a decision by the Turku appeal court to uphold an earlier decision to ban the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement and Pohjoinen Perinne.⁵³ The National Board of Education has taken steps to combat hate speech by tackling social exclusion.⁵⁴

52. Enrique Tessieri, "Laura Huhtasaari: The Perussuomalaiset MP With The Sinister Kindergarten-Teacher Smile", <http://www.migranttales.net/laura-huhtasaari-the-perussuomalaiset-mp-with-the-sinister-kindergarten-teacher-smile/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

53. "Ban on neo-Nazi Group Upheld by Turku Appeal Court", *Yle News*, 28 September 2018, https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/ban_on_neo-nazi_group_upheld_by_turku_appeal_court/10429858, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

54. "Väkivaltaisen Ekstremismin Ehkäisy", *Opetushallitus*, https://edu.fi/yleissivistava_koulutus/hyvinvointi_koulussa/ekstremismin_ehkaisy, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Many Muslims believe that open dialogue is crucial to confronting Islamophobia. While this suggestion is a proactive way to move forward, initiating dialogue is easier said than done under the present negative political environment. How and where do we begin this dialogue? Who starts it and under whose terms? The lack of clear answers to these questions show that political will and leadership are still lacking in building a well-functioning, culturally diverse society. Apart from the need for dialogue, we also need leadership and voices from our culturally diverse/immigrant/minority community and from Finns. More representation by Muslims and other minorities is essential as well, ranging from the police service to public servants. Thus, the big question is not Finland's good laws that guarantee human rights and religious freedom, but assurances that everyone is entitled to such rights and that they will be rigorously enforced. Finland has the social policy resources and know-how to challenge a social ill like Islamophobia because it is a Nordic welfare state. Not doing so is not only squandering an important opportunity, but confining ourselves to live in eternal conflict where we demand one thing for ourselves and deny others the same rights.

Chronology

- **23.02.2018:** A Pakistani migrant was brutally attacked with a knife, axe, and pointed object by three white Finnish youths in the evening in Vantaa, located next door to Helsinki. The man was stabbed up to thirty times and had a fractured skull, among other wounds. Narrowly escaping death, the Pakistani survived the attack but will be on sick leave until the end of 2019. His wife and he both believe that what happened was a hate crime because of the ferocity of the attack. The police disagreed but raised the charges against the three youths from attempted manslaughter to attempted murder. They concluded that what happened wasn't a hate crime because "the attack wasn't planned," and because the mixture of alcohol and drugs had made the three youths very aggressive. The three youths that attacked the Pakistani migrant were sentenced on 25 May to 9.5 years in prison.
- **28.03.2018:** Parliament approved a new law (24/2018 vp) that speeds up deportations in the case that the perpetrator has committed a serious crime that carries a minimum six-year prison term. Just like the tightening of Finland's immigration law in 2016, speeding up deportation could be seen as part of the hostile atmosphere towards migrants, especially Muslims. Finland carried out 900 deportations in 2017. Eleven percent of them (99) were due to criminal sentences.

- **23.04.2018:** Jussi Halla-aho renewed calls to lock up asylum seekers that get their residence permits rejected in Finland. The PS president wants Finland to copy Denmark, where the government plans to confine asylum seekers who get their residence rejected, potential criminals, and those that pose a threat to national security to a small island. The government and other parties have rejected Halla-aho's proposal.
- **25.05.2018:** National Coalition Party Minister of Justice Antti Häkkänen said at a meeting of the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations (ETMU) that there is no room in Finland for Sharia law. Some, like Abdirahim Husu Hussein, a Helsinki city councilperson, considered Häkkänen's comment Islamophobic because nobody is demanding Sharia law in Finland.
- **27.09.2018:** The government presented a draft to parliament, the Animal Welfare Act that if passed, will prohibit halal slaughter in Finland. If the law is approved by parliament, it will come into force on 1 January, 2021.
- **07.11.2018:** PS Vice President MP Laura Huhtasaari continued to reiterate her fearmongering of Muslims by claiming that Europe and Finland are in danger of being taken over by Islam. She said that she does not want "white Finnish culture" substituted for foreign ones like Islam or to see women and girls wearing veils in public.
- **19.12.2018:** A ten-year-old girl was physically attacked by one of her classmates at a school in Espoo, a suburb of Helsinki. The girl was allegedly bullied for about half a year after she decided to wear a hijab to school. A picture of the girl, stained in her own blood, was taken by her brother and posted on social media. The story went viral forcing the police and principal of the school to deny that Islamophobia played a role in what happened to the girl.
- **24-25.12.2018:** The mosque in the northern city of Oulu run by the Islamic Society of Northern Finland was vandalized for a fourth time this year and the seventh time since September 2017. The last time a bike rack was thrown through the window. Criminal charges have been filed to the police.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
FRANCE
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

Islamophobia kept rising in 2018. According to the *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF), 676 Islamophobic incidents were documented in 2018 against 446 in 2017 (increase of 52%). Among these 676 incidents, 20 concern physical attacks (3%), 568 concern discrimination (84%), and 88 concern hate speech (13%).

Islamophobia is not disconnected from the other forms of racism. The CCIF notices that 70% of the victims of Islamophobic acts are women. The National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) in its 2018 report on the state of racism in France also highlights that Islamophobic acts go along with aversion to feminist and secular values. In other words, Islamophobic acts do not only target Muslims but also women, melting pot values, and what is perceived as “the other.” Islamophobia in France relies on nationalistic discourse and far-right imaginary of race, land and culture, not on the defence of freedom and secular values as Islamophobes pretended.

Islamophobia in 2018 was illustrated by violent attacks against Muslim women, the emergence of far-right terror groups, and the deterioration of public discourse against Muslim people. Examples of these three trends are the physical attack on a young woman in the streets of Lille by members of the far-right group *Génération Identitaire*; the dissolution of the terror group AFO that was planning major terror attacks against Muslim civilians; and the use of violent expressions such as “civil war” by many polemicists, journalists, and politicians who aim to point out the supposed polarization of French society between non-Muslims and Muslims.

Last but not least, recurrent terror attacks and the ongoing counterterrorism policy are jeopardizing fundamental rights of Muslim people. In her visit to France in May 2018, Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, claimed “it is very worrying to see that the Muslim minority is perceived in itself as a suspect group.”

Résumé

L'islamophobie continue de croître en France en 2018. Le Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France (CCIF) a rapporté 676 incidents islamophobes en 2018 contre 446 en 2017 (soit une augmentation de 52%). Parmi ces 676 incidents, 20 concernent des attaques physiques (3%), 568 des discriminations (84%) et 88 des discours de haine et insultes (13%).

L'islamophobie n'est pas déconnectée des autres formes de racisme tel que le sexisme. Le CCIF remarque que près de 70% des victimes du racisme antimusulman sont des femmes. Dans son rapport 2018 sur la lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la xénophobie, la Commission nationale consultative des droits de l'homme (CNCDH) souligne le parallèle entre les actes islamophobes et le rejet des valeurs féministes et laïques. En d'autres termes, l'islamophobie ne concerne pas seulement les musulmans mais aussi les femmes, les valeurs du vivre-ensemble et tout ce qui est perçu comme « l'autre » de façon générale. L'islamophobie en France repose donc avant tout sur une idéologie de rejet et un imaginaire nationaliste d'extrême droite et non sur la défense de liberté et de la laïcité comme le prétendent beaucoup d'islamophobes.

En 2018, l'islamophobie s'est illustrée par des attaques violentes contre des femmes musulmanes, l'émergence de groupes terroristes d'extrême droite et la détérioration du débat public à l'égard des musulmans. En guise d'exemple, il est possible de mentionner l'agression physique d'une jeune musulmane dans les rues de Lille par des membres du groupuscule d'extrême droite Génération Identitaire ; la dissolution du groupe terroriste AFO qui planifiait des attaques de grandes ampleurs contre des civils musulmans ; ou encore l'utilisation de l'expression « guerre civile » par de nombreux polémistes dans des débats ayant pour sujet l'islam et les musulmans en France.

Enfin, les attaques récurrentes sur le territoire français de la part de terroristes se réclamant de l'islam ainsi que les politiques de contre-terrorisme remettent en cause les droits fondamentaux des musulmans. En visite en France en mai 2018, la rapporteuse spéciale pour la promotion et la protection des droits de l'homme et des droits fondamentaux, Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin, s'inquiétait « de voir la minorité musulmane être perçue en tant que telle comme un groupe suspect. »

Country Profile

Country: France

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Semi-Presidential System

Ruling Parties: *La République En Marche* (Right-Wing Liberal)

Opposition Parties: *Le Rassemblement National, Les Républicains, La France Insoumise*

Last Elections: 2017 Presidential Election (Emmanuel Macron won 66.1% of the vote against 33.9% of far-right leader Marine Le Pen); 2017 Legislative Election (Macron's party: 350 seats; Center-Right: 136 seats; Center-Left: 45 seats; Far-Left: 27 seats; Far-Right: 8 seats)

Total Population: 66.3 million (in 2015)

Major Languages: French

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF), 676 Islamophobic incidents were documented in 2018 against 446 in 2017 (increase of 52%). Among these 676 incidents, 20 concern physical attacks (3%), 568 concern discrimination (84%), and 88 concern hate speech (13%).

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018, the police reported 5,170 offenses committed because of origin, ethnicity, alleged race, or religion on the whole French territory. According to this figure, racist acts declined for the third time in a row (-4% between 2017 and 2018, -11% between 2016 and 2017, and -20% between 2015 and 2016). As in previous years, the majority of racist offenses involve provocation, insults, or defamation (up to 78%). Then, come threats and blackmail (11%), individual attacks (4%), discrimination (3%), and property damages (2%). Yet, it is difficult to monitor racism in France. In 2017, 1.1 million people claimed to have been victims of racist acts, leading to only 6,122 prosecutions and 561 convictions.

Major Religions (% of Population): The compilation of official statistics based on religious beliefs is not permitted by French law. Yet, according to different and contradictory surveys, 64% of French people are Catholic (among them 7% regularly go to Sunday Mass); 63% have no religion; 8.8% are Muslims; and 0.8% are Jewish. (See "Statistiques sur la pratique religieuse en France", *GéoConfluences*, December 2016.)

Muslim Population (% of Population): The compilation of official statistics based on religious beliefs is not permitted by French law. Yet, Muslim population represents between 5 and 6 million people (8.8%) according to the Pew Research Center.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: CFCM (*Conseil français du culte musulman*), UMF (*Union des mosquées de France*), *Islam de France*, DITIB, *Millî Görüş*, *L.E.S Musulmans*

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: CCIF (*Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France*), CRI (*Coordination contre le racisme et l'islamophobie*), CJL (*Comité Justice et Libertés pour tous*)

Far-Right Parties: The National Rally (*Rassemblement national*, RN), France Arise (*Debout la France*), The Patriots (*Les Patriotes*)

Far-Right Movements: *Génération identitaire*, *Réseau Remora*, *Volontaire pour la France* (VPF), *Soldats d'Odin Breizh*

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: AFO (Action of Operational Forces)

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** Ban of religious symbols including Muslim headscarf from schools [2004]; “Chatel circular” that prohibits parents who accompany children on school trips to display religious symbols [2013]. Moreover, on 18 August, 2016, France’s Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, defended municipal bans of body-covering burkini swimwear designed for Muslim women after several mayors had imposed burkini bans in several seaside towns including Cannes, Ville-neuve-Loubet, and Sisc on the island of Corsica.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decisions)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** (11 April, 2011) Under a decree issued by French Prime Minister François Fillon women are banned from wearing the niqab in any public place.
- **Prayer Ban:** No (depends on local decisions since the European Court of Justice ruled in March 2017 that employers can ban staff from manifesting visible religious expressions, including prayers).

Introduction

Islamophobia in France takes place in a context of social, spatial, and symbolic discriminations towards Muslims and people perceived as Muslims. It is crucial to have in mind this general context before analyzing the state of Islamophobia in 2018.

Historically, anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism take their modern roots in the French colonization of Muslim lands from the conquest of Algiers in 1830.¹ The representation of Muslim populations as barbaric and backward kept spreading with labor immigration from North Africa in the 1950s, organized by the French state in order to rebuild the country after the massive destructions caused by World War II.² Muslim Arab populations, regrouped in slums and then remote *banlieues*, were highly subjected to social relegation, police violence, daily attacks, and symbolic humiliations.³ Starting from the 1980s, France assisted the rise of Arab-origin French visibility in the public sphere – illustrated by the “March for equality and against racism” (December 1983) – which also led to the rise of Le Pen’s far-right party in reaction.⁴ At the end of the 1980s, most French journalists and policy-makers started to evoke a “Muslim problem” instead of “Arab immigration problem” following the exclusion of three girls wearing headscarves from the secondary school of the French northern city of Creil (October 1989) and the Islamic Salvation Front’s victory in the Algerian elections (1990-1991).⁵ Aversion to Muslim people got worse after 9/11, the Islamist terror attacks in Europe in the 2000s, and the consecration of far-right parties. This aversion has been materialized by the rise of laws constraining the daily life of Muslims (see for instance the ban of religious symbols at schools [2004], the ban of niqab [2010], or the “Chatel circular” that prohibits parents who accompany children on school trips to display religious symbols [2013]).⁶

Today French Muslims are still overrepresented in the poorest layers of the society, in neighborhoods with high concentrations of violence and drug traffic but also in prisons. In other words, French Muslims face social, spatial, and symbolic discriminations that are grounded in historical trends. This situation pushes Foner

1. James J. Cooke, “Tricolour and Crescent: Franco-Muslim Relations in Colonial Algeria, 1880-1940”, *Islamic Studies*, 29/1 (Spring 1990), pp. 57-75.

2. Abdelmalek Sayad, *Un Nanterre algérien, terre de bidonvilles*, (Autrement, Paris: 1995); Cohen Muriel, “Les bidonvilles de Nanterre, entre “trop plein” de mémoire et silences”, *La ville et ses frontières, de la ségrégation sociale à l’ethnisation des rapports sociaux*, ed. Brigitte Moulin, (Karthala, Paris: 2001).

3. Ibid.

4. Abdellali Hajjat, “Retour sur la Marche pour l’égalité et contre le racisme”, *Hommes & migrations*, 1304 (2013), pp. 151-155.

5. Farid Hafez, Enes Bayraklı and Leonard Faytre, “Engineering a European Islam”, *Insight Turkey*, 20/3 (2018), p. 146

6. “Accompagnant: Une maman portant un voile peut-elle accompagner les élèves lors de sorties?”, Académie de Nice, <https://www.pedagogie.ac-nice.fr/dsden06/eps06/2017/02/20/accompagnant-une-maman-portant-un-voile-peut-elle-accompagner-les-eleves-lors-de-sorties/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Nancy to compare the situation of Muslims in Europe (including France) with the situation of Afro-Americans in the USA.⁷

Besides this hostile context, Islamist terror attacks that have targeted France these last years and the French state's counterterrorism policies had a direct impact on the French Muslim community as a whole. Since French policy-makers base their action on a loose understanding of terrorism, political Islam, and radicalization, the whole Muslim community gets criminalized in the name of fighting a few terrorist networks and individuals.⁸

In 2018, the French state played a role in several events related to Islamist terrorism and counterterrorism. On one side, terror attacks have been carried out and planned, and, on the another side, the French state tried to respond to these threats by organizing raids, arrests, and the closing down of religious places.

On 23 March, 2018, Radouane Lakdim, a 26-year-old French citizen who was under surveillance by French intelligence for radicalization and categorized as "fiché S,"⁹ killed three and injured many in a terror attack in the south of France.¹⁰ On 12 May 2018, a youth of Chechen origin also categorized as "fiché S" took the life of a person in a knife attack at the Opera district in Paris.¹¹ On 11 December, 2018, Chérif Chekatt, a 29-year-old French citizen who was also under surveillance by the French intelligence for radicalization and categorized as "fiché S," killed 5 and injured many in the center of Strasbourg.¹² In addition to these three attacks, Laurent Nunez, the secretary of state for interior affairs, announced that six Islamist terror attacks had been foiled by French police in 2018.¹³

7. Nancy Foner, "Is Islam in Western Europe Like Race in the United States?", *Sociological Forum*, 30 (December 2015), p. 888; See also: Murtaza Hussain, "Liberté for whom?", *The Intercept*, 23 February 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/02/23/france-islamophobia-islam-french-muslims-terrorism/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

8. According to a note of the French Senate on 29 March 2017, radicalization is "ambiguous concept used under the pressure of events [...] that remains, in the words of Professor Fethi Benslama 'an indispensable notion that must be placed under strong epistemological vigilance'", in *Les collectivités territoriales et la prévention de la radicalisation, Rapport d'information*, 483 (2016-2017), Senat, http://www.senat.fr/rap/r16-483/r16-483_mono.html, (Access date: 1 September 2019); see also, Yasser Louati, "Lutte contre la radicalisation ou lutte contre les musulmans?", *Justices et Libertés pour Tous*, 6 October 2018, <https://justicelibertes.org/2018/10/06/lutte-contre-la-radicalisation-ou-lutte-contre-les-musulmans/> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

9. "fiché S": this term refers to France's national security watch list. "Some 20,000 people are categorised as 'fiché S' in France, of whom around 4,000 are considered dangerous. The list covers a wide range of individuals it is thought could pose a security risk: from those suspected of plotting terrorist acts to political protesters considered to be violent." In Alasdair Sandford, "What Is France's 'fiche S' National Security Watch List?", *Euronews*, 12 December 2018, <https://www.euronews.com/2018/05/14/paris-knife-attack-france-s-fiche-s-terror-watch-list-under-scrutiny>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

10. "Attaques terroristes dans l'Aude", *France Info*, 23 March 2018, <https://www.francetvinfo.fr/faits-divers/terrorisme/attaques-terroristes-dans-l-aude/>, (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

11. "Ce que l'on sait de l'attentat au couteau qui a fait un mort à Paris", *Le Monde*, 13 May 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2018/05/13/attentat-au-couteau-a-paris-l-assaillant-identifie-comme-etant-un-russe-ne-en-tchetchenie_5298196_1653578.html, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

12. "Attaque du marché de Noël à Strasbourg: ce que l'on sait", *Le Parisien*, 11 December 2018, <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/attentat-a-strasbourg-ce-que-l-on-sait-11-12-2018-7966335.php>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

13. "Terrorisme: 6 projets d'attentats déjoués depuis le début de l'année" *BFM TV*, 11 November 2018, <https://www.bfmtv.com/police-justice/terrorisme-6-projets-d-attentats-dejoues-depuis-le-debut-de-l-annee-1563927.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

All these events participated in creating a negative atmosphere surrounding French Muslims. Moreover, this constant terror threat leads the French state to maintain a high level of security policy. The transition of the state of emergency (2015-2017) into common law in October 2017 confirmed the state security approach towards Muslims. In her visit to France in May 2018, Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, warns new anti-terrorism laws risk undermining fundamental rights and freedoms.¹⁴ In 2018, the French administrative authority closed 7 mosques, conducted 93 police raids to private houses, and imposed 106 house arrests.¹⁵ Beyond these figures, counterterrorism has led to the militarization of the French police and the radicalization of their methods especially in popular areas (the so-called *banlieues*), causing a cycle of blunders and violence.¹⁶

It is in this context that the number of Islamophobic acts increased in 2018. In 2018, the *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF) registered 676 Islamophobic attacks against 446 in 2017 (an increase of 52%).¹⁷

Attacks are also getting more organized. In June 2018, French police arrested several members of the far-right terrorist group Action of Operational Forces (AFO)¹⁸ that was planning to commit terror attacks against French Muslims such as poisoning halal foods, physical attacks against Muslim women, and the degradation of what they considered as “radical” mosques.¹⁹ This report shows to what extent French intelligence is worried about the rise of such anti-Muslim groups that sometimes include French soldiers and police officers.

Finally, public discourse towards Muslims continued to degrade in 2018. A depreciative newspeak related to Muslims has been adopted by famous polemicists, journalists, and politicians including terms such as “reverse colonialism” (*colonization à l'envers*); “Islamism-Leftism” (*islamo-gauchisme*); “legal jihad” (*djihad judiciaire*); “Islamist entryism” (*entrisme islamiste*); “new anti-Semitism” (*nouveau antisemitisme*); and “signs of belonging to Islam” (*signes d'islamité*). Another step has been reached

14. “France: UN Expert Says New Terrorism Laws May Undermine Fundamental Rights and Freedoms”, United Nations Human Rights, 23 May 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23130&LangID=F> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

15. Lina Farelli, “Sept mosquées fermées dans le cadre de la loi antiterroriste adoptée en 2017”, Saphir News, 13 February 2019, https://www.saphirnews.com/Sept-mosquees-fermees-dans-le-cadre-de-la-loi-antiterroriste-adoptee-en-2017_a26012.html, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

16. Cyril Lemba, “Mobilisations pour les libertés populaires”, *Orient XXI*, 16 April 2018, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/mobilisations-populaires-pour-les-libertes.2332>, (Access date: 6 September 2019).

17. Collectif Contre L'islamophobie en France, “Rapport CCIF 2019, Rapport sur l'islamophobie pendant l'année 2018”, 15 March 2019, <http://www.islamophobie.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Rapport-CCIF-2019.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

18. For an introduction to their ideology, see the group's website “War of France”: <http://www.guerredefrance.fr/afo.htm>

19. “Groupe AFO: Nouveaux éléments de l'enquête”, CCIF, 28 June 2018, <http://www.islamophobie.net/2018/06/28/groupe-afonouveaux-elements-de-lenquete/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

in hate speech with the tragic use of the expression “civil war” for highlighting the polarization between French Muslims and non-Muslims.²⁰ All these features are analyzed in detail in this report.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

It is difficult to monitor all Islamophobic attacks since many victims do not report or press charges against their aggressor. Firstly, cognitive biases such as humiliation and assimilation of subaltern conditions often prevent the victims from denouncing Islamophobic attacks. Secondly, the French justice system is not efficient in prosecuting racist acts and this inefficiency also prevents victims from reporting. In its report on the state of racism in France, the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) points out that 1.1 million people have been victims of racist acts in 2017, leading to only 6,122 prosecutions and 561 convictions.²¹

Yet, anti-Muslim racism is monitored in France. Three main institutions publish and analyze annual statistics on Islamophobia, namely the French Ministry of Interior, the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CCIF), and the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH). Depending on their methodology, the figures they present differ from one another.

Firstly, on 12 February, 2019, the French Ministry of Interior published statistics on “anti-Muslim racism” in parallel with anti-Semitic and anti-Christian racism figures. The ministry – through the Inter-ministerial Delegation to the Fight against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Anti-LGBT Hate (DILCRAH) – based its statistics upon complaints against anti-Muslim acts recorded in police stations. According to this report, 100 anti-Muslim acts have been recorded in 2018 against 121 in 2017 (a decrease of 21 acts). From these 100 hatred acts, 43 are physical actions (72 in 2017), 57 threats (49 in 2017), 45 attacks against places of worship (68 in 2017), and 6 against cemeteries (4 in 2017).²² The French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM)²³

20. Barbara Lefebvre, “Reconquête républicaine: Gérard Collomb Brise Le Silence”, *Le Figaro*, 4 October 2018, <http://premium.lefigaro.fr/vox/politique/2018/10/04/31001-20181004ARTFIG00115-reconquete-republicaine-gerard-collomb-brise-le-silence.php>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

21. Jean Marie Delarue, the president of National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH), gave these figures in several interviews following the publication of the latest CNCDH report on racism (2019), see Kim Hullot-Guiot, “Racisme: la tolerance augmente, mais les plus racistes se radicalisent”, *Libération*, 23 April 2019, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2019/04/23/racisme-la-tolerance-augmente-mais-les-plus-racistes-se-radicalisent_1722854, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

22. “Bilan 2018 Des Actes Racistes, Antisémites, Antimusulmans Et Antichrétiens”, Délégation Interministérielle À La Lutte Contre Le Racisme, L’antisémitisme Et La Haine Anti-LGBT (DILCRAH), www.gouvernement.fr/bilan-2018-des-actes-racistes-antisemites-antimusulmans-et-antichretiens, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

23. The CFCM was created by the French government in 2003 under the vigorous impulsion of Nicolas Sarkozy. It aimed to be the main representative institution of French Muslims vis-à-vis the state. See: Farid Hafez, Enes Bayraktli and Leonard Faytre, “Engineering a European Islam”, *Insight Turkey*, 20/3 (2018), pp. 131-156.

through its National Observatory against Islamophobia claims these figures do not represent the reality of Islamophobia in France since many victims do not report.²⁴ Indeed besides general mistrust between French citizens and the French justice system,²⁵ relations between Muslims and the French police have been deeply damaged by the State of Emergency (2015-2017) that disproportionately targeted Muslims.²⁶

Secondly, on 15 March, 2019, the NGO *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF) published an annual report on Islamophobia in France. The CCIF does not base its statistics upon complaints made in police stations but upon reports directly made to the CCIF. The figures they present are diametrically different from those of the Ministry of Interior. In 2018, the CCIF registered 676 Islamophobic attacks against 446 in 2017 (increase of 52%). Among these 676 attacks, 20 concern physical attacks (3%), 568 concern discrimination in employment or education (84%), and 88 concern hate speech (13%).²⁷ From these victims, 70% are women and 30% are men. The CCIF interprets this increase of Islamophobic attacks as the consequence of the normalization of hate speech against Muslim people in the media and the political arena.²⁸

Finally, on 23 April, 2019, the National Advisory Commission on Human Rights (CNCDH) published the annual report on racism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia in France. The CNCDH completes and analyzes reports produced by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and many other institutions and NGOs.²⁹ The CNCDH's approach is not only quantitative but also qualitative and provides some clues in understanding the phenomenon of Islamophobia in France. First of all, the CNCDH agrees with the CCIF and highlights the responsibility of politicians and the media in the construction of a dominant and negative narrative towards Muslims.³⁰

The CNCDH also argues Islamophobia is related to other forms of racism such as sexism and xenophobia. The report points out the overrepresentation of women

24. "Baisse des actes anti-musulmans en France", Oumma, 13 February 2019, <https://oumma.com/baisse-des-actes-anti-musulmans-en-france/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

25. See above.

26. Francesco Ragazzi, Stephan Davidshofer, Sarah Perret, Amal Tawfik, "Les effets de la lutte contre le terrorisme et la radicalisation sur les populations musulmanes en France", Centre d'étude sur les Conflits – Liberté et Sécurité (CCLS), (Paris: October 2018), <http://www.ccls.eu/fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Rapport-Anti-terrorisme-et-Discriminations-FINAL2.pdf>, (Access date: 20 February 2019); Yasser Louati, "Islamophobia in France: National Report 2017", in Enes Bayrakli and Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018), pp. 215-246.

27. Collectif Contre L'islamophobie en France, "Rapport CCIF 2019, Rapport sur l'Islamophobie pendant l'année 2018", 15 March 2019, p. 9, <http://www.islamophobie.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Rapport-CCIF-2019.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

28. *Ibid.*, p.4.

29. Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme (CNCDH), "Rapport sur la lutte contre le racisme, l'antisémitisme et la xénophobie", p. 4, (Paris: April 2019), https://www.cncdh.fr/sites/default/files/essentiels_rapport_racisme_2018_vdef_1.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

30. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

as victims of Islamophobic acts. For example, the report notices the difficulties for many Muslim women to have access to sports or cultural activities due to discrimination against the way they dress.³¹ Similarly, in 2018, three out of five French individuals (59%) do not consider the Islamic headscarf as compatible with French society.³² Moreover, the hate of Islam is highly correlated with the hate of immigrants, perceived as the cause of “cultural insecurity.”³³ Finally, the report demonstrates that the “more we hate Islam, the more we hate *laïcité*.”³⁴ As a result, Islamophobia in France relies on nationalistic discourse and the far-right imaginary of race, land, and culture, not on the defense of freedom and secular values as many Islamophobes pretend.

According to the CNCDH’s “tolerance index,” Muslims (in green) and North Africans (in red) are the least tolerated minorities in 2018. The report nevertheless indicates that “the year 2018 is a record year for the acceptance of Muslims and Islam” compared with previous years.³⁵ (Fig. 1)

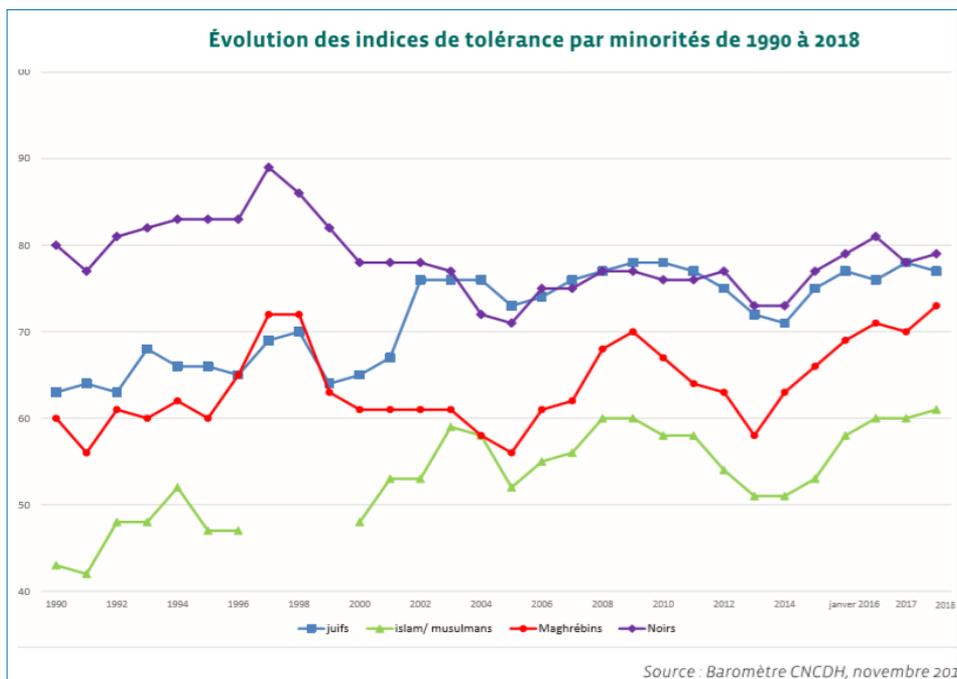


Figure 1: Evolution of the “tolerance index” from 1990 to 2018. This index shows how much French people tolerate minorities: black people (in purple); Jewish people (in blue); North African people (in red); Muslim people (in green).³⁶

31. Ibid., p. 29. See also: Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme (CNCDH), “*Avis sur la lutte contre le racisme et les discriminations dans le sport*”, (Paris: November 2018), <https://www.cncdh.fr/fr/actualite/avis-sur-la-lutte-contre-le-racisme-et-les-discriminations-dans-le-sport>.

32. Ibid., p. 26.

33. Ibid., p. 29.

34. Ibid., p. 26.

35. Ibid., p. 9.

36. Ibid., p. 9.

French Muslims have already assimilated this general aversion. The Center for Conflict Studies - Freedom and Security published on 11 October, 2018, the quantitative survey entitled “The Effects of the Fight against Terrorism and Radicalization on Muslim Populations in France.” This survey shows the damages caused by French counterterrorism policies upon the whole Muslim community since 2015.³⁷ According to the survey,

Muslims feel discriminated against in all the fields covered by this survey (health, school, housing, police, employment, daily life) and this in a much more important way than non-Muslims: 2.2 times more during a search for housing; 3.2 times more at school; 5.3 times more during interactions with the police.³⁸

Muslims feel also obliged to censure themselves: “41.7% of Muslims between the ages of 45-64 claim to ask their children to ‘pay attention to what they say at school,’ to avoid being discriminated against.” Similarly, “about one Muslim out of three says that they ‘avoid saying what they think’ about controversial issues related to foreign policy (30.6%) or society (30.5%).”³⁹

As mentioned above, the state counterterrorism and security approach towards Muslims strengthen aversion to and discrimination against this religious minority.⁴⁰ In order to limit risks of oppression and injustice towards Muslims, Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin calls for more transparency on counterterrorism policy and greater civil awareness of Islamophobia.⁴¹

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2018, beyond individuals we could observe attacks from organized anti-Muslim groups. On 10 January, 2018, three members of the far-right group Generation Identity (*Génération Identitaire*) physically attacked a young woman by using tear gas and punching her four times. The scene was filmed by a reporter and broadcasted on Al-Jazeera English TV channel in December 2018.⁴² In the program entitled “Gen-

37. Francesco Ragazzi, Stephan Davidshofer, Sarah Perret, Amal Tawfik, “*Les effets de la lutte contre le terrorisme et la radicalisation sur les populations musulmanes en France*”, Centre d’étude sur les Conflits – Liberté et Sécurité (CCLS), (Paris: October 2018), <http://www.ccls.eu/fr/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Rapport-Anti-terrorisme-et-Discriminations-FINAL2.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. “France: Les Nouvelles Lois Antiterroristes Risquent De Porter Atteinte Aux Droits Et Libertés Fondamentaux, Selon Une Experte De L’ONU”, United Nations Human Rights, 23 May 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23130&LangID=F>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

41. “Droits De L’homme Et Lutte Antiterroriste: La Rapporteuse Spéciale Des Nations Unies Sur La Promotion Et La Protection Des Droits De L’homme Et Des Libertés Fondamentales Dans La Lutte Antiterroriste Conclut Sa Visite En France”, United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures, 23 May 2018, https://antiterrorisme-droits-libertes.org/IMG/pdf/visite_france_-_rapport_pre_liminaire_-_rapporteuse_speciale_nu_-_23_mai_2018.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

42. Aljazeera English, “Generation Hate”, December 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/investigations/generationhate/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

eration Hate” we hear one of the aggressors using a French pejorative term for “Arab” (*rebeu*) before punching the woman. An investigation has been opened and the three people prosecuted for aggravated violence.⁴³ (Fig. 2)⁴⁴



Figure 2: Screenshot of the documentary “Generation Hate” broadcasted by Al Jazeera English, where three men are seen attacking a Muslim woman.⁴⁵

This event took place in a context of a resurgence of violent far-right groups. On 27 April, 2018, the newspaper *Libération* revealed two notes from French intelligence reporting the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab groups. The notes state that “Islamist attacks in France since January 2015 have been interpreted by radical far-right milieus as a legitimization of their theses on the threat of immigrants [...] and of the bankruptcy of a multicultural society.” The notes also claim many former soldiers and police officers are among those groups along with diasporas of former Yugoslavia. They underline the risk of attacks against Muslims.⁴⁶ In a recent article, the web media *Mediapart* revealed that French intelligence is actually following around 350 radicalized far-right members who have one or several firearms.⁴⁷ Among them, 147 are categorized as “fiché S” (against 11,152 individuals monitored for Islamist radicalization.)⁴⁸ The same media had already disclosed on 9 April, 2018, that

43. Gilles Durand, “Lille: L’agression, Menée Par Des Identitaires Contre Une Jeune Fille Et Filmée Par Al Jazeera, Était-Elle Raciste?”, 20 Minutes, 10 May 2019, <https://www.20minutes.fr/lille/2514823-20190510-video-lille-agression-menee-identitaires-contre-jeune-fille-filmee-al-jazeera-raciste>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

44. “Racisme, violence, salut nazi... Un journaliste a infiltré Génération identitaire et le bar La citadelle à Lille”, France 3 Regions, 19 December 2018, <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/hauts-de-france/nord-0/lille/video-racisme-violence-salut-nazi-journaliste-infiltre-generation-identitaire-bar-citadelle-lille-1590131.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

45. Aljazeera English, “Generation Hate”, December 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/investigations/generationhate/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

46. Willy Le Devin, “Ultradroite Les Fachos Chauffés À Blanc”, *Libération*, 27 April 2018, https://oeilsurlefront.liberation.fr/les-idees/2018/04/27/ultradroite-les-fachos-chauffes-a-blanc_1646451, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

47. Matthieu Suc et Marine Turchi, “Révélations Sur Des ‘Patriotes’ Qui Projetaient Des Attentats Islamophobes”, *Mediapart*, 1 April 2019, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/010419/revelations-sur-des-patriotes-qui-projetaient-des-attentats-islamophobes>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

48. Jean Chichizola, “Sept Mosquées Radicales Ont Été Fermées En Un An”, *Le Figaro*, 10 April 2019, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/actualite-france/sept-mosquees-radicales-ont-ete-fermees-en-un-an-20190410>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

French intelligence was following around 50 police officers, soldiers, and gendarmes in connection with violent and anti-Muslim far-right networks. Among them are former soldiers who fought in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁴⁹

A few months later, in June 2018, French police arrested several members of the far-right terrorist group Action of Operational Forces (AFO) that was planning to commit terror attacks against French Muslims such as poisoning halal foods, killing of hundreds of imams, physical attacks against Muslim women, and degradation of what they considered “radical” mosques.⁵⁰ Ten people were arrested, all huntsmen or sport shooters. Police also found in different locations weapon facilities such as explosive-manufacturing laboratories. They seized 15 handguns, some legally owned by their respective owners. According to police, the AFO is a network of around 100 members that planned terror attacks and training sessions to “resist Islam.”⁵¹ On its website entitled “War of France” (*Guerre de France*) the group calls for getting ready for a civil war⁵² through “preparation of French citizen-soldiers for fighting on the national territory” against the “Islamist threat.”⁵³ According to *Mediapart*, the AFO is linked to “Volunteers for France” (VPF), a far-right political group of 800 members created after the 2015 terror attack. The VPF’s website indicates that the group aims at “defending the French identity” and “fighting the Islamization of the country.”⁵⁴

On 23 July, 2018, French police arrested three more people suspected of belonging to the AFO.⁵⁵ One of them was a former member of the group Volunteers for France (VPF), and the other two were women who attended all the meetings of

49. Matthieu Suc et Marine Turchi, “Forces De L’ordre Liées À L’ultra-Droite Violente: La DGSI S’inquiète”, *Mediapart*, 9 April 2019, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/090418/forces-de-l-ordre-liees-l-ultra-droite-violente-la-dgsi-s-inquiete>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

50. “Groupe AFO: Nouveaux Éléments De L’enquête”, CCIF, 28 June 2018, <http://www.islamophobie.net/2018/06/28/groupe-af0-nouveaux-elements-de-lenquete/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019); Willy Le Devin, “Qui Se Cache Derrière L’af0, Le Groupuscule D’extrême Droite Qui Prévoyait De S’en Prendre À Des Musulmans?”, *Libération*, 25 June 2018, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2018/06/25/qui-se-cache-derriere-l-af0-le-groupuscule-d-extreme-droite-qui-prevoyait-de-s-en-prendre-a-des-musu_1661843, (Access date: 2 September 2019); Elise Vincent, “Ce Que Révèle L’enquête Sur Les Projets D’attentats De L’ultradroite Visant Des Musulmans”, *Le Monde*, 5 September 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2018/09/04/quand-l-ultradroite-visait-des-musulmans_5349917_3224.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

51. “La Cellule D’extrême Droite Voulait S’en Prendre Aux Musulmans”, *Mediapart*, 5 September 2018, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/050918/la-cellule-d-extreme-droite-voulait-s-en-prendre-aux-musulmans>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

52. “AFO, Le Groupuscule D’ultradroite Qui Prépare Ses Membres À La Guerre”, *BFM TV*, 25 June 2018, <https://www.bfmtv.com/police-justice/af0-un-groupuscule-d-ultradroite-qui-prepare-ses-membres-a-la-guerre-1477563.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

53. “4 Questions Sur L’af0, Le Groupuscule D’ultradroite Qui Voulait Attaquer Des Musulmans”, *L’OBS*, 25 June 2018, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20180625.OBS8673/4-questions-sur-l-af0-le-groupuscule-d-ultradroite-qui-voulait-attaquer-des-musulmans.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

54. Matthieu Suc, Marine Turchi and Jacques Massey, “Coup De Filet Au Sein D’une Cellule Clandestine De L’ultra-Droite”, *Mediapart*, 24 June 2018, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/240618/coup-de-filet-au-sein-d-une-cellule-clandestine-de-l-ultra-droite?onglet=full>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

55. “Ultradroite. Les Groupuscule Anti-Musulmans ‘AFO’ Voulait Tuer Le Rappeur Médine”, *Ouest France*, 25 July 2018, <https://www.ouest-france.fr/societe/faits-divers/ultradroite-le-groupuscule-anti-musulmans-af0-voulait-tuer-le-rappeur-medine-5895971>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

this far-right terrorist group. They were planning to assassinate the singer Medine and Islamist Djamel Beghal after his release from jail. A few weeks later, French intelligence warned Medine that a terror attack had been planned against his future concert in Bataclan Concert Hall.⁵⁶ The French singer announced the cancellation of this concert on Twitter on 21 September, 2018.⁵⁷

Finally, it is important to notice that the newspaper *Le Parisien* published an interview with the leader of the terrorist group AFO Guy Sibra on 31 July, 2018 giving him space to justify his actions and normalize his ideas.⁵⁸ (Fig. 3)



Figure 3: On the right, Guy Sibra the leader of the group AFO; on the left, a screenshot of *Le Parisien's* article that gives Guy Sibra space to justify his terrorist enterprise. The contrast between the pictures shows clearly how *Le Parisien* understates the danger that the AFO represents.⁵⁹

Alongside with anti-Muslim terror groups, attacks have also been planned by individuals mostly targeting women. The *Collectif contre l'islamophobie en France* (CCIF) registered a verbal attack against women wearing a hijab. In January 2018, two young women wearing headscarves were attacked by a local resident because of their real or supposed belonging to Islam. The aggressor was found guilty on 9 January, 2019 at the Criminal Court of Meaux.⁶⁰

56. Mathieu Suc and Marine Turchi, "Révélations Sur Des 'Patriotes' Qui Projetaient Des Attentats Islamophobes", Mediapart, 1 April 2019, https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/010419/revelations-sur-des-patriotes-qui-projetaient-des-attentats-islamophobes?page_article=2, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

57. Benjamin Andria, "Medine Annonce L'annulation De Ses Concerts Au Bataclan", Saphir News, 21 September 2018, https://www.saphirnews.com/Medine-annonce-l-annulation-de-ses-concerts-au-Bataclan_a25621.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

58. Jérémie Pham-Lê, "Ultradroite: Les Confidences Du Fondateur Du Groupuscule AFO", *Le Parisien*, 31 July 2018, <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/ultradroite-les-confidences-du-fondateur-du-groupuscule-af-31-07-2018-7839537.php>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

59. Yleanna Robert, "Charente-Maritime: Guy Sibra, Chef De File Présumé Du Réseau D'ultradroite AFO, S'exprime Pour La Première Fois", France 3 Régions, 1 August 2018, <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/nouvelle-aquitaine/charente-maritime/la-rochelle/charente-maritime-guy-sibra-chef-file-presume-du-reseau-ultradroite-af-3-exprime-premiere-fois-1520600.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019); Jérémie Pham-Lê, "Ultradroite: Les Confidences Du Fondateur Du Groupuscule AFO", *Le Parisien*, 31 July 2018, <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/ultradroite-les-confidences-du-fondateur-du-groupuscule-af-31-07-2018-7839537.php>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

60. Collectif Contre L'islamophobie en France, "Rapport CCIF 2019, Rapport Sur l'Islamophobie Pendant L'année 2018", 15 March 2019, p. 4, <http://www.islamophobie.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Rapport-CCIF-2019.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

The NGO Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI) also registered two attacks against Muslim women. At the end of 2017 and beginning of 2018, a sexagenarian French woman physically attacked and repeatedly threatened Muslim mothers while they were bringing their children to school at Perpignan. All these mothers were wearing headscarves.⁶¹ On 22 March, 2018, a doctor at the hospital of Perpignan (South France) verbally attacked a young Muslim woman because of her headscarf. The doctor told his patient that wearing the hijab in the hospital and in public space was prohibited by French law. The patient, thus, suffered non-material damage.⁶²

Moreover, in September and October 2018, a woman entered the swimming pool of Rennes (west France) while wearing a burkini (a covered swimsuit) provoking a fierce debate among other swimmers as well as in the city council. The right-wing opposition condemned a “very retrograde standard of Islam” while the socialist majority responded that “the law of 1905 does not establish the police of clothing.”⁶³

Employment

In March 2018, the Institute of Labor Economics published the “Anti-Muslim Discrimination in France: Evidence from a Field Experiment.” This survey that has been conducted in France before the 2015 attacks – and thus before the state of emergency – demonstrates discrimination against Muslim in the marketplace. The paper “compares the callback rates of immigrants of Muslim and Christian culture who originate from the same country and whose religiosity varies from non-religious to religious.”

Based on responses to over 6,200 job ads, the results reveal an insignificant disadvantage for Muslims when they are not religious. However, Muslims lost further ground when they are religious, while the reverse occurs for Christians. Consequently, religious Muslims must submit twice as many applications as religious Christians before being called back by the recruiters.⁶⁴

Here religion is the criterion of discrimination. Interestingly enough, men are more affected by this discrimination than women. The callback rate of applicants of

61. “Agressions Islamophobes À Perpignan”, Coordination contre le Racisme et l’Islamophobie (CRI), 28 February 2018, <http://www.cri.france.com/actu-islamophobie/agressions-islamophobes-perpignan>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

62. “Discrimination Islamophobe À L’hôpital De Perpignan”, Coordination contre le Racisme et l’Islamophobie (CRI), 30 April 2018, <http://www.cri.france.com/actu-islamophobie/discrimination-islamophobe-a-l>, (Access date: 3 September 2018).

63. Solenne Durox, “Le Burkini Refait Parler De Lui Dans Les Piscines”, *Le Parisien*, 27 September 2018, <http://www.leparisien.fr/societe/le-burkini-refait-parler-de-lui-dans-les-piscines-27-09-2018-7904727.php>, (Access date: 3 September 2019); Samuel Nohra, “Pourquoi Le Burkini Est Autorisé Dans Les Piscines Rennaises”, *Ouest France*, 26 September 2018, <https://www.ouest-france.fr/bretagne/rennes-35000/le-burkini-est-bien-autorise-dans-les-piscines-rennaises-5986896> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

64. Marie-Anne Valfort, “Anti-Muslim Discrimination in France: Evidence from a Field Experiment”, *IZA Institute of Labor Economics*, (Bonn: March 2018), <http://ftp.iza.org/dp11417.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Muslim culture is 11.7% against 18.4% for Christians. Yet, the callback rate of male applicants of Muslim culture is 4.7% against 17.9% for Christian men. According to Marie-Anne Valfort, the author of the survey, there is a distinctive “Muslim effect” since this discrimination is not found for persons identified as Jewish.⁶⁵

Anti-Muslim racism also occurs in companies. In 2018, a Muslim HR consultant was fired from her company after she had denounced her director for repeated sexist and Islamophobic insults.⁶⁶

The *Collectif contre l’islamophobie en France* (CCIF) reported two cases of discrimination in the marketplace. In November 2018, a director of a training center requested a trainee to remove her headscarf in order for her to continue the program.⁶⁷ On 30 November, 2018, an exhibitor at the Saint-Gratien Christmas market (North Paris) was summoned by the city mayor to leave her stand, for the sole reason that she was wearing a headscarf. Accompanied by the CCIF, the victim filed a complaint and brought an action against the mayor Julien Bachard (Republicans party, right-wing).⁶⁸

Education

Islamophobia in education targeted mostly signs of belonging to Islam such as headscarf, halal meat, and the Arabic language. Certain French politicians requested the hijab ban in French universities (the hijab was already banned from primary school up to high school in 2004), such as the deputy of the Republicans party Julien Aubert in November 2018.⁶⁹ Similarly in September 2018, some Muslim students of the Nursing Education Institute (IFSI) complained about the management that was “checking the size of their headbands” as well as “forbidding them religious headscarves.” The co-intervention of the CCIF and the Ombudsman allowed the modification of the institute’s rules of procedure.⁷⁰

In September 2018, some parents complained against the kindergarten of Vénissieux enrolling their children because the management changed the rules of procedure and imposed nursery staff to serve the entire meal to children, even though it

65. Ibid. See also: Léa Polverini, “Pour Obtenir Des Réponses, Les Musulmans Doivent Envoyer 1,6 Fois Plus De Candidatures D’emploi Que Les Chrétiens”, Slate.fr, 6 April 2018, <http://www.slate.fr/story/160003/candidatures-emploi-musulmans-chrétiens>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

66. Zoubi Dah, “Licenciée pour avoir Balancé son Boss: Actes I et II”, Lallab, 10 April 2019, <http://www.lallab.org/licenciee-pour-avoir-balance-son-boss-acte-i-et-ii/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

67. Collectif Contre L’islamophobie en France, “Rapport CCIF 2019, Rapport Sur l’Islamophobie Pendant L’année 2018”, 15 March 2019, <http://www.islamophobie.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Rapport-CCIF-2019.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

68. Ibid.

69. Julien Aubert, “Livre tricolore sur les islam(s)”, 16 November 2018, <https://mailchi.mp/e2ed8d6796c1/tel-echarger-le-livre-tricolore-sur-les-islams>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

70. Collectif Contre L’islamophobie en France, “Rapport CCIF 2019, Rapport Sur l’Islamophobie Pendant L’année 2018”, 15 March 2019, <http://www.islamophobie.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Rapport-CCIF-2019.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

contains meat and the parents oppose it. On 17 October, 2018, the president of the Court of First Instance suspended this regulation in the absence of any technical or financial constraint justifying the amendment of the rules of procedure.⁷¹

On 10 September, 2018, the Minister of Education Jean-Michel Blanquer proposed to increase Arabic teaching in French public schools, alongside with Russian and Chinese. His proposal followed the publication of Karim El Karoui's report on Islamic fundamentalism, which recommended organizing Arabic teaching at school instead of at mosques as a track to fight against Islamism.⁷² Beyond this bold conflation of Arabic language and radicalization, this proposal triggered hard criticism from right-conservative and far-right parties. Former Minister of Education Luc Ferry even said he feared a "risk of bringing Islamism into public education."⁷³ Yet, only one out of a thousand children studies Arabic in primary school, and two out of a thousand in middle school.⁷⁴

Politic

Like previous years, 2018 was a year of disputes over Islam both between and within political parties. This part first analyzes the way main political parties used Islamophobic ideas in 2018. Secondly, it shows how the debate over the organization of French Islam involved Islamophobic rhetoric.

The presidential party **The Republic on the Move** (*La République en Marche*, right-wing liberal) is the most represented party in the French Assembly (304 seats out of 577). The party's position on Islam is quite ambiguous. While President Macron seemed first to promote a liberal interpretation of *laïcité* and the 1905 Law on the Separation of the Churches and State,⁷⁵ he kept repeating that Islam in France must be reorganized by the state in order to prevent radicalization.⁷⁶ Moreover, Macron and the presidential party took decisions that strengthen an exclusively security-based approach towards Muslim people. The counterterrorism law of October

71. "Crèche: Victoire Des Vénissians, La Municipalité Sommée De Respecter La Loi", Collectif Contre L'islamophobie en France, 18 October 2018, <https://www.islamophobie.net/2018/10/18/creche-victoire-des-venissians-la-municipalite-sommee-de-respecter-la-loi/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

72. This report entitled "Islamism Factory" is analyzed in detail in the Politics section.

73. "Enseigner L'arabe À L'école: 'Une Fausse Bonne Idée', Estime Luc Ferry", Europe 1, 11 September 2018, <https://www.europe1.fr/societe/enseigner-larabe-a-lecole-une-fausse-bonne-idee-pour-luc-ferry-3752588>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

74. Nafa Yafi, "Pourquoi L'enseignement De L'arabe En France Suscite-T-Il La Polémique?", Orient XXI, 25 September 2018, <https://orientxxi.info/va-comprendre/pourquoi-l-enseignement-de-l-arabe-en-france-suscite-t-il-la-polemique,2645>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

75. Arnaud Bevilacqua, "L'islam Et Le Voile Selon Emmanuel Macron", La Croix, 16 April 2018, <https://www.la-croix.com/Religion/Islam/Lislam-voile-selon-Emmanuel-Macron-2018-04-16-1200932084>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

76. Timothée Vilars, "Capitalisme Populaire", 'Règles' Pour L'islam: Ce Qu'il Faut Retenir Du Congrès De Macron", L'OBS, 9 July 2018, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/politique/20180709.OBS9395/capitalisme-populaire-regles-pour-l-islam-ce-qu-il-faut-retenir-du-congres-de-macron.html> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

2017 has been widely implemented throughout the year 2018. The United Nations,⁷⁷ the Human Right League, and the French Supreme Court (*Conseil Constitutionnel*)⁷⁸ raised concerns about the consequences of this law on Muslim people.

Certain ministers also participated in spreading an Islamophobic atmosphere in French society. On 3 October, 2018, former French Interior Minister Gerard Colomb claimed in his resignation speech, “Today we live side-by-side... I am afraid that tomorrow we will live face-to-face”. He, thus, implicitly portrayed French Muslims and French non-Muslims as enemies. The same month, Macron nominated Christophe Castaner as new interior minister who claimed on 9 December, 2017, that parents who accompany children on school trips must not be allowed to display religious symbols (i.e. veil).⁷⁹ Similarly, many deputies of Macron’s party explicitly manifested their aversion to the hijab and associate the headscarf with radicalization and political Islam.⁸⁰

The Republicans (*Les Républicains*, center-right) is the second party in France according to the number of seats in the French Assembly. With Laurent Wauquiez at its head the former center-right party has been radicalized with far-right ideology.⁸¹ In April 2018, the newspaper *l’Opinion* even asked whether “the Republicans became a far-right party,”⁸² since the difference between this party and Le Pen’s National Rally became very thin on immigration, Islam, and counterterrorism issues. An ex-member of the party condemned this strategy in the book *He Is Dangerous (Le Dangereux)*, referring to Laurent Wauquiez, published in January 2018.⁸³ In March 2018, Laurent Wauquiez accused Macron of “naivety against terrorism” after a terror attack in the south of France.⁸⁴ In June 2018, he attempted to form an alliance between his party

77. “France: Les Nouvelles Lois Antiterroristes Risquent De Porter Atteinte Aux Droits Et Libertés Fondamentaux, Selon Une Experte De L’ONU”, United Nations Human Rights, 23 May 2018, <https://www.ohchr.org/FR/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23130&LangID=F>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

78. “Trente Ans De Legislation Antiterroriste”, Vie Publique, 3 March 2018, <https://www.vie-publique.fr/chronologie/chronos-thematiques/trente-ans-legislation-antiterroriste.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

79. Hanan Ben Rhouma, “Quand Christophe Castaner S’égare Sur Le Statut Du Voile Dans L’espace Public”, Saphir News, 29 December 2017, https://www.saphirnews.com/Quand-Christophe-Castaner-s-egare-sur-le-statut-du-voile-dans-l-espace-public-video_a24806.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

80. See examples in Media and Internet sections below in this report.

81. “Islam, FN, Immigration... Laurent Wauquiez Droit Dans Ses Bottes Dans”, L’Emission Politique, LCI, 26 January 2018, <https://www.lci.fr/politique/islam-fn-immigration-laurent-wauquiez-droit-dans-ses-bottes-dans-l-emission-politique-lea-salame-france-2-2076944.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

82. Caroline Vigoureux and Joann Mathias, “Les Républicains Sont-Ils Devenus D’extrême Droite?” *l’Opinion*, 20 April 2018, <https://www.lopinion.fr/video/decryptage/republicains-sont-ils-devenus-d-extreme-droite-147944>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

83. Caroline Girardon, “Wauquiez Porte Un Projet Qui Est Une Sorte De Programme En Stereo Du FN”, *Prévient Philippe Langenieux, Auteur De ‘Le Dangereux’*, 20 Minutes, 18 January 2018, <https://www.20minutes.fr/politique/2203835-20180118-wauquiez-porte-projet-sort-programme-stereo-fn-previent-philippe-langenieux-auteur-dangereux>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

84. “Wauquiez Et Le Pen Accusent Macron De Naïvité Face Au Terrorisme”, *France 24*, 26 March 2018, <https://www.france24.com/fr/20180326-france-attentat-trebes-laurent-wauquiez-marine-le-pen-accusent-emmanuel-macron-naivete>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

and *Sens Commun*,⁸⁵ a far-right think tank.⁸⁶ In June 2018, he supervised the spread of political tracts that used anti-Muslim and xenophobic rhetoric.⁸⁷ (Fig. 4)



Figure 4: Political tract spread by the Republicans party to its members. Entitled “France Must Stay France,” this tract participates in spreading the fear of immigrants, terrorism, and the concept of the melting pot.⁸⁸

The National Rally (*Le Rassemblement National*, far-right), ex-National Front, is historically the party that spreads the most racist and Islamophobic propaganda. It is also the party that benefitted the most from the Yellow Vest Movement according to opinion polls in December 2018 (i.e. when the movement was at its peak).⁸⁹ In 2018, the party continued to spread Islamophobic ideology as usual, with, for instance, the party’s attempt to close the mosque of Souillac in January 2018.⁹⁰ Moreover, the National Rally tried to strengthen the Islamophobia network on a Eu-

85. *Sens Commun* (common sense) is a think tank created during the anti-gay marriage protests *Manif pour tous* in 2013. This group of reflection aims at imposing its Catholic-inspired values upon public opinion, especially on topics such as family, identity, and immigration. In 2017, Christophe Billan, the former president of *Sens Commun*, explicitly called for the unification of all right-wing movements (including far-right and Le Pen’s National Rally) around “Christian identity.” See: Lucie Delaporte, “La vidéo vérité qui révèle les ambitions de Sens commun”, Medipart, 13 October 2017, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/131017/la-video-verite-qui-revele-les-ambitions-de-sens-commun>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

86. “Après Avoir Limogé Virginie Calmels, Laurent Wauquiez S’apprête À Renouer Avec Sens Commun”, Europe 1, 18 June 2018, <https://www.europe1.fr/politique/apres-avoir-limoge-virginie-calmels-laurent-wauquiez-sapprete-a-renouer-avec-sens-commun-3685574>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

87. Romain Brunet, “Laurent Wauquiez Et L’extrême Droite À Un Tract Près”, France 24, 8 June 2018, <https://www.france24.com/fr/20180608-france-republicains-tract-laurent-wauquiez-derive-extreme-droite>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

88. Ibid.

89. Caroline Vigoureux, “Sondage Élections Européennes: Les Gilets Jaunes Protestent, Le RN Fait Le Plein”, L’Opinion, 12 December 2018, <https://www.lopinion.fr/edition/politique/sondage-elections-europeennes-gilets-jaunes-protestent-rn-fait-plein-171734>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

90. “Mosquée De Souillac: Victoire Du Rassemblement National!”, Rassemblement National, 10 September 2018, <https://rassemblement-national46.fr/2018/09/mosquee-de-souillac-victoire-du-rassemblement-national/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

ropean level.⁹¹ On 1 May, 2018, Marine Le Pen gathered Europe's most famous Islamophobes at a meeting in Nice:⁹² people like Harald Vilimsky (Austria), Geert Wilders (Netherlands), or Matteo Salvini (Italy) who previously demanded the closing of mosques, or compared the Qur'an to *Mein Kampf*. Similarly on 28 December, 2018, Marine Le Pen in an article targeted the European Union and the Council of Europe as "Trojan Horses" of the Islamization of Europe, warning that the European Court of Human Rights started to integrate Sharia principles in its jurisprudence.⁹³

Following Macron's election to the presidency in 2016, the **Socialist Party** (*Parti Socialiste*) drastically lost its influence on national politics. For this reason, Socialist politicians did not particularly make headlines in 2018 on any issue including Islam. Yet, the spread of Islamophobic discourse is such that the Socialist Party's leaders also used anti-Muslim rhetoric. On October 2018, in the most followed morning radio show program, Olivier Faure, the Socialist Party general coordinator, claimed,

There is a deep identity crisis shared by many citizens [...] there are places where not being an immigrant can be a problem for people who live in these neighborhoods and who may feel excluded. There are places where groupings have been made, generation after generation, that give the feeling that we are in a form of reverse colonization. [...] One local citizen told me that she had long voted for left-wing parties and that she did not want to do it anymore because she had the feeling of being colonized.⁹⁴

This speech uses xenophobic and anti-Muslim rhetoric of the Great Replacement theory.⁹⁵ Leaders of the Republicans and National Rally parties unsurprisingly applauded this speech.⁹⁶

91. "Marine Le Pen Souhaite L'ajout D'un Prénom Français Pour Les Personnes Naturalisées", 20 Minutes, 10 November 2018, <https://www.20minutes.fr/politique/2374711-20181110-marine-pen-souhaite-ajout-prenom-francais-personnes-naturalisees>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

92. David Perrotin and Paul Aveline, "Racistes, Xenophobes, Islamophobes: Voici Les 'Alliés' Européens De Marine Le Pen Acclamés À Nice", BuzzFeed News, 1 May 2018, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/fr/davidperrotin/racistes-xenophobes-islamophobes-voici-les-allies-europeens>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

93. Marine Le Pen, "Bientôt La Charia Dans Notre Droit? Ne Nous Parlez Plus Jamais Des Valeurs De l'Union Européenne!", Rassemblement National, 28 December 2018, <https://rassemblementnational.fr/communiqués/bientot-la-charia-dans-notre-droit-ne-nous-parlez-plus-jamais-des-valeurs-de-lunion-europeenne/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

94. "Olivier Faure, 'Pour Les Européennes, Nous Avons 7 Listes À Gauche, C'est Du Suicidé'", France Inter, 25 October 2018, <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/l-invite-de-8h20-le-grand-entretien/l-invite-de-8h20-le-grand-entretien-25-octobre-2018>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

95. The Great Replacement is "a racist conspiracy theory [...] which was popularized by right-wing French philosopher Renaud Camus. An extension of colonialist theory, it is predicated on the notion that white women are not having enough children and that falling birthrates will lead to white people around the world being replaced by nonwhite people." In Nellie Bowles, "Replacement Theory', a Racist, Sexist Doctrine, Spreads in Far-Right Circles", *The New York Times*, 18 March 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/18/technology/replacement-theory.html>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

96. Loris Boichot, "Immigration: Faure (PS) Évoque Le Sentiment D'un 'Colonisation À L'envers' Dans Certains Quartiers", *Le Figaro*, 26 October 2018, <http://premium.lefigaro.fr/politique/le-scan/citations/2018/10/25/25002-20181025ARTFIG00343-immigration-faure-ps-evoque-le-sentiment-d-une-colonisation-a-l-envers.php>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Unsubmissive France (*France Insoumise*, far-left wing) is a party that traditionally embraces minorities' demands. Yet the party is split between those who support an "intersectionality struggle," including gender and minorities demands, and those who adopt a Jacobin and strictly secular approach to social struggle (i.e. the classical Marxist understanding of society).⁹⁷ This tension was illustrated in November 2018, when a Paris Support Group of the party (JR Hébert group) organized a meeting on "Islamist entryism in labor unions."⁹⁸ A few days later, the group was excluded from the movement triggering tough debates within the party.

In addition to these general trends, some politicians individually participated in Islamophobic polemics. Eric Ciotti (who said in 2016 that François Hollande had been elected because of political Islam)⁹⁹ is a good example of French politicians who attempt to become popular by using Islamophobic discourse. On 17 July, 2018, he claimed in the newspaper *Le Figaro* that Macron "gives credit to Islamo-leftists who defend a multicultural and dangerous vision of society."¹⁰⁰ On 12 July, 2018, he proposed at the French Assembly to ban exterior religious signs for workers in public companies as well as for users of public services (today there is only a ban for workers in public services).¹⁰¹ On 15 November, 2018, he claimed that "some French areas are in the hands of Islamists."¹⁰² Similarly, on 15 December, 2018, in the regional newspaper *Corse Matin*, Eric Diard, rapporteur of the mission on radicalization in public services for the French Assembly (LR), claimed among other things that the terrorist of the Strasbourg attack could have been detected due to the "mark on his front," referring to the Muslim prayer mark (what Arabs call *zabiba*). This comment – coming from a French deputy responsible for counterterrorism – dangerously assimilates terrorism with a mere physical mark that many Muslims share regardless of the nature of their faith or religiosity.

Debates about the Organization of a "French Islam"

For nearly three decades, French governments, regardless of their positions on the political spectrum, have attempted to design a "French Islam" resorting

97. Djordje Kuzmanovic, "Pourquoi Je Quitte La France Insoumise", Marianne, 28 November 2018, <https://www.marianne.net/debatons/tribunes/pourquoi-je-quitte-la-france-insoumise-djordje-kuzmanovic>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

98. Hadrien Mathoux, "Un Groupe De Militants Radiés De La France Insoumise Pour Avoir Organisé Une Réunion Sur Le Communautarisme", 28 November 2018, <https://www.marianne.net/politique/exclusion-france-insoumise-militants-paris-communautarisme>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

99. "François Hollande A Été Élu Grâce À Un Islam Politique", Selon Eric Ciotti, RTL, 25 August 2016, <https://www.rtl.fr/actu/politique/francois-hollande-a-ete-elu-grace-a-un-islam-politique-selon-eric-ciotti-7784580687>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

100. Marion Mourgue, "Eric Ciotti: 'Emmanuel Macron Joue Avec Le Feu'", *Le Figaro*, 17 July 2018, <http://premium.lefigaro.fr/politique/2018/07/17/01002-20180717ARTFIG00283-eric-ciotti-emmanuel-macron-joue-avec-le-feu.php>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

101. Eric Ciotti, Twitter, 12 July 2018, Amendment No 2028 on the Project of Reform of the French Constitution, <https://twitter.com/eciotti/status/1017429600782168064>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

102. Eric Ciotti, "La Laïcité Est Une Digue Contre l'Islam Politique": Retrouvez Mon Interview Dans l'Obs Sur La Volonté Du Gouvernement De Modifier La Loi De 1905", [eric-ciotti.com, 15 November 2018, http://www.eric-ciotti.com/2018/11/15/la-laicite-est-une-digue-contre-lislam-politique-retrouvez-mon-interview-dans-lobs-sur-la-volonte-du-gouvernement-de-modifier-la-loi-de-1905/](http://www.eric-ciotti.com/2018/11/15/la-laicite-est-une-digue-contre-lislam-politique-retrouvez-mon-interview-dans-lobs-sur-la-volonte-du-gouvernement-de-modifier-la-loi-de-1905/), (Access date: 4 September 2019).

to top-down policies while neglecting the needs and opinions of the main group of people involved: French Muslim communities. Mostly motivated by security reasons, these governments have tried to assume the official representation of French Muslims; an “obedient” kind of representation that is fully in line with the state’s directives.

As for Emmanuel Macron, he has repeatedly postponed his project of reform on the organization of Islam in France since it is a highly contentious issue.¹⁰³ Yet, in February 2018, he repeated the objectives of security, control, and integration, which are the main elements of the French official approach to Muslims.¹⁰⁴ He announced that the two main axes of his future reform were “to reduce the influence of Arab countries, which prevents French Islam from entering into modernity” and to reorganize the way mosques are funded and imams are educated.¹⁰⁵ This vision is said to be the fruit of Macron’s close consultant on Islam, Hakim El Karoui. This “expert of Islam”¹⁰⁶ has already published many books and reports on the issue, especially *A French Islam Is Possible* in 2016¹⁰⁷ and *Islam, A French Religion* in 2018.¹⁰⁸ While he explicitly advocates for reorganizing Islam in France through the creation of an independent structure, some scholars criticized his ideas for promoting a top-down state control over Muslims like the “French Islam policy” (*politique musulmane de la France*) during the colonial period.¹⁰⁹

In September 2018, Hakim El Karoui together with the right-wing think tank *Institut Montaigne* published a new report that calls again for a stronger regulation of Muslim religious practices by the state in order to better counter “Islamism.”¹¹⁰

103. Farid Hafez, Enes Bayraklı and Leonard Faytre, “Engineering a European Islam”, *Insight Turkey*, 20/3 (2018), pp. 131-156; “Macron promet une réforme de l’organisation de l’islam en France” RFI, 11 February 2018, <http://www.rfi.fr/france/20180211-macron-promet-une-reforme-organisation-france>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

104. “Quelle Organisation Pour l’Islam Dans La République Française?”, *En Marche*, 10 February 2018, <https://en-marche.fr/articles/actualites/quelle-organisation-pour-l-islam-dans-la-republique-francaise>, (Access date: 4 September 2019); Hervé Gattegno and David Revault d’Allonnes, “Islam de France: ce que veut faire Macron”, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 11 February 2018, <https://www.lejdd.fr/Politique/islam-de-france-ce-que-veut-faire-macron-3571067>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

105. *Ibid.*

106. This vague nomination is problematic since it includes any kind of thinker or author who writes about Islam. The term is used by the newspaper *JDD* in an article in February 2018, see Hervé Gattegno and David Revault d’Allonnes, “Islam De France: Ce Que Veut Faire Macron”, *Le Journal du Dimanche*, 11 February 2018,

107. Hakim El Karoui, *A French Islam Is Possible*, (Institut Montaigne, Paris: 2016).

108. Hakim El Karoui, *L’islam, une religion française*, (Gallimard, Paris: 2018).

109. Jalila Sbai, “Un Projet Aux Relents Coloniaux Pour L’islam De France”, *Orient XXI*, 9 March 2018, <https://orientxxi.info/lu-vu-entendu/un-projet-aux-relents-coloniaux-pour-l-islam-de-france,2325>, (Access date: 4 September 2019); See also: Jalila Sabi, *La Politique musulmane de la France, Un projet chrétien pour l’islam? 1911-1954*, (CNRS Editions, Paris: 2018)

110. About the report: “Un Nouveau Rapport Pour Reformer L’islam En France Remis À Macron”, *France 24*, 10 September 2018, <https://www.france24.com/fr/20180910-rapport-reformer-islam-france-institut-montaigne-religion>, (Access date: 4 September 2019); “Is ‘French Islam! An Attempt to Control Muslims in France?”, *TRT World*, 3 April 2019, <https://www.trtworld.com/europe/is-french-islam-an-attempt-to-control-muslims-in-france-25522>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

In this report, El Karoui repeats his propositions, i.e. new taxes on halal food, pilgrimage, and a number of other Muslim activities as well as the creation of a new independent institution responsible of managing these funds.¹¹¹ The French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb officially praised the report.¹¹² Yet the report entitled “Islamism Factory” triggered turmoil among French Muslim communities since under the single term “Islamism” it includes a great diversity of Muslim movements, and thus conflates regular Muslim practices, such as wearing the headscarf, with Islamism and extremism threats.¹¹³

While leaders of the Republicans party were split within the party over the approach they should adopt on this issue,¹¹⁴ the Deputy Julien Aubert in *Tricolor Booklet on French Islam(s)* (November 2018) exposed a series of proposals to reorganize the Muslim religion in France.¹¹⁵ Designed within the framework of the Great Replacement theory,¹¹⁶ this report makes a list of Islamophobic measures aiming at restricting Muslims’ freedom such as “sanctioning women who do not want to withdraw their headscarves after a police request” or “de-Islamizing certain neighborhoods.” The author justifies these measures by “civil order” rhetoric, a supposedly “risk of secession” and the danger of “French *imamah*”¹¹⁷ Under the appearances of rational analysis,¹¹⁸ this book recycles far-right rhetoric on values, nation, minorities and Islam. It is not a coincidence that Marine Le Pen applauded his proposal of adding a “French name” for naturalized citizens.¹¹⁹

111. Namely *Association musulmane pour l’Islam de France*. The organization was officially created in January 2019, see: “L’essayiste Hakim El Karoui Présente Son Association Musulmane Pour L’Islam De France”, Europe 1, 22 January 2019, <https://www.europe1.fr/societe/essayiste-hakim-el-karoui-presente-son-association-musulmane-pour-islam-de-france-3843212>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

112. “Rapport sur ‘La fabrique de l’islamisme’”, Ministère de l’Intérieur, 10 September 2018, <https://www.interieur.gouv.fr/Actualites/L-actu-du-Ministere/Rapport-sur-La-fabrique-de-l-islamisme>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

113. Julien Lacassagne, “Rapport El-Karoui. La fabrique de l’islamophobie”, 10 October 2018, <https://orientxxi.info/magazine/rapport-el-karoui-la-fabrique-de-l-islamophobie,2666>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

114. Gaël Vaillant, “Islam De France: ‘Un Débat Inflammable’ Chez Les Républicains”, Le Journal du Dimanche, 12 February 2018, <https://www.lejdd.fr/Politique/islam-de-france-un-debat-inflammable-chez-les-republicains-3572504>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

115. “Les Propositions Choc Du Député Julien Aubert Sur l’Islam De France”, C News, 16 November 2018, <https://www.cnews.fr/france/2018-11-16/les-propositions-choc-du-depute-julien-aubert-sur-lislam-de-france-800366>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

116. Julien Aubert, *Livre tricolore sur les islam(s)*, 16 November 2018, <https://mailchi.mp/e2ed8d6796c1/telecharger-le-livre-tricolore-sur-les-islams>, (Access date: 4 September 2019), pp. 1-2.

117. An expression that confuses a supposedly threat of autonomous Muslim political organization in France and the Shia doctrine of imams.

118. For instance, the author mentions a study published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2012) that claims that wearing a headscarf may have a serious impact on the vitamin D sufficiency and the hair wealth of young Jordanian women. The author mentions this study as evidence of the intrinsic danger of wearing a hijab.

119. “Marine Le Pen Souhaite L’ajout D’un Prénom Français Pour Les Personnes Naturalisées”, 20 Minutes, 10 November 2018, <https://www.20minutes.fr/politique/2374711-20181118-marine-pen-souhaite-ajout-prenom-francais-personnes-naturalisees>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Many other so-called experts of Islam disclosed their “solutions” to reorganize Islam in France in 2018. In his *Releasing Islam from Islamism* (January 2018), Mohamed Louizi warns against a “Islamist narrative that has kidnapped the Muslim faith since the death of the Prophet Muhammed,”¹²⁰ i.e. the Islamic political project – represented today by the Muslim Brotherhood – that aims to conquer the world and to destroy Western democracies.¹²¹ As a result, the measures he recommends are a focus on security and state top-down control of Muslim people.

In reaction to all these attempts to restrict Muslims’ freedom of conscience and civil rights, some Muslim activists launched a new movement for Muslim self-organization. In spring 2018, Marwan Muhammad and a group of scholars - among them French sociologists, anthropologists, and activists – organized a tour of the mosques in France and Muslim organizations in order to assess Muslims’ needs and to federate French Muslim communities from the bottom. This wide consultation led, on 30 September, 2018, to the creation of the national platform *L.E.S Musulmans*, which is already able to bring together hundreds of local mosques and organizations under its roof.¹²²

Media

In 2018, Islamophobic controversies often started from social media before being debated in mainstream media and triggering reactions among French politicians. It is not always easy to untangle these three spheres. Yet, mainstream media (i.e. books, TV, radio, and newspapers) greatly participated in creating a negative newspeak related to Islam and Muslims. This part firstly analyzes the way this newspeak manifested throughout the year 2018. Secondly, it provides three examples of controversies widely disputed in mainstream media in 2018.

The negative newspeak that targeted Muslims is not a new phenomenon in France. Yet the process of keeping French Muslims within a degrading linguistic framework increased in 2018 in addition to being normalized.

Islamophobia Newspeak in French Media

Because they offer tools for minorities intellectual independence, postcolonialism theories have been perceived by right and far-right media as “Islamism’s Trojan horse.” This concept comes from the journalist Ivan Rioufol’s book *The Coming Civil War* (*La guerre civile qui vient*, 2016) in which he denounced “multiculturalism as

120. Mohamed Louizi, *Libérer l’Islam de l’islamisme*, (Fondation pour l’innovation politique, Paris: 2018) <http://www.fondapol.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ISLAM-POLITIQUE-1.pdf>

121. Ibid.

122. “Plateforme L.E.S. Musulmans: Une Année Historique, Au Service De Tous”, L.E.S Musulmans, 20 April 2019, <https://lesmusulmans.fr/articles/plateforme-annee-historique/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Islamism's Trojan horse."¹²³ In 2018, this idea kept being spread. On 28 November, 2018, 80 thinkers, scholars, and artists published a "call against postcolonialism" in the weekly *Le Point*. They condemned an "intellectual terrorism" that uses the threat of "racism" and "Islamophobia" in order to "diabolize" their opponents.¹²⁴ Many of the signatories are well-known for their Islamophobic comments (such as Waleed Al-Husseini, Alain Finkielkraut, Elisabeth Badinter, or Zineb El Rhazoui). Laurent Bouvet, the leader of *Printemps Republicain*, a group that constantly triggers Islamophobic polemics, made a similar criticism in an interview for *Le Figaro* on 13 December, 2018.¹²⁵

The same accusation also contains the expression "Islamism-leftism" (*islamo-gauchisme*) referring to politicians or parties that are supposedly compromised with Islamist networks and demands. In October 2018, the journal *Revue des Deux Mondes* published a special edition entitled "Islamism-Leftism, Story of a Downward Spiral."¹²⁶ (Fig. 5) The articles refer to "Islamism-leftists" as "traitors of French identity", "collaborators", and "neo-Vichysm."¹²⁷ Similarly, leaders of *La France Insoumise* have been depicted as "Islamism-leftist" when the party decided to revoke from its movement a group that organized a meeting on "Islamist entryism in labor unions." This is the idea that the former journalist at *Le Monde* and *Libération*¹²⁸ Yves Mamou developed in his book *The Great Desertion – French Elites and Islamism* (September 2018), in which he accused French elites of having allowed the constitution of an "Islamist nation" in France.¹²⁹

123. "Ivan Rioufol: 'Le Multiculturalisme Est Le Cheval De Troie De L'islamisme'", RT France, 7 April 2016, <https://francais.rt.com/entretiens/18736-ivan-rioufol-multiculturalisme-cheval-troie-islam>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

124. "Le 'Décolonialisme', Une Stratégie Hégémonique: L'appel De 80 Intellectuels", *Le Point*, 4 December 2018, https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/le-decolonialisme-une-strategie-hegemonique-l-appel-de-80-intellectuels-28-11-2018-2275104_20.php#xtmc=l-appel-des-80&xtnp=1&xtr=1, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

125. Alexandre Devecchio, "Eviction D'un Professeur Oppose Au Décolonialisme: L'université En Peril", *Le Figaro*, 13 December 2018, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/2018/12/13/31003-20181213ARTFIG00216-eviction-d-un-professeur-oppose-au-decolonialisme-l-universite-en-peril.php>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

126. Hadrien Mathoux, "Un Groupe De Militants Radiés De La France Insoumise Pour Avoir Organisé Une Réunion Sur Le Communautarisme", 28 November 2018, <https://www.marianne.net/politique/exclusion-france-insoumise-militants-paris-communautarisme>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

127. Expressions such as "collaborators" and "neo-Vichysm" refer to French alliance to Nazi Germany during World War II.

128. Both newspapers are generally considered to follow social-democratic standpoints.

129. Paul Sugy, "Face À L'islamisme, Nos Élités Ont Trahi", *Figaro Vox*, 8 October 2018, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/politique/2018/10/05/31001-20181005ARTFIG00341-face-a-l-islamisme-nos-elites-ont-trahi.php>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

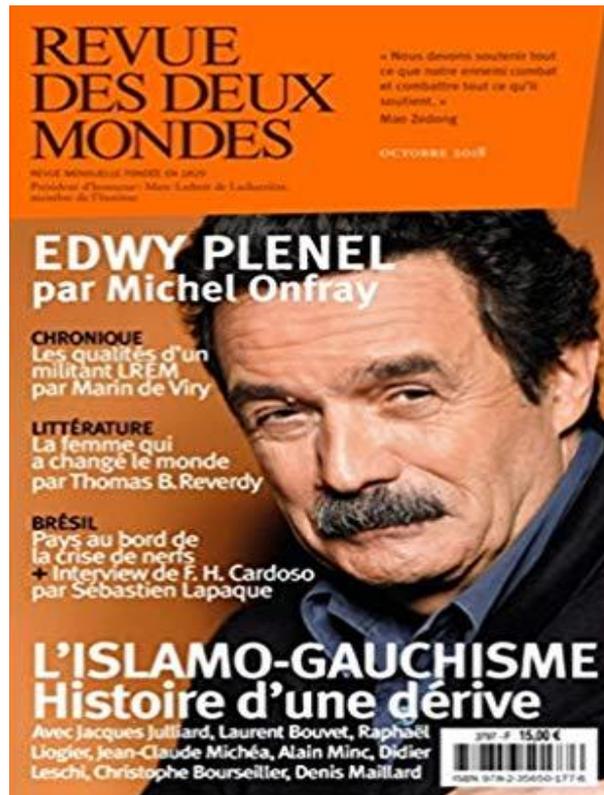


Figure 5: The monthly *Revue des Deux Mondes* published a special edition entitled “Islamism, Story of a Downward Spiral.” The cover shows Edwy Plenel, the president of the online newspaper *Mediapart* considered by many Islamophobes to be compromised with Muslim people. In 2014, Edwy Plenel published a book that defended the Muslim minority in France (*Pour les musulmans*, La Découverte).¹³⁰

- **“Islamisation” as “Reverse Colonisation” of France**

In 2018, many books promoted the idea that France had been colonized by Muslims or what they commonly call “Islamism.” On 17 October, 2018, Gérard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme, both well-known and respected journalists at *Le Monde*, published the book *Insh'Allah! Islamization Disclosed* (*Inch'Allah ! L'islamisation à visage découvert*). (Fig. 7) The book lists a series of local events that occurred in North Paris which supposedly demonstrate the rise of a counter Islamist society.¹³¹ The authors benefitted from a great coverage by mainstream media and were invited to many TV and radio shows.¹³² This publicity was an occasion for regular Islamophobes to normalize their theories about the Islamization of France such as Gilles William Goldnadel and journalists of *Figaro Vox*, who congratulated the two journalists for having finally “opened

130. Valérie Toranian, “Les Racines De L'islamo-Gauchisme”, *Revue Des Deux Mondes*, 27 September 2018, <https://www.revuedesdeuxmondes.fr/racines-de-lislamo-gauchisme/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

131. Julien Lacassagne, “On Ne Peut Rien Dire Sur L'islam!”, *Orient XXI*, 27 December 2018, <https://orientxxi.info/lu-vu-entendu/on-ne-peut-rien-dire-sur-l-islam,2823>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

132. Among them are LCP TV channel (“La plume dans la plaie” program), France Inter, Arte, BFM TV, France Bleu, *Paris Match*, *Le Monde*, *Le Point*, etc.

the eyes” on this “reality” (“better late than never,” as they said).¹³³ Other books published in 2018 intertwined Islamization, reverse colonization, and Great Replacement rhetoric. On 27 September, Laurent Obertone published *The Forbidden France. Truth about Immigration*; on 24 October, Philippe Lobjois and Michel Olivier published *The Secret War: Radical Islam in the World of Work*; and in November Jean-Frédéric Poisson published *Islam Conquers the West. The Strategy Unveiled*.¹³⁴ But it is *French Destiny (Destin français)* of the Islamophobe Eric Zemmour that attracted the media’s attention the most. A favorite in libraries, this book rewrites the history of France in the light of an essential representation of the French nation. The depiction of France as “homogenous” and “eternal” allows Eric Zemmour to categorize Muslims as an “exterior threat.” This connection between nationalism and Islamophobia is at the heart of Zemmour’s work: in his book, he rehabilitates the memory of Petain, the leader of the Vichy collaborationist government during World War II.¹³⁵ Last but not least, the promotion of his book led to several Islamophobic scandals. For instance on 15 December, while attending a popular TV show, he verbally attacked the columnist Hapsatou Sy about her name.¹³⁶ Similarly, on 20 November, Pascal Prau, the speaker of a popular talk show, explicitly supported Zemmour’s theory of “reverse colonialism” by interrupting another journalist shocked by these xenophobic ideas.¹³⁷

In response, certain academic studies attempted to deconstruct this Great Replacement ideology. This is the case of *Communautarisme?* written by sociologists Marwan Mohammed and Julien Talpin.¹³⁸ The book shows how the French expression “communautarisme”¹³⁹ serves as an injunction to maintain minorities in their subaltern status. (Fig. 8) Yet this kind of work never benefits from the same publicity as Islamophobic essays. This double standard clearly reflects the domination of Islamophobic discourse in French media and its normalization.

133. Gilles William Goldnadel, “Goldnadel: ‘Oui, En Seine-Saint-Denis, L’islamisation Est En Marche’”, Le Figaro, 22 October 2018, http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/politique/2018/10/22/31001-20181022ARTFIG00110-goldnadel-oui-en-seine-saint-denis-l-islamisation-est-en-marche.php?redirect_premium, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

134. Julien Lacassagne, “On Ne Peut Rien Dire Sur L’islam!”, Orient XXI, 27 December 2018, <https://orientxxi.info/lu-vu-entendu/on-ne-peut-rien-dire-sur-l-islam,2823>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

135. Ibid.

136. According to Zemmour, her mother did not give her a good name and should have chosen a “Christian” one. Audrey Kucinkas, “Ce Que Zemmour A Vraiment Dit À Hapsatou Sy Chez Ardisson”, L’Express, 19 September 2018, https://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/medias/zemmour-chez-ardisson-hapsatou-sy-sur-la-sellette_2035701.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

137. Al Kanz, Twitter, 21 November 2018, <https://twitter.com/Alkanz/status/1065347592945582080>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

138. Rachid Zerrouki, “Marwan Mohammed: ‘Le Concept De Communautarisme Nie Aux Minorités La Possibilité De S’affirmer Et D’agir Dans L’espace Public’”, Bondy Blog, 31 December 2018, <https://www.bondyblog.fr/reportages/au-pouvoir/marwan-mohammed-le-concept-de-communautarisme-nie-aux-minorites-toute-possibilite-de-saffirmer-et-dagir-dans-lespace-public-2/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

139. “Communautarisme” is a French term negatively depicting “community life” as an ontological threat to the unity of the French nation, see: Fabrice Dhume, “Communautarisme, une catégorie mutante”, La Vie des Idées, 25 September 2018, <https://laviedesidees.fr/Communautarisme-une-categorie-mutante.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

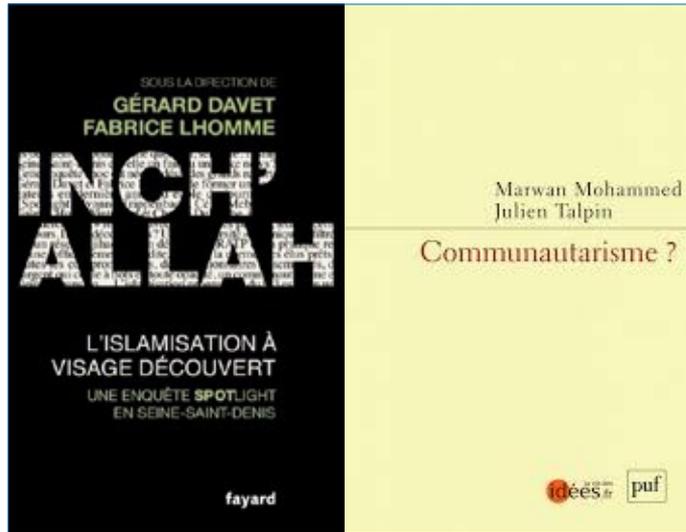


Figure 6: On the left, the cover of *InchAllah*, a book that spreads Islamophobic stereotypes and uses rhetoric of the Great Replacement theory. On the right, the academic survey of two sociologists that meticulously deconstruct Islamophobic ideas of “Islamist segregation” and “Muslim parallel society.”

- ***Pejorative Prefixes and Suffixes Related to Muslims: “Legal Jihad” and “Islam-Organized Crime”***

On 8 March, 2018, the newspaper *Marianne* published a call to support Mohamed Louizi, accused for defamation by some members of the organization *Musulmans de France*, which is close to the Muslim Brotherhood. The article entitled “We Must Defend Mohamed Louizi, Victim of ‘Legal Jihad’” (*jihad judiciaire*), accuses the Muslim Brotherhood organization of pressing charges against Mohammed Louizi in order to silence him and his research against “political Islam.”¹⁴⁰ The article denounces the strategy of “jihad of the courts” supposedly used by the NGO *Musulmans de France* as a means to “convert our Western democracies to their ideology.” This call was signed by people well-known for their Islamophobic comments such as Waleed al-Husseini, Laurent Bouvet, and Pascal Bruckner. Similarly, on 30 March, 2018, the same newspaper published an article by the journalist Martine Gozlan in which she presents the trial of Georges Bensoussan for racist speech as a “harassment.”¹⁴¹ She accuses the CCIF – one of the complainants – of making “legal jihad.”¹⁴² In both articles, the right to open

140. “Il Faut Defender Mohamed Louizi, Victime De ‘Djihad Judiciaire’”, *Marianne*, 10 March 2018, <https://www.marianne.net/debattons/tribunes/il-faut-defendre-mohamed-louizi-victime-de-djihad-judiciaire>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

141. The plaintiffs complained against following Bensoussan’s words; he said on French radio France Culture, “Today, there is another people [the people of Arab-Muslim culture] in the French nation that leads to the regression of a number of democratic values. [...] It turns out that an Algerian sociologist, Smaïn Laacher, with great courage, just said in the film that will be broadcast on France 3 TV channel: ‘it is a shame to keep secret as a taboo that in Arab families in France - and everyone knows it but no one wants to say it - anti-Semitism, we suck it with the mother’s milk.’”

142. Martine Gozlan, “Racisme Et Incitation À La Haine: Georges Bensoussan Relaxé En Appel”, *Marianne*, 24 May 2018, <https://www.marianne.net/societe/racisme-et-incitation-la-haine-georges-bensoussan-relaxe-en-appel>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

a case and to complain against someone – i.e. the bases of a state of law – are denied to Muslim people and delegitimized under the negative term “jihad.”

Similarly, after the terror attack at Strasbourg on 14 December, George Brenier, security expert for the TV channel TF1, claimed the terrorist’s profile reflected “Islamized crime” (*Islamobanditisme*). The expert wanted to highlight the ambiguous profile of the terrorist who had also been condemned for a common crime in the past. Yet, by using this term he assimilated “organized crime” with Islam, as if Islam intrinsically leads to crime.¹⁴³

• ***Muslims as the Source of a “New Anti-Semitism”***

In 2018, Muslims have also been accused of being the source of a “New anti-Semitism.” On 12 January, 2018, Antoine Gallimard, president of the famous Gallimard publishing house, did not want to give up publishing the anti-Semitic writings of Louis-Ferdinand Céline while, according to him, “Today, anti-Semitism is no longer on the side of Christians but of Muslims, and they are not going to read Céline’s texts.”¹⁴⁴ The murder on 23 March, 2018 of an elderly Jewish woman, Mireille Knoll, by a Muslim triggered a debate about Muslim anti-Semitism despite the fact that the motive of the crime has not been established yet.¹⁴⁵ It is in this context that the popular *Le Parisien* newspaper, published on 22 April, 2018, the “Call against New Anti-Semitism” (*l’Appel des 300 contre le nouvel antisémitisme*) denouncing a new Muslim-rooted anti-Semitism in France. This call claims current anti-Semitism is due to Islam and the Muslim community and not to French traditional far-right groups. They make a clear distinction between French people, on one side, and Muslims (as a whole) on the other. In this call, Muslims are indirectly depicted as the French “inner enemy,” since Islam is supposed to be intrinsically anti-Semitic. According to the article, this new anti-Semitism constitutes an “ethnic cleansing.” It also denounces far-left parties for leading anti-Zionist campaigns that are the “acceptable” face of anti-Semitism. Three-hundred people signed the call, among them famous intellectuals, artists, politicians, and three former presidents. Among them are also figures of French Islamophobia such as Pascal Bruckner, Alain Finkielkraut, and Pierre-André Taguieff.¹⁴⁶

143. “Attentat De Strasbourg: Le Terroriste Présumé Était Connu Pour Des Crimes Et Délits De Droit Commun”, LCI, 12 December 2018, <https://www.lci.fr/police/attentat-de-strasbourg-le-terroriste-presume-etait-connu-pour-des-crimes-et-delits-de-droit-commun-2107350.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

144. Louis-Ferdinand Céline is a major French author of the twenty century who is yet criticized because of his explicit antisemitism. “Nouvel Antisémitisme: Derrière L’inquiétude, Des Pulsions Identitaires Fixées Sur L’Islam”, France 24, 23 April 2018, <https://www.france24.com/fr/20180423-france-nouvel-antisemitisme-islam-musulmans-juifs>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

145. Hélène Assekour, “Mireille Knoll, Sarah Halimi: Quand Un Meurtre Devient-Il-Antisémitite?”, Arrêt sur Images, 29 March 2018, <https://www.arretsurlimages.net/articles/mireille-knoll-sarah-halimi-quand-un-meurtre-devient-il-antisemite>, (Access date: 5 September 2019); “Un An Après Le Meurtre De Mireille Knoll, Le Mobile Antisémitite Et L’auteur Toujours Incertains”, Capital, 22 March 2018, <https://www.capital.fr/economie-politique/un-an-apres-le-meurtre-de-mireille-knoll-le-mobile-antisemite-et-lauteur-toujours-incertains-1332378>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

146. Léonard Faytre, “5 Soru: ‘Yeni Anti Semitizme karşı’ Fransız Manifesto”, SETA, 11 May 2018, <https://www.setav.org/5-soru-yeni-anti-semitizme-karsi-fransiz-manifestosu/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

- **“Face-to-Face”, “Armed Conflict against Islam”, and “Civil War”**

This strict distinction between non-Muslims and Muslims in the public discourse constitutes a great threat for French society. It is also the result of constant Islamophobic propaganda. On 15 September, 2018, the polemicist Eric Zemmour warned France of a coming “civil war against Islam and its French collaborators” on the public radio station France Inter.¹⁴⁷ On 27 September, 2018, journalists Zineb El Rhazoui and Jean-Claude Dassier respectively claimed, “Women wearing headscarves belong to and manifest an ideology of radical Islam that leads to terrorism” and “we are in armed conflict against Islam,” on the popular C News TV channel.¹⁴⁸ On 3 October, 2018, former French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb claimed in his resignation speech, “Today we live side-by-side... I am afraid that tomorrow we will live face-to-face,” implicitly portraying French Muslims and French non-Muslims as enemies.¹⁴⁹ Facing much criticism for his booklet on French Islam, Deputy Julien Aubert claimed on 22 November, 2018, “the verbal violence my book triggered reflects a divided society. By not allowing the Republicans to talk about this theme [i.e. Islam], is the physical confrontation which, I fear, will one day end this quarrel.”¹⁵⁰

These allusions to civil war do not only represent the normalization of anti-Muslim discourse but also the legitimization of hate attacks toward individuals. In other words, they promote the worst-case scenario: confrontation.¹⁵¹

Three Symptomatic Controversies about the Hijab

As mentioned above, polemics about Islam usually intertwine social media, mainstream media, and the political spheres. In 2018, three polemics were symptomatic of the normalization of Islamophobia in France: Mennel Ibtissem’s participation on TV show *The Voice*; the interview of UNEF student union leader Maryam Pougé-toux; the Gap Kids marketing campaign. All of these controversies implied aversion to women wearing the hijab.

- ***Mennel Ibtissem’s Participation on the TV show The Voice***

On 3 February, 2018, the broadcast of *The Voice* showed Mennel Ibtissem going on stage to perform Leonard Cohen’s song *Hallelujah*. While the audience and jury had admired the young woman’s voice, a controversy started on social networks: some blamed Mennel Ibtissem for having sung part of the song in Arabic while oth-

147. “Le Grand Face-à-Face – Eric Zemmour”, France Inter, 15 September 2018, <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/le-grand-face-a-face/le-grand-face-a-face-15-septembre-2018> (from 32:20’), (Access date: 5 September 2019).

148. “Islamophobie En Direct Sur CNEWS: Le CRI Porte Plainte Contre Zineb El Rhazoui Et Dassier”, Oumma, 14 December 2018, <https://oumma.com/islamophobie-en-direct-sur-cnews-le-cri-porte-plainte-contre-zineb-el-rhazoui-et-dassier/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

149. “L’avertissement de Collomb: ‘La Loi Du Plus Fort A Pris La Place De La République’”, L’OBS, 4 October 2018, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/politique/20181004.OBS3399/l-avertissement-de-collomb-la-loi-du-plus-fort-a-pris-la-place-de-la-republique.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

150. Julien Aubert, “Il est Impossible De Parler De L’islam Sans Être Caricature”, Le Figaro, 22 November 2018, <http://premium.lefigaro.fr/vox/politique/2018/11/22/31001-20181122ARTFIG00264-julien-aubert-il-est-impossible-de-parler-de-l-islam-sans-etre-caricature.php>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

151. Léonard Faytre, “Islamophobes Contemplate a Civil War in France”, Daily Sabah, 12 October 2018, <https://www.dailysabah.com/op-ed/2018/10/13/islamophobes-contemplate-a-civil-war-in-france>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

ers accused TF1 of “normalizing” the Islamic veil.¹⁵² The next day, several Internet users actively searched the singer’s previous activities on social media and exhumed a few controversial comments, including conspiracy sayings over the 2016 Nice terror attacks.¹⁵³ Far-right accounts immediately shared screenshots revealing these comments. Activists and politicians reacted also on social media: some requested her exclusion from the TV show (such as Philippe Vardon or Laurent Bouvet), and others accused her of being an “Islamist” (Jean Messiha).¹⁵⁴ Similarly many polemics occurred in mainstream media. On CNews, the journalist Ivan Rioufol claimed,

She is wearing a headscarf; she is close to [Tariq] Ramadan [...] you do not want to see that she is Islamist. A headscarf today, when it is worn – above all on a TV show – it is a political sign, it is not a religious sign, it is a way to make it clear that she does not want to live with us [...] Islam is a totalitarian ideology.¹⁵⁵

On Friday, 9 February, one week after her first appearance on the show, Mennel Ibtissem announced she was leaving the program. The feminist Rokhaya Diallo noticed on Twitter that people explored only the past of this specific singer-applicant. In other words, Mennel Ibtissem would not have experienced all these problems if she had not worn a headscarf.¹⁵⁶

- ***The Interview of UNEF Student Union Leader Maryam Pougetoux***

On 12 May, 2018, the TV channel M6 broadcasted a report about protests that took place in many universities in France. Journalists briefly interviewed Maryam Pougetoux, one of the leaders of UNEF student union (left-wing), who was wearing a headscarf.¹⁵⁷ Without listening to what Maryam Pougetoux said about the ongoing protests, several politicians from social democrats to far-rightists accused the student of “promotion of political Islam”,¹⁵⁸ of showing her “difference with French society”¹⁵⁹

152. Julien Salingue, “L’affaire Mennel’, Énième Symptôme De La Normalisation De L’islamophobie”, Npa2009.org, 26 October 2018, <https://npa2009.org/actualite/antiracisme/laffaire-mennel-enieme-symptome-de-la-normalisation-de-lislamophobie>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

153. Assma Maad and David Perrotin, “Affaire Mennel: Les 6 Étapes Qui Ont Mené À L’abandon De La Candidate De ‘The Voice’”, BuzzFeed News, 12 February 2018, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/fr/assmamaad/affaire-mennel-les-6-etapes-qui-ont-mene-a-labandon-de-la>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

154. Ibid.

155. C News, YouTube, “L’heure des Pros”, 9 February 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_RaT-6ac-rI, from 35’30, (Access date: 5 September 2019)

156. Julien Salingue, “L’affaire Mennel’, Énième Symptôme De La Normalisation De L’islamophobie”, Npa2009.org, 26 October 2018, <https://npa2009.org/actualite/antiracisme/laffaire-mennel-enieme-symptome-de-la-normalisation-de-lislamophobie>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

157. Manon Aublanc, “Qui est Maryam Pougetoux, La Responsable Voilée De l’Unef?”, 20 Minutes, 23 May 2018, <https://www.20minutes.fr/societe/2276127-20180523-maryam-pougetoux-responsable-voilee-unef>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

158. Quote from Marlene Schiappa, the secretary of state for equality between women and men in “Voile de Maryam Pougetoux: droit, raison et politique”, L’Express, 31 May 2018, https://blogs.lexpress.fr/etudiant-sur-le-tard/sur_laffaire_maryam_pougetoux/, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

159. Quote from previous Minister of the Interior Gérard Collomb in “Voile de Maryam Pougetoux: droit, raison et politique”, L’Express, 31 May 2018, https://blogs.lexpress.fr/etudiant-sur-le-tard/sur_laffaire_maryam_pougetoux/, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

or of being an “Islamist.”¹⁶⁰ Even far-left politicians remained ambiguous in their reactions, hesitating between Jacobin strict secular approach (i.e. condemning the headscarf in union activities) and multicultural liberal approach (i.e. accepting it).¹⁶¹

The UNEF student union issued a statement to defend the young woman. The organization assured that there was no incompatibility between showing one’s religious beliefs and the values of unionism.¹⁶² This controversy sparked emotion worldwide and was covered by most respected media outlets.¹⁶³ Yet, this awareness did not prevent the spread of anti-Muslim racist comments such as *Charlie Hebdo*’s caricature of Maryam Pougetoux. (Fig. 9)



Figure 7: On the right, a screenshot of M6 TV interview of Maryam Pougetoux, one of the leaders of student union UNEF. She is commenting on student protests against the new French university application process; on the right, the caricature of Maryam Pougetoux on the cover of satiric *Charlie Hebdo*, which states “French University Application Process (*Parcoursup*) Is Sh***, They Accepted Me as Leader of UNEF.” The cartoon face has been drawn to look like a monkey.¹⁶⁴

160. Eric Ciotti, Twitter, 25 May 2018, <https://twitter.com/eciotti/status/1000104781619367937?lang=fr>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

161. See Melenchon’s reaction: “Mélencchon Sur Le Voile De La Présidente De L’Unef À La Sorbonne: ‘C’est Comme Si J’arrivais Avec Une Énorme Croix” LCI, 20 May 2018, <https://www.lci.fr/politique/religion-islam-sur-lci-melenchon-revient-sur-maryam-pougetoux-president-unef-sorbonne-c-est-comme-si-j-arrivais-avec-une-enorme-croix-2087886.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

162. “L’Unef Défend Maryam Pougetoux, Critiquée Car Elle Porte Le Voile”, Ouest France, 14 May 2018, <https://www.ouest-france.fr/societe/l-unef-defend-maryam-pougetoux-critiquee-car-elle-porte-le-voile-5758802>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

163. Among others *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, BBC, *The independent*, and Al-Jazeera.

164. Geoffroy Clavel, “L’Unef Défend Maryam Pougetoux, Sa Présidente À Paris IV, Attaquée Parce Qu’elle Porte Le Voile”, Huffington Post, 14 May 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.fr/2018/05/14/lunef-defend-maryam-pougetoux-sa-presidente-a-paris-iv-attaquee-parce-quelle-porte-le-voile_a_23434022/, (Access date: 5 September 2019); “Charlie Hebdo: La Caricature Qui Relance La Polémique Sur La Présidente De L’Unef Voilée”, LaDepeche, 25 May 2018, <https://www.ladepeche.fr/article/2018/05/25/2804716-charlie-hebdo-caricature-relance-polemique-presidente-unef-voilee.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

- **Gap Kids Marketing Campaign**

On 31 August, 2018, the company Gap Kids published on social media its last marketing campaign showing children of Harlem, including a young girl wearing a headscarf.¹⁶⁵ Rapidly, many Internet users including journalists, activists, and politicians firmly condemned what they considered as “submission to Islamism”¹⁶⁶ and called on a boycott of the firm.¹⁶⁷ As usual, mainstream media (TV, radio, newspapers) widely publicized this controversy. Gap Kids responded that the advertisement was not designed for the French public. In fact, the newspaper *Libération* noticed that the publication of this same picture on Instagram generated almost only positive comments from the English-speaking world.¹⁶⁸

Justice System

Like media and politics, Islamophobic acts in the justice system mostly concern Muslim women. On 15 January, 2018, a sexagenarian woman was prosecuted at the Court of Appeal of Rouen (Northwest France) for an aggression committed in October 2015 against a veiled woman.¹⁶⁹

In February 2018, the disciplinary chamber of the Aquitaine Medical Association imposed a six-month ban on a doctor who in 2015 harassed a mother wearing the hijab. While the woman was accompanying her child in the hospital, the doctor told her “we are at war, we must know in which camp you are” and “the headscarf you wear is a sign of non-integration.” The doctor has appealed the decision.¹⁷⁰

The same month, Christine Tasin, president of the anti-Muslim NGO *Résistance Républicaine*, was sentenced by the Paris Court of Appeal to pay a fine of €1,500 for

165. “Gap Kids Fait Polémique En Mettant En Scène Une Fillette Voilée Dans Une Publicité”, LCI, 9 August 2018, <https://www.lci.fr/international/gap-kids-fait-polemique-en-mettant-en-scene-une-fillette-voilee-dans-une-publicite-2095329.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

166. The Republicans MP Valérie Boyer for whom “marketing promotes submission to Islamism”. See: Valérie Boyer, Twitter, 10 August 2018, https://twitter.com/valerieboyer13/status/1027845296481624064?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1027845296481624064&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nouvelobs.com%2Fsociete%2F20180810.OBS0776%2Fune-pub-gap-montrant-une-petite-fille-voilee-fait-polemique.html.

167. Aurore Bergé, the spokesperson of the LREM group in the French Assembly, who calls for boycotting Gap. See “Une Pub Gap Montrant Une Petite Fille Voilée Fait Polémique”, L’OBS, 10 August 2018, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20180810.OBS0776/une-pub-gap-montrant-une-petite-fille-voilee-fait-polemique.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

168. Emma Donada, “Est-Ce Qu’une Petite Fille Voilée Apparaît Dans Une Publicité Française Pour Gap?”, *Libération*, 10 August 2018, https://www.liberation.fr/checknews/2018/08/10/est-ce-qu-une-petite-fille-voilee-apparait-dans-une-publicite-francaise-pour-gap-lien-signale-sur-fa_1671986, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

169. “Une Femme Aggressée Parce Qu’elle Portait Une Burqa En Seine-Maritime: Un Retraité Jugé À Rouen”, *Actu.fr*, 16 January 2018, https://actu.fr/normandie/gruchet-le-valasse_76329/femme-agreesee-parce-portait-burqa-seine-maritime-retraite-juge-rouen_15071125.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

170. Stéphanie Brossard, “Libourne: Un Médecin Sanctionné Pour Discrimination Et Islamophobie”, *France Bleu*, 21 February 2018, <https://www.francebleu.fr/infos/faits-divers-justice/libourne-un-medecin-suspendu-pour-discrimination-et-islamophobie-1519234668>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Islamophobic public remarks following the assassination of a policeman and his wife by a jihadist in Magnanville in 2016.¹⁷¹

The CCIF, which provides legal assistance, registered several sentences for Islamophobic acts in 2018. For instance, in June, the French justice sentenced the manager of a tobacco bar and post office in Albi (Southwest France) who refused to offer services to Muslim clients wearing headscarves. The public prosecutor requested €3,000 fine and a conditional sentence of imprisonment of 3 months for religious discrimination. The criminal court finally sentenced her to nearly €9,000, for refusal of goods or services to a person because of her religion.¹⁷² Similarly, on 21 June, the Administrative Court of Nice sentenced Cannes City Hall to repay a Muslim woman unjustly fined in 2016 because she was wearing burkini on the beach.¹⁷³

In August 2018, the UN Human Rights Committee criticized French justice for not having condemned the dismissal of an employee wearing the hijab from the private nursery where she was working. The committee considered this dismissal as unfair and as a discrimination based on religion.¹⁷⁴ Similarly in October 2018, a group of UN experts condemned France for having banned the niqab. The committee considered this law was “marginalizing” these women “by confining them to their homes and by denying them access to public services.”¹⁷⁵ Yet both opinions are not binding.

Alongside Muslim women and the hijab, judicial events regarding Islamophobia focused on security issues.

On 7 March, 2018, the human rights activist Abdelaziz Chaambi was sentenced to pay €2,000 fine by the Court of Appeal of Grenoble for contempt against the police while protesting in January 2015. Abdelaziz Chaambi was supported by the French Human Rights League that saw in this trial a threat to all activists who defend minorities.¹⁷⁶

171. “Islamophobie: Une Association Française Condamnée En Appel”, Yabiladi, 22 February 2018, <https://www.yabiladi.com/articles/details/62096/islamophobie-association-francaise-condamnee-appel.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

172. Collectif Contre L’islamophobie en France, “Rapport CCIF 2019, Rapport Sur l’Islamophobie Pendant L’année 2018”, 15 March 2019, p. 6, <http://www.islamophobie.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Rapport-CCIF-2019.pdf>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

173. Ibid.

174. Pascal Charrier, “L’ONU Critique La France Dans L’affaire Baby-Loup”, La Croix, 26 August 2018, <https://www.la-croix.com/France/LONU-critique-France-laffaire-Baby-Loup-2018-08-26-1200964030>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

175. “Interdiction Du Niqab: La France ‘Condamnée’ Par Un Comité De L’onu”, Le Point, 23 October 2018, https://www.lepoint.fr/societe/interdiction-du-niqab-la-france-condamnee-par-un-comite-de-l-onu-23-10-2018-2265132_23.php, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

176. Jean-Christophe Pain, “Abdelaziz Chaambi Condamné À 2 000 Euros D’amende Pour Outrage Par La Cour d’Appel De Grenoble”, France 3 Régions, 7 March 2018, <https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/auvergne-rhone-alpes/isere/grenoble/abdelaziz-chaambi-condamne-2-000-euros-amende-outrage-cour-appel-grenoble-1436387.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

In April 2018, a dozen far-right figures held a rally in front of the National School of the Judiciary, among them Renaud Camus, father of the Great Replacement theory, and Pierre Cassen, founder of the Islamophobic website *Riposte Laïque*. Already condemned for Islamophobic remarks, they consider themselves victims of “legal persecution.” The rally was only attended by a few individuals.¹⁷⁷

In May 2018, the administrative court of Cergy-Pontoise sentenced the French state to pay the manager of Pepper Grill, a halal restaurant, €10,000 for moral damages. During the state of emergency on 21 November, 2015, French police made a violent raid against this restaurant while customers were eating. The court considered that the level of violence was unjustified.¹⁷⁸

Finally in December 2018, a preliminary investigation was opened against a private bar linked to far-right group *Génération Identitaire* in Lille, three days after the broadcast of a documentary on this organization on Al-Jazeera English.¹⁷⁹

Internet

Islamophobic activities have three main aspects on the Internet. Firstly, there are accounts on social media launching Islamophobic controversies. As mentioned above, almost every controversy related to Islam starts at Twitter or Facebook. The second aspect concerns websites that publicize Islamophobic contents or at least the fear of an Islamist segregation. These websites are either rooted in the far right or the left. The last aspect concerns paramilitary organizations that share contacts, comments, and techniques on the Internet.

Islamophobic Accounts on Social Media

Twitter and Facebook platforms give the floor to left-wing activists, journalists, and politicians who constantly attack the headscarf as well as “Muslim backwardness” in the name of secularism and the French “way of life.” This is the case of activists such as Laurent Bouvet and Gilles Clavreul, co-founders of *Printemps Republicains*; of polemist such as Zohra Bitan;¹⁸⁰ of journalists such as Zineb El Rhazoui;¹⁸¹ and of politicians such as Manuel Valls¹⁸² and Marlène Schiappa.¹⁸³

177. Baptiste Giraud, “La Crème Des Islamophobes De France S’octroie Une Tribune En Plein Bordeaux”, Rue 89, 4 April 2018, <https://rue89bordeaux.com/2018/04/creme-islamophobes-de-france-soctroie-tribune-plein-bordeaux/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

178. Julie Ménard, “L’Etat Doit 10 000€ Au Pepper Grill De Saint-Ouen-l’Aumône”, Le Parisien, 23 May 2018, <http://www.leparisien.fr/val-d-oise-95/l-etat-doit-10-000-eur-au-pepper-grill-de-saint-ouen-l-aumone-23-05-2018-7731555.php>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

179. Cyril Simon, “Une Enquête Ouverte Après Un Documentaire Sur Un Bar De Génération Identitaire”, Le Parisien, 12 December 2018, <http://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/enquete-ouverte-apres-le-documentaire-d-al-jazeera-sur-le-bar-de-generation-identitaire-a-lille-12-12-2018-7967235.php>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

180. Polemist at the popular “Les Grandes Gueules” Talk Show on BFM TV.

181. Former journalist at *Charlie Hebdo*.

182. Ex-Prime Minister (Ex-Socialist Party member).

183. State Secretary in charge of equality between women and men and the fight against discrimination (Republic On the Move, presidential party).

On social media there are also Islamophobic accounts that refer to the far-right xenophobic tradition, among them accounts of politicians such as Jean Messiha (National Rally), Patricia Guilhaud (Republic Arise), and Eric Ciotti (The Republicans), but also famous polemicists such as Gilles-William Goldanel.¹⁸⁴ In their tweets, anti-Muslim racism is connected to anti-immigration and nationalism discourses.

Finally, there are self-proclaimed ex-Muslim activists such as Majid Oukacha and Waleed Al-Husseini who conflate regular Muslim activities (headscarf, prayer, etc.) and radicalization in their lawful criticism of religion. According to them, any Muslim is intrinsically a potential terrorist, or at least abides by the “barbaric” corpus of Shari’a law.

These accounts are just some (of many) well-known names and widely followed accounts. Their ideas are supported and retweeted by a number of anonymous accounts and common users.

Islamophobic Websites

There is a distinction between discourses rooted in the left and the far right regarding websites. In the first case, NGOs such as *Printemps Republicain* (Republican Spring) and *Comité Laïcité République* (*Laïcité* – Republic Committee) hide their anti-Muslim racism under the veil of secularism, women’s rights, and Jacobin ideology. In the second one, websites such as *FDeSouche*, *Resistance Républicaine*, *Riposte Laïque*, *Boulevard Voltaire*, *TVLibertés*, *Breizh-info*, or *Observatoire de l’Islamisation* openly claim being Islamophobic and base their discourse upon the “clash of civilization”, “Great Replacement”, and “reverse colonialism” theories. Yet, one may keep in mind that this distinction is not always appropriate since all the mentioned discourses can be found in both sides.

FigaroVox is an influential platform that uses its reputation of respectful mainstream media¹⁸⁵ for spreading Islamophobic and nationalistic contents. Websites of far-right parties such as National Rally, *Debout la France*, *Parti de la France* are also active voices of Islamophobia online.

Paramilitary Groups’ Websites

It is less known by the general public that Islamophobia is also the leitmotiv of some paramilitary groups that convene online. The white supremacist platform *reseaulibre.org* gathered around 3,000 users and debates the ways to physically attack Muslims and to commit terror attacks.¹⁸⁶ In a recent article, the online media *Mediapart* expressed its suspicion that the director of *reseaulibre.org* is a former French

184. Lawyer and polemicist who attends many TV shows such as “Les Terriens Dimanche” on C8 or “Les Grandes Gueules” on BFM TV. He also writes articles in the famous right-wing *Le Figaro* newspaper.

185. *Le Figaro* is a famous historical right-wing newspaper.

186. Matthieu Suc and Marine Turchi, “Révélations Sur Des ‘Patriotes’ Qui Projetaient Des Attentats Islamophobes”, *Mediapart*, 1 April 2019, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/010419/revelations-sur-des-patriotes-qui-projetaient-des-attentats-islamophobes>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

spy, who is an expat in Russia since 1998.¹⁸⁷ The website closed on 20 October, 2018, but redirected its users towards another platform, namely *LeonFrance.fr*.¹⁸⁸ The anti-Muslim terrorist group AFO also spread its propaganda on a website entitled *Guerre de France* (War of France). This website is still available online. (Fig. 10)



Figure 8: Screenshot of the AFO's website still available online as of the beginning of 2019. We can see well-armed soldiers involved in destructive warfare in the streets of Paris.¹⁸⁹

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Previous parts of this report already given a picture of political, media, and Internet figures involved in the Islamophobia network. The interactions between those mentioned politicians, journalists, activists, thinkers, newspapers, and NGOs form an “Islamophobic cloud” that contests the freedom of conscience and basic rights for Muslim people, especially Muslim women. For instance, it prevents Muslim women from activities, jobs, accommodation, or representations in the public sphere outside the scope of the law. In 2018, the pressure imposed by this “Islamophobia cloud” tended to be normalized (see the cases of Mennel Ibtissem and Maryam Poutignoux for example). Therefore, it became more and more difficult for Muslim individuals to face this general normative discourse.

Since the causes of Islamophobic actors are intertwined with each other, it is not easy to determine which figures played the most powerful role in this general “Islamophobia cloud.” Yet, it is possible to make the distinction between, first, those who participate in this “cloud” by spreading Islamophobic rhetoric and ideas and, second, those who participate in this same “cloud” by planning or calling on terror attacks against Muslims. Again the boundary between the two categories is not impermeable.

1. Among the central figures of the first category there are those who take advantage of their social reputation and respectability to spread a normalized

187. Ibid.

188. Ibid.

189. AFO website: www.guerredefrance.fr/afo.htm.

form of Islamophobia. Likewise, leftist and self-proclaimed “anti-racist” NGOs such as *Printemps Republicain*, *Comité Laïcité et République*, and LICRA actively militate in mainstream and social media for a hard interpretation of *laïcité* that would exclude any exterior expression of religion. For them, visible expressions of Islam are not compatible with French secular order. This position leads them to spread Islamophobic rhetoric regarding Muslim people, intrinsically perceived as a threat. For instance, Laurent Jouvét, co-founder of *Printemps Republicain*, wrote a book on “cultural insecurity” and often stigmatizes headscarf and halal food. Mainstream newspapers such as *Le Figaro*, *Causeur*, and *Valeurs Actuelles* share this hard vision of *laïcité* while promoting at the same time rightist rhetoric focused on French nation, cultural identity, authority, and civilization. On a regular basis, they interview conservative thinkers such as Eric Zemmour, Alain Finkielkraut, Ivan Rioufol, and Gilles-William Goldnadel who advocate fighting against “growing Islamist segregation”¹⁹⁰ and “parallel society.” This kind of polemicists are also regularly invited on popular TV talk shows such as “Les Grandes Gueules” on BFM TV, “L’Heure des Pros” on CNews and “Les Terriens Dimanche” on C8. Finally, all these ideas are recycled by politicians such as Marine Le Pen, Laurent Wauquiez, and Eric Ciotti who are above all seeking electoral success. These Islamophobia figures are now normalized in French society. Yet they compete with even more radicalized figures. Ideologues such as Renaud Camus, considered as father of the “Great Replacement” theory in France, Pierre Cassen, and Christine Tasin, founders of openly Islamophobic *Riposte laïque* and *Résistance Républicaine* respectively, constantly attack Muslim people verbally and promote the implementation of racist policies against Muslims and immigrants. These figures criticized “mainstream Islamophobes” for being too shy in their “denunciation of Muslims” but at the same time provide them with intellectual tools.¹⁹¹

2. Among the groups who are planning or call for planning terror attacks against Muslim people, is the AFO (Action of Operational Forces) that was going to physically attack hundreds of imams, women, and Muslim mosques in summer 2018. French police partly dismantled the group between June and August 2018 (see above). The AFO was linked to Volunteers for France (VPF) that also calls for “defending French identity” and “fighting against the Islamization in France.” The group registers between

190. “L’appel Des 100 Intellectuels Contre Le ‘Séparatisme Islamiste’”, *Le Parisien*, 21 March 2018, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/vox/societe/2018/03/19/31003-20180319ARTFIG00299-l-appel-des-100-intellectuels-contre-le-separatisme-islamiste.php>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

191. The idea of the Great Replacement for example.

200 and 800 members including many retired soldiers and French generals and officers.¹⁹² Meanwhile, Remora Network openly attempts to organize “civil resistance” and paramilitary operations against Muslims in France. The group split the French map in 15 areas, all supervised by “former experimented army officers.”¹⁹³ Other groups such Soldiers of Odin Breizh, a French version of a Finnish far-right group, and Generation Identity aim to fight against the “Great Replacement” by organizing actions such as patrols in French cities or national borders.¹⁹⁴

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

In 2018, Muslim activists and entrepreneurs repeatedly organized counter-discourses and initiatives against this “Islamophobia cloud.” Ironically enough, endless debates about the organization of a “French Islam” have been an opportunity for reshaping the relations between French Muslim communities at a grassroots level. Supported by French sociologists, demographers, journalists, and activists,¹⁹⁵ Marwan Muhammad coordinated the France-wide survey “Consultation of Muslims” between 10 May and 20 June, 2018. In addition to conducting debates in 57 mosques, they gathered answers from 24,029 individuals who were questioned online about the situation of Muslims in France.¹⁹⁶ The results show that a large majority of French Muslims who attended the survey want a national institution representing Muslims (85%) independent from the state (70%).¹⁹⁷ Organizers of the survey founded *L.E.S. Musulmans* in order to pursue this bottom-up building process and to put pressure on public authorities regarding Muslim concerns.¹⁹⁸

Inquiries and investigations about anti-Muslim racism have had an important impact on countering Islamophobia in 2018. The NGO Committee Justice and Liberties (CJL) conducted several actions and studies analyzing the relations

192. Matthieu Suc and Marine Turchi, “Forces De L'ordre Liées À L'ultra-Droite Violente: La DGSJ S'inquiète”, Mediapart, 9 April 2019, <https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/090418/forces-de-l-ordre-liees-l-ultra-droite-violente-la-dgsj-s-inquiete>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

193. See the far-right website *Minurne Résistance*, <https://www.minurne.org/billets/tag/remora>.

194. Eléa Pommiers, “Dans Les Hautes-Alpes, Les Militants De Génération Identitaire Sont Passibles De Poursuites”, *Le Monde*, 11 May 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/police-justice/article/2018/05/11/dans-les-hautes-alpes-les-militants-de-generation-identitaire-sont-passibles-de-poursuites_5297757_1653578.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

195. Among them the sociologists Fatiha Ajbli, Valérie Amiraux, Said Bouamama, Moussa Bourekba, Nacira Guénif-Souilamas, Julien Talpin, and statisticians Reda Choukour and demographer Patrick Simon.

196. Samba Doucouré and Huê Trinh Nguyen, “Consultation initiée par Marwan Muhammad: des chiffres... et des luttes”, *Saphir News*, 2 October 2018, https://www.saphirnews.com/Consultation-initiee-par-Marwan-Muhammad-des-chiffres-et-des-luttes_a25638.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

197. *Ibid.*

198. See the organization's website: <https://lesmusulmans.fr/>.

between terrorism, counterterrorism, and Islamophobia in France.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, in spring 2018, Hassina Mechaï and Sihem Zine published *L'Etat d'urgence (permanent)* (Permanent State of Emergency), a book that discusses experiences of the French Muslims who unjustly suffered from the French State of Emergency between 2015 and 2017. This is a precious study since French media mainly silenced misuses and security excesses during this period.²⁰⁰

Academic studies fighting Islamophobic rhetoric have also played an important role in 2018. Already mentioned in this report, the sociological analysis *Communautarisme?* of Marwan Mohammed and Julien Talpin (September 2018) meticulously deconstructs Islamophobic ideas of “Islamist segregation” and “parallel society.”²⁰¹ In the same way, the heads of the state-funded Observatory of *Laïcité* Jean-Louis Bianco and Nicolas Cadène continued to promote a liberal understanding of French secular order which does not discriminate against Muslim people, especially women.

Finally, some NGOs monitor Islamophobic acts and provide legal assistance to victims. The most famous, Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF),²⁰² published the most reliable records on Islamophobia in France. The organization also assists victims in their cases and regularly organizes workshops and training on French legal procedures. Alongside the CCIF, Coordination against Racism and Islamophobia (CRI)²⁰³ and Action for Muslim Rights (ADM)²⁰⁴ worked significantly towards assisting victims and denouncing anti-Muslim racism in the public sphere.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamist terrorists and anti-Muslim extremists would like to see France enter into a civil war with non-Muslims on one side and Muslims on the other. Islamophobia is thus a source of great disorder. Its consequences do not only undermine the life of Muslims but also the cohesion of the French nation as a whole. In order to prevent this worst-case scenario, the French state must “reassert its authority and commitment to the founding principles of the French Republic in the face of continuous ideological

199. Yasser Louati, “L’alliance Objective Entre Terrorisme Et Islamophobie”, Medium, 31 October 2018, <https://medium.com/@yasserlouati/lalliance-objective-entre-terrorisme-et-islamophobie-9fcfa71260ba>, (Access date: 5 September 2019); See also CJL organization’s activities and inquiries on the website: <https://justicelibertes.org/en/>

200. Hassina Mechaï and Sihem Zine, “L’état D’urgence (Permanent)”, Les Mots Sont Importants, 9 July 2018, <https://lmsi.net/L-etat-d-urgence-permanent>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

201. Marwan Mohammed and Julien Talpin, *Communautarisme?* (PUF, Paris: 2018).

202. See CCIF’s website: <http://www.islamophobie.net/>.

203. See CRI’s website: <https://crifrance.com/>.

204. See ADM’s website: <https://adm-musulmans.com/>.

assaults.”²⁰⁵ In other words, the state must rebuild a relation of trust between its institutions, French Muslim communities, and the French people by fighting discourses, actions, and policies that participate in ostracizing the Muslim minorities in French society. Recommendations regarding trust building, security policy, and hate discourse follow below. Some of them are directly taken from last year’s report:

Regarding Trust Building

- Abandon top-down policy-making aiming at engineering “French Islam” irrespective of civil society initiatives and network.
- Support the bottom-up building project such as *L.E.S Musulmans*, which benefits from popular recognition and a wide network of mosques and civil organizations.
- Promote in education, media, and state institutions a liberal and inclusive understanding of *laïcité* such as defined by Observatory of *Laïcité*.
- Launch a nationwide assessment on the effects of the 2004 ban on headscarves in public schools.

Regarding Security Policy

- Involve grassroots organizations, legitimate community leaders, and education personnel to elaborate more effective counterterrorism.
- Publicize this cooperation with grassroots organizations in order to deconstruct negative stereotypes that depict Muslims as supporters of terrorism.
- Abolish the use of “white notes” by intelligence services and rely on investigation and proof rather than mere suspicion to prosecute individuals.
- Abolish the newly adopted measure in the 2017 antiterrorism law that allows arbitrary closing down of places of worship unless a clear definition of radicalization 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.

Regarding Hate Speech

- Protect freedom of speech by pressing state-owned media to adhere to a charter of plurality and promote Muslim visibility to normalize their presence.
- Cancel state subsidies to media outlets that promote individuals condemned of incitement of hatred, calling for discrimination, violence against individuals, or who were proven guilty of promoting racism.
- Facilitate the right of reply to individuals or organizations when attacked on media platforms.
- Train top management of state-owned media on Islamophobia, its consequences, and on how they can protect social cohesion by combating it.

205. Yasser Louati, “Islamophobia in France: National Report 2017”, in Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018), p. 244.

- Include discrimination cases in official statistics of anti-Muslim racism.
- Apply existing laws against discrimination at work and increase fines for companies.
- Grant freedom of religion and thought in workplaces.
- Train school teachers on Islamophobia, strengthen an anti-racism approach in education programs, and promote a liberal and inclusive understanding of *laïcité*.

Chronology

- **10.01.2018:** Three members of the far-right group Generation Identity (*Génération Identitaire*) physically attack a young woman by using tear gas and punching her four times. The scene was filmed by a reporter and broadcasted on Al-Jazeera English TV channel in December 2018.
- **January 2018:** Two young women wearing headscarves are attacked by a local resident because of their real or supposed belonging to Islam. The aggressor was condemned on 9 January, 2019 at the Criminal Court of Meaux.
- **January 2018:** National Rally Party attempts to close the mosque of Souillac.
- **January-February 2018:** A sexagenarian French woman repeatedly physically attacks and threatens Muslim mothers while they were bringing their children to school at Perpignan.
- **03.02.2018:** The TV broadcast of “The Voice” shows Mennel Ibtissem going on stage to perform Leonard Cohen’s song *Hallelujah*, triggering an Islamophobic controversy on social networks: some blame Mennel Ibtissem for singing part of the song in Arabic while others accuse TF1 of “normalizing” the Islamic veil. A week after her first appearance on the show, Mennel Ibtissem announces she is leaving the program.
- **08.03.2018:** The newspaper *Marianne* publishes a call to support Mohamed Louizi, accused of defamation by members of the organization *Musulmans de France*, which is close to the Muslim Brotherhood. The article entitled “We Must Defend Mohamed Louizi, Victim of ‘Legal Jihad’” (*jihad judiciaire*), accuses the Muslim Brotherhood organization of pressing charges against Mohammed Louizi in order to silent him and his research against “political Islam.” In the article, the right to open a case and to complain against someone – i.e. the basics of a state of law – are denied to Muslim people and delegitimized under the negative term “jihad.”
- **22.03.2018:** A doctor of the hospital of Perpignan (South France) verbally attacks a Muslim young woman because of her headscarf. The doctor tells his patient that wearing the hijab in the hospital and in public space is prohibited by French law. The patient suffers from non-material damage.

- **23.03.2018:** Radouane Lakdim, a 26-year-old French citizen who was under surveillance of French intelligence for radicalization killed three and injured many in a terror attack in the south of France.
- **March 2018:** The Institute of Labor Economics publishes the survey “Anti-Muslim Discrimination in France: Evidence from a Field Experiment.” The survey that has been conducted in France before the 2015 attacks – before the state of emergency – demonstrates discrimination against Muslim in the marketplace.
- **16.04.2018:** Hassina Mechaï and Sihem Zine publish *L’Etat d’urgence (permanent)* (Permanent State of Emergency), a book that discusses the experiences of the French Muslims who unjustly suffered from the French state of emergency between 2015 and 2017.
- **22.04.2018:** The newspaper *Le Parisien* publishes the “Call against New Anti-Semitism” (*l’Appel des 300 contre le nouvel antisémitisme*) denouncing a new Muslim-rooted anti-Semitism in France. In the call, Muslims are indirectly depicted as the French “inner enemy,” since Islam is supposed to be intrinsically anti-Semitic.
- **27.04.2018:** The newspaper *Libération* reveals two notes from French intelligence reporting the rise of anti-Muslim and anti-Arab groups. These notes proclaim, “Islamist attacks in France since January 2015 have been interpreted by radical far-right milieus as a legitimization of their theses on the threat of immigrants [...] and the bankruptcy of a multicultural society.”
- **12.05.2018:** Khamzat Azimov, a youth of Chechen origin who was under surveillance of French intelligence for radicalization, took a person’s life in a knife attack at the Opera district in Paris.
- **12.05.2018:** The TV channel M6 broadcasts a report about protests that took place in many universities in France. Journalists briefly interview Maryam Pougetoux, one of the leaders of UNEF student union (left-wing), who wears a headscarf. Without listening to what Maryam Pougetoux has to say about the ongoing protests, several politicians from social democrats to far-rightists accuse the student of “promotion of political Islam”, of showing her “difference with French society” or of being an “Islamist.”
- **14.05.2018:** In her visit to France Fionnuala D. Ní Aoláin, the UN special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, warns new anti-terrorism laws risk undermining fundamental rights and freedoms.
- **08.06.2018:** Laurent Wauquiez, leader of the Republicans party (right-wing conservative), supervises the spread of political tracts that used anti-Muslim and xenophobic rhetoric.

- **18.06.2018:** Laurent Wauquiez attempts to form an alliance between his party and *Sens Commun*, a far-right think tank.
- **24.06.2018:** French police arrest ten members of the far-right terrorist group Action of Operational Forces (AFO) that was planning to commit terror attacks against French Muslims such as poisoning halal foods, physical attacks against Muslim women, and degradation of what they considered “radical” mosques.
- **12.07.2018:** Eric Ciotti (The Republicans party) proposes at the French Assembly to ban exterior religious signs for workers in public companies and for users of public services (today there is only a ban for workers in public services).
- **23.07.2018:** French police arrest three more people suspected of belonging to the AFO. One of them was a former member of the group Volunteers for France (VPF), the two others were women who attended all the meetings of this far-right terrorist group.
- **26.08.2018:** The UN Human Rights Committee criticizes French justice for not having condemned the dismissal of an employee wearing the hijab from the private nursery where she was working. The committee considers this dismissal as unfair and as a discrimination based on religion.
- **31.08.2018:** The company Gap Kids publishes on social media its last marketing campaign showing children of Harlem, including a young girl wearing a headscarf. Rapidly, many Internet users including journalists, activists, and politicians firmly condemn what they consider as “submission to Islamism” and call to boycott the firm.
- **15.09.2018:** The polemicist Eric Zemmour warns France of a coming “civil war against Islam and its French collaborators” on the public radio station France Inter.
- **20.09.2018:** Hakim El Karoui publishes with the right-wing think tank *Institut Montaigne* a new report that calls for a stronger regulation of Muslim religious practices by the state in order to better counter “Islamism.”
- **21.09.2018:** The French singer Medine announces the cancellation of a concert on Twitter due to terrorist threats.
- **26.09.2018:** French sociologists Marwan Mohammed and Julien Talpin meticulously deconstruct Islamophobic ideas of “Islamist segregation” and “parallel society” in their book *Communautarisme?*
- **26.09.2018:** A woman enters the swimming pool of Rennes (West France) while wearing a burkini (a covered swimsuit) provoking a fierce debate among other swimmers and the city council.
- **27.09.2018:** Journalists Zineb El Rhazoui and Jean-Claude Dassier respectively claim, “Women wearing headscarves belong to and manifest an ideol-

ogy of radical Islam that leads to terrorism” and “We are in armed conflict against Islam,” on the popular CNews TV channel.

- **27.09.2018:** The journal *Revue des Deux Mondes* publishes a special edition entitled “Islamism-Leftism, History of a Downward Spiral.” The articles refer to “Islamist-leftists” as “traitors of French identity”, “collaborators”, and “neo-Vichysm.”
- **30.09.2018:** The creation of the national platform *L.E.S Musulmans* brings together hundreds of local mosques and organizations under its roof. The organization aims to coordinate Muslims representation from the bottom up.
- **September 2018:** Several Muslim students of the Nursing Education Institute (IFSI) complain about the management that is “checking the size of their headbands” as well as “forbidding them religious headscarves.”
- **September 2018:** Several parents complain against the kindergarten of Vénissieux enrolling their children because the management changed the rules of procedure and imposed nursery staff to serve the entire meal to children, even though it contains meat and the parents oppose it.
- **03.10.2018:** Former French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb claims in his resignation speech, “Today we live side-by-side... I am afraid that tomorrow we will live face-to-face,” implicitly portraying French Muslims and French non-Muslims as enemies.
- **11.10.2018:** The Centre for Conflict Studies - Freedom and Security publishes the quantitative survey “The Effects of the Fight against Terrorism and Radicalization on Muslim Populations in France.” This survey shows the damages caused by French counterterrorism policies on the whole Muslim community since 2015.
- **17.10.2018:** Gérard Davet and Fabrice Lhomme, both well-known and respected journalists at *Le Monde*, publish the book *Insh'Allah! Islamization Disclosed (Inch'Allah! L'islamisation à visage découvert)*. The book lists a series of local events that occurred in North Paris which supposedly demonstrate the rise of a counter Islamist society.
- **October 2018:** A group of UN experts condemns France for having banned the niqab.
- **09.11.2018:** A support group of the left-wing party *La France Insoumise* organizes a meeting on “Islamist entryism in labour unions.” The group is excluded from the movement a few days later, triggering tough debates within the party.
- **10.11.2018:** Laurent Nunez, the secretary of state for interior affairs, announces that six Islamist terror attacks have been foiled by French police in 2018.

- **16.11.2018:** Deputy Julien Aubert in his *Tricolor Booklet on French Islam(s)* exposes a series of proposals to reorganize the Muslim religion in France. Designed within the framework of the Great Replacement theory, this report makes a list of Islamophobic measures aiming at restricting Muslims' freedom such as "sanctioning women who do not want to withdraw their headscarf after police request" or "de-Islamizing some neighborhoods."
- **28.11.2018:** Eighty thinkers, scholars, and artists publish a "call against postcolonialism" in the weekly *Le Point*. They condemn an "intellectual terrorism" that uses the threat of "racism" and "Islamophobia" in order to "diabolize" their opponents.
- **30.11.2018:** An exhibitor at the Saint-Gratien Christmas market (North Paris) is summoned by the city mayor to leave her stand, for the sole reason that she is wearing a headscarf.
- **11.12.2018:** Chérif Chekatt, a 29-year-old French citizen who was under surveillance by French intelligence for radicalization, killed 5 and injured many in the center of Strasbourg.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
GERMANY
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

ANNA-ESTHER YOUNES

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Executive Summary

This year's report revolves around the intimate entanglements between race, class and empire and will tease out links between European border regimes, social welfare politics, and Islamophobia in a 2018 Germany. Against the latter's backdrop, the topic of migration is the prime prism through which elaborations on racialized exclusions took place. In the context of how racialized exclusions affect different groups, it is noteworthy that experiences of being Black and of being Muslim/Arab have come to resemble each other in Germany – whether that is in contemporary discussions around anti-Semitism mirroring black U.S. American experiences; sudden incarceration politics with possible life-threatening consequences; precarious labor conditions up to the point of total exploitation; border politics that close off Europe against Africa and the Middle East; or simply in the cultural politics of rap music and sports. The year 2018 has furthermore shown that “migration” and “asylum politics” have become the predominant sites where a deathly trinity of migration, asylum and race come together when people chanted “[Refugees] Drown! Drown! Drown!” at a public AfD event.

Islamophobic discourse over the past 70 years in Germany conceptually changed its naming practice from “guest worker”, to “foreigner”, to “Muslim”, to today's “economic migrant” and/or “refugee” and, finally, to physical (Islamist) “threat.” This development exposes an underlying racial economy, which continuously de-values and re-defines the Other: today, the contributions of national reconstruction of former *guest workers* are discursively *de-valued and linked* to those of “Muslims”, “Terrorists”, “Refugees” generally. Today, all those groups fill this racialized vessel with changing name-tags, whilst being charged of being on the spectrum between economic “*free riders*” and/or existential “*threats*”.

Although official state statistics of physical violence against German Muslims, refugees, and migrants have gone down, it is the political and economic professionalization, the social media presence, up to military training and music events of the so-called conservative revolutionaries of the new and old right that leave elaborate space for concern.

The forms of political violence we witnessed in 2018 are characterized by mob manhunts coordinated via the Internet, such as in Chemnitz, with (white) Western victims of globalization chasing the victims of Western imperialism and war. In 2018, Islamophobia was still a dangerously successful policy in Germany, with a growing tendency to mob-like street violence.

Zusammenfassung

Der diesjährige Bericht konzentriert sich auf die engen Verflechtungen von Rasse, Klasse und Empire. Er arbeitet Verbindungen zwischen europäischen Grenzregimen, Sozialpolitik und Islamophobie in Deutschland im Jahr 2018 heraus. Vor diesem Hintergrund ist Migration der Dreh- und Angelpunkt, durch den rassifizierende Ausschlüsse hauptsächlich stattfanden. Wenn beachtet wird, dass verschiedene Gruppen unterschiedlich rassifiziert werden, ist es auffällig, dass Erfahrungen von „Schwarzsein“ und „Arabisch-/Muslimischsein“ einander immer mehr ähneln. Dabei handelt es sich z.B. um zeitgenössische Diskussionen rund um Antisemitismus, die die Erfahrungen von Schwarzen US Amerikaner_innen widerspiegeln; eine Politik der plötzlichen Inhaftierung mit möglichen lebensbedrohlichen Konsequenzen; prekäre Arbeitsbedingungen bis hin zur völligen Ausbeutung; eine Grenzpolitik, die Europa gegenüber Afrika und dem Nahen Osten abriegelt; oder einfach Ähnlichkeiten in der Kulturpolitik, besonders hinsichtlich Rap Musik und im Sport. Das Jahr 2018 hat zudem gezeigt, dass „Migration“ und „Asylpolitik“ die vorherrschenden Räume sind, in denen eine tödliche Dreifaltigkeit von Migration-Asyl-und-Rasse zusammenkommen kann, wenn das Publikum bei einer öffentlichen AfD-Veranstaltung „Absaufen, absaufen, absaufen!“ skandiert. Islamophobe Diskurse in Deutschland haben sich in ihren konzeptuellen Benennungspraktiken in den vergangenen 70 Jahren vom „Gastarbeiter“, über den „Ausländer“, zum „Muslim“ und heutigen „Wirtschaftsmigranten“ und/oder „-Flüchtling“ und schlussendlich zur (islamistischen) physischen „Bedrohung“ verschoben. Dies legt auch eine rassifizierende Ökonomie offen, die frühere *Gastarbeiter_innen* und deren Beiträge nicht nur diskursiv entwertet (vom „Gast-/Arbeiter“, zum „Muslim“, zur „Bedrohung“), sondern die dieselben Gruppen durch ihre verschiedenen Benennungspraktiken nun auch als ökonomische „Trittbrettfahrer_innen“ oder existenzielle „Bedrohungen“ betitelt. Obwohl laut offiziellen staatlichen Statistiken in Deutschland die Anzahl der physischen Angriffe gegen deutsche Muslime, Geflüchtete und Migrant_innen gesunken ist, gibt es genug Anlass zur Sorge: die sogenannten „konservativen Revolutionäre“ der alten und neuen Rechten professionalisieren sich politisch, ökonomisch sowie in den sozialen Medien, bis hin zu professionell organisierten Musikveranstaltungen und militärischen Trainings. Die Formen der politischen Gewalt, die 2018 zu erleben waren, sind gekennzeichnet von einem Menschen jagenden Mob, koordiniert durch das Internet – wie in Chemnitz, wo (weiße) westliche Globalisierungsoffer die Opfer des westlichen Imperialismus und Krieg durch die Straßen jagten. Im Jahr 2018 war Islamophobie in Deutschland somit weiterhin eine gefährlich erfolgreiche Politik mit wachsender Tendenz zu mobartiger Straßengewalt.

Country Profile

Country: Germany

Type of Regime: Federal and Representative Democracy

Form of Government: Federal Republic, Chancellor

Ruling Parties: Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD)

Opposition Parties: The Greens, the Left, the FDP (The Liberals), the AfD, independent candidates.

Last Elections: 2017 elections – CDU/CSU 33% (246 seats), SPD 20.5% (153 seats), AfD 12.6% (94 seats), FDP 10.7% (80 seats), Die Linke 9.2% (69 seats), Grüne 8.9% (67 seats).

Total Population: 83 million (in 2018, Federal Statistical Office, Germany)

Major Languages: German

Official Religion: Christianity

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to police statistics only there were 678 attacks on German Muslims, 40 attacks on mosques, 1,775 attacks on refugees, 173 attacks on asylum homes, and 95 attacks on aid workers. That is less than 2017, which saw around 2,200 attacks on refugees and asylum homes and 900 attacks on German Muslims over the course of the entire year. In 2016, there were around 3,500 attacks in total.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: 2017 - 6,434 xenophobic criminal acts; 794 violent xenophobic criminal acts; 1,277 racist criminal acts; 158 racist violent attacks. All data is inconclusive and only police statistics. (BMI, *Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2017*, Bundesweite Fallzahlen)

Major Religions (% of Population): 2016 – 82,521,700 million: Christianity (45,504,000), Judaism (99,000), no number for Muslims. (Federal Office for Statistics, Germany)

Muslim Population (% of Population): Between 4 and 5.2 million people. However, there is no official and reliable statistic available. (See Laura Cwiertnia und Kolja Rudzio, “Islamdebatte: Wie viele Muslime leben in Deutschland?”, *Die Zeit*, 18 April, 2018)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB); Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Germany (AMJ); Islamic Community Millî Görüş (IGMG); Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD); Union of Islamic Cultural Centers (VIKZ); Islamic Community of Shia Communities in Germany (IGS).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Several small NGOs in local cities. There is a lack of larger nationwide initiatives.

Far-Right Parties: The Alternative for Germany (AfD – *Alternative für Deutsch-*

land), The National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD – *Nationdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*), The Republicans (*Die Republikaner*, REP).

Far-Right Movements: *Identitäre Bewegung* (IB - Identitarian Movement), Reich Citizens' Movement (*Reichsbürgerbewegung*)

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: Reich Citizens' Movement (*Reichsbürgerbewegung*)

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** A ban on the hijab exists for people holding official offices such as at court (or being a lawyer), in school (schoolteacher), or entering the police, for instance. However, most reported cases of discrimination against the hijab come from private business, which is legally not a site for exclusion according to the law, but vigilante justice.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

In 2018, conflating fantasies of race with fantasies about class have come to the fore in three public debates: (1) A debate around anti-Semitic German hip hop and rap (see *Media*); (2) A debate around national football player Mesut Özil and the picture he took with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (see *Politics*); (3) And the racist attacks on people of color in Chemnitz after a young German man of color was killed during a fight with three asylum seekers (see *Verbal and Physical Attacks*).

Furthermore, the marks of racial capitalism were also again felt in the discursive eclipse of security (& anti-terror laws) and migration (& asylum laws) debates, with more and more people demanding, if not even outrightly voting for, their own fantasy to be economically and politically secure in an all-white nation. In this vein, it was in particular fears of Islamist and anti-Semitic refugees/Muslims ostensibly destabilizing Germany's peace that successfully eclipsed the categories of "asylum" and "security policies." Already at the beginning of the year a political demand to expel anti-Semitic foreigners from North African and Arab "breeding grounds" (*Nährboden*)¹ was embraced by most mainstream party fractions of the German parliament.

A battle continues to be fought over who gets to represent Germany's future: is it the politically right-wing movements and parties (i.e. the party Alternative for Germany, AfD) or is it the "We are more!" anti-racist demonstrators taking to the streets in post-Chemnitz times? Or will it be a comeback by more mainstream parties struggling for voters' attention? In this battle, fought with verbal and real pyrotechniques, the figure of the "firecracker" at racist demonstrations is hovering above society almost reminiscent of a bad omen. And whilst white Germans were chasing people of color and so-called "Muslim criminals" on the streets of Chemnitz, Chancellor Merkel traveled to Senegal, Ghana, and Nigeria in order to maintain what is presently dying on the stages of world politics: diplomacy along with neoliberalism's luring but delusive foresight to trade in (European-supported) economic prosperity for African states with an African politics to put an end to people coming to Europe.² The latter strategy is commonly called "combating the causes for flight" (*Bekämpfung von Fluchtursachen*) and includes economic partnerships, educational exchange programs, know-how transfer in military, police and incarceration tactics, and, last but not least, social affairs.³ Ac-

1. "Antrag der Fraktionen CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP und BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Antisemitismus entschlossen bekämpfen", Deutscher Bundestag, 17 January 2018, <https://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btd/19/004/1900444.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

2. At least since the Berlin West Africa Conference in 1884-85, colonial ventures were primarily formed by liberal ideas, with the signatories vowing to establish and maintain humanitarian ethics (such as "moral and material well-being" of their subjects, an end to slavery, education, freedom of conscience and religious tolerance, etc.) in order to serve humanity.

3. Tamila Varshalomidze, "Migration expected to top Merkel's agenda on West Africa tour", Al-Jazeera Online", 28 August 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/migration-expected-top-merkel-agenda-west-africa-tour-180825154635346.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

cordingly, the already unstable concept of “class” collapsed into that of the “nation” upon her visit in Ghana, where Merkel stated, “I strongly believe that a prosperous European Union is only possible, if we learn to deal with questions of migration and a partnership with Africa.”⁴

All the while, AfD MP Petr Bystron (former FDP member) busied himself training for future “race wars” on a paramilitary shooting-range of the white supremacist group *Suidlanders* in South Africa,⁵ the haunting paradigms of empire and race *inside* of Germany (i.e. Chemnitz) unfolded against the broadening of the economic precariat. According to the National Poverty Conference (*Nationale Armutskonferenz*, *NAK*), 16.2% of the population are seen as poor with precarious labor conditions, a single-parent household (primarily women and around an additional 2 million children that are not in the statistics), or older age as the main risk factors.⁶ The low-pay sector, which is globally around 80% of the world population,⁷ employs 7.5 million people (almost every 4th employee and 22,6% of the population, according to the NAK report); this is more than double the number compared to the 90s. Around 1.2 million people in Germany have to supplement their low-paying income with government subsidiaries (NAK report); around 1 million are wagedworkers,⁸ but only around 2.2 million people are officially registered as unemployed.⁹ The contradiction¹⁰ of the so-called invisible hand of the free market thus emboldens a system of governance where “[o]ver the past years, poverty is solidified in Germany, whilst unemployment is [*statistically*] decreasing.”¹¹

4. “Kanzlerin Merkel in Ghana”, Die Bundeskanzlerin, Mediathek, 30 August 2018, <https://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/bkin-de/mediathek/kanzlerin-merkel-in-ghana-15267361mediathek?query>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). German original version: “Ich glaube ganz fest daran, dass es eine prosperierende Europäische Union nur dann geben kann, wenn wir mit den Fragen der Migration und den Fragen der Partnerschaft mit Afrika klarkommen.”

5. Heiner Hoffmann and Ulrich Neumann, “AfD im Rassenkrieg?: Der Abgeordnete Petr Bystron und seine südafrikanischen Freunde”, SWR Report, 19 December 2018, https://www.swr.de/report/reise-bezahlt-vom-bundestag-bundestag-afd-abgeordneter-absolviert-mit-suedafrikanischen-rassisten-gemeinsames-schiess-training/-/id=233454/did=22786966/nid=233454/1kw92e6/index.html?fbclid=IwAR0y6wMX_bkt7pOyGNwj_N6iWXpc-m8qSeyez-_SUI6hwdVwryVfl6Ah1_Eos, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

6. “Armut stört - Schattenbericht der Nationalen Armutskonferenz”, Nationale Armutskonferenz - NAK, 17 October 2018, https://www.nationale-armutskonferenz.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Schattenbericht-2018_2019.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. Tina Groll, “1.4 Milliarden Menschen arbeiten unter widrigen Umständen”, Die Zeit (online), 7 May 2018, <https://www.zeit.de/wirtschaft/2018-05/niedriglohn-digitalisierung-atlas-arbeitswelt-boeckler-institut-klufft>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

8. Susan Bonath, “Neues aus den Unterklassen: Wie der Lohnarbeitsmarkt erodiert und Statistiken manipuliert werden”, RT deutsch, 5 September 2018, <https://deutsch.rt.com/inland/75494-neues-aus-unterklassen-lohnarbeitsmarkt-erodiert/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

9. “Der Arbeitsmarkt im Dezember 2018”, Bundesagentur für Arbeit – Statistik, <https://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

10. In October 2018, Caritas Germany even published a 13-point manual of how to deal with begging people and informs about 13 common stereotypes. For more information see: Caritasverband für die Stadt Köln e.V. “Armut in Deutschland: 13 Tipps für den Umgang mit bettelnden Menschen”, Caritas Deutschland, https://www.caritas.de/beitraege/13-tipps-fuer-den-umgang-mit-bettelnden-menschen/1130389/?fbclid=IwAR2yK7zdxIIQ3OQKb-8GA3DCU3mqNs3PKag8_uH0BvTovXFy-F8vcYiOC_Zo, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

11. “Armut stört - Schattenbericht der Nationalen Armutskonferenz”, Nationale Armutskonferenz, p. 20.

“Race” is what we fantasize the other to be, “class” is what we fantasize the other to have. When combined this was expressed in rants about the “many cell phones” refugees ostensibly possess, which seemingly testifies to their unjustified status of being in need of asylum generally, or as in the case of Palestinian German politician Sawsan Chebli, who was attacked online over a (five-year-old) photo that shows her wearing a Rolex watch.¹²

In an economic system that made everyone exchangeable, the wages of whiteness can be demanded and appealed to from several angles (via tropes of class, race, sexuality, or others). Whiteness can thus also be seen to give a name to the little social appreciation (and appeasement) of white worthiness, which is left to a precarious white population. After neoliberalism has put a price tag on democracy, sociopolitical supremacy is not granted anymore for merely being “white”, “German”, or “European” (as in colonial times),¹³ but becomes something in need of proof, something to be trans-/nationally fought for, or physically defended - if need be. Popular sites for said struggle are citizenship debates, economic possibilities, legal and public rights, welfare support, or the right to refuge. In conclusion, in a 2018 Germany, it was the struggle (and its normalization)¹⁴ over who owns the *property rights of whiteness* in times of economic and political crises. Pursuing Islamophobic and racist policies and acts thus earned people the right to re-/claim “belonging” and “representation,” but its roots are fueled by deep structural desires to re-/organize society spiritually and materially.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

An incitement to report men of color that seem to or indeed are intruding on white female bodily security has been created legally and discursively ever since New Year’s 2015/2016. In 2018, the case of 26-year-old Syrian refugee Amad Ahmad who burnt to death in his cell made the news in the second half of the year. The story starts at the beginning of July with a few young German women and Ahmad at a lake. The four women filed a police complaint of harassment against Ahmad who allegedly

12. Berliner Staatssekretärin, “Chebli deaktiviert Facebook-Account wegen Hass-Nachrichten”, Tagesspiegel, 22 October 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/berliner-staatssekretaerin-chebli-deaktiviert-facebook-account-wegen-hass-nachrichten/23216792.html>, (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

13. I am aware that racial and ethnic minorities such as Jews, the Irish, the Huguenots, and others have not simply held the status of “being white” even during colonial times, at least not in Europe itself. The colonies, however, often offered a way for Europeans to “become white” together within and through the practices of settler-/ colonialism. Instead, it is rather the historical dis-/continuities for a “white majority” that I want to give expression to with this maybe oversimplified statement.

14. Annette Ramelsberger, “Wenn rechte Gewalt zur Normalität wird”, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, 9 January 2019, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/rechtsextremismus-sachsen-anhalt-prozess-justiz-1.4280352>, (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

gesticulated and glanced over in an inappropriate way – no physical transgressions were reported.¹⁵ Ahmad was immediately incarcerated, whereupon the story becomes increasingly bizarre: his file in Cleve, where he was first taken into custody, was eventually confused with that of another man who was on the run from the police in Hamburg, a young male refugee from Mali. Both men were listed as “Amed Amed,” the main similarity. Only after Ahmad’s death it turned out that he was unjustly held in custody for a crime he didn’t commit due to an ostensible bureaucratic “mix-up.” This follows another mix-up before his death, where Ahmad was also mistaken for another Syrian who was charged with “rape” – the case was dropped, however, because the victim admitted that she made up the rape. However, after all this, it is not clear how two very different police files with very different data, from two different police stations in two cities in the northern part of Germany (Hamburg and Cleve), including two totally different people (one from Aleppo in Syria and another one from Timbuktu in Mali) could have been “confused.” Also unclear are the reasons for the fire in his prison cell, just as much as it is unclear why the police didn’t answer the emergency call that came through the intercom out of Ahmad’s cell the moment the fire broke out.¹⁶ This case is an extreme example of how quickly even minimally transgressive behavior by men of color (and in particular by refugees) can quickly lead to punitive consequences as well as death at the hands of the police and the judicial system.¹⁷

Overall, the violent and violently verbal attacks on German Muslims counted as Islamophobic by the police accumulated to the number of 621 attacks in total until the end of 2018 – out of those, 31 attacks targeted mosques (as a building) and 48 people were physically hurt.¹⁸ The small number might be due to the change in registering cases – see *Islamophobia in Germany: National Report 2017* – where now the near vicinity of the mosque is not counted anymore, nor are prayer rooms or other private institutions (i.e. airports). The attacks on German Muslims have to be seen in conjunction with attacks on refugees, their asylum homes as well as NGOs in the

15. Stefan Buchen and Philipp Hennig, “Fehler der Staatsanwaltschaft Hamburg: ‘Wir haben den Amed Amed’”, *Taz*, 29 January 2019, www.taz.de/!5565684/, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

16. “Justizversagen: Warum verbrannte Amad A. in der JVA Kleve?” *Monitor - Das Erste*, 25 October 2018, mediathek.daserste.de/Monitor/Justizversagen-Warum-verbrannte-Amad-A-/Video?bcastId=438224&documentId=57159186, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

17. Ahmad’s case is reminiscent of a similar one, where a young refugee from Sierra Leone, Oury Jalloh, was – given the overwhelming evidence – most likely burnt to death by police officers in his cell in 2005 (the chief public prosecutor in Naumburg declared the Jalloh case as “forlorn,” recommending its closure in January 2019) *Das Erste* “Der Fall Oury Jalloh: Ermittlungen sollen ausbleiben”, 17 January 2019, www.daserste.de/information/politik-weltgeschehen/monitor/videosextern/der-fall-oury-jalloh-ermittlungen-sollen-ausbleiben-100.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

18. See: “Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten”, *Deutscher Bundestag*, Drucksache 19/2315, 24.05.2018 (1. Quartal); Drucksache 19/3917, 22.08.2018 (2. Quartal); Drucksache 19/6333, 07.12.2018 (3. Quartal); Drucksache 19/8854, 29.03.2019 (4. Quartal). The vast majority (around 95%) of incidents were motivated by right-wing violence and in a negligibly small number of cases the perpetrators were caught/found.

service of refugees and their problems. Until the end of 2018, around 1,775 attacks on refugees took place, with around 329 adults and 15 children hurt.¹⁹ At the same time, around 173 attacks on asylum homes and around 95 attacks on aid workers were counted. Overall, we observe a decline in the reporting and/or registration of physical attacks compared to the previous years.

Pegida demonstrations took place regularly in Germany, with 68 demonstrations until end of 2018 and 49 of said demonstrations taking place in Berlin. Three chapters (Nuremberg, Munich, and Mittel-Franken) are currently surveilled by the intelligence services.²⁰ In June 2018, at Dresden's Pegida demonstration a speaker talks about an organization saving refugees on open waters. The crowd cheered "Drown! Drown! Drown!" whereupon the speaker answered, given the media presence, "No, we still need the boat to send them all back!"²¹

On Saturday, 25 August, 2018, the 200th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth, the city (called "Karl Marx City" in the GDR) celebrated its 875th birthday whilst late at night, at around 3 o'clock in the morning a fight ensues between two groups. Three men are (critically) wounded and one man, Daniel H., a German man of color, eventually dies. Within one day, news spreads on the Internet that Daniel tried to rescue German women from the attacks of "foreign invaders," becoming a stylized hero who was killed in defense of German security. On Sunday afternoon at 4:30 pm of the same day, an "illegal" demonstration took place, with more than 800 participants – amongst them also children. Meant as a so-called funeral march for the victim, the chants stated the opposite: "Foreigners out", "We are the *Volk*", and "One dead foreigner for each dead German" were heard on the streets of Chemnitz for the days to come. On Saturday, however, several right-wing neo-Nazi groups and the AfD mobilized via the Internet a demonstration for the next day – Monday, 27 August 2018. According to several media outlets, the secret service informed the police of a possible right-wing mobilization that could easily amount to the 10,000s. However, despite the warning, on Monday it was only 591 police officers that faced around 6,000 right-wingers and their supporters, and around 1,500 counter demonstrators on the other side. People of color were being chased or beaten up, "Heil Hitler" signs and chants were heard, drunken men showed their naked bottoms, while the police was unable to protect the non-white passersby or counter demonstrators – or so they claimed – and thus recommended people of color go home, instead. That evening,

19. "Proteste gegen und Übergriffe auf Flüchtlingsunterkünfte", Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/8344, 13.03.2019, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

20. See "Islamfeindlichkeit und antimuslimische Straftaten", Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/2315, 24.05.2018 (1. Quartal); Drucksache 19/3917, 22.08.2018 (2. Quartal); Drucksache 19/6333, 07.12.2018 (3. Quartal); Drucksache 19/8854, 29.03.2019 (4. Quartal).

21. ARD Panorama, "Absaufen? - Zu Besuch bei Pegida", 30 August 2018, www.ardmediathek.de/ard/player/Y3JpZDovL25kci5kZS8xNTMyMDE4NS0xODRiLTQ1N2UyYWZiOC04YTlkOTUwM2Q2OWY/, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

20 people were hurt. On Wednesday, the police warrant for the two accused men who killed Daniel H. is leaked by the judicial officer Daniel Zabel (see more in *Internet* section).²²

Events such as the one in Chemnitz or Dresden in August where a demonstrator (an employee of Saxony's State Office of Criminal Investigation as it turned out later)²³ violently stopped journalists from working at a Pegida demonstration, set forth a debate about sympathizers within the police, propelling the word "Pegizei" – a portmanteau of "Pegida" and "Polizei" (Police). On 5 September, Saxony's head of government Michael Kretschmer (CDU) drew attention and criticism toward himself by stating, "There was no mob, there was no manhunt, there was no pogrom" (in Chemnitz). Shortly after, the head of one of Germany's most prominent and only "public" intelligence services (*Verfassungsschutz*), Hans-Georg Maaßen, was put in the limelight with similar statements that went even further. Maaßen even questioned the authenticity of the footage of the manhunt that went viral online. As though this was not enough, Maaßen found himself guilty of sharing sensitive intelligence service intel about neo-Nazi movements with politicians of the AfD. In all that political mess Minister of the Interior, Building and Homeland Affairs (*Bundesminister des Innern, für Bau und Heimat*) Horst Seehofer (CSU/CDU) not only uttered sympathy for the demonstrators in Chemnitz and claimed that "migration is the mother of all problems,"²⁴ he also supported Maaßen and eventually even protected him from being ousted from the state apparatus. His intervention of giving him a job in his Ministry of Homeland Affairs instead of ending his political career entirely caused additional friction within the CDU/CSU and with the SPD.

However, not only did Chemnitz show a tryst of famous right-wing politicians, it was also a hub for well-known neo-Nazis: Maik Arnold (National Socialists Chemnitz) who supposedly has ties to the NSU was present during the demonstrations in Chemnitz; Yves Rahmel the right-wing extremist music producer of PC Records who published the "Döner Killer" song, a glorification of the NSU murders, was present; and Christian Fischer, former head of a now illegal paramilitary youth organization that trained young followers militarily, with the Hitler Youth as a role model. The different demonstrations eventually joined forces with the AfD demon-

22. For an overview of events in Chemnitz see: Samuel Misteli & André Müller, "Ein Toter, Hetze gegen Ausländer und dann ein Leck – eine Chronologie zu Chemnitz", NZZ, 8 September 2018, www.nzz.ch/international/chemnitz-ein-ueberblick-ueber-die-ereignisse-ld.1415760, (Access date: 3 September 2019); See also: Patrick Gensing, "Chronologie zu Chemnitz: Ein Tötungsdelikt und die politischen Folgen", Tagesschau, 24 September 2018, <https://www.tagesschau.de/faktenfinder/inland/chronologie-chemnitz-103.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

23. "Pegida-Demonstrant arbeitet für sächsisches Landeskriminalamt", Zeit Online, 22 August 2018, www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2018-08/dresden-pegida-demonstrant-zdf-angriff-polizei-angestellter, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. "Horst Seehofer äußert Verständnis für Demonstranten", Zeit Online, 6 September 2018, www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-09/bundesinnenminister-horst-seehofer, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

stration in their final march²⁵ around Björn Höcke,²⁶ who stated his party wants to “intellectually refine the ‘brute’ ways of civil protest.”²⁷

In a well-researched document of the Antifa Committee Leipzig (*Antifa-Komitee Leipzig, AK*) about the origins and developments of mass movements such as PEGIDA and HoGeSa (*Hooligans against Salafism*), the Antifa observed a “change of tactics” (*Stellungswechsel*) in mobilization strategies from rather old-fashioned neo-Nazi movements to the more populist movements of PEGIDA and HoGeSa: [...] “the rejection of an ‘Israel Connection’ seems to present a reliable and flexible dividing line between neo-Nazis and an entire spectrum of so-called right-wing populism [*Pegida, HoGeSa, but also the AfD*].”²⁸ The pro-Israel, or rather pro-Zionist, dividing line in politics also marks the moment through which the AfD was able to maintain its position as a people’s party in a democratic system²⁹ marked by the Holocaust. However, it is not only the appeal to and of more mainstream policy stances such as imperial and/or ethno-nationalist policies, it is also an appeal to patriarchal fantasies of national and military prowess, and heteronormativity (especially in terms of marriage and gender issues) that are advanced by a well-connected transnational and professionalized network of so-called conservative revolutionaries in high positions who are apt at wooing the single-issue voter disgruntled by a too large state tax on public TV, who oppose abortion, or other issues, for instance. The question for policymakers is thus: how can we tell a narrative that takes capitalist-induced poverty of white people in one of the richest countries in the world serious, whilst not neglecting the deeply embedded racism so prevalent *all over* Germany?

Employment

One of the interesting events concerning empire and class is the debate surrounding the German military in 2018. Due to a severe shortage in staff, the German Bundeswehr (military) has been debating to make it possible for non-Germans to be

25. It is apparent, especially from Höcke’s last statement, that street violence is always also class violence. As mentioned in the report of 2017, the AfD prime voters’ constituency as well as its political elite is primarily middle to upper class, now showing their presence in Chemnitz as a way to gain more legitimacy and further their “outreach” program. The many firecrackers thrown at police, journalists and civilians, as well as the many naked bottoms shown to police and TV cameras are also reminiscent of struggles over masculinity and power.

26. Of 250,000 inhabitants in Chemnitz, 10,000 of them were demonstrators who also came massively from other parts of Germany. Chemnitz, thus, became a site of social unrest, attacks on journalists and racist violence. Thus, from October 2018 onward, the entire inner-city route taken by the demonstrators in Chemnitz was (pre-emptively?) installed with video cameras.

27. Andreas Maus, Andrea Röpke, Lisa Seemann, “AfD-Schulterschluss mit Rechtsextremen”, Tagesschau, 6 September 2018, www.tagesschau.de/ausland/monitor-afd-rechte-gruppen-101.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

28. “HoGeSa, Pegida, Legida: Rassistische Mobilisierungen neuen Typs” Antifa Leipzig, 4 December 2014, https://www.inventati.org/leipzig/?page_id=2663, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

29. Over the past decade mainstream politicians have recurrently declared Muslims as stupid (Sarrazin), multiculturalism as failed (Merkel), or migration as being the mother of all problems (Seehofer) to name just a few examples of the recent decade.

employed.³⁰ In this scenario, eligibility however only extends to EU citizen foreigners who have already lived in Germany with fluent German skills. The target countries are seemingly Romania, Italy, and Poland, while the targeted professions named in the media were doctors and IT specialists.³¹ Looming over tropes of a military reconstruction is the more than a decade-old SPD and CDU proposal to invest into a unified EU-led armed force, which surfaced again this year.³² It might be safe to attest that despite an overall unease and insecurity as to what role and path the German or European forces will take in the future, there have nevertheless been steady and exigent debates about new forms of trans-/national European defense strategies. In a Europe in crisis, we thus witness two divergent but interconnected debates and policies: the new right movements are rather interested in international white solidarity networks and policies (open to be ruled from local constituencies and direct mandates), whilst the liberal European elite is rather geographically oriented to maintain and defend a “strong Europe.” At the same time, the Protestant anti-Semitism delegate of the German government, Dr. Felix Klein, aims at institutionalizing prayer rooms and religious counsel for Muslims (around 4,000) and Jews employed by the German military.³³

In the wake of the military’s attention to employment records, it is also noteworthy that an investigative report by the left-leaning newspaper *taz* was published, uncovering an entire network of right-wing motivated individuals and planned actions within the Bundeswehr.³⁴ This comes as yet another disclosure of right-wing activities within the executive forces writ-large, which recurrently vibrates through German public discourse – almost every time with a lot of spectacle, but few consequences when it comes to structural or employment reform. In the case of the uncovered Bundeswehr network by the two *taz* journalists, media and political networks have barely picked up the findings so far in order to have a more structural debate about right-wing activities that extend from high-ranking military personal, to intelligence offices and others.³⁵ According to the newspaper *taz*, the accused Mister

30. “Bundeswehr prüft Aufnahme von Ausländern”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 21 July 2018, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/bundeswehr-prueft-aufnahme-von-auslaendern-15701627.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

31. “Bundeswehr will EU-Ausländer anwerben”, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung Online*, 27 December 2018, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/bundeswehr-auslaender-eu-1.4267414> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

32. Daniel Brössler, “Das Phantom der europäischen Armee”, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung Online*, 26 November 2018, www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/verteidigung-das-phantom-der-europaeischen-armee-1.4225843, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. Interview with Dr. Felix Klein, *Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für jüdisches Leben in Deutschland* appointed delegate of the government for Jewish life in Germany, at Heimatministerium Berlin, 7 December 2018.

34. Martin Knaul, Christina Schmidt, and Daniel Schulz “Rechtes Netzwerk in der Bundeswehr: Hannibals Schatzenarmee”, *Taz*, 16 November 2018, www.taz.de/Rechtes-Netzwerk-in-der-Bundeswehr/!5548926/, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

35. Tim Wiese, “Wo bleibt die Resonanz auf die ‘Hannibal’-Recherche?” *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, 24 November 2018, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/medienkritik-wo-bleibt-die-resonanz-auf-die-hannibal.1264.de.html?dram:article_id=434071, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

S., operating under the pseudonym “Hannibal,” was born in 1985 in Halle (an der Saale; former GDR) and is a member of the Special Operations Forces (*Kommando Spezialkräfte*) of the Military in Calw, Southern Germany. Allegedly, Mister S. was responsible of organizing and managing a network in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria: “Members in these groups are police and soldiers, reservists, civil servants and intelligence officers who have a plan under conspiratorial conditions: if they see the signs when ‘Day X’ arrives, they want to take up arms.”³⁶

Allegations such as these weigh heavily on a German state apparatus that is interested in presenting itself in liberal ways. In November 2018, news made rounds in Germany in which Sinan Selen, formerly an anti-terrorist agent of the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (*Bundeskriminalamt*), became the new vice-president of the German intelligence service called the Federal Bureau of Constitutional Protection (*Bundesverfassungsschutz*) and thus the first high-ranking intelligence officer with a so-called migration background - specifically a Turkish Kurdish one. The appointment also attracted considerable hate attacks from AfD politician Johannes Huber on social media in general.³⁷

Neo-Nazi preparations for a “Day X,” the day organized society supposedly collapses as we know it and which also represents the day of “revolutionary and systemic change,” have resonated for the past 30 years through a unified Germany (and Europe). Its actual importance became urgently real again during the National Socialist Underground trials (NSU trials), which ended in July 2018. Therein, “preppers” preparing for “Day X” also played a pivotal role in the workings and networking of the neo-Nazis on trial. Being one of the biggest political trials *and* scandals of postwar Germany, detailed recordings can only be read from the antifascist initiative “NSU watch,” which took it upon itself to document what is otherwise not recorded for the public during the trial.³⁸ One of the most sobering facts of the trial was that the actual network of helpers, neo-Nazis and members of the intelligence services, were insufficiently touched upon and primarily treated as negligible (read also *Islamophobia in Germany: National Report 2017*). The Central Council of Muslims and the Central Council of Jews have voiced their critique of the final verdict. The relatives of the murdered have filed law suits against the government and the federal states of Bavaria and Thuringia, stating they are willing to take the case all the way to the European Court of Justice, if need be.³⁹

36. Knaul, Schmidt, and Schulz “Rechtes Netzwerk in der Bundeswehr: Hannibals Schattenarmee”. German citation: “Mitglieder in diesen Gruppen sind Polizisten und Soldaten, Reservisten, Beamte und Mitarbeiter des Verfassungsschutzes, die unter konspirativen Bedingungen einen Plan hegen: Wenn sie die Zeichen sehen, wenn „Tag X“ da ist, wollen sie zu den Waffen greifen.”

37. Georg Mascolo, “Designerter Verfassungsschutz-Vize: Das Prinzip Verleumdung”, Tagesschau, 5 December 2018, www.tagesschau.de/inland/verfassungsschutz-vize-101.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

38. For further information, legal summaries, and an English-speaking readership, please visit: Antonia von der Behrens “The NSU Case in Germany”, NSU Watch, 3 July 2018, <https://www.nsu-watch.info/2018/07/the-nsu-case-in-germany-as-at-july-3rd-2018/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

39. “Germany’s neo-Nazi NSU trial verdict sparks protests, calls for investigation”, Deutsche Welle, 11 July 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-neo-nazi-nsu-trial-verdict-sparks-protests-calls-for-investigation/a-44641189>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

The European report on anti-Muslim racism published by FRA in 2018, which is only based on a very partial selection of Muslim subjects in the EU, has found that the labor market is still one of the most important sites for discrimination with women being the primary victims due to their attire.⁴⁰ Hence, as mentioned in previous reports, the issue of covered Muslim (women's) heads continues to be a legal, political, and personal spectacle and problem for many. A detailed report focusing specifically on discrimination on the labor market against women wearing a hijab in Germany was published in 2018.⁴¹ Cited in this report is a 2017 study claiming that 71.3% of hijab-wearing women believed they weren't hired due to their headscarf (only 23% of all Muslim women in Germany wear the hijab regularly).⁴² The results of several reports thus clearly show that easy demarcations between anti-Muslim racism and racism generally are hard to draw – after all, having a Turkish- or Arab-sounding first name or surname can lead to discrimination no matter what. The intersections of gender and race, however, put religiously devout Muslim women with a headscarf clearly on the losing end of employment prospects. The year 2019, however, might signal a new legal debate and consequences: whereas the ban on headscarves in Germany was legally bargained with when it comes to civil service jobs (teachers, police, court), a young woman sued her employer Müller, a famous German drugstore chain, in Ulm (Bavaria) for firing her after she decided to wear the hijab. The drugstore chain argued that as a chain and company it wants to remain “politically and religiously neutral.” The judges decided to pass the case on to the European Labor Court in Luxembourg.⁴³ This will not only be a question of whether in the future it will be allowed for Muslim women with a hijab to be discriminated in the private business sector, but its consequences can set a precedence for the whole of Europe.

Education

In November 2018, for instance, a study cited a teacher working in Berlin's migrant quarter of Neukoelln who claimed, “Only one out of 103 children speaks German at home.”⁴⁴ This utterance was used to demarcate the borders of respectability and ac-

40. “Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey Muslims – Selected Findings”, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, (2017), <https://fra.europa.eu/en/databases/anti-muslim-hatred/node/1782>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

41. Gökçe Yurdakul, Soraya Hassoun and Maziar Taymoorzadeh, “Religion und Arbeitsmarkt. Verhindern ‘Kopftuch-Verbote’ die Integration? Eine Expertise für den Mediendienst Integration”, (Mediendienst Integration, Berlin: July 2018), p. 2, https://mediendienst-integration.de/fileadmin/Dateien/Expertise_Kopftuch_Juli_2018.pdf, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

42. Ibid.

43. “EuGH soll über Kopftuchverbot bei Ulmer Drogeriekette Müller entscheiden”, Bundesarbeitsgericht Verweist Klage Nach Luxemburg 30 January 2019, <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/baden-wuerttemberg/ulm/Bundesarbeitsgericht-verhandelt-Mitarbeiterklage-Ulmer-Drogeriemarktkette-Mueller-wegen-Kopftuchverbot,arbeitsgericht-verhandelt-kopftuchverbot-100.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

44. Fatma Azdemir, “Kolumne Minority Report: Wer was sprechen darf”, Taz, 26 November 2018, www.taz.de/Kolumne-Minority-Report/!5550159/, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

ceptability in Germany, making working-class multilingual families (of color) a sign of deviance and deficiency. The head of school is also quoted in the headline with the subtitle “We Are Arabized,” whilst showing a photograph where a blond female teacher is speaking to a class of “black-haired” first-graders.⁴⁵

Neukoelln and Wedding, for instance, the two poorest color neighborhoods, structurally part of the most unequal quarters of Berlin, are already defined by the social inequalities brought about by race and class: 45% of children growing up in Neukoelln have parents who are recipients of social welfare support and the average income per (adult) person is 1,025 Euros⁴⁶ - around 920 Euro/month was the official demarcation for being at risk of poverty in Berlin in 2017.⁴⁷ Having less than 769 Euros/month is categorized as poor⁴⁸ (around 420 Euros was the social welfare support⁴⁹ granted to an adult EU citizen in Berlin, exclusive of rent).

A report was published in Berlin by the appointed delegate of the city of Berlin against discrimination in schools in 2018. It highlighted that over a period of one year, 183 cases of discrimination were reported: 106 of those were categorized as “racism” with Muslims and black students as prime targets;⁵⁰ 10 cases were based on gender and/or sexuality discrimination; 4 cases based on class; and the large number of 20 cases based on (bodily) ableism - 36 cases could not be counted.⁵¹ Overall, these statistics seem to be very low given that there are around 350,000 pupils in Berlin. The new study for 2018 is not out as of yet; however, it might be reasonable to assume that with the new possibility to report cases of discrimination at schools in Berlin, the number of reported cases will increase. What is important to mention from such a small sample is that most cases of discrimination (108 out of 170) were committed by the adults present (teachers, principals, educators, police, youth welfare personal, pedagogical staff) and only 20 were committed in a peer-on-peer situation.⁵²

45. Hildburg Bruns, “Berliner Schulleiterin über ihre ersten Klassen: Nur eins von 103 Kindern spricht zu Hause deutsch. Rektorin aus Neukölln: ‘Wir sind arabisiert’”, *Bild*, 20 November 2018, www.bild.de/regional/berlin/berlin-aktuell/berliner-rektorin-klagt-nur-1-von-103-kindern-spricht-zu-hause-deutsch-58543002.bild.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

46. *Berliner Morgenpost*, “Bezirk Mitte ist sozial tief gespalten”, 12 January 2019, p. 12.

47. “Jugendliche haben ein besonders hohes Armutsrisiko - Zahlen für Berlin und Brandenburg”, *rbb24*, 23 August 2018, www.rbb24.de/politik/beitrag/2018/08/berlin-fast-ein-fuenftel-von-armut-bedroht-mehr-als-in-brandenburg.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

48. “Jeder sechste Berliner ist von Armut bedroht”, *Berliner Morgenpost*, YouTube, 12 March 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVJQ4JISZak, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

49. Here: Arbeitslosgeld II, also called Hartz IV.

50. The study took place between 09/2016 and 07/2017. It reported 36 cases as anti-Muslim racism, 24 as anti-black racism, 12 as anti-Sinti and Roma racism, and 9 as anti-Semitic.

51. Susanne Leinemann, “Die meisten Diskriminierungen in Schulen sind rassistisch”, *Berliner Morgenpost*, 16 November 2018, www.morgenpost.de/berlin/article215806201/Die-meisten-Diskriminierungen-in-Schulen-sind-rassistisch.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

52. Susanne Memarnia, “Diskriminierung an Berliner Schulen: Wenn LehrerInnen rassistisch sind”, *Taz*, 16 November 2018, <https://taz.de/Diskriminierung-an-Berliner-Schulen/!5548895/>, (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

Trouble was caused in 2018 by various AfD politicians who took it upon themselves to intimidate schoolteachers or university staff⁵³ all over Germany to call on students to “report” their teaching staff (via mail or online) in case “non-objective comments” were made by teachers, or, also, if negative comments about the AfD were uttered. The way to go about that was by referencing the “Law of Neutrality” (see *Islamophobia in Germany: National Report 2017*), which decrees that no “ideological” statement should be made in educational state spaces – a law that has usually been used to bare hijab-wearing Muslim women from entering the state educational sector is now used to also demarcate “political deviance” of (white) Germans.⁵⁴ The AfD argued that “left-wing radical ideology” is being spread and young students cannot defend themselves – their online registration for radical teachers should be seen as a new “strategy of self-defense,”⁵⁵ and the results should be sent to the respective federal school board authorities.⁵⁶

Politics

One of the most prominent debates erupting around race and Islamophobia in 2018 was caused by national football player Mesut Özil. It stirred excessive debate when Özil announced his retreat from the German national football team in July due to racism, as he tweeted. The latter happened on the one hand after the publication of a picture on Twitter, which shows Mesut Özil, Ilkay Gündoğan (another German football player) and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in May 2018. More importantly, however, it also happened after the defeat of the German national team at the World Cup 2018. Already toward the end of the German team’s participation, several sports

53. Karim Fereidooni and Jan Schedler “Pressemitteilung von RfM-Mitglied: AfD und Rassismuskritik an Schulen”, Rat für Migration, 6 December 2018, <https://rat-fuer-migration.de/2018/12/06/pressemitteilung-afd-mitarbeiter-moechte-dass-schule-teilnahme-an-rassismuskritischem-uni-projekt-absagt/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

54. According to the AfD, students would be left to “self-define” what neutrality means and then report it accordingly. This idea is comparable to calls that the Gestapo put out and introduced after 1933. In fact, the majority of Gestapo Nazi laws came out of (ordinary) citizens reporting to the Gestapo what they (personally) deemed would violate the “order of society.”

55. Silke Fokken, “AfD-Appell an Schüler: Überflüssige Provokation”, Spiegel Online, 21 September 2018, www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/afd-auf-ruf-fuer-schueler-in-hamburg-ueberfluessige-provokation-a-1229435.html, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

56. Heike Klovert, “Aufsichtsbeschwerde und Onlineplattform: Müssen Lehrer die AfD fürchten?” Spiegel Online, 9 October 2018, www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/afd-plant-meldeportale-gegen-lehrer-und-schulen-die-wichtigsten-antworten-a-1232276.html, (Access date: 4 September 2019). Ironically, or maybe symptomatic of the given debate, is that a retired high school teacher (and child of a former Jewish émigré resistance fighter) already sued the German intelligence service Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesverfassungsschutz*) in 2017 for her continuous surveillance due to her ostensible closeness to radical left-wing groups. She was denied tenure, kicked out of her job for a year, and, then again, surveilled in later age for once being a member of the Communist party and for still being in active “contact with radicals,” aka anti-fascist organizations, according to the intelligence service. Whether the state is truly helpless in the face of “radical left-wing thought” is hence questionable. For more information on the retired high school teacher see: “Verfassungsschutz Ex-Lehrerin wehrt sich gegen Beobachtung”, Spiegel Online, 17 January 2017, <http://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/silvia-gingold-lehrerin-wehrt-sich-gegen-verfassungsschutz-a-1129722.html>, (Access date: 4 September 2019). For more information of the decree against radicals, see: Gerard Braunthal, “Political Loyalty and Public Service in West Germany - The 1972 Decree against Radicals and Its Consequences”, 1990, Amherst: UMass Press.

commentators such as Mario Basler made fun of Özil's body language, former German national player Lothar Matthäus even claimed that it seemed Özil wasn't comfortable wearing the German tricot, followed by racist vitriol during games by fans in the stadium – Matthäus's pictures with Vladimir Putin during the World Cup didn't even cause nearly as much political critique as Özil's and Gündoğan's. After the German team's defeat, vitriol continued until Özil eventually tweeted his delayed but famous response to the national debate from England and in English: "People with racially discriminative backgrounds should not be allowed to work in the largest football federation in the world that has players from dual heritage families. Attitudes like theirs simply do not reflect the players they supposedly represent." He continued: "It is with a heavy heart and after much consideration that because of recent events I will no longer be playing for Germany at international level whilst I have this feeling of racism and disrespect. I used to wear the German shirt with such pride and excitement, but now I don't. I feel unwanted and think that what I have achieved since my international debut in 2009 has been forgotten."⁵⁷

Özil was born and grew up in Germany and received German citizenship at the age of 18, in 2007. In a special meeting with Germany's president Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the latter posted on Facebook after his meeting with Özil and Gündoğan that the former stated "I was born here and I stand up for my country."⁵⁸ For two months, Özil remained silent about the photo posted in Twitter. The anger about this silence was followed by extreme verbal attacks, seemingly attempting a "forced" confession on behalf of Özil, as though he owes something to the German public. Comparing Lothar Matthäus's case with that of Özil clearly shows that it is not just class that defines belonging, but also Whiteness. Hence, the suspicion of duplicity when it comes to Özil, along with the plethora of ill will directed at him might be fuelled by a potent mix of class envy and racism.

In 2010, Mesut Özil was awarded with an Integration Bambi,⁵⁹ a prize that usually goes to special achievements in media but which introduced an "integration" award after the spectacular goals Özil achieved and for being the first German Turkish player in the national soccer team. Özil went from an "integration role model" to a "football scapegoat" within 8 years, with the general suspicious questions surfacing positing whether he is Turkish or German. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas even questioned whether a multimillionaire living abroad would be able to say anything about "integration" and the national public broadcasting sta-

57. Tom Bryant, "Mesut Özil walks away from Germany team citing 'racism and disrespect'", *The Guardian*, 23 July 2018, www.theguardian.com/football/2018/jul/22/mesut-ozil-retires-german-national-team-discrimination, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

58. In German: "Ich bin hier aufgewachsen und stehe zu meinem Land."

59. RobertEnke32 "Mesut Özil & Nazan Eckes @ Bambi Integration 2010", YouTube, 12 November 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgoH-WH7DBQ, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

tion ARD journalist Rainald Becker even called for Özil to return his Integration Bambi award.⁶⁰ All the while, the national magazine *Spiegel* commissioned a survey on 24-25 July, within which only 27% of respondents regretted Özil's exit, whereas 58% didn't think that the way he was treated was racist – it was the same *Spiegel* issue that had him and his face on the cover with the headline “Alienation – The Özil Affair and the Problem with Integration.”⁶¹

The profound sense of dislocation that racism can inflict was brought to the fore by Mesut Özil's public reaction. The debate about him, however, also triggered another nationwide moment, which took place on Twitter. Therein, a new hashtag by Ali Can called *#MeTwo* came into being.⁶² The hashtag calls on people to share their experiences of racism and it became a national online spectacle and public debate.⁶³ Thousands of people took to Twitter to share their former or present experiences of racism – from everyday racism to violence. Also here a debate ensued whether a discourse on integration and racism is beneficial writ-large, if people of color in Germany highlighted only the “negative” experiences of living in Germany. An argument well-known from the *#MeToo* debate, upon which the *#MeTwo* campaign was modeled.

Whilst the summer was busy with Özil and the *#MeTwo* Twitter campaign, the parliament debated (immigrants' or Muslims') anti-Semitism prior to the summer break and the AfD and Chemnitz after the summer break. Dr. Felix Klein, the delegate of the government on questions of anti-Semitism and Jewish life in Germany, mentioned in an interview with the *Islamophobia Report* that it was debated to install a delegate of the government on questions of racism as well, however, after an Israeli flag was burnt in Berlin during demonstrations against Trump's decision to move the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, the discussion went otherwise.⁶⁴ Instead, the beginning of the year 2018, witnessed a new resolution petitioned by fractions of the CDU/CSU, SPD, FDB, and the Greens in the parliament dealing solely with anti-Semitism. The document asks

60. Tagesschau, “Tagesthemen, 22:15 Uhr 23.07.2018”, Youtube, 23 July 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-wo13HB1LpE, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

61. “Zwei Drittel der Deutschen beklagen Rechtsruck und Verrohung”, Spiegel Online, 28 July 2018, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/deutschland-zwei-drittel-beklagen-rechtsruck-und-verrohung-a-1220477.html, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

62. “Rassismus im Alltag: #MeTwo”, Spiegel Online, 26 July 2018, www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/metwo-menschen-mit-migrationshintergrund-berichten-ueber-rassismus-im-alltag-a-1220384.html, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

63. Gouri Sharma, “#MeTwo: As nationalist anger rises, stories of everyday racism”, Al-Jazeera, 4 September 2018, www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/metwo-nationalist-anger-rises-stories-everyday-racism-180903221934064.html, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

64. Interview with Dr. Felix Klein, *Beauftragter der Bundesregierung für jüdisches Leben in Deutschland* Appointed delegate of the government for Jewish life in Germany, at Heimatministerium Berlin, 7 December 2018. It is also noteworthy to mention that the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution has categorized demonstrations against Trump's decision to move the embassy to Jerusalem as “Islamist anti-Semitism.” This included, according to the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution primarily Palestinians, Turks, and other Muslim groups with “migration backgrounds.” See: BMI, „*Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017*“, p. 195.

the parliament to issue new legislations that are better able to deal with the eviction of anti-Semitic foreigners/refugees from North African and Arab “breeding grounds” (*Nährboden*)⁶⁵ from Germany. It also demanded to install said special delegate on the issues of anti-Semitism (Felix Klein), who in fact took office only five months later in May. The document also demands legislation to investigate whether it was possible to declare the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) against Israel as sedition and, thus, for any actions taken thereon as criminal offenses.⁶⁶ The document’s political goal is stated on page two: “The absolute acceptance of Jewish life is the benchmark for a successful integration. Whoever rejects Jewish life in Germany or questions the right of Israel to exist, will meet resolute opposition.” Shortly afterward follows the definition of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance: “Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”⁶⁷ The final definition in the German document, however, added a sentence. According to Klein, the chancellor’s office wanted that extra clause added, which states “Moreover, also the state of Israel, being understood as a Jewish collective, can become the target to said attacks.” A similar resolution was issued in May in Berlin this time including the party the Left.⁶⁸

In April and May 2018, Berlin Neukoelln also saw two demonstrations against anti-Semitism of white (non-Jewish) German men and women, all of them wearing kippot and Israeli flags – one of the marches was reported as a “Kippa Flashmob.”⁶⁹ Yael Wilms, one of the organizers, has risen to fame in 2018 through her act of *Jew-facing*⁷⁰ during demonstrating in Neukoelln, propelling the idea of anti-Semitism being a “Muslim” and/or “Arab/Turkish” problem.

According to Dr. Felix Klein in an interview with the author, the German Fed-

65. “Antrag der Fraktionen CDU/CSU, SPD, FDP und BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN: Antisemitismus entschlossen bekämpfen.” Deutscher Bundestag.

66. The Intelligence Service of Baden-Württemberg has listed BDS already under the section of “right-wing extremism” and defines it as anti-Semitic. See: “Verfassungsschutzbericht Baden-Württemberg 2017”, *Ministerium Für Inneres Digitalisierung und Migration*, p. 171. http://www.verfassungsschutz-bw.de/site/lfv/get/documents/IV.Dachmandant/Datenquelle/PDF/2018_Aktuell/Verfassungsschutzbericht_BW_2017.pdf

67. “Working Definition of Antisemitism”, International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism?usergroup=1>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

68. “Antrag der Fraktion der SPD, der Fraktion der CDU, der Fraktion Die Linke, der Fraktion Bündnis 90/Die Grünen und der Fraktion der FDP”, Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin, Drucksache 18/1061, 23 May 2018.

69. Alexander Fröhlich, “Demo-Wochenende in Berlin: Kippa-Flashmob zieht durch Neukölln”, *Tagesspiegel*, 25 May 2018, https://m.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/demo-wochenende-in-berlin-kippa-flashmob-zieht-durch-neukoelln/22605976.html?utm_referrer=http://m.facebook.com/#layer, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

70. What I mean with this is to take on a fantasized Jewish identity/look by – as in this case – wearing a dark-haired, curly wig, a David star necklace, a David star tattoo on her left chest, changing her name to Yael, as well as adopting a transnational and local Zionist political ideology, including marching against anti-Semitism in Neukoelln. Jew-facing however is way more common in Germany than just this one case and can even extend to people inventing Jewish family members or being Jewish themselves.

eral Office of Criminal Investigation (*Bundeskriminalamt, BKA*) informed him that around half of all violent attacks on Jews in Germany⁷¹ have allegedly been committed by Muslims, which could not be confirmed by Berlin's State Office of Criminal Investigation (*Landeskriminalamt, LKA*).⁷²

In October 2018, Jewish members of the AfD in Wiesbaden (Hesse) formed a group called "Jews in the AfD," in short JAfD. The group justified its own founding with an "uncontrolled mass immigration" of young men from an "Islamic culture" with "anti-Semitic socialization." The document also cites the "destruction of the traditional, monogamous family" due to "gender mainstreaming."⁷³ The founding of the group wasn't received well in the Jewish communities in Germany. Several organizations⁷⁴ and individuals⁷⁵ wrote collective public statements declaring their discontent, primarily accusing the AfD of racism and anti-Semitism as well as being a danger to democracy. After much debate and calls for the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*) to put the AfD on its radar, it finally responded to in January 2019 after presenting a 450-page expert opinion: the result is that the entire AfD is a test case (*Prüffall*) for the Intelligence Service and will not be surveilled, yet the right extremist wing (*Der Flügel*) around Björn Höcke and the youth organization (JA) of the AfD count as "suspicious cases" (*Verdachtsfall*).⁷⁶ Neither of the two cases, however, means true surveillance, but rather an assessment of possible future actions.⁷⁷

At the beginning of the year, Kay Gottschalk, a high party official in the AfD,

71. Bundeskriminalamt, "Politisch Motivierte Kriminalität im Jahr 2018 – Bundesweite Fallzahlen": 'Antisemitische Straftaten 2014 – Aug. 18'. Unpublished document, courtesy of Dr. Felix Klein (Publication Date: May 2019). **2014**: 1,596 criminal offenses, 45 violent physical attacks. **2015**: 1,366 offenses, 36 violent attacks. **2016**: 1,468 offenses, 34 attacks. **2017**: 1,504 offenses, 37 attacks. Until **August 2018**: 888 offenses, 22 attacks.

72. Interview with Daniel Hiltmann and Anke Henke, LKA Berlin, 19 February, 2019. Original sentence in German: "Die Zahlen für Berlin belegen dies nicht. Vielleicht sind Statistiken mit eingeflossen von NGOs, die auch Sachverhalte unterhalb einer ‚strafrechtliche Schwelle‘ darstellen und/oder Forschungsergebnisse, die das subjektive Empfinden von Betroffenen mit abbilden, z. B. der Antisemitismusbericht vom „Unabhängigen Expertenkreis Antisemitismus“. The official data for anti-Semitic criminal offenses for 2018 were also shared with me: 78% were right-wing motivated; 15% were attributed to "foreign ideology"; 2% left-wing ideology; 4% religious ideology; 1% not categorizable. The publication of the yearly LKA report "Lagedarstellung politisch motivierte Kriminalität Berlin 2018" will happen around May 2019 and can be retrieved under: <https://www.berlin.de/polizei/verschiedenes/polizeiliche-kriminalstatistik/>.

73. "Jüdische AfD-Mitglieder gründen Vereinigung", Zeit Online, 7 October 2018, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2018-10/juden-afd-jafd-vera-kosova> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

74. "Gemeinsame Erklärung gegen die AfD", Keine Alternative für Juden, https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjB-t_mczqAhULsKQKHXv_6AP4QFjAAe-gQICRAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.zentralratderjuden.de%2Ffileadmin%2Fuser_upload%2Fpdfs%2FGe-meinsame_Erklaerung_gegen_die_AfD_.pdf&usq=AOvVaw2qa9roajilu2cpMS2Lx56c

75. Micha Brumlik, Marina Chernivsky, Max Czollek, Hannah Peaceman, Anna Schapiro, Lea Wohl von Haselberg, "Die AfD vertritt menschenfeindliche und antisemitische Positionen", Zeit Online, 26 September 2018, www.zeit.de/kultur/2018-09/juden-afd-gegenbewegung-positionspapier (Access Date: 29 September 2018).

76. Maria Fiedler and Frank Jansen, "Prüffall: Was bedeutet das für die AfD?" 15 January 2018, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/verfassungsschutz-prueffall-was-bedeutet-das-fuer-die-afd/23868648.html>, (Access date: 4 September 2019)

77. At the same time, the left-wing newspaper *jungeWelt* and the Marxist coordination group Marx21, which publishes two magazines and organizes the yearly "Marx Is Muss" congress of left-wing youth organizations, have both regularly been included in the publications by the Intelligence Service for years. Marx21 is surveilled since 2013, the *jungeWelt* since 2014. See: BMI – Bundesministerium des Inneren/ Federal Ministry of the Interior, "Verfassungsschutzbericht 2017", p. 160 and 161.

called for the boycott of all Turkish shops at the AfD New Year's event in Krefeld (North Rhine-Westphalia), since German Turks all support Erdoğan.⁷⁸

Another example of empire fantasies took place at the end of June 2018 when the AfD convened at the Kyffhäuser memorial with – amongst many others – Dr. Alexander Gauland, chairman of the AfD in parliament. The memorial was one built at the end of the 19th century in memory of Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm I and stands as a symbolic monument against the outer enemies of the (then) empire, but also the inner ones, such as Social Democracy. In his speech at the memorial, Gauland stated that “Orientals and Africans” are coming to Germany en masse in order not to work but have loads of children. Seemingly, their goal is a “population exchange” between Germans and “Orientals and Africans.”⁷⁹ These statements by Gauland followed his infamous declaration just shortly before, at the party convention of the AfD youth organization, the Young Alternative (*JA*), on 2 June: “We have a glorious history and that, dear friends, lasted longer than those blasted 12 years, [...] Yes, we avow those 12 years, yet, Hitler and the Nazis are just a speck of bird poop in more than 1,000 years of successful German history.”⁸⁰

Media

In times of so-called fake news we are witnessing that perceptions can greatly diverge from actual reality, with some of said misrepresentations having a potential to become dangerous. If a country, for instance, believes that the population of a particular minority is proportionally a lot larger than what it actually is, then public opinion could easily tip over into violence by way of “conspiracy theories.” Or, in other words, if a majority perceives itself to be “overrun” and “taken over” by an actual minority, we do not need history books to draw the necessary conclusions. In the recent German case, a 2018 study found that Germans greatly overestimate the number of Muslims in Germany. According to public opinion, Germans believe that at least every fifth person in Germany is a “Muslim,” which would be 21% of the entire population. In reality, the percentage of Muslims in Germany reaches 4%, less than a fifth of what people actually thought.

The commodification of “gangsta rap” happened within the larger national framework of the defunding of the welfare state and narratives of a “failed mul-

78. Michael Passon, “AfD-Aufforderung zum ‘Türken-Boycott’: Staatsanwaltschaft in der Kritik”, *Westdeutsche Zeitung*, 16 July 2018, https://www.wz.de/nrw/krefeld/afd-aufforderung-zum-tuerken-boycott-staatsanwaltschaft-in-der-kritik_aid-25015185, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

79. Der Flügel, “Kyffhäusertreffen 2018 - Rede von Alexander Gauland”, Youtube, 11 July 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHGeX55vd00>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

80. The entire speech including a short introduction by Gauland can be retrieved on the AfD-friendly website: Jürgen Fritz, “Alexander Gaulands vollständige Vogelschiss-Rede”, JFB, 7 June 2018, <https://juergenfritz.com/2018/06/07/vogelschissrede/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

ticalism” from the 2000s onward.⁸¹ In 2018, an emotive and transnational scandal erupted around the popular award show *Echo*, which gives out prizes based on the box office results of music artists in various categories. This year, Farid Bang and Kollegah, two well-known rap artists, were the winners in the category “Hip Hop/Urban – National” with their song “08/15.”⁸² One of their so-called punchlines was “My muscles are more defined than those of an Auschwitz inmate.” The artists had already justified their lyrics to the *Echo* ethics committee prior to the final event.⁸³ During the event, Farid Bang, who wrote the line, apologized to the audience stating, “We didn’t want to cause any negative feelings.”⁸⁴ The critique of anti-Semitism, however, became so heated that several artists returned their decade-old awards (i.e. Westernhagen and Daniel Barenboim) and blamed Echo itself. The music company BMG cancelled the artists’ contracts in the same month (April), and, after 26 years, the entire organization was cancelled for good. Media debates ensued about anti-Semitism in German hip hop and rap. Two penal charges of “sedition” (*Volksverhetzung*) against the rappers were filed at the court in Stuttgart, which tried both the rappers’ present and former songs.⁸⁵ The International Auschwitz Committee suggested Bang and Kollegah visit Auschwitz, which they did.⁸⁶

The infamous *BILD* newspaper was the main media instigator in this debate with titles such as “Dumb and Dumber,”⁸⁷ for instance, as a reference to Bang and

81. For around 20 decades, *mainstream* German hip hop culture represented primarily the (white) middle class (for example Fettes Brot, Freundeskreis, Absolute Beginner) or at least tried to appeal to it, whilst simultaneously employing fun, comical, or pseudo-/romantic lyrics, lifestyle and music style. The commodification of “gangsta rap” progressed quite rapidly from the beginning of the 2000s onward (primarily with the label Aggro Berlin and artists such as Sido, Bushido, Haftbefehl), and was presented by a different profile of artists aiming at provocative and transgressive expression to musically embody personal (and men of color) prowess.

82. Kanaxmusik, “Kollegah & Farid Bang - 0815 §185 (JBG 3)”, Facebook, 02 December 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1445613002203201>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

83. “Nach Antisemitismus-Vorwürfen: Kollegah und Farid Bang zertrümmern ihren Echo”, NEON, 11 August 2011, <https://www.stern.de/neon/feierabend/musik-literatur/kollegah-und-farid-bang-zertruemmern-ihren-echo-in-neuem-musikvideo-8207604.html>, 11 August 2018, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

84. RS, “Nicht ausgestrahlte Szene? Hier entschuldigen sich Farid Bang und Kollegah beim ‘Echo’”, Rolling Stone 30 April 2018, <https://www.rollingstone.de/nicht-ausgestrahlte-szene-hier-entschuldigen-sich-farid-bang-und-kollegah-beim-echo-1492237/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

85. “Kollegah und Farid Bang: Ermittlungen wegen Volksverhetzung”, Kurier, 2 May 2018, <https://kurier.at/kultur/kollegah-und-farid-bang-ermittlungen-wegen-volksverhetzung/400029955>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

86. “Umstrittene Rapper in KZ-Gedenkstätte: Kollegah und Farid Bang besuchen Auschwitz”, Spiegel Online, 7 June 2018, www.spiegel.de/panorama/leute/kollegah-und-farid-bang-besuchen-auschwitz-a-1211812.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

87. Philip P. Engel, “Hip-Hop und Judenhass: Dumm und dümmer: Warum Kollegah und Farid Bang für ihre unwürdige Leichenfledderei nicht auch noch geehrt werden sollten”, BILD, 4 April 2018, www.bild.de/politik/inland/kollegah/kollegah-und-antisemitismus-kommentar-55289444.bild.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Kollegah.⁸⁸ Interestingly, the tabloid focused quickly on Kollegah in their accusations, although Bang was the one who wrote the line and sang it. According to Kollegah, anti-Semitism accusations became virulent after he went to Palestine in 2016 and shot a documentary during his trip.⁸⁹

So far, the German state or media have cared far less for the tighter surveillance and reporting of the ever-growing neo-Nazi and right-wing underground music and festival scene: only in the first half of 2018, around 131 music events took place all over Germany (around 1.4 events per day), with around 13,000 guests – what became more pronounced was the confidence with which guests of said events would show Hitler salutes even to police surrounding the events (the latter is illegal in Germany). In 2017, around 300 events took place with around 30,000 participants. Thuringia's Ministry of the Interior even had to admit that it was difficult to deny the “right to free assembly.”⁹⁰ The right to free assembly thus stands in stark contrast to the freedom of expression in the arts when it comes to Muslim rap artists in Germany with a diverging political opinion on foreign policy and a seemingly aggressive performance. Finally, somewhere in the middle of class and race is the common consumer citizen who literally buys what they like, just like others vote for what they like.

Justice system

The Justice system, in particular migration and asylum laws, were the first ones to change with masses of racist or Islamophobic attacks against refugees or people of color. Inside of the CDU, debates about changes to the German Basic Right to Asylum were held during the succession fight for Merkel's throne in 2018. Similar to said debate is the coalition's “Pact for Migration,” presented by Seehofer. The homepage of the Ministry of Homeland Affairs states in a summary of the pact: “This master plan is based on the conviction that Germany can only assume its external

88. At the same time, there exists a right-wing extremist rock band that calls itself “08/15.” Their songs are shared on YouTube by users that also share right-wing extremist bands such as the famous Oithanasie (a word play on euthanasia). 08/15's songs, however, are not as popular as the ones by Farid Bang and Kollegah (individually) - maybe also because of the music genre of neo-Nazi music (rock, hard-rock, and metal), which wasn't as successful in marketing itself in a new, multicultural consumer landscape. It definitely wasn't cool or appealing enough for the consumers. And/or Bang and Kollegah's moral transgressions as commercialized “prototype Muslim gangsters” mirrored a social reality of a society, which didn't sit well with its “takeover” by individuals coming from its margins. Especially not when being young, male, and formerly poor rap artists of a Muslim (Farid) or white Muslim-convert background (Kollegah). When looking at how the media debate unfolded, Farid Bang and Kollegah seemed still more “visibly offensive,” than right-wing extremist music culture. The saying and term “08/15” in German refers, on the one hand, to something “ordinary” in a derogatory way, and on the other hand, to a machine gun used during WWI. Both usages, however, go back to this very gun used by the then German imperial army.

89. Alpha Music Empire “Kollegah in Palästina (Eine StreetCinema Dokumentation)”, YouTube, 29 November 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOqNrC_ILIM, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

90. “131 Neonazi-Konzerte in der ersten Jahreshälfte”, Frankfurter Allgemeine, 14 August 2018, www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/131-neonazi-konzerte-in-der-ersten-jahreshaelfte-15737345.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019). For more information see also: Kleine Anfrage und Antwort der Bundesregierung, “Musikveranstaltungen der extremen Rechten”, Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/ 2489 (5 June 2018); Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/ 3751 (9 September 2018); Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/ 5543, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

responsibility, if at the same time domestic cohesion is maintained.” Further on the homepage it states that “a situation such as in 2015” should not repeat itself and the masterplan is one of the tools to “overcome the split in our society.” The master plan incorporates a “Marshall Plan for Africa”, an “Employment Offensive” for and in the Middle East that builds jobs, and emigration councils (for those interested in migrating to Germany) and Return Council Centers (for those interested in going back voluntarily) to Iraq, Ghana, Kosovo, Serbia, Albania, Tunisia, Morocco, and Senegal which are already in place.⁹¹ It also includes ideas that refugees or asylum seekers who committed a crime in Germany will be expelled, as well as a European-led police and Frontex force coordination to “secure” open waters.⁹² When looking at the actual numbers of people being allowed said statuses to begin with, it is however difficult to understand the political crises that unfolded: in total and at the end of 2017, in a population of around 83 million, 644,277 refugees⁹³ lived in Germany with more than half coming from Syria. Added to that are 42,572 asylum seekers⁹⁴ and 217,081 Jewish emigrants from the former USSR, at the end of June 2018.⁹⁵

Fantasized tropes of crime created several hysteric moments around migration in German politics.⁹⁶ In April 2018, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees was caught up in a scandal where apparently 1,200 applications for asylum were granted without any legal or political basis. The scandal led to a national debate, with Horst Seehofer at its center, to question the entirety of current asylum application policies. Political pressure also led to 18,000 cases of asylum applications being worked out again in hindsight.⁹⁷ Public grievances and mass protests have used migrant/refugee crime as a foil to bolster their political positions, although public statistics clearly refuted an increase in crime.⁹⁸

The political margins of security and asylum intersections is where (future) possibilities of state violence against the most precarious (i.e. refugees) come to the

91. See the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees website: <https://www.returningfromgermany.de/en/>

92. “Masterplan Migration: Maßnahmen zur Ordnung, Steuerung und Begrenzung der Zuwanderung”, Bundesministerium des Innern für Bau und Heimat 4 July 2018, www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/downloads/DE/veroeffentlichungen/themen/migration/masterplan-migration.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=7, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

93. Legally accounted for according to, for example, the Geneva Conventions.

94. Legally accounted for according to the Dublin agreement and German Basic Law § 16a.

95. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache, 19/3860, 17 August 2018.

96. Christopher Schuetze and Michael Wolgelenter, “Fact Check: Trump’s False and Misleading Claims about Germany’s Crime and Immigration”, *The New York Times*, 18 June 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/06/18/world/europe/fact-check-trump-germany.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

97. Jan Bielicki, “Nur wenige Flüchtlinge haben Bleiberecht erschlichen”, *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 20 August 2018, www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/bundesamt-fuer-migration-nur-wenige-fluechtlinge-haben-bleiberecht-erschlichen-1.4096796, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

98. Marlene Grunert, “Das sagt die Statistik über Ausländer und Straftaten”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 22 June 2018, www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/kriminelle-migranten-statistik-ueber-auslaender-und-straftaten-15652784.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

fore, and where empire and class come together again.⁹⁹ When mapping the margins of said discourse, Mariam Puvogel Chakib highlights in particular the plight of Chechnian refugees who have been for a long time marked on the intersections of crime and terrorism. Puvogel Chakib details cases in the summer of 2018, where young male “Chechnian endangerers” (*Gefährder*) were randomly incarcerated after a fight broke out between a group of Afghans and Chechnians on a football field in Chemnitz the day before. After the fight, 26 Chechnian men were incarcerated without being given any legal reasons: there were no police questionings, people were forced to undress and sleep in their cells naked without blankets, and water was withheld, even to those who needed it for medication intake. During the police search of the asylum homes of the accused, women and children were forced at gunpoint to stand against the wall. And whilst the police shared the illegal and unjustified incarceration with the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, despite none of the incarcerated being charged with taking part in the violence on the football field, several of them shortly afterward received rejection notifications for their asylum applications.¹⁰⁰

News about potential threats coming from the German police itself have kept the German nation busy in 2018. Already in 2016, the deputy prime minister of Saxony, Martin Dulig (SPD), declared quite boldly that he kept wondering if the political assessments of the police and the intelligence service (*Verfassungsschutz*) are always correct when dealing with right-wing violence or attacks on refugees and PoC generally. He went even further and stated that just employing more police personal against the racist violence of the past years doesn't do justice to the entirety of the problem. Instead, Dulig declared, the police in Saxony has - qualitatively speaking - a problem with racism whilst being close to the AfD and Pegida.¹⁰¹ The year 2018, brought out a few cases of right-wing police activities: in December, a right-wing extremist police “cell” was uncovered in the Frankfurt (a.M., Hesse) including their racist WhatsApp chat group. A group of 4 policemen and 1 policewoman is accused, amongst other things, of being connected to a racist fax sent to a German Turkish lawyer, which included her personal address and the name of her two-year-old daughter, and contained the message of “slaughtering” her – the sender called

99. Another example is the appeal to the government of Saxony by Carsten Hütter (AfD) to know how many German and foreign Sinti and Roma live in the federal state of Saxony, supposedly, in order to know how many of said groups violate compulsory education, are registered as refugees, and live off of government support. See: Sächsischer Landtag, Drucksache 6/13730, 13 June 2018.

100. Mariam Puvogel Chakib, “Von Gefährdeten zu »Gefährdern“, *Analyse & Kritik*, 15 January 2019, https://www.akweb.de/ak_s/ak645/12.htm?fbclid=IwAR0kYoURNU1zllGbff4czsRLLT3HWxMPja_7P6wvV1366JqoP_MGNyQeH3U, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

101. “Minister wirft eigener Polizei Nähe zu Pegida vor”, *Spiegel Online*, 3 March 2017, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/sachsen-polizei-sympathisiert-laut-minister-martin-dulig-mit-pegida-a-1080343.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

itself “NSU 2.0” using police slang and wording.¹⁰² Seda Başay-Yıldız was one of the lawyers defending the victims in the NSU trial that came to an end in autumn 2018. Mustafa Kaplan, another lawyer who also defended NSU victims in said trial, also received a letter signed by the “NSU 2.0” in December - for reasons unmentioned in the media the authorities, however, believe this letter came from a free rider.¹⁰³ More letters were sent to other defense attorneys, media, and state agencies. This news was followed shortly afterwards by new cases of right-wing extremist cells in police stations in Wiesbaden, Fulda, and Offenbach in the federal state of Hesse – talks of an alleged “right-wing extremist network within the

Hesse police” have been uttered.¹⁰⁴ The latter is uncannily similar to the investigative report of a well-connected right-wing extremist network in police, intelligence, and military service by the two *taz* journalists Martin Knaul and Christina Schmidt – yet, no connections have been drawn so far. According to the government, there have been 71 criminal and violent offenses in Germany that referenced the NSU, from June 2016 until August 2018: 14 of them targeted refugees or people of color and, astonishingly, none of the attackers were allegedly linked to any right-wing extremist fraternity, party, or even organizations or network.¹⁰⁵

Internet

The Internet provides a viable platform for attacks on minorities. In particular, the transnationally well-connected and right-wing extremist Identitarian Movement (*Identitäre Bewegung*, IB, founded in France in 2002) is showing a thought-through Internet presence engaging in, as in the case of Germany, spontaneous “direct actions” coupled with a professionalized Internet presence (social media). As reported in the last Islamophobia report in 2017, the IB is part of the new right-wing movement of “ethno-nationalists” and views “liberalism” as part of today’s political problems.¹⁰⁶ Beginning in 2020, several (left-leaning) newspapers (*taz* in Berlin, *Frankfurter Rundschau* in Frankfurt a.M.), the headquarters of national public broadcasting sta-

102. “Ermittlungen wegen ‘NSU 2.0’ in Frankfurt: Fax von ganz rechts”, Spiegel Online, 17 December 2019, www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/frankfurt-mutmassliche-rechtsextreme-zelle-in-der-polizei-was-ueber-den-nsu-2-0-bekannt-ist-a-1244092.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

103. “Frankfurter Anwältin soll weitere Drohbriefe erhalten haben”, Zeit Online, 29 January 2019, www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2019-01/seda-basay-yildiz-frankfurter-anwaeltin-polizei-rechtsextremismus, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

104. Katharina Iskandar, “Polizeiskandal in Hessen: Rechtsextreme Vorfälle in drei weiteren Polizeipräsidien”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 18 December 2018, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/rhein-main/region-und-hessen/polizeiskandal-in-hessen-rechtsextreme-vorfaelle-in-drei-weiteren-polizeipraesidien-15948499.html?fbclid=IwAR-14J5adTSkUbZqiEBWpSZNKIRkoTaGSBl0D6QFRZ2bnv-Bkzd1rDQgHgY>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

105. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 19/3736, 8 August 2018.

106. IB shares members with the youth organization of the Alternative for Germany (JA), such as Jannik Brämer in Berlin. Other close ties to the AfD from IB members are held, for example, by Götz Kubitschek, Herbert Mohr, Marc Vallendar, Joachim Berg, Thorsten Weiß, Mirko Riedel, Christian Schurig, Wilhelm Nolde, Julian Pazotka, Kai Laubach, Robert Timm, and Dominik Appold. IB is also well-connected to publishers and PEGIDA, and shows a monetary prowess that (older) right-wing extremist movements such as the NPD don’t have.

tion ARD, as well as the SPD headquarter were targeted with posters stating “When are you talking about left-wing violence?” One *taz* employee was pushed during an encounter.¹⁰⁷ The IB uses social media in particular for fast uploads, video reporting, and communication and their protest style resembles direct actions from i.e. Greenpeace,¹⁰⁸ Amnesty International, etc. They understand themselves as an international European movement to “defend Europe,” primarily against Islam and migration.¹⁰⁹

The Internet also played a pivotal role in the racist riots in Chemnitz. Several right-wing neo-Nazi groups such as Kaotic Chemnitz, the local right-wing extremist party Pro Chemnitz, Pegida, and the AfD mobilized throughout the weekend leading up to Monday, 27 August, 2018. On Wednesday, the police warrant of the accused two men who killed Daniel H. is leaked by the judicial officer Daniel Zabel – a move that is not only illegal, but was justified by the representative of the law by his desire to “bring the truth to light.”¹¹⁰ The latter argument is reminiscent of the more common argument of contemporary right-wing movements claiming that the state and media either “cover up the truth” or “manufacture lies.” The warrant showed the name of the accused 22-year-old Iraqi including his address, the names of witnesses, and the presiding judge. According to his own testimony, Zabel sent a photo of the warrant to colleagues in the judicial apparatus, friends of the dead Daniel H., and to the right-wing extremist party and group Pro Chemnitz, which was primarily responsible for organizing the masses of people in Chemnitz. The warrant was *first* published on Facebook by AfD politicians and by Pegida’s founder Lutz Bachmann – both groups rode to prominence on the ticket of Islamophobia. The justification Zabel gave should thus be seen as a legal move by his lawyer, for Zabel’s legal training clearly prepared him to know the law much better. What is more plausible, but harder to prove, is that Zabel might have tried to position himself as a “warrior” against the system; a hero who is now tried by a “repressive Stasi system” alluded to

107. Henrik Merker, “Identitäre Bewegung greift Zeitungen und Parteibüros an”, *Zeit Online*, 14 January 2019, https://blog.zeit.de/stoerungsmelder/2019/01/14/identitaere-bewegung-greift-zeitungen-und-partiebueiros-an_27911, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

108. “Rechte schwenken ihr Fähnchen: ‘Identitäre’ klettern aufs Brandenburger Tor”, *N-TV*, 27 August 2016, www.n-tv.de/politik/Identitaere-klettern-aufs-Brandenburger-Tor-article18513421.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

109. “Von Rechtsextremen gechartertes Schiff: Crew der ‘C-Star’ soll mittellos in Barcelona gestrandet sein”, *Spiegel Online*, 6 October 2017, www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/identitaere-bewegung-crew-der-c-star-mittellos-in-barcelona-gestrandet-a-1171611.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019). In 2017, with the help of crowd-funding (the rent is around 64,000 euros, the maintenance is around 200,000 Euros), IB rented the boat *C-Star* in the Mediterranean Sea and left the primarily Sri Lankan crew alone on the boat afterward (Catalan police found them in terrible health conditions, without water or food). SOS Méditerranée, an NGO set up to rescue refugees in open waters, commented on the seeming “war” in the Mediterranean Sea as a “humanitarian crisis.” IB member Patrick Lenart (Austria) had the idea to charter the ship to pick up refugees in order to send them back to North Africa; he even wanted to work together with the Libyan coast guard, but the latter refused. At the time of writing, there is practically no NGO ship allowed to leave ports in the Mediterranean to rescue refugees anymore.

110. Sybille Klormann, “Warum das Veröffentlichen eines Haftbefehls eine Straftat ist”, 31 August 2018, www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2018-08/justiz-veroeffentlichung-haftbefehl-chemnitz-straftat-dresden, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

by Pegida, Pro Chemnitz, AfD, IB, and others so often – or else, he was thrown under the bus in order to prevent an even larger network from blowing up. The reason for such assumptions is that Zabel’s lawyer, Frank Hannig, oversaw and directed the founding assembly of Pegida (but never officially joined) and was, ironically, a Stasi¹¹¹ spy himself during GDR times.¹¹²

What becomes apparent from both examples is that the new right-wing movements operate transnationally, are well-connected in terms of personnel and use the Internet in order to publicize their activities much like the New Social Movements of the 90s. Social media is used for orchestrated “direct actions” such as the ones in Chemnitz, Berlin, and Frankfurt. The Internet is a means to portray the power and prowess of those who feel “cheated and lied to.” The possibility to present oneself as more numerous as one might be is, thus, also a useful intimidation tactic in the world of anonymous algorithms and aliases. Additionally, the Internet also shows us that “old” forms of democratic participation exist alongside new forms of social organizing that primarily happen in the World Wide Web. The latter should thus be seen as more potent, vital and also dangerous for the strengthening of right-wing movements and Islamophobic networks.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Next to many people already named in the chapters above, this section will focus solely on those in prime power positions. At times it becomes hard to distinguish certain verbal manoeuvres from mainstream politicians from those of the far right.

Prominent CDU politicians such as MP Veronika Bellmann (CDU) stated that “there was no place for Muslims in her political party.” According to her, Muslims ‘today present themselves secular and tomorrow they present themselves strictly religious.’¹¹³

The next in line in 2018 is Horst Seehofer (CSU), minister president of Bavaria from 2008 to 2018 and minister of the interior, building and community (Homeland Ministry) since 2018 under Chancellor Angela Merkel. His heads-on power challenges to Merkel ended in heated debates and only stopped when Merkel announced her withdrawal. All of a sudden, Seehofer came out in public cherishing Merkel’s politics and character, something he in fact had challenged entirely throughout 2018. One of the most poignant heads-on fights with Merkel was Seehofer’s comment that “migration is the mother of all problems,” which followed his remark in 2016 when he called

111. Stasi – The Ministry for State Security. The Stasi worked in sync as an intelligence agency and secret police. It had its civil spies, called “IMs” (Informal Collaborators), working *everywhere* in society: amongst families, friends, neighbors, kindergartens, schools, at universities, work, in churches, etc.

112. David Schraven, Ulrich Wolf, and Marta Orosz, “Von der Stasi zu Pegida”, *Correctiv*, 4 April 2016, <https://correctiv.org/aktuelles/artikel-aktuelles/2016/04/04/von-der-stasi-zu-pegida>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

113. Farid Hafez, “Germany and the Rise of the Eternal Muslim”, *Maydan*, 27 September 2018, www.themaydan.com/2018/09/germany-rise-eternal-muslim/, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Merkel's decision to "open" the borders in 2015 the "rule of mischief."¹¹⁴ Seehofer's discursive topping came on his 69th birthday, when Seehofer presented *his* "Master Plan for Migration" and stated pleasingly in front of rolling cameras: "Of all things on my 69th birthday, 69 people - which was not my order - were returned to Afghanistan." Overall, this report views Minister Seehofer as one of the main instigators of Islamophobia with a responsible public and political profile in Germany, in 2018.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The most prominent civil society commentary came from the "MeTwo" Twitter Hashtag after events surrounding the racist treatment of Mesut Özil. The hashtag¹¹⁵ became so famous, that its initiator, young journalist Ali Can became a symbol for a debate which otherwise happened either in academic or activist circles without ever becoming mainstream, rarely through politics, and even less so on social media - albeit the latter catapulted the debated into the center of society. The sheer flood of experiences tweeted by people of color made the nation stop for a short moment and contemplate its compliance.¹¹⁶

A week after the racist mob chased People of Color in Chemnitz, the German tradition of throwing a big party to prove the opposite, took place (similar events took place in the 90s, apparently to no avail). The initiative called itself "We are more!" ("Wir sind mehr!") and the concert took place in Chemnitz on 3 September with around 50,000 party-protestors. It was streamed live on YouTube and the French-German channel Arte.¹¹⁷

114. "Seehofer: 'Es ist eine Herrschaft des Unrechts'", Sueddeutsche Zeitung Online, 9 February 2016, www.sueddeutsche.de/bayern/fluechtlinge-seehofer-es-ist-eine-herrschaft-des-unrechts-1.2856699, (Access date: 5 September 2019). Said sentence is usually an allusion used for the former GDR, or else, other authoritarian states.

115. A satirical comment on Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism in the era of social media comes from the Instagram account "3fD 'Arabs for Germany'" / "3fD 'Arabs für Deutschland'" that comments on current politics via their own photo collages with an "Arab." The account can be accessed under "arabsfuerdeutschland" and publishes, for instance, a photo from a school class ostensibly from the 1930s stating: "The school of the future / An end to science / An end to political correctness / An end to tolerance / It's enough! / We want the cane!" For more see: arabsfuerdeutschland "3fD Arabs für Deutschland", Instagram, 18 August 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BmoSWI8n5Rd/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

116. Georg Diez, "Diese Geschichten werden unser Land verändern", 29 July 2018, www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/metwo-diese-geschichten-werden-unser-land-veraendern-kolumne-a-1220559.html#ref=recom-outbrain, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

117. Wirbleibenmehr "#wirsindmehr – Chemnitz", YouTube, 3 September 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5zh-HhkMosQ (The "Feine Sahne Fischfilet" concert starts at around 01:00:00min). Debates ensued over the performance of the left-wing punk band Feine Sahne Fischfilet claiming the event supported "left-wing extremism" and "propensity to violence" due to lyrics such as "We are back in our city / we will shit in front of your fraternity" and "The next police station is only a stone's throw away." German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier was publicly criticized, amongst others by the General Secretary of the CDU Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, for advertising the event given the group's appearance. The event ended entirely peacefully. For more information on the debate see: Ansgar Graw and Hannah Lühmann, "Werbung für Linksextreme? Kritik an Steinmeier wegen Konzert-Tipp", Welt, 3 September 2018, www.welt.de/politik/deutschland/article181390978/Feine-Sahne-Fischfilet-in-Chemnitz-Steinmeier-gegen-Konzert-Tipp-in-der-Kritik.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Again after Chemnitz, on 13 October, the biggest anti-racist demonstration in decades took place in Berlin and was called “Indivisible” (*Unteilbar*), with the slogan “United against Racism.” Ostensibly there were around 240,000 demonstrators, although the organizers apparently only expected around 40,000 to show up. At the end of the day, a concert took place where the famous German musician Herbert Grönemeyer sang in Turkish.¹¹⁸

After the AfD tried to push through with their idea of supporting children to spy on their teachers, teachers in Berlin have countered by “reporting themselves” en masse to the AfD asking them to put their names on the list. A public debate erupted where comparisons were drawn to Nazi persecution policies.¹¹⁹ The move by the schools and teachers was made public through the GEW, the German union for teachers and university staff. The first school that came forward was the Lina Morgenstern School in Kreuzberg (Berlin), where “teachers wrote a joint letter to the AfD asking for all their names to be voluntarily added onto the ‘denunciation list’ it is compiling.”¹²⁰

A less funny situation happened near Cologne at the beginning of 2019: an independent cinema in Hachenburg (Westerwald) advertised “free entry for AfD members” to the movie *Schindler’s List*. The commercial cinema aimed to show the movie on 27 January, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army and the German commemoration day for the victims of Nazi persecution. Right afterward, an online video appeared that threatened a bomb explosion at the movie theater as well as several hate (and support) mails. A public debate ensued, whether the cinema owner Karin Leicher might have provoked in the “wrong way,” thus drawing the aggressive and international reactions for a good reason. Critique came from the CDU for drawing unnecessary attention to the AfD with the “provocation,” but Hendrik Hering (SPD), president of the federal parliament of North Rhine-Westphalia, stood up for Leicher and applauded her “creative” social protest.¹²¹ Eventually, Leicher decided to offer the event free of charge with a subsequent discussion for everyone interested. She explained both of her decisions with the fact that there is a vivid AfD scene in the vicinity.¹²²

118. “Gegen Rassismus: Großdemonstration ‘#Unteilbar’ in Berlin”, ARD Tagesschau, 13 October 2018, www.tagesschau.de/multimedia/video/video-459117.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

119. Anna Klöpffer, “Protest gegen AfD-Lehrerportal wächst: Berliner Schulen zeigen sich selbst an”, Taz, 18 November 2018, www.taz.de/!5548508/, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

120. Jon Stone, “German teachers mass report themselves to far-right AfD after it asks children to spy on their political views”, Independent, 22 October 2018, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/germany-afd-far-right-teachers-schools-pupils-political-views-berlin-a8595501.html?fbclid=IwAR2jc8cm1iLXkXR9RPt8nAlFdfqk-9sU9OjMZNhqpzwVgv7veKaSKy3QGvY, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

121. Ute Spangenberg, “AfD-Aktion eines Kinos: Viel Aufregung um ‘Schindlers Liste’”, Tagesschau, 2 January 2019, www.tagesschau.de/inland/kinoaktion-101.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

122. “Kehrtwende von Hachenburger Kino: Freier Eintritt in ‘Schindlers Liste’ für alle”, SWR Aktuell, 3 January 2019, www.swr.de/swraktuell/rheinland-pfalz/koblenz/Umstrittene-Aktion-von-Kino-in-Hachenburg-Schindlers-Liste-mit-freiem-Eintritt-fuer-AfD-Mitglieder,schindlers-100.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

The union of German historians also felt compelled to publish a concerned and independent political statement – in English and German – that was drafted on their yearly convention in September. The historians agreed collectively that they see recent political developments in Germany as a “danger to democracy.”¹²³

The most politically ironic intervention in 2018, however, came from the infamous Coke Brothers venture. A business known for its human rights and worker’s rights violations, its outright support of conservative politics in the USA, and its disastrous approach to nature, positioned itself this year as a liberal voice against the AfD. A fake Coca Cola billboard was put up by activists shortly before Christmas in front of the AfD headquarters in Berlin stating “Merry Holidays – Say no to the AfD.” Patrick Kammerer, director of public affairs & communications of Coca Cola Germany, commented on Twitter poignantly, “Not every fake has to be wrong.”¹²⁴ Subsequently, AfD members were filmed emptying bottles of Coca Cola in the gutter as a sign of protest. Another AfD move used a counter-billboard showing the AfD embracing the Coca Cola rival Pepsi as their favorite drink, whereupon Pepsi declared its intention to keep all legal options open for suing the AfD. Eventually, the AfD started using local German Cola products such as Vita Cola (the former GDR copy of Coca Cola). Vita Cola didn’t threaten a lawsuit, but made it clear in public that their brand stands for “tolerance and cosmopolitanism” and opposes the appropriation by the AfD.¹²⁵

In line with the big-business politics was the decision of high-profile German businesses (amongst them some DAX companies) to take a political stance. After the events in Chemnitz, some felt compelled not to continue treating society as separate from economy. Fears primarily revolved around the international reputation of German business, Germany as a site for international business as well as for the many international employees. Companies also feared that business and invest-

123. “Resolution of the Association of German Historians (VHD, Verband der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands) on Current Threats to Democracy”, VHD, 27 September 2018, www.historikerverband.de/verband/stellungnahmen/resolution-on-current-threats-to-democracy.html#c1553 (Access Date: 27 September 2018). In their statement, the union of historians details their critique by explaining historical analogies such as “discriminatory language and discourse”, “representative democracy, a culture of open debate, and a no to populism”, the dangers of “nationalism” and “for a united Europe”, for “the protection of minorities and human rights”, “against the abuses and misuses of history.” Around three weeks later, critical voices of historians who felt “pressured” into the resolution came out in an article of the conservative-liberal newspaper *FAZ* (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*) stating that this resolution was just as much a unilateral move of certain fractions within the union of historians as was Merkel’s decision to open the borders in 2015. The authors of the article also criticized that “left-wing linguistic defamations” weren’t mentioned and called the “moral impetus” during the entire event “embarrassing.” For more on the latter see: Dominik Geppert and Peter Hoeres, “Resolution von Historikertagen: Gegen Gruppendruck und Bekenntniszwang”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, 12 October 2018, www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/hoch-schule/zwei-historiker-wenden-sich-gegen-die-resolution-aus-muenster-15828216.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

124. Patrick Kammerer, Twitter, 3 December 2018, <https://twitter.com/PatrickKammerer/status/1069545444253073410>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

125. “Ärger um gefälschtes Anti-AfD-Plakat: Der Cola-Krieg geht weiter – Björn Höcke schießt bei Twitter Eigentümer”, *Berliner Zeitung*, 11 December 2018, www.bz-berlin.de/berlin/der-cola-krieg-geht-weiter-bjoern-hoecke-schiest-bei-twitter-eigentor, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

ment would spiral down given the negative reporting and the legitimate fears (of foreigners) that now concern (apparently solely) the “East of Germany.” Reinhard von Eben-Worlée, president of the association Family Businesses cautioned, “Not only Saxony, Germany as a whole, is facing the problem of a shortage of skilled workers [*Fachkräftemangel*] and has to be able to compete with other countries for foreign workers. Professionals only come if a climate of cosmopolitanism prevails. The same applies to companies.”¹²⁶

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The wages of being white German post-unification never materialized into actual economic and social status gains for a large section of former East Germans. Waves of unemployment after unification (up into several generations until today) became a reality that was epitomized in the well-known slogan that the “East was sold out.” In a response to a *taz* interview with Tobias Burdukat, a social worker in the former East of Germany, the interviewee makes clear that the unseen and well-organized neo-Nazi structures are all over Germany. The question whether the “We are more!” hashtag campaign was speaking to a certain truth was met with suspicion. Instead, Burdukat believes that its mantra is simply not a true assessment of reality and believes another hashtag such as #whatifnotnow would have been better. In order to change anything, Tobias Burdukat infers that people need to become active in a long-term fashion, move from the cities to the villages and/or support local organizations and political structures that attempt to work against it.¹²⁷ Hence, the following recommendations are put forth:

- Critical Whiteness workshops and training for police and administrative staff, evaluated by an independent committee or institution that is not from the police.
- Incidents of racist attacks should include the surroundings of mosques.
- Incidents of racist attacks should include any religious prayer space and/or rooms.
- More public and institutional debate on how Jews and Muslims are pitted against each other within an Islamophobic German public discourse.
- Rural areas (in the East and West) should have more political and institutional coverage, representation, with a focus on anti-racist trainings, diversity, and gender issues.

126. Thomas Tuma, Klaus Stratmann, Donata Riedel, Anja Müller, Jannik Tillar, “Ausschreitungen in Sachsen: Unternehmen erheben ihre Stimme gegen den braunen Mob”, *Handelsblatt*, 29 August 2018, www.handelsblatt.com/politik/deutschland/ausschreitungen-in-sachsen-unternehmen-erheben-ihre-stimme-gegen-den-braunen-mob/22971732.html?ticket=ST-979472-UpTZd67UHc2RNOF2r90Q-ap1, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

127. *Taz*, “Jugendarbeiter über Rechtsextremismus: ‘Wir sind nicht mehr’”, Youtube, 11 September 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAVrEgzXaVM&feature=youtu.be>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

- A critical and thorough understanding of right-wing extremist networks that extend into the parliament (AfD politicians) and within the state apparatus (military, intelligence services, police forces) should take place by legal and media investigations.
- A critical understanding of how classism, class and racism interact – especially with regards to the former East of Germany – is of utmost necessity to deconstruct the myth that racism only exist in the East of Germany and, by extension, Europe.

The issue of Islamophobia and racism writ-large, along with the sociopolitical fragmentations of today's society have become propelling forces in Germany.

Chronology

- **17.01.2018:** Sections of the parliament release a resolution calling for the criminalization and expelling of anti-Semitic foreigners from Arab and North African breeding grounds.
- **January 2018:** Report is published showing Germans greatly overestimate the number of Muslims living in Germany.
- **April 2018:** Rap artists Farid Bang and Kollegah are accused of anti-Semitism and the entire music award Echo, after 26 years, is cancelled in its wake.
- **May 2018:** “Kippa Flashmobs” of Germans posing as Jews demonstrate against anti-Semitism in the migrant quarter of Neukoelln in Berlin.
- **02.06.2018:** Infamous speech of Gauland (AfD) stating that the “Nazis were just a speck of bird poop in more than 1,000 years of successful German history.”
- **June 2018:** Pegida Demonstration in Dresden takes place where “Drown! Drown! Drown!” is chanted interpolating the so-called refugee crisis in the Mediterranean.
- **22.07.2018:** Mesut Özil announces on Twitter that he will leave the German national football team for good due to racism.
- **24.07.2018:** Ali Can coins the Twitter hashtag #MeTwo, giving expression to people who experience racism.
- **July 2018:** NSU trial comes to an end and the families of the victims vow to take the case to the European Court of Justice.
- **25.08.2018:** Daniel H. is killed in Chemnitz.
- **26.08.2018:** First racist and anti-refugee/immigrant demonstration in Chemnitz (Saxony) takes place and will be followed by more in the days and weeks to come.
- **03.09.2018:** “We Are More” anti-racist music demonstration takes place in Chemnitz with around 50,000 participants.

- **05.09.2018:** Saxony's Head of Government Michael Kretschmer (CDU) declares "There was no mob, there was no manhunt, there was no pogrom" in Chemnitz.
- **05.09.2018:** German Minister of the Interior Horst Seehofer (CSU) declares "Migration is the mother of all problems."
- **21.09.2019:** Björn Höcke (AfD) declares his party wants to "intellectually refine the 'brute' ways of civil protest."
- **22.09.2018:** Amed Ahmad dies of his wounds after being severely burnt in his cell.
- **27.09.2018:** The Union of Historians announces in a public statement that recent political developments in Germany are a "danger to democracy."
- **13.10.2018:** "Indivisible" anti-racist demonstration takes place in Berlin with around 240,000 people participating.
- **16.11.2018:** The newspaper *taz – die Tageszeitung* publishes an investigative report on neo-Nazi networks in the military, police, and intelligence services that operate in Germany, Switzerland, and Austria.
- **November 2018:** Berlin teachers report themselves to the AfD after the latter called on students to denounce left-leaning teachers.
- **December 2018:** Several right-wing extremist police networks are uncovered in Hesse (West Germany).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
GREECE
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

This report examines Islamophobia in Greece in 2018 taking all local, national and international developments into account. The main outcome of this year's report is that Islamophobia continues to exist in different realms across Greece. Even if Islamophobia remains manifested mainly on the discursive level as anti-Muslim hate speech, physical violence towards Muslims and sacred places of Islam continued at a lesser extent. In this respect, attacks targeting some immigrants and refugees as well as their NGOs based in central Athens took place in 2018. Moreover, the exterior of a mosque located in Western Thrace was defamed with anti-Turkish slogans while Golden Dawn continued protesting against the mosque of Athens. Furthermore, a demonstration was organised by theologians, Orthodox Church figures and some religious groups in Syntagma Square against the new religious school textbooks which included more information about religions other than Orthodox Christianity, including Islam. Meanwhile, a few national and international initiatives were also launched in Athens seeking to fight racism, discrimination, and Islamophobia at different levels of Greek society.

Based on the report's existing findings, Islamophobia is primarily manifested in Greek politics, printed and electronic media, and among some Orthodox Church figures, while it is relatively limited in the education and justice system. Also, the Greek law does not seem to be powerful enough in fighting anti-Muslim hatred inside Greek society in a way that the vast majority of perpetrator(s) of Islamophobic attacks remain unidentified in general. That is to say, even some politicians and clerics of the Greek Church who keep repeating their Islamophobic discourses overtly in their written or oral statements are never penalised for their hate-motivated behaviour. With the exception of a few state and NGO initiatives, almost no progress has been achieved in effectively fighting Islamophobia across Greece. For the purpose of addressing this vacuum, an official observatory mechanism, which needs to fully cooperate with Muslims, should be formed urgently and start monitoring any type of Islamophobic behaviour and incidents occurring in different parts of the country. Also, a series of training seminars particularly for civil servants and journalists could be organised so as to develop their knowledge about Muslims and Islam in Greece.

Περίληψη

Η παρούσα έκθεση εξετάζει την Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα για το 2018 λαμβάνοντας υπόψη όλες τις τοπικές, εθνικές και διεθνείς εξελίξεις. Το κύριο συμπέρασμα της φετινής έκθεσης είναι ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία στην Ελλάδα εξακολουθεί να υφίσταται σε διάφορους χώρους. Παρά το γεγονός ότι η Ισλαμοφοβία εξακολουθεί να εκδηλώνεται ως επί το πλείστον σε επίπεδο δημόσιου λόγου ως ρητορική μίσους εναντίον των Μουσουλμάνων, βίαιες επιθέσεις εναντίον Μουσουλμάνων και ιερών χώρων του Ισλάμ καταγράφηκαν και φέτος, αλλά σε μικρότερο βαθμό. Στη διάρκεια του 2018 καταγράφηκαν επιθέσεις εναντίον προσφύγων και μεταναστών, αλλά και οργανώσεων τους στην Αθήνα, γράφτηκαν αντι-Τουρκικά συνθήματα στους τοίχους τζαμιού στη Θράκη, ενώ η Χρυσή Αυγή συνέχισε να διαμαρτύρεται για την κατασκευή του τζαμιού της Αθήνας. Επιπλέον, θεολόγοι, εκκλησιαστικοί παράγοντες και θρησκευτικές ομάδες, διοργάνωσαν στο Σύνταγμα διαδήλωση κατά των νέων βιβλίων θρησκευτικών τα οποία περιλαμβάνουν περισσότερες πληροφορίες για τις άλλες θρησκείες και μεταξύ αυτών και για το Ισλάμ. Παρόλα αυτά το 2018 έλαβαν χώρα και ορισμένες εθνικές και διεθνείς πρωτοβουλίες, κυρίως στην Αθήνα, για την καταπολέμηση του ρατσισμού, των διακρίσεων και της Ισλαμοφοβίας.

Σύμφωνα με τα κυριότερα ευρήματα της έκθεσης η Ισλαμοφοβία διαπιστώνεται κυρίως στον χώρο της πολιτικής, του έντυπου και ηλεκτρονικού τύπου, και μεταξύ ορισμένων κληρικών της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας, ενώ είναι ελάχιστη στους χώρους της παιδείας και της δικαιοσύνης. Επιπλέον, η ελληνική νομοθεσία δεν φαίνεται να είναι επαρκής για την αντιμετώπιση του μίσους εναντίον των Μουσουλμάνων, με αποτέλεσμα η πλειονότητα των δραστών να παραμένουν άγνωστοι και ατιμώρητοι. Κατά συνέπεια ορισμένοι πολιτικοί και κληρικοί της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας οι οποίοι εξακολουθούν να αναπαράγουν ανοιχτά τον Ισλαμοφοβικό τους λόγο, στις γραπτές ή προφορικές δηλώσεις και τα κείμενά τους, παραμένουν ατιμώρητοι. Με την εξαίρεση ορισμένων πρωτοβουλιών από την πλευρά του κράτους και ορισμένων ΜΚΟ δεν έχει υπάρξει αποτελεσματική πρόοδος στην αντιμετώπιση της Ισλαμοφοβίας στην Ελλάδα. Προκειμένου να καλυφθεί το εν λόγω κενό κρίνεται απαραίτητη η δημιουργία ενός επίσημου παρατηρητηρίου το οποίο να συνεργάζεται με τους Μουσουλμάνους, έτσι ώστε να καταγράφονται τα Ισλαμοφοβικά περιστατικά σε όλη την Ελλάδα. Τέλος, θα μπορούσε να διοργανωθεί μια σειρά σεμιναρίων ιδίως σε δημοσίους υπαλλήλους και δημοσιογράφους με σκοπό την ενημέρωσή τους για το Ισλάμ και τους Μουσουλμάνους στην Ελλάδα.

Country Profile

Country: Greece

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Form of Government: The prime minister is the head of government. The president, elected by parliament every five years, is the head of state. The president of the Republic has limited political power, as most power lies with the government.

Ruling Parties: SYRIZA (The Coalition of the Radical Left) with Aneksartitoi Ellines (Independent Greeks).

Opposition Parties: Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy), Xryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn); PASOK (The socialists), KKE (Greek Communist Party), To Potami (The River), Enosi Kentroon (Centre Union).

Last Elections: 2015 Parliamentary Elections: SYRIZA 35.46% (145 seats); Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy) 28.09% (75 seats); Xryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn) 6.99% (18 seats); PASOK (socialists) 6.29% (17 seats); KKE (Greek Communist Party) 5.55% (15 seats); To Potami (The River) 4.09% (11 seats); Aneksartitoi Ellines (Independent Greeks) 3.69% (10 seats); Enosi Kentroon (Centre Union) 3.44% (9 seats).

Total Population: 10,816,286 in 2011 (National Census)

Major Languages: Greek

Official Religion: Eastern Orthodox Church

Statistics on Islamophobia: No statistics on Islamophobia available

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The Racist Violence Recording Network in 2018 reported 117 racist incidents with more than 130 victims, while in 2017 it recorded 102 incidents with more than 120 victims. The Police Department against Racist Violence and other Police Authorities recorded 226 incidents with probable racist motive for 2018. Religion was recorded as motive in 28 cases, but with no further details.

Major Religions (% of Population): No official data available, since religious affiliation is not included in the national census. A Pew Research Institute poll (2015) estimates 90% of the population is Christian Orthodox, the unaffiliated are 4%, other Christian <4%, Muslims 2%, and other religions <1%.

Muslim Population (% of Population): No official data available, since religious affiliation is not included in the national census. A Pew Research Institute poll (2016) estimates Muslims at 5.7% of the population.

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Muslim Association of Greece, Xanthi Turkish Union, Association of Religious Staff of Western Thrace Mosques, Association of Western Thracian Graduates of Imam Hatip High Schools, Shia Muslim Community of Greece.

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: Greek Helsinki Monitor, Racist Violence Recording Network. There is no single NGO in Greece founded for the purpose of

fighting Islamophobia. All the NGOs stated here tackle physical and verbal Islamophobic attacks under the main principles of human rights such as equality and non-discrimination.

Far-Right Parties: Xryssi Avgi (Golden Dawn), Elliniki Lyssi (National Solution), Nea Dexia (New Right), Dynamis Ellinismou (Power of Hellenism).

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: Crypteia, Combat 18 Hellas, Aneksartitoi Meadrioi Ethnikistes (Independent Maeandrioi Nationalists), Group Epsilon-EY (Order of Greek Fighters), Blood and Honour.

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Islamophobia in Greece is primarily found on the discursive level while physical attacks with religious motivation targeting mosques, cemeteries, Muslim immigrants or refugees, which are actually difficult to record, remain fewer compared to other European countries. Politics, religion, and media are three primary realms that continued to play a significant role in the reproduction of Islamophobia in the public domain throughout 2018; namely Islamophobia was expressed by certain political parties and politicians of the right and extreme right, some self-proclaimed liberals, certain figures of the Orthodox Church of Greece, some media organs and journalists including their posts on social media. The main issues that contributed to the reproduction of Islamophobia in 2018 were terrorist attacks in Western societies; the so-called refugee problem, primarily refugees who reside in Athens and some of the Aegean islands; the construction of the mosque of Athens; and issues related to the Muslim Turkish minority of Western Thrace where Islamophobia is sometimes reflected through the lens of Turcophobia¹ The report is based on data collected during 2018 and takes into account local, national, and international events that might have influenced the (re)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 settled in different parts of the country.²

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

As was mentioned in previous reports, Greece lacks an observatory in order to document regularly and systematically Islamophobic attacks in Greek society. Furthermore, a crucial issue with Islamophobia is that it is not easy to document motives targeting Muslims particularly behind racist attacks against immigrants and refugees, although in many cases such motives do directly or indirectly underlie the attacks. According to the latest data,³ during 2018, 50,511 immigrants and refugees crossed

1. For examples of physical attacks targeting sacred places of Muslims with anti-Turkish slogans see Ali Huseyinoglu, "Questioning Islamophobia in the Context of Greece", *IRCICA Journal: A Journal on Islamic History and Civilization*, Volume III, Issue 6, Fall 2015, pp.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.

3. Operational Portal Refugee Situations, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

the sea borders with Turkey in the Aegean Sea. During the year, a series of violent attacks against them was recorded in major Greek cities (e.g. Athens) or especially in those islands which host refugee camps. In September, in Lesbos a 9-year-old girl was attacked because she was wearing a headscarf, but she was Greek and non-Muslim, and apparently wore the headscarf for medical reasons.⁴ This event offers a critical aspect of the rising Islamophobia which targets all those who appear to be a Muslim based on their appearance. Lesbos has seen a rise of the extreme right, mainly Golden Dawn supporters, with anti-immigrant and Islamophobic attitudes during at least the last couple of years. In April, Afghan refugees, including women and children, gathered and protested in the central square of Lesbos about the delay in getting their asylum cards. During the night extreme-right groups attacked them. During the attack racist slogans like “burn them all” were heard and the result was that 28 people were injured and hospitalised.⁵ From the beginning of this year the climate on the islands of Chios, Lesbos, and Samos is rather conflictive and many attacks have been recorded not only against refugees but also against NGO activists and journalists covering the issue.⁶ It is important to mention also the verbal vulgar and offensive attack of a police officer in the refugee camp in Moria, Lesbos, against an elderly refugee woman from Syria which was recorded and shown in the media.⁷ Another attack with bats against unattended refugee children in Oraiokastro, in Macedonia, was documented in September. The attack resulted in the serious injury of one of the children who had to be hospitalised.⁸ Similar attacks have also been reported in Athens. In Peristeri, for example, in May an attack resulted in the injury of an immigrant.⁹ This series of violent attacks led a number of MPs from the ruling party of SYRIZA to ask a parliamentary question requesting that the government take all the necessary measures in order to confront this kind of violence, and find and bring to justice all the perpetrators.¹⁰ Finally, on 22 March, an arson attack took place against

4. “Lesbos: Attack against a 9-Year-Old Girl Wearing a Headscarf”, Nooz, 6 September 2018, <http://www.nooz.gr/greece/1509831/lesbos--epithesi-se-9chroni-poy-foroyse-mantili->, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

5. Christos Demethes, “Mytilini: Fascist Attack against Immigrants - They Were Shouting ‘Burn Them Alive’”, News247, 23 April 2018, <https://www.news247.gr/koinonia/mytilini-fasistiki-epithesi-enantion-metanaston-fon-azan-kapste-toys-zontanoy.6605096.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

6. “Chronology of Xenophobic Attacks in the Islands during the Last Six Months”, Efsyn, 1 November 2018, <https://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/hronologio-xenofovikon-epitheseon-teleytaio-examino-sta-nisia>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. “Vulgar Attack against a Female Refugee by Policemen in Moria”, Iefimerida, 20 October 2018, <https://www.iefimerida.gr/news/452727/ai-g-skatogria-fyge-apo-do-sayra-hydaia-epithesi-astynomikon-se-ilikiomeni-prosfyga-stin>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

8. “Racist Attack with Bats against Refugee Children in Oraiokastro”, TVXS, 7 September 2018, <https://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/ratsistiki-epithesi-me-ropala-se-prosfygapoyla-sto-oraiokastro>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

9. “Racist Attack against an Immigrant in Peristeri”, To Pontiki, 14 May 2018, <http://www.topontiki.gr/article/273126/ratsistiki-epithesi-kata-metanasti-sto-peristeri-ton-erixan-sto-edafos-kai-ton>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

10. Konstantinos Tsellos, “In the Parliament the Racist Attacks against Immigrants”, Euronews, 11 September 2018, <https://gr.euronews.com/2018/09/11/sth-vouli-oi-ratsistikes-epitheseis-enantion-metanaston>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

the offices of the Afghan Migrant and Refugee Community of Greece, in central Athens (Figure 1). The extreme-right group Crypteia claimed responsibility for the attack.¹¹



Figure 1: The attack against the Afghan Migrant and Refugee Community of Greece on 22 March. The photo is from the community's Facebook page.

According to the Muslim Association of Greece (MAG), Crypteia made them a threatening phone call in January. In this call, they said that they are a group that burns, hits, and kills immigrants, mainly Muslims, and that MAG is among their targets.¹²

The only physical attack against a mosque throughout 2018 occurred in the Municipality of Iasmos in Western Thrace (Rhodopi Prefecture). On 1 July, a person(s) that remains unknown defamed the outer wall of the Iasmos Mosque with the slogan “Fuck Turkey” (Figure 2), a display of hatred towards Turkey via targeting Islamic sacred places. In fact, this manifestation of Islamophobia intertwined with anti-Turkish sentiments is an old phenomenon for Western Thrace where Muslims of ethnic Turkish identity have been living since the Ottoman times.

11. The UN Refugee Agency, 23 March 2018, <http://www.unhcr.org/gr/6650-l>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). Crypteia in Ancient Sparta was something of a secret police organised by the Spartan elites in order to terrorise the slaves, especially their leaders and those who were brave enough to start uprisings. For that purpose, young Spartans with knives were sent out during the night to assassinate slaves in order to create fear among them.

12. Muslim Association of Greece, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/Muslim-Association-of-GreeceMAG>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).



Figure 2: Defamation of the outer wall of the Iasmos Mosque with the anti-Turkish slogan 'Fuck Turkey'. The photo is from the website of Birlik Gazetesi, 1 July, 2018¹³.

On the whole, it could be argued that Islamophobic attacks against prayer houses, Ottoman mosques, or individual Muslims have not been officially recorded or mentioned by the media or by Muslims communities. On the other hand, the recorded racist attacks against immigrants and refugees do not always have a clear religious background. Nevertheless, these attacks as the statement by Crypteia to MAG suggests should not be underestimated.

Employment

Due to the lack of any data (official or not) with regard to religious discrimination in the job market, this part has been kept empty. From all the sources available, media, and personal communication it did not come out that such incidents in the job market have been recorded.

Education

Similarly, to the previous year, regarding education and in relation to the policies implemented by the Ministry of Education there are no direct Islamophobic incidents from the part of the ministry to mention. However, there are some issues related to education that should be underlined. The first one is the continuation of reactions from parents with the support of extreme-right groups, GD among others, and the Church and theological circles against the new religious textbooks which started to change in 2016 by including more information about other religions and, of course, about Islam. The instances where Islam was mentioned were actually considered one of the reasons that sparked the fire of reactions especially in combination with the presence of immigrant and refugee children in the Greek education system.

The Panhellenic Union of Theologians was among those who reacted the most against these new textbooks through public announcements and the organisation of conferences on the issue. Furthermore, together with other Greek Orthodox

13. "Yassıköy'de camiye çirkin saldırı!", Birlik Gazetesi, 1 July 2018, <http://www.birlikgazetesi.net/haberler/14476-yassikoeyde-camiye-crkn-saldiri.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

groups and associations they organised a rally in Athens city centre against the books on 4 March (Figure 3). One of the main slogans used was “WE SAY NO TO THE NEW RELIGIOUS TEXTBOOKS, in order to save our Faith, our families, our Homeland. We, Greeks should escalate our Resistance, our Vigilance, our Confession and Testimony; For us and our children”. It is interesting that the extreme-right party Golden Dawn also took part in this rally in order to support the initiative and express the party’s resistance against what they believe is an effort towards the de-Christianisation of the Greek society. As one of the party’s MPs, Ilias Kassidiaris, tweeted, “Today in Propylaia [i.e. the old building of the University of Athens]: Against the new religious textbooks which promote de-Hellenisation and Islamisation”.¹⁴



Figure 3: The rally against the religious textbooks on 4 March, 2018 in Syntagma Square. The photo is from the official website of the Panhellenic Union of Theologians.

Another issue that is also related to education is the incorporation of immigrant and especially refugee children in Greek schools. In some cases throughout Greece, such as in the regions of Serres and Chalkidiki, in Macedonia and in the island of Chios, there have been reactions from the part of parent associations, although not so strong as during the first year. The Aegean Sea Parent Associations reacted through public announcements arguing among other things that “in the islands of the North Aegean for security reasons no refugees and immigrant should stay permanently”,¹⁵ implying that refugee children should not stay and study in the regional schools. In

14. Ilias Kassidiaris, Twitter, 4 March 2018, <https://twitter.com/iliaskasidiaris/status/970315890079227905>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

15. “Reactions in Pologyros against Refugee Children in Schools”, Life-Events.gr, 18 November 2018, <https://www.life-events.gr/gegonota/antidraseis-ston-polygyro-gia-prosfygopoula-sta-scholeia/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). Giorgos Pagoudis, “They Don’t Want the Refugee Children in Schools in Chios”, Efimerida ton Sydakton, 13 August 2018, <https://www.efsyn.gr/arthro/den-theloyn-prosfygopoula-sta-sholeia-tis-hioy>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). “Serres: Extrajudicial and Reactions against Refugee Children in One School”, Aftodioikisi.gr, 18 October 2018, <https://www.aftodioikisi.gr/koinonia/serres-exodika-ke-antidrasis-gia-ta-prosfygopoula-se-scholio>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

one of these cases a parent association in Chios reacted against the acceptance of a refugee child in school arguing,

The time of registration [i.e. of the child] and the inclusion of a Muslim child during the days of the Holy Easter, the greatest of the Christian holidays, when children work on this subject, they watch videos and discuss with the kindergarten teachers, worried us a lot.¹⁶

Politics

During the last three years, Golden Dawn (GD) has been the most important agent of reproducing Islamophobia in Greek society. Through ideological or news texts uploaded mainly on their website or published in the party's newspaper the fear of Islam is present and very strong. According to GD, Islam is incompatible with the West, Muslims cannot be integrated in western societies, and it is necessary to change the multicultural approach otherwise wars will erupt in western cities.¹⁷ This fear reproduced by GD is directly related to immigration since as the party argues,

At least 80 per cent of the asylum seekers are men under the age of 30, almost all are Sunni Muslims and in their vast majority they support every kind of extremist-terrorist organisations within Islam.¹⁸

In this respect, immigrants and refugees are considered as invaders, as the Trojan horse, that have come to occupy Europe. Golden Dawn also argues that this is a plan of Zionists, composing this way a conspiracy theory. In order to support its arguments on the threat of Islam, GD reproduces all the news from abroad related to violent acts of Muslims (e.g. the terrorist attack in Russia in February or in France in March and elsewhere).¹⁹ On the other hand, the party praises initiatives taken by other European countries, for example Austria's and Denmark's initiative to close down mosques and deport imams or ban the wearing of the burqa in public places, and leaders like Matteo Salvini in Italy and Victor Orban in Hungary, among oth-

16. "Racist Delirium from a Parent Association about a Refugee Child in a Kindergarten", Lifo, 11 April 2018, <https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/188206/ratsistiko-paralirima-apo-syllogo-goneon-gia-prosfygopoylo-se-nipiago-geio-ti-apanta-i-dieythynsi-protovathmias>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

17: G. Linardis, "Islam Is Impossible to Coexist with the Western Civilization", Xryssi Avgi, 5 January 2018, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/to-islam-einai-adunato-na-sunuparjei-me-ton-dutiko-politismo>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

18. G. Linardis, "The Trojan Horse of Asian and African Invasion in Europe", Xryssi Avgi, 13 January 2018), <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/o-doureios-ippos-ths-eisbolhs-asiatwn-kai-afrikanwn-sthn-eurwph>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

19. "Shocking Video from a Jihadist Attack outside of an Orthodox Temple in Russia", Xryssi Avgi, 19 February 2018, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/sokaristiko-binteo-apo-epithesh-tzichantisth-ewj-apo-orthodojo-nao-sthn-rws>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). "3 Dead and 10 Injured the Tragic Result from the Attack of Moroccan Jihadist in France!", Xryssi Avgi, 23 March 2018 <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/3-nekroi-kai-10-traumaties-o-tragikos-apologismos-ths-epitheshs-tou-marokin>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

ers, for their courage to stand against the “Islamisation of Europe”.²⁰ Finally, as one might suppose, the rhetoric of GD includes phrases like Islamist cannibals, Islamist decapitators, Islamic fanaticism, and many others in order to underline what they believe is the violent, barbaric, and medieval nature of Islam. Golden Dawn also organised a rally (Figure 4) at the site of the new mosque that will be built in Athens, protesting for the demolition of a pre-existing small Orthodox temple.²¹



Figure 4: From the rally at Votanikos, Athens. The banner with the writing ‘Golden Dawn’ and next to that another with the phrase ‘Stop Islam’ are visible in the background. The photo is from the official website of GD.

As usual with many statements of the GD and its MPs, on 6 March, Islamophobia was once again manifested inside the Greek Parliament through the lenses of Turcophobia. Ilias Kassidiaris, one of the most vocal MPs of GD, strongly rejected the involvement of Mustafa Mustafa, a member of the Muslim Turkish minority and an MP of SYRIZA in Rhodopi, in the Commission of Foreign Policy and Defence by shouting, “The traitor (of Greece) must go out. The Turk must leave here!”²² Later in

20. Giorgos Mastoras, “Austria Responds to Islamisation Deporting Imams and Closing down 7 Mosques”, Xryssi Avgi, 8 June 2018, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/h-austria-apanta-sto-politiko-islam-apelaunontas-imamhdes-kai-kleinontas-7>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). Giorgos Mastoras, “The Prime Minister of Hungary Passionately: There Are No Muslim Refugees, but Muslim Invaders in Europe”, Xryssi Avgi, 9 January 2018, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/labros-o-prwthupourgos-ths-ouggarias-gia-emas-den-uparchoun-mousoulmanoi-pr>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). “Unemployment-Immigrant Invasion-Identity Crisis - Only Nationalists Have the Answers”, Xryssi Avgi, 11 October 2018, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/anagergia-metanasteutikh-eisbolh-krish-ta-tohtas-tis-apanthseis-echoun-mono>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). Giorgos Mastoras, “In Denmark They Ban the Use of Burqa in Public Places”, Xryssi Avgi, 1 June 2018, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/sthn-dania-apa-goreusan-thn-chrhsh-mpourkas-se-dhmosious-chwrous>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

21. “Demonstration against the Demolition of the Holy Temple in Votanikos”, Xryssi Avgi, 5 September 2018, <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/sugkentrwsh-diamarturias-gia-thn-katastrofh-tou-i.n.-panagias-eleutherwtria>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. Christos Bokas, “Tension with GD Members in the Parliament. The Session Was Interrupted”, Proto Thema, 6 March 2018, <https://www.protothema.gr/politics/article/767477/kekleismenon-ton-thuron-o-kotzias-enimeronei-tin-epitropi-exoterikon-upotheseon/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

his statements to journalists, he clarified that the existence of one of the four Muslim MPs, who are referred to by the President of Turkey as coethnic with Turks and to which statement no Greek political party reacted except GD, in such a strategic and significant commission where state secrets can also be shared was unacceptable and dangerous.²³ Kassidiaris's reaction was another indication of the continuity of lack of trust among some Greeks even towards minority members elected to the Greek Parliament based on their religious and/or ethnic differences.

Apart from GD, there are other marginal right-wing parties like the Nea Dexia (New Right), founded and lead by Failos Kranidiotis, that are openly against Islam, immigrants, and refugees in general. Kranidiotis speaks repeatedly not about immigration and immigrants and refugees, but about the 'Islamic colonisation' of Greece and Europe that should be confronted.²⁴ The party also praises and supports leaders like Salvini, Orban, and Trump as well as their views and policies on immigration flows and Islam.²⁵ In its published theses regarding the so-called demographic and immigration problems, which are the most important topics in the party's discourse, the New Right argues,

The evidence so far leads to a situation in which the Greek population and the Greek society as we know them until now are being altered. We do not have the right to passively accept these developments. We have to take our responsibilities, especially towards our own children. [...]

The so-called integration is actually a colonisation. The mass reception and settlement of people especially Muslims, with all the consequences of that, will create in a short time a new community that will replace the previous one [i.e. the Greek one].²⁶

The party makes a series of suggestions in order to confront immigration - including some very strict and non-humanitarian ones - and includes a special section regarding Islam with the following measures:

- Ban of funding coming from Islamic organisations from abroad.
- Exclusive use of the Greek translation of the Koran.
- Legislation about Islam based on the example of Austria. Ban of symbols used in public places.

23. "Ilias Kassidiaris Insists: Mustafa Mustafa is an MP of Erdogan", Mononews, 6 March 2018, <http://www.mononews.gr/politics/epimeni-o-ili-as-kasidiaris-o-moustafa-moustafa-ine-vouleftis-tou-erntogan-video>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. Failos Kranidiotis, "For the Murder of the 25-Year-Old in Filopappou", *Nea Dexia*, 17 August 2018, <https://www.neadexia.gr/deltaepsilon-lambda-tau-upsilon-piomicron-upsilon-alpha-phakappa-omicron-tan-uomegasigma-epsilon-iotasigma-delta-talambda-omegasigma-epsilon-iotasigma/-25>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

25. Panagiotis Doulmas, "O tetartos pylonas", *Nea Dexia*, 19 March 2018, www.neadexia.gr/alpha-rho-theta-rho-omicron-i-crongamma-rho-alpha-phii-ota-alpha-epsilon-iotasigma-tau-omicron-lambda-epsilon-iotasigma-upsilon-nuepsilon-omicron-nu-tau-epsilon-iotasigma/9471942, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

26. "Theseis gia to Metanastefiko-Dimografiko", *Nea Dexia*, <https://www.neadexia.gr/delta-tau-omicron-gamma-rho-alpha-phii-ota-kappa-omicron-muepsilon-ota-alpha-phasi-gamma-tau-epsilon-iotasigma-upsilon-tau-ota-kappa-omicron.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

- Ban of use of any kind of head covering [meaning especially the headscarf and all its variations] deriving from a religious obligation in public and private places and of all clothing that conceals the face. High fines in case of violation of this legislation.
- Investigation of the legality of purposes and activities of every organised Islamic structure, e.g. unions, clubs, associations, etc.
- Ban of Sharia law in every part of the country. In the case of the implementation of Sharia, the consequence will be the removal of citizenship, if this is the case, and immediate deportation.
- The start of a political debate on the topic of whether Islam is actually a religion given that its holy book is considered as law by Muslim communities.
- Closure of every illegal mosque.
- Annulment of the first [official] mosque of Athens.²⁷

It is very interesting that on 18 October, certain members of Nea Dexia resigned and on 27 October formed another political movement called “Ethnos kai Eleftheria” (Nation and Freedom). What is even more interesting is that among this movement’s first texts is one on immigration and the so-called demographic problem which is actually identical with the one of Nea Dexia mentioned above - especially the measures that are necessary against Islam.²⁸

Another extreme-right party is Elliniki Lyssi (Greek Solution), founded by Kyriakos Velopoulos, a former MP of Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos (Greek Orthodox Rally) of Georgios Karatzaferis. In the party’s political programme dedicated to the “immigration issue” the party argues,

Integration programmes for the illegal immigrants have already been prepared and this means that unfortunately they came to stay! European countries will not open their borders and this means that in Greece hundreds of thousands of Muslim illegal immigrants will settle.

The alteration of our Language, our Religion, our Traditions, our Values and in general of Hellenism is a matter of time. For as long as this dangerous coalition government stays in power, this time is getting closer!²⁹

Through a detailed description of the implementation of a series of security measures that are necessary in order to confront immigration waves, the party argues that “we, the Greeks, need to take back our country and preserve our language, civilization and religion!”³⁰

27. Ibid.

28. “Immigration-Demographic Issue”, Ethnos kai Eleftheria, 12 November 2018, <https://www.nationandfreedom.tk/2522-2/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

29. “Political Programme”, Elliniki Lyssi, <https://elliniki-lisi.gr/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Elliniki-lisi-Programma.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

30. Ibid.

From the above references, it is obvious that in Greek politics Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments and attitudes are mainly found within the spectrum of the extreme-right. However, one can still find examples of self-proclaimed liberals who have been expressing Islamophobic views on a systematic basis during the last years. One such example is the leader of a small neo-liberal political party, Thanos Tzimeros, mentioned also in previous reports, who continues his Islamophobic discourse, especially through Facebook and Twitter or in his public speeches and appearances. Among many comments, texts, and tweets one that actually summarises his views is the following:

[...] Islam is BY ITS NATURE bigoted, aggressive, INTOLERANT to diversity and [the Europeans] should proceed to the next step which is its FULL BAN within the EU. As I have written in tens of articles, it is [Islam] not only a religion but a regulative, legislative framework which CONTRADICTS ALL the basic values of the Western Civilisation. In the same way that we wouldn't accept an association of paedophiles, of men beating up their wives, children oppressors and aspiring murderers of other faith followers, it is not possible to accept within the EU the presence of a 'religion' with the exact same values, something that we realised after they managed to gain power through the rise of their population and after they started to show their real face. Europe IS NOT going to avoid the clash with Islam. The sooner the better. It is already too late.³¹

The main conclusion regarding politics is that open Islamophobia is evident in the extreme-right and other small political parties, although it could be also present in concealed forms in other parties and politicians as well. An interesting finding emerged from interviews with Muslims in which they argued that covert Islamophobia could be found in the state apparatuses as well, a form that could be described as "institutional Islamophobia". One example mentioned was the control by the police and the secret services of prayer houses, especially in Athens, and another one was the delay of the construction of the first official mosque in the Greek capital. It was argued that the continuous delays and obstacles raised with regard to the mosque might imply a covered Islamophobia by the state, which actually does not want a mosque to be built.³²

An interesting parameter related to politics is the two-week-long public deliberation on the law with regard to the administrative council of the new mosque in Athens that opened in May 2018. Despite the fact that the law passed from the Greek Parliament it is quite illuminating for one to pay attention to the comments

31. Thanos Tzimeros, Facebook, 11 May 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/Thanos.Tzimeros.Page/posts/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

32. Such views are not in any way representative of all Muslims in Greece, but should be at least recorded and perhaps taken into consideration. For security reasons the names of the interviewees cannot be revealed.

uploaded in this public deliberation.³³ The vast majority of the 148 comments from individuals or organised groups were against the construction of the mosque, while at the same time they expressed openly Islamophobic views. Although in such cases it is usual that people of the same ideological background enter the discussion massively in order to make their voice heard, the fact is that among all the comments written during this process not even one positive view and in support of the mosque and Muslims was expressed. The main arguments, among others, were that the construction of the mosque will create many dangers, Muslims will be radicalised, the mosque is unconstitutional, Muslims are invading Greece, Greece is an Orthodox country, and Islam is incompatible with the Greek history and civilization, and that it will lead to the Islamisation of the country.

Media

It is not rare to find Islamophobic views and articles published in extreme-right newspapers like *Golden Dawn*, *Makeleio*, *Stobos*, *Eleftheros Kosmos*, and *Eleftheri Ora* (Figure 5), as was mentioned in previous reports.



Figure 5: Front page of *Eleftheri Ora*, 16 October, 2018. In the upper part it is written, “Hardcore Headscarves of Islam Are Shocking Piraeus”.

However, other newspapers like *Dimocratia*, which belongs to the right-wing spectrum, have hosted views and articles which are openly Islamophobic. Among the authors of such articles is Failos Kranidiotis, whose party *Nea Dexia* was mentioned in the above section on politics. Throughout the year, *Dimocratia* published news and articles echoing views against Islam, immigration, multiculturalism, and

33. For more details and comments visit the link of the deliberation at: <http://www.opengov.gr/ypepth/?p=4141#comments>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

arguing that politicians in Greece should learn from the lessons in other countries, implying the terrorist attacks that have taken place during the last years. In addition, the articles argue that the integration of Muslims in Greece and Europe is impossible and that the mosque the government decided to build in Athens is an endeavour that should not take place for cultural and for security reasons.³⁴

Apart from the media that belong to the right and the extreme-right ideological and political spectrum, one can also find Islamophobic opinion pieces and articles in other newspapers of liberal and/or centre-right background like the news site *liberal.gr* and the newspapers *Athens Voice* and *Ta Nea*. The fact is that these media include articles of specific authors who could be considered as important figures in the Islamophobia network; for example, the former politician and minister Andreas Andrianopoulos, and the author Soti Triandafyllou.

Book publications with Islamophobic content are another issue. An example that could be mentioned is a book published by an extreme-right publishing house Longhi (Spear), written by Christos Bisdas, a columnist of the extreme-right newspaper *Eleftheros Kosmos* mentioned above. The book (Figure 6) included articles published in the newspaper under the title “The Attack of Islam in Europe: Terrorism, Illegal Immigration, Colonisation. Is There a Solution?” and was published in the publisher’s new series titled “Modern Nationalist Thinking”.



Figure 6: The front cover of the book by C. Bisdas.

34. Eleni Papadopoulou, “Je suis Charlie: The Massacre of 11 Innocent People and the... Top Response against the Bloodshed”, *Dimocratia*, 11 January 2018, <https://www.dimokratianews.gr/content/81911/je-suis-charlie>, (Access date: 3 September 2019). Eleni Papadopoulou, “France and Islam”, *Dimocratia*, 22 March 2018, <https://www.dimokratianews.gr/content/84371/gallia-kai-islam>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Justice System

When it comes to the justice system there are a few decisions that are directly or indirectly related to the issue of Islamophobia. As was mentioned in the section on education, a series of reactions erupted from the part of theologians and clergy members, because of the new religious textbooks, which included information on other religions apart from the Orthodox Christianity that until now held the monopoly. A number of parents, bishops, and religious associations appealed to the Council of State against the Ministry of Education and the new textbooks. In 2018, the court published its decisions (926/2018 and 660/2018) which considered the new textbooks as unconstitutional. Among other excuses, Article 3 of the Greek Constitution which states that the dominant religion in Greece is the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ was cited. However, the court's decision was accepted with criticism and was described as extremely conservative bringing back the necessity for the amendment of the Greek Constitution. On its part, the Ministry of Education replied that the content of the school textbooks is the state's responsibility and that it will proceed with the reformation of the educational system, including the religious textbooks, as planned.

In May 2018, the trial of a well-known author who wrote an Islamophobic text after the attacks of November 2015 in Paris took place in Athens after a lawsuit of the Greek Helsinki Monitor.³⁵ The trial was to take place initially during 2017 but it was postponed. According to the charges she went on trial for violating the anti-racist law (4285/2014) and some 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 she has the right of freedom of speech or that she said nothing wrong because Islam is indeed a problem and not a moderate religion. The court acquitted her on all charges, a decision that, on the one hand, was considered as a victory of freedom of speech and opinion, and, on the other, as a victory of racist and Islamophobic discourse.³⁶ What was also interesting and publicly commented on was the oration of the public prosecutor in which she argued that “the opinions the accused expressed are similar to the views that passed through our minds after the attack in Bataclan [Paris, 2015]. Her text is just an expression of opinion and it is impossible to satisfy the burden of proof that

35. The Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM), founded in 1993, monitors, publishes, lobbies, and litigates on human and minority rights and anti-discrimination issues in Greece and, from time to time, in the Balkans. It also monitors Greek and, when opportunity arises, Balkan media for stereotypes and hate speech. For information see: <https://greekhelsinki.wordpress.com/about/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

36. “Soti Triandafyllou Was Declared Innocent”, *Protagon*, 2 May 2018, <https://www.protagon.gr/epikairota/athwa-i-swti-triantafyllou-gia-tin-ypothesi-ypokinisis-misous-enantion-mousoulmanwn-44341612383>, (Access date: 3 September 2019). “Soti Triandafyllou Was Declared Innocent: A Great Victory for Freedom of Speech”, *Athens Voice*, 2 May 2018, https://www.athensvoice.gr/greece/439421_athoa-i-soti-triantafylloy-mia-megali-niki-gia-tin-elytheria-toy-logoy, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

a crime was committed”.³⁷ As some argued, such an oration coming from a judge proves that Islamophobia runs deep in Greek society on many different levels - something that needs to be addressed.³⁸

Finally, in September 2018, the Greek Helsinki Monitor sued Thanos Tzimeros, who was mentioned above for his Islamophobic views,³⁹ based on the anti-racist legislation, because of a public comment he made on his Facebook page arguing that just being Muslim is a crime because of the violent character and the brutality of Islam. In addition, in the same comment he uploaded an older article (2016) he had written supporting his argumentation against Islam and Muslims and asking for the penal persecution of Muslims just because they are Muslims and because, in his view, actually ‘Muslims act like a gang with the Koran functioning as its statutes’. Based on that, he argued that Muslims should be arrested and persecuted because they believe and follow the Koran which includes orders for the suppression of women, robbery of infidels, etc. Authorities, he argued, should arrest Muslims even if they have never actually committed a crime.

Internet

The Internet and social media, in particular, have been a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobic views and the expression of hatred of Islam and Muslims. While it is difficult to monitor the whole field in a systematic manner, similarly to the 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 kinds of views, ideological texts, messages, and comments are primarily used in order to cultivate and impose the fear of Islam and 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.com/> and <http://www.antepithesi.gr/>); <https://ethnikismos.net/> 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 the study of Turkish history society and Greek-Turkish relations, <http://nikosxeiladakis.gr/> in which a special section dedicated to Islam can be found; and, of course, all the websites of the newspapers mentioned in the media section of the report which belong to the extreme-right (<http://www.stoxos.gr/>, <http://www.makeleio.gr/>, <https://www.elora.gr/portall/>, <http://www.elkosmos.gr/>). Apart from

37. Elli Zotou, “Soti Triandafyllou kai gerontas pastitsios”, Avgi, 4 May 2018, <https://www.avgi.gr/article/10808/8876113/e-sote-triantafyllou-kai-o-gerontas-pastitsios>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

38. Danai Kiskira-Bartsoka, “Panagiotis Dimitras: Islamophobia Runs Greek Society, Intelligentsia and Justice”, Documento, 2 May 2018, https://www.documentonews.gr/article/panagiwths-dhmhtras-h-islamofobia-diatrex-ei-thn-ellhnikh-koinwnia-dianohsh-kai-dikaioynh?fbclid=IwAR3VPmBJJDHr5SO_lst6a94ssoJ8BFj0MPBV-v9jH_pWUp_b8qlu9xElncMw#.Wunx7y3kymw.facebook, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

39. Panayote Dimitras, “Lawsuit against Thanos Tzimeros for Islamophobic and Blasphemous Post”, Racistcrimes-watch.wordpress, 5 September 2018, <https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com/2018/09/05/1-650/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

the above, one can find blogs with Islamophobic content and images, arguing that Greece and especially Athens face an invasion by illegal immigrants who are mainly Muslims, deteriorating its population's synthesis,⁴⁰ and that the Koran is a source of hatred and Greeks need to fight Islam before it is too late for the Greek society and the Greek civilization.⁴¹ Finally, there are many Facebook and Twitter accounts, both personal pages and groups, which reproduce messages, videos, and texts against immigrants and refugees and, of course, against multiculturalism, Islam, and Muslims and the construction of the mosque in Athens (Figure 6).



Figure 6: "The mosque will cost 91 million [Euros] to the Greek population. No to the Islamic mosque."⁴² The photo is by the Facebook account of a group against the Islamic Mosque, 31 July 2018.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Some of the central figures in the Islamophobia network have already been mentioned in previous sections, e.g. Thanos Tzimeros in politics or Nikos Heiladakis in the Internet section. Another central figure, however, is Andreas Andrianopoulos, a self-proclaimed liberal and former minister with the right-wing party Nea Dimocratia (New Democracy). During the last years, he has been writing articles, books, and making lots of comments on Facebook and mainly on Twitter openly expressing his

40. Ion, "The Deterioration of Athens", prwthentekatu.blogspot.gr, 2 June 2018, <http://prwthentekatu.blogspot.com/2018/06/blog-post.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

41. "The Koran: A Source of Hatred!", panagiotisarvanitis.blogspot.gr, 19 January 2018, http://panagiotisarvanitis.blogspot.com/2016/01/blog-post_60.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019). "Fight Islam before It Is Too Late!", panagiotisarvanitis.blogspot.gr, 30 March 2018, http://panagiotisarvanitis.blogspot.com/2016/03/blog-post_67.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

42. Oxi Tzami, Facebook, 31 July 2018.

anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim views and suggestions. His main arguments are that Islam is monolithic and violent by its nature and concepts such as ‘moderate Muslims’ do not exist, adding that western values are not the Sharia law, halal, and the burqa.⁴³ Commenting on the withdrawal of Angela Merkel from her party leadership and criticising her for her immigration policy, he wrote,

Hold back the Muslim invasion, which openly now undermines social cohesion and smooth economic growth - contrary to the unrealistic opinions of the Open Society Foundation mechanisms, claiming that supposedly the security systems are being saved from collapse and the gaps in manpower are being filled.⁴⁴

In addition, in 2018, he published his second book on Islam,⁴⁵ under the title *Islam of Our Future* (Figure 7) reproducing most of his argumentation regarding immigration, violence in Islam, and multiculturalism. From the front cover alone one can understand its Islamophobic approach.



Figure 7: The front cover of Andrianopoulos's book from Epikentro publishing house.

43. Andreas Andrianopoulos, “Our Values Are Not Halal, Burqa and Sharia”, Liberal.gr, 17 September 2018, <https://www.liberal.gr/arthro/220200/apopsi/arhra/Axies-mas-den-einai-to-chalal-i-mpourka-kai-i-saria.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019). Andreas Andrianopoulos, “Dangerous Naivety”, Liberal.gr, 11 July 2018, <https://www.liberal.gr/arthro/212206/apopsi/arhra/epikinduni-afeleia.html>, (Access date: 20 November 2018).

44. Andreas Andrianopoulos, “Goodbye Mrs Merkel... forever!”, Ta Nea, 3 November 2018, <https://www.tanea.gr/print/2018/11/03/opinions/good-bye-lfk-merkel-lfgia-panta/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

45. His first book was published in 2015 by the same publishing house under the title *Islam's Rage and the Fanatics of Jihad*.

Another field where one can find Islamophobic views is that of the Orthodox Church of Greece. Clarifying from the very beginning that the Church on the whole and the Holy Synod have never taken an official Islamophobic or anti-Muslim decision, it goes without saying that several Church figures have overtly expressed such views during the last years. One of them - and the main figure - is Amvrosios, the metropolitan of Kalavryta, who in his public addresses to his flock or through his own blog reproduces such discourses. In one such text, after arguing that Greece is losing its Orthodox Christian character because of the left-wing government and that it is under attack and has actually been conquered, he adds,

In Votanikos Tsipras's government demolishes an Orthodox temple in order to build using state money a mosque for the Islamists! (sic) [...] As far as Muslim immigrants are concerned in our country, apart from the desecration of the holy symbols of our holy Orthodoxy we have also other sad phenomena like robberies, muggings, murders, immorality, etc.⁴⁶

A second metropolitan that usually reproduces such discourses is the Metropolitan of Piraeus Serafeim. In his texts and rhetoric, he continuously argues that the Koran and Islam, in general, reproduce and propagate raw violence and that Greece had such an experience during the Ottoman rule.⁴⁷ While such views are not representative of the Orthodox Church they prove that Islamophobia exists within its circles. This is also supported by the reactions of larger parts of the clergy to the new religious textbooks mentioned in the education section. Furthermore, there are other religious groups like the True Orthodox Christians, who follow the old calendar,⁴⁸ that have been also expressing anti-immigrant and openly Islamophobic views, are against the construction of the mosque in Athens, and participate in demonstrations on the issue together with members of Golden Dawn (Figure 8).

46. It is important to mention that in his texts he makes use of fake news mainly reproduced by extreme-right media like *Eleftheri Ora* or Golden Dawn's website. Amvrosios, "Greece Is Changing Character! Everything Changes towards the Worst!", Mokka.blogspot, 15 October 2018, https://mkka.blogspot.com/2018/10/blog-post_15.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

47. "Is It Possible to Have Misunderstood the Koran Regarding Jihad?", *Metropolis of Piraeus*, 28 December 2017.

48. True Orthodox Christians (TOC) are recognised as orthodox but are considered as ultra conservative and even exhibiting fundamentalist attitudes. They are organised in a separate Orthodox Church hierarchy with their own Bishops and clergy who are not public employees as the hierarchy and clergy of the Greek Orthodox Church (GOC). There is a second, parallel and independent, Orthodox Church that neither receives official state support nor is represented within the Greek state. Their relationship with the official GOC is antagonistic at the level of the religious institution and hierarchy, but their temples and rituals are identical to those of the GOC with the exception of the religious calendar they use. The TOC use the "old" Julian calendar instead of the "new" Gregorian calendar which has been adopted in 1923. From 1924 onward a part of the orthodox clergy hierarchy and population in Greece refused to follow the new calendar and gradually formed the Church of the TOC of Greece.



Figure 8: Photo from the rally in Votanikos with the participation of the True Orthodox Christians.⁴⁹

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessments and Initiatives

The three state policies/decisions that could be considered as important in confronting Islamophobia and anti-Muslim hatred in 2018 were the following: First, the new curriculum and religious textbooks introduced in 2016 on a pilot level in selected schools continued. Despite the Council of State's decision and the reactions from fundamentalist groups and the Orthodox Church, the ministry seems determined to proceed. Second, the programme of the Ministry of Education about the incorporation of refugee children continued to be implemented in 2018 in various regions of Greece despite again local reactions and obstacles, which were fewer compared to the previous years. Third, during 2018, the preparations (construction work amendments, legislation on the mosque's board and internal regulation, call for applications for the mosque's imam) for the functioning of the official mosque proceeded, although, in truth, the whole process moves very slowly. It is expected that it will be ready by the end of April 2019 at the latest, according to government officials.

With regard to the media, the European project Respect Words⁵⁰ that was launched in 2017 about the way journalists should cover issues related to immigrants and ethnic or religious minorities throughout Europe ended in 2018. 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 reporting on Muslim communities, which was created in 2017, but printed and published in 2018. Adding to the above, in 2018, the European

49. Evangelos Lagos, 5 September 2018.

50. The project was run by the Andalusian Association of Municipal and Community Broadcasters for Radio and Television (EMA-RTV) as its leader. For more information see: <https://www.respectwords.org/en/project/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

project Counter Islamophobia Kit (CIK), including a partner from Greece, continued its research. The project produced 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. In September, the project organised a half-day conference in Athens discussing its results and the issue of Islamophobia in Greece and abroad.

Finally, in 2018, a new European project started under the name “Mutual Understanding Respect Learning (MURAL)”. The main goals of the project are increasing tolerance and respect on issues of faith, religious convictions, and national origin; promoting the values of pluralism and democratic societies; fostering inter-state collaboration, exchange of knowledge and good practices. This project targets all the above towards the confrontation of anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and the lack of tolerance that parts of Europe face nowadays. As part of the project a workshop was organised in November in Athens with the participation of representatives and members of the Muslim and Jewish communities of Athens, as well as teachers, journalists, and civil society actors.⁵¹

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

All the available data with regard to Islamophobia in Greece for 2018 shows that significant changes have not taken place compared to the previous year. Islamophobia is primarily manifested in the public discourse and the political programmes of parties and politicians mainly of the extreme-right, among some higher clergy members of the Orthodox Church of Greece, and in different platforms of the Greek media, with the Internet and social media being a fertile ground for the reproduction of Islamophobia. However, it is important to mention that Islamophobia is found also among self-proclaimed political and/or economic liberals and not only in the extremes. There are, of course, political parties, politicians and anti-racist groups mainly from the Left opposing racist and Islamophobic discourses and discriminatory practices.

Among the main issues that need to be addressed with regard to monitoring and confronting Islamophobia are the following:

- First of all, a need that still hasn't been met in order to confront Islamophobia is the establishment of an official observatory mechanism that will monitor and record Islamophobic incidents on both the levels of discourse and physical attacks. Towards this direction a first step would be the collaboration of existing state mechanisms and civil society networks in order to achieve a better level of Islamophobia monitoring.

51. For more information see: <http://hellenicplatform.org/mutual-understanding-respect-learning-mural/#>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

- Second, the legal mechanism in Greece is not effectively tackling Islamophobia and the Greek law is not robust enough to discourage Islamophobic actions and more specifically hate speech.
- Third, the Orthodox Church of Greece should not only publicly disapprove of its metropolitans who insist on using Islamophobic discourse, but also effectively 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 and the 14th century, knowledge about the fundamentals of Islam is highly limited, which provides another space for Islamophobia to flourish inside the Greek society. In this respect, the new religious textbooks' broader distribution during 2018, which include more information about Islam, is 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; a platform is necessary where views of Muslims will be taken fully into consideration by Greek decision makers in Greece's fight against Islamophobia.

Overall, two positive parameters are that the government, despite the existing gaps, could not be considered as hostile to Islam and Muslims, and that the initiatives of civil society, academia, and media organisations through the implementation of relevant projects could play a crucial role in the study and confrontation of Islamophobia.

Chronology

- **18.01.2018:** The Muslim Association of Greece received a threatening phone call from Crypteia stating that they are a group that burns, hits, and kills immigrants, mainly Muslims, and that they are a target.
- **04.03.2018:** A demonstration in Syntagma Square against the new religious school textbooks organised by theologians, Orthodox Church figures, and other associations.
- **22.03.2018:** Arson attack by Crypteia against the offices of the Afghan Migrant and Refugee Community of Greece, in central Athens.
- **22.04.2018:** Attack against Afghan immigrants and refugees gathered in the main square of Lesvos resulting in 28 injuries.

- **02.05.2018:** The author Soti Triandafyllou was declared innocent by a court in Athens for his racist and Islamophobic text.
- **01.07.2018:** Defamation of outer wall of the Iasmos Mosque with an anti-Turkish slogan in Western Thrace (Rhodopi Prefecture).
- **05.09.2018:** A demonstration organised by Golden Dawn against the mosque of Athens in Votanikos.
- **05.09.2018:** A lawsuit by the Racist Crime Watch against Thanos Tzimeros for uploading an Islamophobic text on his Facebook page.
- **06.09.2018:** A girl was attacked in Lesvos because she was wearing a headscarf although she was not a Muslim.
- **22.09.2018:** A half-day conference in Athens organised by the Counter Islamophobia Kit project discussing the results of its research and the issue of Islamophobia in Greece and abroad.
- **10.10.2018:** A racist verbal attack by a police officer in Lesvos against an elderly woman from Syria.
- **22-26.11.2018:** A workshop in Athens with the participation of representatives and members of the Muslim and Jewish communities of Athens, as well as teachers, journalists, and civil society actors organised by the Mutual Understanding Respect Learning project.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
HUNGARY
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

There is an increase in xenophobic attitudes towards Muslims over the past year, fuelled in large part by the April 2018 countrywide elections campaign in which migrants and migration were central issues of discourse. Located along the old 'Balkan Route,' Hungary occupies a key location for migrants seeking asylum in Europe. Over the course of the elections campaign (2018), the issue of migrants became conflated with a growing fear of Muslims and a particularly hostile reception within the transit zones along the border for those seeking to make asylum claims. As a result of well-planned and funded attacks on migrants (often depicted as Muslim) using media platforms and billboards, there has been a reported spike in open hostility towards anyone deemed to be Muslim in appearance.

Figures on crime in Hungary are reported and collected in the Unified System of Criminal Statistics of the Investigative Authorities and of Public Prosecution. The majority of cases either remain unreported or are not investigated as hate crimes since Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racially motivated attacks lack legal recognition. This makes it difficult to separate explicitly Islamophobic attacks from those targeting the Roma population. Judith Sargentini's Report for the EU provides ample assessments of NGOs and international organizations that show clear evidence of the diminishing space for civil society organizations, and the serious lack of public access to free information. The declining desire to associate with 'European values' has led to a growing rift within the European People's Party, where the government party had previously found its strongest allies.

Sargentini's Report reiterated a long list of its deep concerns including restrictions on the following: applied rule of law; academic freedom; human rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees; women's and gender protections; rights of minority groups; and the functioning of an independent judiciary system.

Összefoglaló

A korábbi évekhez képest is nőtt a muszlimokkal szembeni, nyílt idegenellenesség Magyarországon, nagymértékben a FIDESZ-kormány 2018-as, migrációellenes választási kampányának következményeként.

Magyarország 2015-ben kulcsfontosságú pozíciót töltött be az Európában menedéket keresők „balkáni útvonalán”, csupán néhány hónap alatt rekordszámú menedékkérő haladt át az ország területén. A 2015 elején indított, jól megtervezett és bőségesen finanszírozott kormányzati kommunikációs kampány nyíltan a menekültek és a muszlimok ellen irányult, összemosva a bevándorlást a terrorizmussal. A menekült- és bevándorlásellenes narratíva olyannyira sikeresnek bizonyult, hogy a FIDESZ 2018-as választási kampányának is meghatározó eleme volt, a Magyarországon regisztrált menedékkérelmek tartósan alacsony száma ellenére.

A gyűlöletkeltő kampány jelentősen hozzájárult a kormány népszerűségének növekedéséhez, és erősen fokozta a menekültektől való félelem és az általános idegenellenes attitűdök elterjedését.

A szabad sajtó bedarálása, a civil szervezetek megfélemlítése és a demokrácia leépítése következményeként a kormányzati narratívával szemben megfogalmazódó kritikák és ellenvélemények nem tudnak szélesebb közönséghez eljutni. Az erősödő Európa-ellenes

retorika és a kormány nyílt szembenállása az európai értékekkel mára már trendet teremtett az EU-n belül is. Ezen folyamatokat a Judith Sargentini európai parlamenti képviselő által összeállított és nevével fémjelzett jelentés, valamint hazai és nemzetközi civil szervezetek beszámolóí is részletesen tárgyalják. A riportok beszámolnak a jogállamiságot, az akadémiai szabadságot, a menedékkérők, nők és kisebbségek jogait, valamint a független igazságszolgáltatást erodáló folyamatokról.

Jelen riport a magyar kormány bevándorlásellenes politikai narratíváját, az arra épülő választási kampány fő motívumait, illetve a médiában megjelenő propaganda-üzeneteket és azok következményeit foglalja össze. A beszámolóban civil szervezetek képviselőivel és a magyarországi muszlim közösségek tagjaival készült interjúkat is felhasználtunk.

Country Profile

Country: Hungary

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary representative democracy

Ruling Parties: FIDESZ (Fidesz – Hungarian Civic Alliance) (governs in coalition with the micro-party KDNP [Christian Democratic People's Party])

Opposition Parties: Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik), Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Democratic Coalition (DK), Politics Can Be Different (LMP), Dialogue for Hungary (PM)

Last Elections: 8 April, 2018: FIDESZ-KDNP (49.27%); Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (19.06%); Hungarian Socialist Party and Dialogue for Hungary (MSZP-P) (11.91%); Politics Can Be Different (LMP) (7.06%); Democratic Coalition (DK) (5.38%).

Total Population: 9,778,371

Major Languages: Hungarian

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Central Statistical Office 2011 census data: Catholics (39.0 %), Other Christianity (15%), Judaism (0.1%), Islam (0.1%), Unaffiliated (18.2%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 5,579 Central Statistical Office 2011 Census / 30-50.000

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Organization of Muslims in Hungary (*Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza*), Hungarian Islamic Community (*Magyar Iszlám Közösség*)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: The Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, Menedék Association for Migrants, Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Amnesty International Hungary

Far Right Parties: Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarorszáért Mozgalom*), Our Homeland Movement (*Mi Hazánk Mozgalom*)

Far Right Movements: Generation Identity (*Identitás Generáció*), The Army of Outlaws (*Betyársereg*), Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (*Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*), Hungarian Self-Defense Movement (*Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom*), Power and Determination (*Erő és Elszántság*), Hungarian Legion (*Légió Hungária*)

Far Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No

- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Hungary does not have an extensive community of Muslims, and so the rise in the rhetoric of Islamophobia is completely at odds with the current numbers of migrants or settled Muslims living in Hungary. In this sense, Muslims are a virtually invisible (and yet highly visible) minority of the Hungarian population. The 2011 census data indicates that there were 5,579 persons who identified as Muslim, and of these the majority followed Sunni Islam. Institutions that support Muslims are small in number with a few mosques in the capital of Budapest. Before their status was officially revoked by the government in 2012, the Islamic Church (IE – *Iszlám Egyház*) was the largest Muslim organization in Hungary. Now the two prominent organizations that cater to the Muslim population in Hungary are the Hungarian Islamic Community (MIK – *Magyar Iszlám Közösség*) and the Organization of Muslims in Hungary (MME – *Magyarországi Muszlimok Egyháza*).¹ Of these, the latter largely represents foreign-born Muslims, while the former is mainly dominated by Hungarian-born converts and is better represented in the media. At the federal level, the leading representative organization is the Islamic Council of Hungary (MIT – *Magyarországi Iszlám Tanács*), which is an umbrella organization jointly created by the MIK and the MME in 2011 and recognized as one of the country's thirty-two churches by parliament in 2012.²

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Islamophobia is present in the daily political discourse, and it is also a part of a broader and growing xenophobic attitude towards non-Hungarians fueled by the state media channels. General knowledge on the religion of Islam is largely superficial. Islamophobia as a discursive element in Hungarian political discourse draws upon an embedded anti-Semitic and anti-Roma attitude, with a growing focus on the figure of the *migrant*.³ Ahead of the April 2018 election, a rampantly xenophobic discourse targeted the spectre of Muslim migrants 'invading' Hungary with criminal intent to take over parts of the country.⁴ Given the illegalization of providing

1. "Általános Kérdések", Iszlám, <http://iszlam.com/kerdes-valasz/altalanos-kerdesek/item/2093-magyarorszagon-hany-fore-teheto-az-iszlam-hivokszama-es-a-tobbseg-siita-vagy-szunnita>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

2. "Nyilvános a Lista az Elismert Egyházakról", Hvg, 23 April 2012, http://hvg.hu/itthon/20120423_elismert_egyhazak/, (Access date: 3 September 2019) cited in: Zsolt Sereghy, "Islamophobia in Hungary: National Report 2016," Islamophobiaeurope, <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/HUNGARY.pdf/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

3. Ayse Ceyhan and Anastasia Tsoukala, "The Securitization of Migration in Western Societies: Ambivalent Discourses and Policies," *Alternatives*, 27 (2002), pp. 21-39.

4. Shawn Walker, "Ghettos and No-Go Zones': Hungary's Far Right Fuels Fear Ahead of Vote," *The Guardian*, 28 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/28/hungary-election-viktor-orban-far-right-stokes-migration-fears-far-from-border/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

information or resources to or for migrants, this has further driven underground organizations such as Migszol Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary. On 4 April, 2018, they blogged a dire notice titled, “Desperate Times Call for New Measures,” announcing their mission to support migrants based on information collected with individuals “on the ground”. They argued that the FIDESZ-controlled propaganda and legal restrictions mean they can no longer gain access to detained asylum seekers. The blog makes clear that suspending their work was the only course of action that protected the personal safety of both the migrants and the organizers.⁵

Islamophobia is most commonly framed within the context of the securitization of migration where the threat to the Hungarian people is three-fold: physical insecurity (threats of terrorism, rape, and violent male masses), economic insecurity (“they will take our jobs”), and the cultural homogeneity and national identity of the people (‘mixing’ of race, religions, and cultures as a threat). In part, a new umbrella concept of “new security challenges” has created the precedent for all European governments to self-select refugees on the basis of protecting their population.⁶ Increasingly, central and eastern European states like Hungary have reconstructed humanitarian migrants as a threat to the culture, economy, and security of nation-states.⁷

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The number of verbal and physical attacks against Muslims in Hungary are on the rise, as are reports of abuses towards migrants at the border.⁸ Hungarian border hunters are given licence to seriously harm asylum seekers in order to block their passage to Hungary. Doctors in the surrounding region have recorded a spike in cases of physical harm and abuse they are treating resulting in injuries inflicted at Hungary’s border wall.⁹ Sultan Sulok, the president of the Organization of Muslims in Hungary claims that the members of his Mosque of Muslims are suffering physical and property-based vandalism attacks as a direct result of the political rhetoric focused on Muslims. Since there is a fear of reporting incidents, those interviewed for *The National* stated that in the lead-up to the election, individual members had suffered physical and verbal assaults, including women having their hijabs ripped off in pub-

5. Migszol Migrant Solidarity Group of Hungary, “Desperate Times Call for New Measures,” Migszol, 24 April 2018, <http://www.migszol.com/blog/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

6. Georgios Karyotis, “Securitization of Migration in Greece: Process, Motives, and Implications”, *International Political Sociology*, 6:4 (2012), pp. 390-408.

7. András Szalai and Gabriella Göbl, “Securitizing Migration in Contemporary Hungary”, *Working paper, CEU Center for EU Enlargement Studies*, 30 November 2015, pp. 8-9.

8. Petra Bárd, “What Is Behind the Low Numbers of Hate Crimes in Hungary?” Newsletter of the European Society of Criminology, December 2017, <https://escnewsletter.org/newsletter/2017-1/what-behind-low-number-hate-crimes-hungary/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

9. Joe Wallen, “Hungary Is the Worst: Refugees Become Punch Bag under PM Viktor Orbán”, 13 July 2018, *The Independent*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/hungary-refugees-immigration-viktor-orban-racism-border-fence-a8446046.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

lic and being threatened at knifepoint while on a tram in Budapest¹⁰. Andras Kováts, director of Menedék Hungarian Association for Migrants, claims that migrant Muslims who arrive in Hungary are unaware what kind of hostile reception awaits them on the job market, including workplace-based conflicts that can potentially arise.¹¹

In interviews within Muslim communities, most reported a rise in the number of verbal attacks against women and girls in particular, since those wearing a headscarf or head-covering are the most visibly identifiable Muslims. Participant responses demonstrate that there are a number of different kinds of assaults that regularly take place, including physical incidents as well as the more common acts of spitting, slapping, and shoving of individuals in public spaces. It remains unclear the extent to which these are being recorded and taken seriously by the police forces. The number of attacks against Muslim-affiliated institutions or those organizations that are deemed to be supporting the ‘migrant crisis’ are not officially reported for 2017-2018, although staff and community members demonstrated a lack of trust in the police and in reaching out to the authorities for assistance.¹² A Central European University Master’s student reported, “You know, it is not every day that I feel something bad against me from the people in Budapest, but sometimes when I am waiting for the metro alone, I feel afraid. Somebody has spit on me before – it was a Hungarian man who said “go home, you Muslim” and I was surprised because how can he tell I am Muslim?!”¹³ As we discussed the incident, the student believed she was profiled because of her darker skin and her accent, since there were no other visible markers identifying her as being of Muslim faith.

Employment

In our discussions with legal consultants and a Human Resources manager who specializes in providing support for third-country nationals, both reported that xenophobia in general was an issue. In particular, recent Muslim migrants are unfairly assumed to have language limitations that impede their ability to be employed. Of the select few Muslim veiled women that these experts had helped over the past few years, most had sought self-employment over disclosing their religion to an employer in Hungary. Women have reported to the legal consultant that dress and prayer are very sensitive issues in the workplace, where appearing to be ‘conservative’ and praying in the open can lead to discrimination in the place of work. Most women

10. Paul Peachey, “Hungary’s Muslim Fear-Fallout Due to Anti-Islamic Rhetoric”, *The National*, 10 March 2018, <https://www.thenational.ae/world/europe/hungary-s-muslims-fear-fallout-from-anti-islam-rhetoric-1.711823/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

11. Anonymous interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, Budapest, 19 December 2018.

12. János Káldos, Napi Iszlám, <http://www.napiiszlam.hu/>, Interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, Budapest, 19 December 2018.

13. Anonymous interview conducted by Nadia Jones-Gailani, Budapest, 6 December 2018.

admitted to hiding in the staircase of the office building to pray during the workday.¹⁴ Overall, the Muslims that have been supported by these experts related their experiences in ‘coming-out’ to their colleagues in a similar confessional model to ‘coming out’ for persons announcing any non-normative sexual identity. According to the HR consultant who wishes to remain unnamed, it is often not the cultural differences that lead to conflict but rather the phenomenon of ‘foreign language fear’. Since religious affiliation cannot be legally probed during a job interview, it is often an accent or a way of dressing that can codify the expected racial elements of ‘Muslim’ for the employer. Despite there being no official restrictions according to race or religion on labor employment according to the Hungarian law, there nevertheless exists an unspoken discriminatory practice of keeping visible Muslims out of the workforce.¹⁵

Education

The Hungarian National Curriculum demonstrates a lack of comprehensive insight on the religion of Islam. An overview of the curriculum suggests that it remains Eurocentric and focused inwardly on developments and histories of the surrounding region. The Association of History Teachers’ lobbied for amendments to the above, and since 2013 there have been mandatory religious studies included as part of the curriculum in primary school. One example of misinformation provided as part of the curriculum is from a chapter of the Geography 8 textbook published by the Institute for Educational Research and Development. In one section focused on Italy, the so-called migrant crisis is portrayed as a European project to keep out migrants and maintain the safety of those inside of the EU. Its key message: “Italy is one of the founders of the EU...Italy is fighting hard with the enormous flow of refugees. There are 4,300,000 refugees in Italy at the moment. People coming from Africa try to reach Europe through the country. Authorities have established detention camps for the immigrants.” It not only overestimates the number of refugees in Italy but also frames the issue of detention camps as a necessary part of securing borders.¹⁶

Politics

During the election campaign of 2018, the Hungarian Islam Community, the Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, and the Hungarian Muslim Church expressed their fear of the potential consequences of the government’s anti-Muslim and anti-migration campaign.¹⁷ In March 2018, the Hungarian Islam Community pub-

14. Anonymous interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, email correspondence received on 7 January 2019.

15. Anonymous interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, Budapest, 19 December 2018.

16. Josef Spiak, “This Is Why Refugee Floods Became the Most Important Information about Italy in the Eighth Geography”, 24.hu, 6 February 2018, <https://24.hu/kozelet/2018/02/06/ezert-lett-a-menekularadat-a-legfontosabb-tudnivalo-olaszorszagrol-a-nyolcadikos-foldrajzkonyvben/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

17. Balázs Bakó, Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, Interview conducted by Gabi Göbl, Budapest, 12 December 2018.

lished a statement through the National Press Agency to condemn the political fear-mongering election campaign against Muslims:

We know that there is an ongoing election campaign but how is it connected to a world religion and a registered church? In the past hundred years, Muslim people were not the ones sending Jews to Auschwitz, they did not commit the Roma murders, and they did not commit terrorist attacks. Besides our center in Zugló [ed.14th district], there are 11 mosques in districts lead by FIDESZ. We are asking everyone to stop playing the Muslim card and stop the incitement. For all atrocities committed in the present and in the future against us will be on those responsible for hate-mongering – we are ready to take such cases to international forums and courts. There is freedom of religion in Hungary, we expect the government to act accordingly and the solidarity of society, churches, and political parties. We refuse to participate in throwing mud.¹⁸

The figures below indicate a clear correlation between the far right poster campaigns that promote a hostile attitude towards those seeking asylum. Figure 1 shows UKIP leader (2016) Nigel Farage standing in front of a Brexit campaign poster promoting ‘Leave (EU)’ and the second picture has reused the same image in Hungary as part of the FIDESZ anti-migrant election campaign. As the images indicate, the same picture can tell a similar message in both cases: UKIP and FIDESZ right-wing support for migration restrictions of a ‘flood’ of what are assumed to be Muslim migrants.



Figure 1: Nigel Farage standing in front of a UKIP ‘Leave’ promotional bus.
Figure 2: UKIP image is repurposed and blanketed across Hungary as part of the FIDESZ anti-migrant election campaign.

During the April 2018 elections, the governing party (FIDESZ) used a number of tactics to ensure a favorable majority by targeting famed Hungarian-American financier and philanthropist George Soros, and his so-called liberal army. A month before the election, PM Viktor Orbán claimed, “There are two paths ahead for Hungary to choose from... We will either have a national government, in which case we will not

¹⁸ MTI, “According to the Hungarian Islamic Community There Is Hate Speech against Muslims”, HVG.hu, 22 March 2018, https://hvg.hu/itthon/20180322_Magyar_Iszlam_Kozosseg_Nem_kivanunk_reszt_venni_a_politikai_sardobalasan, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

become an immigrant country, or the people of George Soros form a government and Hungary will become an immigrant country.”¹⁹ The government’s attacks on all Soros-funded organizations in Hungary, including the Open Society Foundation (OSF) and Central European University (CEU), have dominated the public campaign and stigmatized all smaller and subsidiary organizations that support Soros open society values or in some way assist migrants in Hungary. The OSF has already relocated to Berlin out of fear for the safety of the organization and its employees, and the CEU declared in December 2017 that it would officially begin the process of moving the university to a safer location in Vienna (as of the 2019 academic year).²⁰

During the elections campaign, there was also a widespread defamation campaign against Gábor Vona, the leader of the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary Party. The FIDESZ campaign used citizen information to phone Hungarians with claims stating that Vona had converted to Islam. In addition, flyers were distributed that made fake allegations that Vona wanted to build a mosque in the town of Miskolc, in a working class neighborhood. Those responsible also spread a video of his visit to Turkey where he allegedly confessed to his ties to Islam.²¹

Media

State-run media dominates the discourse on anti-migration sentiments and is the driving force behind the anti-Muslim and openly Islamophobic rhetoric in Hungary. Among the most prevalent government-supporting channels which regularly report on “Muslim community groups” are: Origo, Magyar Idők, Hír TV, Echo Tv, and 888.hu. The named media outlets typically depict Muslims as having a hand in terror-related incidents, using their scope and authority to fuel a fake news campaign that draws attention to the securitization of the country.

Criminal acts committed by refugees or people with immigrant background are overrepresented and hyped up in the media even though these make up a very small number of overall crimes committed in Hungary. Instances of sexual violence committed by individuals with migrant backgrounds are widely reported by government-friendly media sources whereas statistics about women who are sexually assaulted in Hungary barely receive any public attention.²²

19. “Hungary Will Either Have a National Government, Or George Soros’s People Will Form a Government”, Miniszterelnok, 2 March 2018, <http://www.miniszterelnok.hu/hungary-will-either-have-a-national-government-or-george-soros-people-will-form-a-government/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

20. Elizabeth Redden, “Central European University Forced out of Hungary”, Inside Higher Ed, 4 December 2018, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/12/04/central-european-university-forced-out-hungary-moving-vienna>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

21. Kovács Bálint, “Na, mi Volt ma Három Kormánypárti lap Címlapján?” Index, 28 March 2018, https://index.hu/belfold/2018/valasztas/2018/03/28/valasztasi_kampany_marcius_28-an/na_mi_volt_ma_harom_kormanyparti_lap_cimlapjan/, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. Márta Kovács, “Nem a Menekültek Erőszakolják Meg a Legtöbb Magyar Nőt”, 24.hu, 11 September 2018, <https://24.hu/belfold/2018/09/11/nemi-eroszak-menekult-magyar-statisztika/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

In one case, the M1 public television channel broadcasted an interview with a Swedish-Hungarian dual citizen, who claimed to have returned to Hungary because Stockholm was “invaded by migrants”. The individual claimed that traveling on the metro had become impossible in Stockholm since she was sexually harassed on a daily basis by migrants. Index.hu, a pro-opposition media outlet, later revealed that the woman was convicted for defamation, harassment, and violating public trust. Furthermore, there was no evidence she had ever lived or worked in Stockholm.²³

In another example, a ‘fake news’ video produced by János Lázár, former head of the Prime Minister’s Office, depicted Lázár walking through a district of Vienna and promoting the ghettoization process that was underway as he claimed Muslim immigrants were forcing out white citizens.²⁴

There is very little space for raising objections to the state-run media campaign against migrants and Muslims. Over the past two years in particular, media outlets have been consolidated into the hands of government supporters. Diverse opinions and unbiased presentation of reality is not possible for most of the population, and it is especially problematic in terms of Hungarians who do not use English-language sources or who live outside of major urban centers. Opposition media outlets have been shut down or deprived of the income they would generate through advertising. For example, just two days after the general election in April 2018, the national daily Magyar Nemzet shut down after eighty years of serving the Hungarian population.²⁵

Justice System

Since 2015 the Hungarian government has gradually dismantled the asylum system by introducing a series of laws that made the access to protection very difficult, and lately, almost impossible. In addition to the legal measures, the inhumane treatment by the Hungarian authorities has included practices from systematic violence and beatings at the border²⁶ and abuse of those seeking protection to starvation of people in the transit zones. Such actions pushed the European Commission to launch an infringement procedure against Hungary.²⁷

23. Balázs Pivarnyik, “M1 Broadcasts Interview with Charlatan Claiming Islamic Hordes Have Taken over Stockholm”, The Budapest Beacon, 13 March 2018, <https://budapestbeacon.com/m1-broadcasts-interview-with-charlatan-claiming-islamic-hordes-have-taken-over-stockholm/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

24. Ivel Sore, “Lázár János about Vienna”, YouTube, 6 March 2018, <https://youtu.be/0wEiXUanPfg> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

25. Márton Dunai, “Major Hungarian Opposition Newspaper to Close after Orban Victory”, Reuters, 10 April 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hungary-election-media/major-hungarian-opposition-newspaper-to-close-after-orban-victory-idUSKBN1HH10S>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

26. Doctors Without Borders, “MSF Denounces Widespread Violence against Migrants and Refugees at the Serbian-Hungarian Border”, 8 March 2017/5 June 2018, <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.ca/article/msf-denounces-widespread-violence-against-migrants-and-refugees-serbian-hungarian-border>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

27. “Migration and Asylum: Commission Takes Further Steps in Infringement Procedures against Hungary”, European Commission Press Release Database, 19 July 2018, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4522_en.htm, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Moreover, the FIDESZ government has introduced several laws to back up the security framework of their intention to keep out all migrants and to persecute those deemed to be assisting migrants or spreading information regarding immigration to Hungary. In June 2018, the Parliament passed the “Stop Soros” laws that seek to criminalize a number of activities related to the support and assistance extended by law to asylum seekers. According to the intentionally vague wording of the laws, members of NGOs and individuals are threatened with prison time for helping asylum seekers by “facilitating illegal migration”. An additionally tax law was adopted, targeting “propaganda activity that portrays immigration in a positive light...participating in a media campaign...building and operating a network” and “educational activities” in which a 25% tax is levied on all budgets associated with organizations providing legal advice regarding asylum and including unspecified activities related to migrants’ integration. The law is designed to target in particular NGOs, educational institutions, journalists, individuals, and potentially anyone who dares to disagree with the government on migration.²⁸

In June 2018, after a series of legal changes supporting the government’s anti-Muslim narrative, the Fundamental Law of Hungary (before 2011 known as the Hungarian Constitution) was amended to include two new provisions restricting “foreign populations” attempting to settle in Hungary, and stating that “all state bodies are obliged to protect Hungary’s identity and its Christian culture.”²⁹

The devastating consequences of the desire to identify and prosecute Muslim migrants is especially clear in the now infamous case of Ahmed H, an asylum seeker from Syria, who was convicted when trying to cross the Serbian-Hungarian border in 2015. During a conflict in which those desperate to seek help and medical attention clashed with police at Röszke, located at the Southern border of Hungary in September 2015, Ahmed was unfairly imprisoned for “complicity in an act of terror” for committing the act of “throwing stones” at the border guards. It took until early 2019 for his case to be repealed and for Ahmed to be released from prison. The law enabled authorities to ramp up the charges to terrorism, and his case then could be used to demonize all migrants irrespective of their personal background, motivation, and behavior.³⁰

Internet

Following the widespread and mainstream Islamophobic, anti-migrant, racist, and xenophobic narratives of the government itself and related media outlets, similar

28. “The Police and the Ministry of Interior Are ‘Fully Prepared’ for the Implementation of the ‘Stop Soros’ Act”, About Hungary, 5 July 2018, <http://abouthungary.hu/news-in-brief/the-police-and-the-ministry-of-interior-are-fully-prepared-for-the-implementation-of-the-stop-soros-act/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

29. György Folk, “Rule of Law in Hungary: MEPs Call on Council to Act”, Liberties, 31 January 2019, <https://www.liberties.eu/en/news/rule-of-law-ep-debate-hungary-jan-2019/16931>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

30. Amnesty International, “Release of Syrian Man Wrongly Convicted of Terrorism in Hungary an ‘Overwhelming Relief’”, Amnesty, 1 January 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/01/release-of-syrian-man-wrongly-convicted-of-terrorism-in-hungary-an-overwhelming-relief/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

narratives are strongly present throughout cyberspace. Even though social media platforms such as Facebook are trying to shut down such accounts, it is evident that they can proliferate by rebranding every so often.³¹ Examples of this kind of virulent hate that is being circulated online can be found on the following social media sites including Facebook (Dzsihádfigyelő; Patrióta; Vadhajtasok; Breitportal; Migrációkutató Intézet) in addition to websites including dzsihadfigyelo.com, vadhajtasok.hu (commonly known as the “the wildest right portal”), generacio.eu and breitportal.hu, the latter two linked to a group called Generation Identity (please see below for descriptions of these organizations).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network³²

There are a number of actors spreading Islamophobic views in Hungary including many small networks that cannot be fully documented here. The Center for the Study of Political Islam (*Politikai Iszlám Tanulmányok Központja*), focuses on the ‘real face’ of political Islam and its values. Director Incze Nikoletta is a prominent figure of Islamophobic discourse. The Migration Research Institute’s Facebook page frequently publishes articles on the threat, crimes, and attacks committed by immigrants. Generation Identity (*Identitás Generáció*) is the Hungarian branch of a pan-European, far right youth movement.³³ Generation Identity International ran a project called Defend Europe, in which it launched its own anti-migration #MeToo campaign, with supposed testimonies of women claiming they were raped by migrants. Facebook and Instagram have deleted their accounts due to the extreme homophobic, Islamophobic, xenophobic, and overall racist content.³⁴ The Power and Determination Movement (*Erő és Elszántság Mozgalom*) was formed in 2017, and was formerly known as *Identitesz*, orchestrating the idea of white Europe and the end of multiculturalism.³⁵

31. Oroszi Babett, “Orban’s Media Empire”, *Atlatszo*, 29 September 2018, <https://english.atlatszo.hu/2018/09/29/a-case-study-in-hungarian-propaganda-this-is-how-the-pro-government-media-works-if-something-awkward-is-revealed-about-pm-orban/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

32. Far right groups targeting Roma communities which occasionally express xenophobic, anti-Semitic, and Islamophobic views that are not listed above include: Hungarian Legion (*Légió Hungária*), Army of Outlaws (*Betyársereg*), Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement (*Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*), Hungarian Self-Defense Movement (*Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom*). Sources: Anonymous interviews conducted by Gabi Göbl, Budapest, 19 December 2018; interview with Balázs Bakó, Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association, conducted by Gabi Göbl, Budapest, 12 December 2018, Political Capital, “Radicalism and Extremism”, http://www.politicalcapital.hu/konyvtar.php?category_list=1&category_id=10&category_hun=Radikalizmus%20%C3%A9s%20extr%C3%A9mizmus, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

33. Maya Oppenheim, “Defend Europe: Far-Right Ship Stopping Refugees Ends Its Mission after a Series of Setbacks”, *The Independent*, 21 August 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/defend-europe-far-right-ship-stop-refugees-mediterranean-end-mission-c-star-setbacks-migrant-boats-a7904466.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

34. B.S., “Generation Identity Hungary: We Are the Only Centre-Right Youth Political Movement That Opposes the Leftist Influence on Youth”, *Demokracija*, 24 September 2018, <http://demokracija.eu/world/generation-identity-hungary-we-are-the-only-centre-right-youth-political-movement-that-opposes-the-leftist-influence-on-youth.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

35. Dániel Pál Rényi, “Liberalis Köcsögözték, Komcsizták, Migránsozták az Együtt Aktivistáját, Miközben Rúgták és Ütötték”, *444.hu*, <https://444.hu/2017/12/03/liberalis-kocsog-uvoltottek-az-egyutt-aktivistajara-mikozben-verték>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

Given the declining objectivity present in the reporting of organizations such as the Center for the Study of Political Islam Hungary (CSPI), many researchers have publicly distanced themselves from this research institute. Earlier this year, CSPI director, Incze Nikoletta, gave an interview where she called Islam a very strong and violent ideology, and supported the state's fight against it in Hungary. Drawing upon the notion of the "clash of civilizations," Nikoletta presented an alarmist opinion that anticipated an aggressive war launched by a "different civilization".³⁶

As the government owns the two-third majority in the parliament, opposition parties can do little to object to government policies or legislative processes. Although the majority of opposition parties generally criticize the government's political narratives related to migration and fearmongering, opinions diverge from each other when it comes to details. The shrinking media landscape does not allow opinions to reach wider audiences, and in most cases national coverage is not translated widely outside of Hungary.

The Two Tailed Dog Party (a satirical party) is a beacon of some hope for those who desire more balance in media and political debates. Despite mocking the ruling party on many public outlets, they have also successfully collected public donations to demonstrate that not all Hungarians wish to participate in the government's hate campaigns. The party has a vivid social media presence, satirizing mainstream Islamophobic discourses.³⁷

Even within the limited space to confront Islamophobia and negative stereotypes about Muslims, many active NGOs and grassroots initiatives continue their mission to educate the public about the misinformation spread by the government. There are programs in schools (again, limited in numbers), public events where they present their cases (the Hungarian Helsinki Committee has held a series of talks to present information based on cases they are working with),³⁸ and a growing movement to protest the shrinking space for speaking out against the growing authoritarian governance of the country. For example, *Szabad Egyetem* (Open University) is a movement that demonstrates a student initiative to bring together those in resistance to these measures across four Hungarian-accredited institutions. They are fighting for academic freedom and in support of the human rights of refugees and Roma populations currently under attack by the government.³⁹

36. Gábor Csene, "Megelégelték az Íszlamofóbiát", Nepszava.hu, 2 January 2019. https://nepszava.hu/3020249_megelgelték-az-izlamofobiát, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

37. Kétfarkú Kutya Párt, Facebook, 17 January 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/justanotherwordpresspage/photos/a.107067403292/10156084356883293/?type=3&theater>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

38. Anita Komuves, "Target or Ally? Hungary Faces the Elections Battle", vsquare.org, 03 April, 2018, <https://vsquare.org/russia-target-or-ally-hungary-faces-the-elections-battle/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

39. The classes offered at the protest site, which was located directly outside of the Hungarian Parliament on Kossuth Lajos Square, can be seen at <https://www.ceu.edu/event/2018-11-30/szabadegyetem-events>.

The Hungarian Islam Advocacy Association (*Magyar Iszlám Jogvédő Egyesület*) was founded in 2016 as an advocacy group to prevent hate crime against Muslims in Hungary. The organization also takes on the task of registering hate crimes, informing the public on Islamophobia-related incidents, offering legal aid for victims of Islamophobic hate crimes and discrimination, and counteracting government propaganda on Muslims. Their main aim is to provide support for refugees and to initiate interreligious dialogue.

Menedék Association for Migrants holds sensitization workshops in local schools that attempt to educate people about strong prejudices towards ‘Muslim-majority’ countries fueled massively by government propaganda. Director András Kováts claimed that the temporary nature of their work makes it is very difficult to create momentum in the fight against Islamophobic views in Hungary.⁴⁰ Hungarian Helsinki Committee is a human rights NGO protecting human dignity through legal and public activities. The organization supports refugees, detainees, and victims of law enforcement violence. Amnesty International Hungary is part of the Amnesty International movement. Its activities include participation in joint international campaigns of the movement members as well as local campaigns focusing on specifically Hungarian human rights violations and matters. Churches and individual members of churches are occasionally active, in some cases even opposing the official stance of their respective organization, including the Hungarian Reform Church, the Methodists, Islam, some of the Jewish communities, and other small religious groups.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

There is a very serious need for independent and open channels of media communication in the country that offer a critical response to the fearmongering propaganda that is fueled by the state and promoted across its subsidiary channels. Independent media and a political voice for those in support of migrants and Muslims in Hungary is essential for combatting the hate and prejudice that exists openly in daily life. There is a desperate need for funding and the protection of NGOs and independent journalists and newspapers who are helping to try to change the conversation and assist the vulnerable. Oversight as well as direct action by the European Parliament would be crucial in order to curtail corruption and the misappropriation of EU funds designed to help assist the country in its economic and political transition following the 1989 change of regime. Part of a solution should come in the form of amendments to the current national curriculum to include a basic education on Islam and migration as a sociological and historical study. On a more pressing level, there is a dire need for the desecuritization of migrants across Europe, and the prevention of hate-literature and propaganda at all levels.

40. Phone interview with András Kováts, conducted by Gabi Göbl, 14 December 2018.

Chronology

- **08.01.2018:** PM Viktor Orbán visits Bavaria and declares Hungary does not want Muslim invaders.⁴¹
- **09.02.2018:** PM Orbán on the national stage condemns diversity and claims Hungarians do not want their colors mixed.⁴²
- **06.03.2018:** PM Orbán's former head of the Prime Minister's Office János Lázár posts a video of Muslim "ghettos" in Vienna.⁴³
- **12.03.2018:** PM Orbán meets privately with Geert Wilders, an openly-Islamophobic Dutch politician active in the EU Parliament.⁴⁴
- **15.03.2018:** PM Orbán marks the commemoration of the uprising against the Habsburgs by inciting Europe to rise up against the invasion of Soros forces.⁴⁵
- **04.04.2018:** Generation Identity all-male members dress in burkas to disrupt *MSZP-Párbeszéd* PM candidate Gergely Karácsony's campaign event.⁴⁶
- **08.04.2018:** Parliamentary election: FIDESZ wins a landslide victory, gaining a two-thirds majority in Parliament.⁴⁷
- **20.06.2018:** The constitution is amended for the 7th time, with the text incorporating that "groups of foreign nationals cannot be settled" in Hungary and that state institutions are obliged to protect the Christian culture in Hungary. Provisions also include the criminalization of homelessness.
- On the same day, parliament passes the "Stop Soros" law that criminalizes individuals and organizations helping asylum seekers.⁴⁸
- **19.07.2018:** The European Commission takes further infringement pro-

41. Emily Shultheis, "Viktor Orbán: Hungary Doesn't Want 'Muslim Invaders'", Politico, 8 January 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/viktor-orban-hungary-doesnt-want-muslim-invaders/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

42. Benjamin Novak, "Orbán Calls on Mayors to Make Sure 'Hungarian People Are Ready to Defend Hungary'", The Budapest Beacon, 9 February, 2018, <https://budapestbeacon.com/orban-uses-conference-mayors-vow-protect-hungarys-ethnic-group/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

43. "Hungarian Diplomacy at Work: János Lázár's Pitiabile Vienna", Hungarian Spectrum, 6 March 2018, <http://hungarianspectrum.org/tag/vienna/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

44. György Lázár, "Geert Wilders Loves Hungary and Had Coffee with Viktor Orbán", Hungarian Free Press, 12 March 2018, <http://hungarianfreepress.com/2017/03/12/geert-wilders-loves-hungary-and-had-coffee-with-viktor-orban/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

45. Shaun Walker, "Hungarian Leader Says Europe Is Now Under Invasion by Migrants", The Guardian, 15 March 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/15/hungarian-leader-says-europe-is-now-under-invasion-by-migrants>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

46. Urfi Péter, "Itt tart a NER: Burkába Öltözött Férfiak Zavarták meg Karácsony Beszédét", 444.hu, 4 April 2018, <https://444.hu/2018/04/04/itt-tart-a-fidesz-burkaba-oltozott-ferfiak-zavartak-meg-karacsony-beszedet>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

47. Jennifer Rankin, "Hungary Election: Viktor Orbán Declares Victory - As It Happened", The Guardian, 8 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2018/apr/08/hungary-election-viktor-orban-expected-to-win-third-term-live-updates>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

48. "Constitutional Amendments and Stop Soros: Shifting Illiberalism into Higher Gear in Hungary", Political Capital, 22 June 2018, http://www.politicalcapital.hu/news.php?article_read=1&article_id=2270, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

cedures against Hungary for the non-compliance of its asylum and return legislation with EU law.⁴⁹

- **21.08.2018:** Rejected asylum seekers in the transit zones are repeatedly denied food by the Hungarian authorities.⁵⁰
- **03.09.2018:** Government extends again the so-called state of crisis due to mass migration.⁵¹
- **15.10.2018:** A provision of the constitution comes into force and makes homelessness a criminal offence.⁵²
- **23.11.2018:** MP Dúró Dóra, formerly of Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary, suggests a draft law on burkas in public.⁵³

49. "Migration and Asylum: Commission Takes Further Steps in Infringement Procedures against Hungary", European Commission Press Release Database, 19 July 2018, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-18-4522_en.htm, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

50. Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Twitter, 21 September 2018, https://twitter.com/hhc_helsinki/status/1031946847626117120?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dw.com%2Fen%2Fhungary-using-starvation-tactics-against-asylum-seekers%2Fa-45179267, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

51. Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Twitter, 3 September 2018, https://twitter.com/hhc_helsinki/status/1036864215162789888, (Access date: 14 December 2018),

52. Kara Fox, "Hungary's Constitution Makes Street Homelessness a Crime", CNN, 15 October 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/10/15/europe/hungary-criminalizes-homelessness-intl/index.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).g

53. Botos Tamás, "Betiltaná a Burkát a Mi Hazánk", 444.hu, 23 November 2018, <https://444.hu/2018/11/23/betiltana-a-burkat-a-mi-hazank>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
IRELAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.

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Executive Summary

Muslims in Ireland continue to experience anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination as the evidence here bears out. Although official data on Islamophobia are incredibly problematic, reports in media and otherwise evidence the manner in which anti-Muslim hostility manifests in Ireland, underscoring the need for hate crime legislation in Ireland. These experiences of hostility are by no means limited to the 'offline' context as research in the online sphere by Siapera et al. further demonstrates. Experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination in the occupational, accommodation, and institutional contexts are also evidenced below. Ireland continues to see local and international fringe political actors undertake anti-Muslim activities. These range from publicity campaigns to opposing the construction of a mosque. Media reportage vis-à-vis Muslims/Islam in Ireland demonstrates an unfortunate consistency when compared with the previous *European Islamophobia Reports* (EIR) on Ireland. The use of language continues to be problematic with Muslim/Islam co-located with terms such as 'extremists' or 'radical.' Furthermore, the tendency for sensationalist reporting in relation to Muslims/Islam maintains. As with previous submissions, there is some evidence of nuanced media reporting, something to be welcomed. Encouragingly, initiatives have been undertaken/are ongoing by civil society actors designed to directly challenge anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. Positive steps have also been taken at the level of the state to prevent discrimination accessing education by members of minority/no religions in Ireland. While small, these initiatives are welcome in a national and international context wherein anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination is all too common. The evidence presented here of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland demonstrates the urgent need for much more to be done to challenge this phenomenon.

Country Profile

Country: Ireland

Type of Regime: Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary Democracy

Ruling Parties: Fine Gael (Centre Right), supported by a number of Independents and in a Confidence and Supply Agreement with Fianna Fáil (Centrist)

Opposition Parties: Sinn Féin (Left), Labour Party (Centre Left), Green Party (Centre Left), Social Democrats (Centre Left).

Last Elections: 2018 Presidential (official head of state, limited political function/authority) Michael D. Higgins (Labour) won with 55.8% of the vote.

General Election 2016: Fine Gael won 25.5% of the national vote (55 seats); ahead of Fianna Fáil with 24.3% of the national vote (40 seats); Sinn Feinn 13.8% of the national vote (23 seats).

Total Population: 4.8 million in 2016 Census

Major Languages: Irish, English

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: Irish police do have the facility to record anti-Muslim incidents/crimes. However, no official data on Islamophobia are publicly available at this time.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There are limitations vis-à-vis data on racism in Ireland. The Irish police service recorded 323 hate crimes in 2017, 290 in 2016, and 162 in 2015; these data are not currently disaggregated by motivation. There is also a paucity of regular data collection and dissemination for Ireland. Nonetheless, there are some useful studies available. For example, in relation to accessing accommodation and the potential for discrimination, Grotti et al. demonstrate vis-à-vis homelessness that “Muslims are particularly over-represented, constituting almost six per cent of the homeless but only one per cent of total population.”¹ Further research would be required to say for certain that being identified as Muslim was the central catalyst in these experiences over other characteristics/issues.

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholicism (78.3%), No religion (9.8%), Church of Ireland (2.8%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 63,443 (1.3%) in 2016.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: In no specific order: Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland; Islamic Centre of Ireland; Muslim Association of Ireland; Ahlul Bayt Islamic Centre; Irish Sufi Foundation.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: European Network Against Racism Ireland, Glencree Peace and Reconciliation Centre, and Immigrant Council of Ireland.

1. Raffaele Grotti, Helen Russell, Éamonn Fahey and Bertrand Maitre, *Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland*, (Irish Human Right and Equality Commission and Economic and Social Research Institute Report, Dublin: 2018) <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2018/06/Discrimination-and-Inequality-in-Housing-in-Ireland..pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Far Right Parties: Fringe only, including Identity Ireland and National Party.

Far Right Movements: Generation Identity UK and Ireland.

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** Officially none. However, educational institutions are permitted to decide themselves whether students may/may not wear the hijab to school.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (local planning decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

As in previous reports, the following details experiences of anti-Muslim hostility in the on- and offline contexts. In addition, insights are also provided on experience of discrimination in a range of contexts. Despite changes in the Irish police recording practices, the lack of official data on experiences of anti-Muslim hate crime as discussed below is concerning.² Politically, local and international fringe political actors continue to undertake anti-Muslim activities across the state. Conversely, the Irish Taoiseach stated in 2018 that a prohibition on the wearing of the burqa in Ireland is not planned, short- or long-term. This submission also engages with Irish media reportage noting the consistency across *EIR* submissions in the form of problematic use of language and sensationalist reporting practices vis-a-vis Muslims/Islam.

This report concludes by noting initiatives that are being undertaken by civil society actors in Ireland designed to challenge anti-Muslim racism; additionally, positive steps have also been taken at the level of the state to prevent discrimination accessing education. These initiatives are welcome in a national and international context wherein anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination are all too common. Nonetheless, the evidence presented here of anti-Muslim racism in Ireland demonstrates the urgent need for much more to be done to challenge this phenomenon.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Statistics on incidents of hate crime in Ireland as reported in the Irish police service *An Garda Síochána (AGS) Annual Report 2017* demonstrate considerable increases in reported hate crime in Ireland in the years 2013- 2017. However, the report does not disaggregate across the various ‘discriminatory motivation’ bases and as such it is not possible to provide insights on officially recorded anti-Muslim hate crimes/incidents in Ireland.³ Nonetheless, a number of reports of anti-Muslim hostility came to the fore across 2018. In January, a local politician based in Dublin shared a message on Twitter that noted the abuse meted out to a young Muslim on local public transport:

Muslim girl I know was abused by a drunk on the Dart from Connolly to Malahide last night. Followed her carriage to carriage. No one said or did anything which is shameful. Men sat looking out the window. Poor reflection on us folks.⁴

2. Amanda Haynes and Jennifer Schweppe, “Lifecycle of a Hate Crime: Country Report for Ireland”, ICCL 2017 <https://www.iccl.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Hate-Crime-Report-LR-WEB.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

3. An Garda Síochána, *Annual Report 2017*, <https://www.garda.ie/en/about-us/our-departments/office-of-corporate-communications/news-media/garda-annual-report-2017.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

4. Keith Redmond, Twitter, provided by report to ENAR Ireland, <https://twitter.com/ClrKRRedmond>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Media reports in July also detailed the manner in which a Muslim doctor referred to as ‘Amna’ has been subjected to repeated verbal abuse and harassment due to being identifiably Muslim. Writing online, Amna recalled abuse on public transport by another female passenger that she described as being intoxicated. She also noted that Muslim women who wear hijab are perceived as “refugees,” “someone who deserves an insult in the name of religion.”⁵ Moreover, Muslim women in Ireland face ongoing and consistent anti-Muslim abuse but are fearful of reporting it to the AGS, and instead “brush it off.”⁶

Elaborating on experiences of anti-Muslim discrimination, Amna noted how, when looking for accommodation, one landlord told her that it would be better for her to “live with her own community”; another, refused her entry to a property as “she might have a gun in her handbag.”⁷ Grotti et al. provide insights into experiences of Muslim communities vis-à-vis discrimination in the housing sphere in Ireland.⁸ While the authors acknowledge that identity characteristics other than religion may inform experiences of discrimination in housing, they note that “Muslims are particularly over-represented, constituting almost six per cent of the homeless but only one per cent of total population.”⁹

Student and activist Somaya Mahmud described her experiences of hostility while campaigning politically, noting that her “hijab made me a target. My brown skin made me a target.”¹⁰ Mahmud was told, despite being an Irish citizen, she had “no right to vote on the Constitution” and to “go home” and “visit her family and maybe make a holiday of it.” As Mahmud notes, such treatment makes young Muslims fearful to voice their opinions and has a chilling effect on political engagement.¹¹

The aftermath of a series of related attacks, one fatal, in the town of Dundalk witnessed a public demonstration of anti-Muslim hostility. According to Gallagher, international media outlets (discussed below) and far right organisations were quick to share content wherein the suspect was referred to as a “halal c**t.”¹² A court hear-

5. Sorcha Pollak, “Muslim Female Doctor Humiliated in Racial Attack on Dublin Bus”, *The Irish Times*, 4 July 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/muslim-female-doctor-humiliated-in-racial-attack-on-dublin-bus-1.3553991>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. Grotti, Russell, Fahey, and Maitre, *Discrimination and Inequality in Housing in Ireland*, p. 63.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Somaya Mahmud, “Campaigning for Repeal: ‘My Hijab Made Me a Target. My Brown Skin Made Me a Target’”, *The Journal*, 10 June 2018, <https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/campaigning-for-repeal-my-hijab-made-me-a-target-my-brown-skin-made-me-a-target-4053413-Jun2018/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

11. *Ibid.*

12. Conor Gallagher, “Reaction to Dundalk Attacks Ranges from Tributes and Sympathy to Racial Slurs; Crowds Outside Court Shout Abuse at Young Man Charged over Stabbings”, *The Irish Times*, 6 January 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/reaction-to-dundalk-stabbings-ranges-from-sympathy-to-slurs-1.3346332>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

ing attended by the accused witnessed scuffles and the shouting of racist epithets by a large crowd outside. Posters were also placed around the locality that referred to the incidents as “a direct attack upon Ireland” and Dundalk as “ground zero”;¹³ this despite Irish police stating that they could not establish a link to terrorist activity on the part of the assailant.¹⁴

Institutionally, questions must be asked of the practices and policies of the AGS vis-à-vis their *Annual Report 2017*. The report notes regular engagement with Muslim communities, imams and youth “in order to prevent any individual or group within this community posing a threat to the State.”¹⁵ The question of radicalisation among other groups seemingly is not an issue. The effects that this can have on popular and self-perceptions of Muslim communities in Ireland are negative and counterproductive to positive initiatives undertaken by the Irish police service in engaging Muslim communities.

Employment

Amna, noted earlier, also recalled her experiences of discrimination in the workplace. In one case she was asked at work where she was from. Upon answering, Amna was told that she should return there when she had finished her studies in Ireland.¹⁶

Education

Heretofore, schools in Ireland have had the facility to prioritise admission for children with the same faith ethos as the institution in question, if it was oversubscribed. This was particularly problematic for Muslims and other faith/non-faith communities in the Irish context given the predominance of Catholic-run primary, and to lesser extent, secondary schools.¹⁷ Research undertaken with Muslim communities in Ireland has documented experiences of discrimination when it comes to accessing schools on the basis of religious identity.¹⁸ As reported in Irish media in October, the ability for schools to discriminate at admission on the grounds of religious identity is to cease with enrolment for the 2019/20 school year.¹⁹ Minority religious communi-

13. Ibid.

14. “Mohammed Morei Charged with Dundalk Murder”, BBC, 4 January 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-42573012>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

15. An Garda Síochána, *An Garda Síochána Annual Report 2017*, pp. 38-39.

16. Pollak, *Muslim Female Doctor Humiliated in Racial Attack on Dublin Bus*.

17. James Carr, “European Islamophobia Report: Ireland 2015”, *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2016) http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/reports/2015/en/EIR_2015_IRELAND.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

18. James Carr, “Islamophobia in Dublin: Experiences and How to Respond”, *Immigrant Council of Ireland*, <https://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/2017-10/AR%20INT%202016%20Islamophobia%20in%20Dublin%20-%20Experiences%20&%20How%20to%20Respond.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

19. Carl O’Brien, “Baptism Barrier’ To Be Removed from Primary Schools Next Year”, *The Irish Times*, 3 October 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/baptism-barrier-to-be-removed-from-primary-schools-next-year-1.3649317>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

ties are an exception and will be allowed to prioritise members of their faith to allow minority religious-run schools to maintain their ethos.²⁰

Politics

The year 2018 again witnessed political anti-Muslim activity in Ireland. In May, reports emerged online of activity by identitarian group, Generation Identity United Kingdom and Ireland (GIUK&I), across Ireland.²¹ In June, further reports of activity by GIUK&I noted activity in Dublin and Belfast, Northern Ireland involving the draping of burqas over prominent landmarks accompanied by posters stating “The New Irish?” and “The Future of Northern Ireland?”²² Reports also emerged that Tore Rasmussen, originally from Norway and a leading figure in the GIUK&I, was now living in Ireland. Rasmussen was previously denied entry into the UK as he “pose[d] a present, genuine, and sufficiently serious threat to the fundamental interests of society, including to public policy or public security.”²³ In October, an online publication listed additional activities undertaken by GIUK&I in Ireland.²⁴ These included banner drops and a visit to the new Asylum Seeker Centre where a poster was placed on the door as an “Objection to the Great Replacement of Europeans...”²⁵ In November, a video posted online included an interview undertaken by Rowan Croft with one of the leaders of GIUK&I, Damhnait McKenna from Belfast, and UK associate Caolan Robertson. Robertson stated he and others, including Canadian Lauren Southern, were going to visit locations in Ireland that have had an “influx of refugees” to film about immigration in Europe.²⁶ Ms Southern is also alleged to have been previously denied access to the UK.²⁷

The fringe political party Identity Ireland (II) posted some of their activity online in October. II leader Peter O’Loughlin discussed his party’s opposition to the planned construction of a mosque in Kilkenny.²⁸ O’Loughlin claimed that Islam was

20. Ibid.

21. “Kilkenny Action against Fraudulent Sinn Féin”, Kilkenny Journal, 18 May 2018 <https://kilkennyjournal.wordpress.com/2018/11/26/kilkenny-action-against-fraudulent-sinn-fein/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

22. Séan Fahey, “Far-Right Activist Denied UK Entry Running Anti-immigration Group in Ireland”, Buzzfeed, 26 June 2018, https://www.buzz.ie/news/far-right-activist-denied-uk-entry-running-group-ireland-289982?utm_source=email, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

23. Ibid.

24. “Spotlight: Generation Identity”, The Tricolour, 24 October 2018, <http://www.thetricolour.com/Articles/183/politics/Spotlight--Generation-Identity/l4510624/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

25. Ibid.

26. Grand Torino, “Grand Torino with Caolan Roberston”, Youtube, 23 November 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PoortYCdNbOw>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. Maya Oppenheim, “Lauren Southern: Far-Right Canadian Activist Detained in Calais and Banned from Entering UK”, The Independent (UK), 13 March 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/lauren-southern-far-right-canada-racist-calais-detain-uk-ban-enter-visa-a8254116.html>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

28. Identity Ireland, Youtube, “Identity Ireland Opposes Kilkenny Mosque”, 9 October 2018 https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=tR8YDw4QiO8, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

“destroying” cities in Europe and warned of the risk of “Sharia courts”, “rape gangs”, and ‘grooming gangs’ should the mosque be built.²⁹ In April, a public meeting was organised by Teachta Dála (TD) (Member of Parliament) John McGuinness and his son Local Councillor Andrew McGuinness on the topic of the construction of the proposed Kilkenny mosque and associated community centre; both are members of the mainstream Fianna Fáil political party.³⁰ The purpose of the meeting, according to local imam Ibrahim Ndure, was to address the local community’s “questions and concerns.”³¹ According to media reports, “shouting and heckling dominated the two hour event.”³² Objections to the construction ostensibly centred on traffic and parking concerns as well as the proximity to a local burial ground. While some supported the construction, others were overt in their anti-Muslim sentiment.

We don't want a mosque. This is not just for the Muslims of Kilkenny. They are going to come from all of Tipperary, Wexford. This is Kilkenny, not Mecca. Don't be bringing people down here. Don't build the mosque. We don't want it. You have to respect our culture – for us to respect you, respect us first.³³

Media reports claimed the event “descended into chaos with some shouting racist comments at the imam and members of the Muslim community who were present.”³⁴ Imam Ndure cited social media platforms as providing “misleading and false information” as playing a key role in the abuse experienced on the evening.³⁵ Despite the collection of over one-thousand petition signatures (organised by Eugene McGuinness, brother of John McGuinness [TD] above) and the submission of forty formal planning objections, the mosque development was granted planning permission in September.³⁶

Interestingly, in August, Irish Taoiseach Leo Varadkar, when asked if he would be in favour of placing a prohibition on the wearing of the burqa in public settings, responded by stating that “there were no plans to do that.” Varadkar continued,

29. Ibid.

30. “This Is Kilkenny, Not Mecca: Angry Opposition to Mosque plan: Fianna Fáil TD John McGuinness Calls for Calm at Heated Meeting”, *The Irish Times*, 13 April 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/this-is-kilkenny-not-mecca-angry-opposition-to-mosque-plan-1.3461036?mode=sample&auth-failed=1&pw-origin=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.irishtimes.com%2Fnews%2Fireland%2Firish-news%2Fthis-is-kilkenny-not-mecca-angry-opposition-to-mosque-plan-1.3461036>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Katie O’Neill, “Imam Blames Facebook Fake News for Abuse at Kilkenny Mosque Plan Meeting,” *The Times*, 16 April 2018, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/imam-blames-facebook-fake-news-for-abuse-at-mosque-plan-meeting-05zldsrh9>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

35. Ibid.

36. Conor Kane, “Permission Granted for Controversial Mosque in Kilkenny”, *The Irish Times*, 27 September 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/permission-granted-for-controversial-mosque-in-kilkenny-1.3643877>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

My view on it... I don't like it but I think people are entitled to wear what they want to wear. I believe in the freedom of religion. I don't agree with the doctrine of every religion or necessarily any religion, but I do believe in the freedom of religion.³⁷

Media

The following necessarily limited analysis of media in the Irish context centres on print media reports made in 2018 vis-à-vis Muslims/Islam in Ireland. It is important to underscore that the following analysis should not be taken as exhaustive of all media coverage of Muslims/Islam in Ireland; such an analysis is beyond the scope of this report. As per previous *EIR* submissions on Ireland, specific periods of time and selected media coverage were chosen in order to delimit the focus of analysis for this report.³⁸

As noted, 2018 commenced with news of a series of attacks (one fatal) undertaken by a man believed to be of Egyptian nationality in the town of Dundalk.³⁹ While accompanied by cautions of not “reading too much, too early in the Dundalk attacks,” a piece in the *Irish Times* cited a source which stated that the event “fits the wider European pattern by the look of it”;... ‘which would suggest terrorism - a dis-enchanted young *Muslim* man, no sense of former issues with mental health or criminality.’⁴⁰ The speculation associating Muslims/Islam with the incident in the absence of evidence is unhelpful, with potentially stigmatising effects on Muslims/Islam in Ireland. Greater reflexivity on the part of media producers would be welcome in this area. Mohammed Morei, the man who committed the attacks, was charged with the murder of Japanese national Yosuke Sasaki but the AGS stated that they “found no established link to indicate the attacks... were terror-related.”⁴¹

37. Christina Finn, “Leo Varadkar: ‘There Will Be No Burqa Ban in Ireland’”, *The Journal*, 5 August 2018, <https://www.thejournal.ie/no-burqa-ban-ireland-4161037-Aug2018/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

38. See Lexis Nexis, “Home,” (2019) retrieved January 8, 2018, <http://bis.lexisnexis.co.uk/products/newsdesk>. Four critical events were chosen for the purpose of analysis, namely, media reports following a fatal attack in Dundalk town; media coverage around the topic of FGM and the comments of a leading Irish Muslim; a documentary on the presence of ‘jihadis’ in Ireland and associated media coverage; and finally, media reports following the terrorist attack in the Strasbourg Christmas Market in December 2018. Media reports relating to Muslims and Islam on the day that these events took place and in the seven 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*, *The Sunday Business Post*, and archival coverage (as noted by Nexis). The search terms used on the Nexis database were, for example, “Muslim! OR Islam! AND Dundalk” – only the location/core topic was changed in each search but remaining terms were maintained. A limited number of critical case examples of media reports outside of those listed in the analysis parameters above are also included.

39. Ken Foy, Elaine Keogh, Ryan Nugent and Robin Schiller, ‘Gardaí trawl Two Mobile Phones for Terror Links to Knifeman After Killing,’ *The Irish Independent*, 4 January 2018; *The Journal*, “Dundalk Stabbing Accused Mohamed Morei’s Nationality Still Unknown 92 Days After Murder”, <https://www.thejournal.ie/dundalk-stabbing-mohamed-morei-court-3942710-Apr2018/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

40. Peter Murtagh, ‘Nature of Attack Raises Concerns over Terror,’ *The Irish Times*, 4 January 2018.

41. “Teen Charged with Murder of Japanese Man in Dundalk”, RTÉ, 5 January 2018, <https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2018/0104/931001-dundalk/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

On a positive note, there was also evidence of nuance in reports relating to the Dundalk case. Gallagher noted the manner in which the reaction to the attacks went beyond Irish-based media and that “US, far-right news sites [that] seized on the stabbings as ‘Ireland’s first Islamic terrorist attack’.”⁴² The perspectives of Muslim individuals were featured by some media outlets, providing insights on their feelings of frustration at being viewed with suspicion in the aftermath of such events.⁴³

In February, comments made by a leading figure in Islam in Ireland, Dr Ali Selim, on television attracted critical media attention which was problematic at times. Speaking to RTÉ, Selim stated that “I’m not an advocate of female genital mutilation but I am an advocate of female circumcision.”⁴⁴ Selim’s comments were subject to criticism from within Muslim communities and without; the presence of the former in the media again demonstrating the manner in which some outlets provided Muslim professionals with a platform to critically engage with the issue.⁴⁵ However, there were also those reports that problematically described FGM as a “repulsive Muslim practice.”⁴⁶ This latter report also praised the outspoken Sheikh Dr Umar al-Qadri “as the only one to take a stand against Selim.”⁴⁷

As noted in previous *EIR* submissions for the Irish context, media reporting in the past in Ireland on the topic of Muslims/Islam has held a sensationalist element. This in particular relates to the risk of a terrorist attack in the state.⁴⁸ Of particular note was the television documentary entitled *Ireland’s Jihadis*.⁴⁹ This documentary included interviews with a Muslim woman who claimed that she was previously radicalised and also acquainted with individuals involved in terrorist attacks in London; at least one of whom also spent some time in Ireland.⁵⁰ The documentary also included an interview with Sheikh Dr Umar al-Qadri who has been outspoken vis-à-

42. Gallagher, *Reaction to Dundalk Attacks Ranges from Tributes and Sympathy to Racial Slurs*.

43. Sorcha Pollak, “Muslim Community Warns against Dangers of Kneejerk Reaction; Islamic Leaders Urge Irish to Remember Own Experiences of Prejudice”, *The Irish Times*, 5 January 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/muslims-call-on-irish-people-to-resist-blaming-islam-for-attacks-1.3345225>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

44. Elaine Edwards and Aine McMahon, “Doctors Says FGM Comments Incorrect”, *The Irish Times*, 1 February 2018, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/health/view-of-muslim-academic-on-fgm-highly-dangerous-obstetrician-says-1.3386909>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

45. *Ibid.*

46. Ed Power, “Ireland’s Jihadis Review: Portrait of Establishment Which Seems to Believe Best Defence against Terrorism Is Complacency”, *The Irish Independent*, 26 September 2018, <https://www.independent.ie/entertainment/television/tv-reviews/irelands-jihadis-review-portrait-of-establishment-which-seems-to-believe-best-defence-against-terrorism-is-complacency-37358547.html>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

47. *Ibid.*

48. Carr, *European Islamophobia Report: Ireland 2017*.

49. Orlareid, “Ireland’s Jihadis: True Lives Paul Williams Documentary”, Youtube, 2 October 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ia029xhQioE>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

50. Power, *Ireland’s Jihadis review*.

vis extremism in Ireland.⁵¹ As with 2017 media reports, the documentary, presented Ireland as a soft target for terrorism and a base for ‘Islamic extremists.’⁵²

Arguably as problematic as the documentary itself were the various print media reports surrounding its broadcast. The following provide some insight:

“Radicalised Irish woman claims there are 150 Islamic extremists living in Ireland; Aaliyah said that she had been influenced by the 9/11 attacks and she converted to Islam after she moved to the UK.”⁵³

“Ireland a ‘safe haven’ for jihadists targeting UK and Europe.”⁵⁴

“‘HIDING’ At least 150 Islamic extremists living in Ireland, claims friend of terrorist involved in last year’s London Bridge attack.”⁵⁵

The year 2018 concluded with the horrific attack at the Strasbourg Christmas Market. Resonating with the incidents discussed above, reporting that could serve to label and implicate all Muslims/Islam in terrorist attacks was evident where the attacker’s religion was specifically referred to. Apparently indicating a religious motivation to the attacks, one newspaper ran with the following:

Strasbourg Christmas market shooting: First picture of suspect Cherif Chekatt; Cherif Chekatt, 29, shouted ‘Allahu Akbar’ as he killed two people and injured 14 others in the gun attack, say prosecutors.⁵⁶

Justice System

At the time of writing Ireland remains devoid of hate crime legislation. As such, Muslim communities are without specific legal means to challenge experiences of hate crime in Ireland. Speaking publicly in July, Chief Commissioner of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, Emily Logan, assessed Ireland as being deficient in this regard.⁵⁷

51. Ibid.

52. Fiona Dillon, “Up to 150 Islamic Extremists Living Here, Claims ‘Irish Jihadi’”, *The Herald*, 24 September 2018.

53. Aakanksha Surve, “Radicalised Irish Woman Claims There Are 150 Islamic Extremists Living in Ireland; Aaliyah Said That She Had Been Influenced by the 9/11 Attacks and She Converted to Islam after She Moved to the UK,” *The Irish Mirror*, 25 September 2018, <https://www.irishmirror.ie/tv/irelands-jihadis-documentary-isis-extremism-13303589>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

54. Paul Williams, “Ireland a ‘Safe Haven’ for Jihadists Targeting UK and Europe”, *The Irish Independent*, 24 September 2018, <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/how-ireland-is-a-safe-haven-for-jihadists-targeting-uk-and-europe-37346987.html>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

55. Nicola Bardon, “At Least 150 Islamic Extremists Living in Ireland, Claims Friend of Terrorist Involved in Last Year’s London Bridge Attack”, *The Sun*, 26 September 2018, <https://www.thesun.ie/news/3169768/number-islamic-extremists-ireland-london-bridge-terrorist-friend/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

56. Chris Kitching, “Strasbourg Christmas Market Shooting: First Picture of Suspect Cherif Chekatt”, *Irish Mirror*, 12 December 2018, https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/breaking-strasbourg-christmas-market-shooting-13723355?_ga=2.7552826.929716391.1562242219-1134242485.1562242222, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

57. “Irish Legislation Is Inadequate: Are Hate Crimes on the Rise?”, *Irish Examiner*, 5 July 2018, <https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/views/ourview/irish-legislation-is-inadequate-are-hate-crimes-on-the-rise-853084.html>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Internet

In 2018, Siapera et al. published research findings on the topic of online hate speech.⁵⁸ The authors argue that anti-Muslim racism online can be categorised under four headings: “terrorism; clash of civilisations; Muslim men as misogynist and sexually deviant; and a general unspecified antipathy.”⁵⁹ Siapera et al. provide evidence from both Facebook and Twitter, noting the role key ‘trigger events’ play in informing negative online discourses.⁶⁰ Examples of online activity provided by Siapera et al. include:⁶¹

“Islam is an existential and real threat to the European way of life. I commend you for speaking out as you are entitled to” (Facebook post)

“whilst your average moohamiden has 3 or 4 wives and at least a dozen mini moohamiden’s” (Twitter post)

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

As noted in previous *EIR* submissions for Ireland and indeed above, central figures engaging in anti-Muslim/Islam discourses and activities in Ireland include Identity Ireland, the National Party, Generation Identity UK and Ireland, and associates. Relatedly, and as noted above, it could be alleged that key individuals in this area in Ireland include: Peter O’Loughlin, Justin Barrett, Tore Rasmussen, Dahmnait McKenna, and Rowan Croft. In the case of the latter, earlier in 2018, Croft interviewed Anne Marie Waters, a person outspoken against Muslims and Islam. During this interview various Islamophobic claims were made both by Croft and Waters.⁶² Importantly, this interview, and indeed the presence of Rasmussen and GI UK&I, again underscores the connectivity between those who espouse anti-Muslim, anti-Islam discourses in Ireland with those from the broader international context.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation organised a series of events across 2018 in conjunction with a range of Muslim community groups.⁶³ The aim of these events was for a range of governmental organisations and Muslim communities rep-

58. Eugenia Siapera, Elena Moreo and Jiang Zhou, *Hate Track: Tracking and Monitoring Racist Speech Online*, (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Report, Dublin: 2018) <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2018/11/HateTrack-Tracking-and-Monitoring-Racist-Hate-Speech-Online.pdf>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

59. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

62. Grand Torino, “Grand Torino with Anne Marie Waters”, Youtube, 21 May 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sPal0IrnfcE>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

63. Glencree, “Dialogues with Muslim Communities of Ireland Report”, (The Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, Wicklow: 2018), <http://glencree.ie/ihrec-event/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

representatives to “engage... in dialogue... on the issues of human rights and equality” with Islamophobia as a focal point.⁶⁴

Work continues on the development of a secondary/high-school level teaching resource designed to directly challenge anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination. This resource is being developed in partnership with professional consultants, the NGO Immigrant Council of Ireland, local Muslim communities, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe’s Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights.⁶⁵

Broader initiatives in the civil society sector include that of the Coalition Against Hate Crime Ireland (CAHCI), the purpose of which is to “promote meaningful reform of the law, policy and practice as it relates to hate crime in Ireland.”⁶⁶ In late 2018, members of CAHCI met with representatives of the AGS to discuss challenging hate crime in Ireland (Communication from CAHCI).⁶⁷

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report details experiences of anti-Muslim hostility and discrimination in Ireland. Local and international fringe political actors continue to undertake anti-Muslim activities/campaigns. Irish media reportage evidences a consistency in the continued form of problematic language and sensationalist reporting vis-à-vis Muslims and Islam. Some encouraging civil society initiatives have been noted above which are designed to directly challenge anti-Muslim racism. While positive steps have also been taken at the level of the state to prevent discrimination accessing education, the evidence presented here underscores the urgent need for more to be done to challenge anti-Muslim racism in Ireland. The following policy recommendations, if addressed, would go some way towards challenging Islamophobia in Ireland.

- The Irish government must implement hate crime legislation.
- The official recording of anti-Muslim and broader forms of hate crime must be improved. Current practice is not fit for purpose.
- Efforts must continue to encourage greater reflexivity relating to reporting Muslims/Islam issues among media actors in Ireland.
- Official action must be taken against political groupings that target and incite hatred towards minority communities.
- Counter-radicalisation strategies in Ireland must not single out Muslim communities as being the only communities susceptible to ‘radicalisation.’

64. Ibid.

65. “OSCE/ODIHR, Ireland’s Immigrant Council Hold Consultations in Dublin to Develop Educational Materials to Counter Intolerance against Muslims”, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, <https://www.osce.org/odihr/349376>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

66. “Coalition against Hate Crime”, ENAR Ireland, <http://enarireland.org/the-national-steering-group-against-hate-crime/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

67. Work between the AGS and CAHCI is ongoing at the time of writing.

Chronology

- **03.01.2018:** Series of attacks in Dundalk involving man believed to be of Egyptian nationality, followed by Islamophobic media coverage.
- **08.02.2018:** Leading figure in Islam in Ireland makes comments regarding FGM on Irish television, followed by Islamophobic media coverage.
- **12.04.2018:** Public information session regarding mosque construction in Kilkenny.
- 21.05.2018: *Grand Torino* interview between Rowan Croft and Anne Marie Waters.
- **May & June 2018:** Reports of on-street activity by Generation Identity UK and Ireland.
- **10.06.2018:** Reports in media of harassment towards activist Somaya Mahmud.
- **04.07.2018:** Reports in media of hostility and discrimination as experienced by 'Amna.'
- **26.09.2018:** *Ireland's Jihadis* documentary airs on Irish television.
- **November 2018:** Generation Identity UK and Ireland, accompanied by associates, film at various locations around Ireland.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ITALY
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

The last political elections in March 2018 highlighted the issues connected to migration and the flows of political refugees, making them central issues in the political agenda and in the public opinion. The electoral consensus with League North (Lega Nord) and its leader Matteo Salvini has increased across 2018 following an anti-migration rhetoric. Within this discursive frame, the issues of Islam and Muslim communities have drawn particular attention through the stereotype of their incompatibility with Christian and Western cultures, and claims that Islam is a religion based on terrorism. The xenophobic and anti-Islam climate fostered by the traditional political players from the right wing, Lega Nord and Fratelli d'Italia, by the extreme-right movements (Casa Pound and Forza Nuova), and by the most conservative branches of the mass media, such as *Il Giornale*, has caused very negative effects on a social level, legitimising racist behaviours. Physical and verbal attacks on immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and Muslim citizens have increased in the north and south of Italy, leading to dramatic events such as the wounding by gunshot of six migrants from Nigeria in Macerata on 3 February and the murder of a Senegalese street seller, Idy Diene (54), in Florence on 5 March. Moreover, as outlined by research (see Vox Diritti), the hate speech towards Muslim communities has increased, reflecting the birth of a widespread hostility in Italian society towards cultural diversity. The response of civil society, the democratic associations, and an important part of the Catholic world has definitely been consistent, but it appears to be ineffective in terms of opposing this drift. The collaboration between these realities and Muslim NGO is becoming more and more urgent in order to contain the situation that is jeopardising the democratic structures and the future of civil coexistence in Italy.

Sintesi

Le ultime elezioni politiche del marzo del 2018 hanno evidenziato un'enfasi sui temi legati all'immigrazione e ai flussi di rifugiati politici quale problema centrale nell'agenda politica e nell'opinione pubblica. Il consenso elettorale verso la Lega Nord e il suo leader Matteo Salvini si è accresciuto lungo tutto il 2018 sulla spinta di una retorica anti-immigrazione. All'interno di questo frame discorsivo la questione dell'Islam e delle comunità musulmane ha avuto una particolare attenzione attraverso il solito stereotipato armamentario collegato all'incompatibilità con la nostra cultura cristiana e occidentale, e con i richiami ad una religione del terrore. Il clima xenofobo e anti-Islam alimentato dai tradizionali attori politici della destra, Lega Nord e Fratelli d'Italia, dei movimenti di estrema destra (Casa Pound a Forza Nuova) e dai settori più conservatori dei mass-media, come ad esempio Il Giornale, ha avuto effetti molto negativi a livello sociale legittimando comportamenti di stampo razzista. Si sono accresciuti sia al Nord che al Sud gli attacchi fisici e verbali nei confronti dei migranti, richiedenti asilo, rifugiati e cittadini musulmani fino ad arrivare ad eventi drammatici quali il ferimento di sei migranti nigeriani a Macerata il 3 febbraio e l'omicidio di un venditore ambulante senegalese a Firenze, Idy Diene di 54 anni, il 5 marzo.

Inoltre, come rilevato dalle ricerche (vedi VoxDiritti) è aumentato nel corso del 2018 il discorso d'odio nei confronti delle comunità islamiche, specchio di una diffusa penetrazione nella società italiana di ostilità verso le diversità culturali. La risposta della società civile, delle associazioni democratiche e di una parte importante del mondo cattolico è stata sicuramente ampia, ma appare inefficace a contrastare questa deriva. Sempre più urgente diventa la collaborazione tra queste realtà e le NGOs musulmane al fine di arginare questa situazione che mette in crisi gli stessi assetti democratici e il futuro della convivenza civile in Italia.

Country Profile

Country: Italy

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary government

Ruling Parties: Five Stars and League North

Opposition Parties: Democratic Party, Free and Equal +Europe (centre-left parties), and Forza Italia

Last Elections: 2018 Legislative Election: Chamber of Deputies: Five Stars, 133 seats; Centre-Right, 151 seats (League North: 17,3% equal, to 73 seats); Centre-Left, 88 seats; Left, 14 seats; Far Right, 0 seats; Senate of Republic: Five Stars, 68 seats; Centre-Right, 77 seats (League North: 17,6% equal to 37 seats); Centre-Left, 43 seats; Left, 4 seats; Far-Right, 0 seats.

Total Population: 60.483.973 million (National Institute of Statistic, January 2018)

Major Languages: Italian

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: Regarding 2018, there is no official data on racism and discrimination; the public agencies such as UNAR (National Office Racial Antidiscrimination) have not published specific statistics or reports in the last year. The last official report is from the OCSE based on a report by the Ministry of Interior in 2016 that documented 33 racist incidents.

Major Religions (% of Population): 74,4% Catholic Church, 22,6% Irreligious, 3,0% Other (of which 15% are Muslims)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 2.800.000 (4,8%) (PEW Research, 2017).

Main Muslim Community Organisations: UCOI (Unione delle comunità islamiche italiane), CoReIs (Comunità religiosa islamica italiana), Giovani Musulmani d'Italia

Main NGOs Combatting Islamophobia: In Italy, there are specific NGOs or public agencies dealing directly with Islamophobic issues. Islamophobia arises in the wider issue of defending the citizenship or human rights of migrants and of anti-discrimination complaints. Some important Catholic and laic associations at a national level such as ACLI (Associazioni Cristiane dei Lavoratori Italiani), ARCI (Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana), and ANPI (Associazione Nazionale Partigiani d'Italia), are historically at the forefront of the fight against all forms of discrimination and racism in Italian society. Some NGOs like Lunaria every year promote analysis and reports on racist and Islamophobic attacks in society. The Italian context is characterised by a significant variety of local civil society players who act against situations of exclusion and discrimination of migrants and Muslim communities. In this sense, the role of Muslim NGOs is important such as UCOII (Unione delle comunità islamiche italiane), CoReIs (Comunità religiosa islamica italiana), and Giovani Mu-

sulmani d'Italia, but there is not a single "voice" against Islamophobia that is representative of all Muslim associations and communities.

Far Right Parties: Forza Nuova, Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore

Far Right Movements: Casa Pound, Lealtà e Azione, Militia

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Prayer Ban:** No (depends on local decision)

Introduction

The latest report on Islamophobia in Italy (2017) reported a significant concern about the increase of xenophobic and racist contents regarding migrants, asylum seekers, and Muslims in the public opinion and political discourse. During the election campaign, this concern became a tangible reality through a massive “bombardment” of hate speech, promoted by League North and its leader Matteo Salvini and supported by other far right parties like Fratelli d’Italia (Brothers of Italy). The negative representations of Islam and Muslim communities, as well as immigrants in general, have been the central features of a political struggle characterised by the nationalistic slogan “Italians First!”

After the results of the elections and the birth of a new government formed by the coalition of the League North and Five Stars, Matteo Salvini was appointed Minister of Interior, becoming responsible for the migration policy and the relations with religious minorities. Therefore, the xenophobic dynamic is still present and active. The consensus in favour of the extremist positions of League North is well proven by the increase of its votes in the last political elections, with a switch from 17% to more than 30% of potential votes registered by all opinion polls.

Italy does not have an official record of the events or attacks on Italian Muslim communities. There are some NGOs and specific anti-racist associations that collect data from different sources, mainly from the mass media. According to their analyses, it is clear that there has been an increase of Islamophobic content and hate speech in social media, politics, and mass media. A significant example, for instance, is the increase of hate tweets against Muslims from 22.435 in 2016 to 64.934 in the period 2017/2018. A different report on the social and political situation shows that Italy is increasingly becoming intolerant towards immigrants and Muslims¹.

A survey carried out by the Social Change Initiative in partnership with More in Common on the attitudes of Italians towards immigration has highlighted the concern that people with Islamic backgrounds will not integrate in Italian society: 40% of Italians claim that Italian identity and Islam are incompatible.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

During 2018, there was an important increase of physical and verbal attacks against immigrants, Muslims, and asylum seekers committed mainly by militants belonging to organised extreme-right movements, but also, in specific cases, by “normal” citizens, justified for their use of violence by the widespread xenophobic climate that has

1. “Immigrazione in Italia tra realtà e percezione”, Istituto Cattaneo, <https://www.cattaneo.org/2018/08/27/immigrazione-in-italia-tra-realta-e-percezione/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

become hegemonic in the public discourse. There is no official data from institutions or public agencies, but various NGOs or anti-fascist movements have promoted the collection of data about physical and verbal attacks. Some examples are *Cronache di ordinario razzismo* (Chronicles of Ordinary Racism) and the site <http://www.ecn.org//antifa>. The lack of official data on hate crimes and religious racism in Italy represents an important deficit for the enhancement of specific anti-discrimination policies and for the interventions to fight “societal racism”. Another important point of discussion regards researchers’ difficulty in differentiating migrant/asylum seeker/refugee victims of hate crimes from their religious memberships, and thus their difficulty in defining the various types of harassment. However, in the case of asylum seekers or refugees we know from official data that, in most cases, they come from Muslim countries (Tunisia, Sudan, Pakistan, Nigeria, and Algeria).² The most tragic events have been the wounding by gunshot of six migrants from Nigeria in Macerata on 3 February, and the murder of a Senegalese street seller, Idy Diene (54), in Florence on 5 March.³ In the first case, the assailant was a young Italian citizen, Luca Traini, ex-candidate in the administrative election with the League North and close to neo-fascist groups. His justification, reported after the racist attack, was related to the murder of a girl by a Nigerian immigrant. In the second case, the murderer was an Italian man, Roberto Pirrone, retired and 65 years old, who declared he had gone out to commit suicide but after changing his mind, he shot the young African man. The victim was a leading figure of the Senegalese community in Florence and in the local mosque, as reported by friends and local associations.⁴

In a small city of Giulia in Friuli-Venezia, a severed pig’s head was placed on the fence of a property hosting eight asylum seekers, at the end of the month of Ramadan. At the end of August, the keeper of a mosque in Salerno was heavily offended and beaten. In his statements after the brutal attack, he said that “they addressed me with ‘Fucking Muslim’”.⁵ In Padua, on a night of mid-March, an unknown person set fire to the front doorway of the local mosque. The police officers found evidence

2. See the official data from the Ministry of Interior: http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/cruscotto_giornaliero_11-01-2019.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

3. Agnese Ananasso, “Raid Razzista A Macerata, Spari Contro Gli Africani: 6 Feriti. Fermato Italiano Incensurato”, *La Repubblica*, 3 February 2018, https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/02/03/news/macerata_sparatoria-187934230/, (Access date: 2 September 2019); di Simone Innocenti, Matteo Leoni, Jacopo Storni, “Firenze, Spari Su Ponte Vespucci Ucciso Un Ambulante Lira Dei Senegalesi, Danni In Centro”, *Corriere Fiorentino*, 5 March 2018, https://corrierefiorentino.corriere.it/firenze/notizie/cronaca/18_marzo_05/firenze-spari-ponte-vespucci-ferito-uomo-colore-67e87d22-2065-11e8-b9db-31561b61aa5f.shtml?refresh_ce-cp, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

4. Annalisa Camilli, “Un Paese In Cui I Neri Vengono Uccisi Per Strada”, *Internazionale*, 7 March 2018, <https://www.internazionale.it/bloc-notes/annalisa-camilli/2018/03/07/firenze-senegalese-ucciso>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

5. Redazione L’Occhio di Salerno, “Razzismo A Salerno, Aggredito Ragazzo Convertito All’islam. È Il Curatore Della Moschea”, *L’Occhio di Salerno*, 28 August 2018, <https://salerno.occhionotizie.it/razzismo-salerno-aggredito-ragazzo-convertito-islam/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

of arson.⁶ In other cases, police forces played a part. The most serious case was the assault by three police officers (*Carabinieri*) on 28 June on a migrant day-labourer, with regular status, found in his house with guns and a copy of the Quran. He was subsequently arrested and taken into custody for no concrete reason. A few days later, the three *Carabinieri* were arrested for “fabricating” evidence against the migrant worker and unfairly accusing him of being an “Islamist terrorist”.⁷

Employment

In line with the lack of data on racist events, there is no specific, empirical evidence of Islamophobia regarding the complex and varying world of employment. All the Italian trade unions have a migration office which manages the main issues of migration and defends the rights of migrant workers, but they don't have a detailed analysis of discriminations based on religion. Moreover, a recent and detailed research on anti-discrimination by the main Italian trade union (CGIL) shows that anti-discrimination initiatives are sometimes inefficient because of their fragmentation, heterogeneity, and the inadequate knowledge of anti-discrimination laws.⁸

The survey “Work Force in Europe 2018” has highlighted that Italy has the highest rate of workers who feel discriminated against (42%), while 4% of the Italian sample (1.300 interviewees) declared being discriminated because of their religion (mainly of Islam).⁹

Two events have had a wide appeal on the general public. In mid-January, a judge of the Bologna Court denied a young lawyer her right to assist the judicial hearing because she was wearing the “Islamic veil”. According to press, the young lawyer refused to take it off and left the courtroom declaring that the judge would have to explain his behaviour by the fact “that this is the respect for our culture and our traditions”.¹⁰ In June, one of the main Italian trade unions reported that in one of the most important low-cost supermarkets (Eurospin) a migrant worker of the Islamic faith was transferred to another workplace because of his previous request to suspend the night shift during Ramadan.¹¹

6. “Incendiata Nella Notte La Porta Della Moschea Di Padova”, Ait Veneto, 8 March 2018, http://www.ansa.it/veneto/notizie/2018/03/05/incendiata-nella-notte-la-porta-della-moschea-di-padova_a1deb842-a469-4ef8-bc44-a7d5b204dce6.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. “Arrestati Tre Carabinieri, False Accuse A Immigrato”, Ait Cronaca, 27 June 2018, http://www.ansa.it/sito/notizie/cronaca/2018/06/27/arrestati-tre-carabinieri-false-accuse-a-immigrato_c581d86a-f987-4afa-a65f-5bcaeb85992.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

8. Puppa F., “Sindacato, Lavoratori Immigrati E Discriminazioni Razziali Nell'italia Della Crisi”, Mondì Migrants, September 2018.

9. “Discriminazioni Sul Posto Di Lavoro”, Avvenire, 9 March 2018, <https://www.avvenire.it/economia/pagine/adp-discriminazioni-sul-posto-di-lavoro>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

10. Guiseppe Baldessarro, “L'avvocata In Aula Con Il Velo: ‘Cacciata Dal Giudice, Ma Ho Vinto Io’”, Rep, 17 January 2018, https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/generale/2018/01/17/news/l_avvocata_in_aula_con_il_velo_cacciata_dal_giudice_ho_vinto_io_-186711737/, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

11. “Chiede Di Non Lavorare Di Notte Durante Il Ramadan E L'azienda Per Punizione Lo Trasferisce”, Torino.repubblica, 4 June 2018, https://torino.repubblica.it/cronaca/2018/06/04/news/chiede_di_non_lavorare_di_notte_durante_il_ramadan_e_l_azienda_per_punizione_lo_trasferisce-198170994/, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Education

Generally, the Italian education system is strongly intercultural and open to the integration of children with different cultural backgrounds. In the last years, including 2018, there have been many examples of positive dynamics, but also some negative events of ethnic segregation in some schools of the metropolitan inner areas because of the effects of “white flight”.¹² A recent qualitative research carried out by the Catholic University of Milan entitled “The Religious Dimension in Multicultural Schools. Identity and Membership, Behaviours and Symbols, Conflicts and Values” highlighted how religious memberships are “ignored” in everyday relationships among students. Therefore, it is clear that the issue of religion in schools does not appear to play a role in school life. Moreover, the plurality of religious memberships does not seem to be a source of open conflict in classrooms, even if the largest part of critical situations recorded are connected to students with Islamic backgrounds.¹³

The multicultural school and history textbooks have been the object of a strong debate. For example, in October 2018, the newspaper *La Verità* published two articles against the educational book for secondary schools because of the “false positive representation of Islamic civilization”. The first article was a front-page editorial by director Maurizio Belpietro entitled “Brainwashing at Secondary Schools. The School Books Promote Islam”. The second was a long “critical” article by Francesco Borgonovo entitled “Brainwashed in the Classroom. In Our Children’s Book, Only the Christians Do Holy War”, which aimed to illustrate all the “supposed” mistakes of the author and to emphasise the implicit violence of Islam throughout history.

Politics

The political dynamic in 2018, mostly because of the national and local electoral campaigns, focused disruptively on openly racist and xenophobic tones. The often reiterated political statements of League North by its leader Matteo Salvini are based on the typical aversive claims of “invasion”, “Italians First”, or “Close the borders”. We are witnessing a process of the dehumanisation of the foreigner identified in various ways, particularly in the case of asylum seekers and Muslims. This hegemonic representation is connected to a continuous devaluation of democratic civil society, NGOs and part of the Catholic Church, including the figure of the Pope, involved in the integration and in interfaith dialogue.

12. Matteo Piolatto, “La Segregazione Nella Scuola Secondaria Italiana”, Weltforum.it, 6 June 2018, <https://weltforum.it/il-punto/separati-a-scuola/la-segregazione-nella-scuola-secondaria-italiana/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

13. Maddalena Colombo, Rosangela Lodigiani, Mariagrazia Santagati and Antonio Cuciniello, “La Dimensione Religiosa Nelle Scuole Multiculturali. Identità E Appartenenze, Comportamenti E Simboli, Conflitti E Valori”, Università Cattolica Del Sacro Cuore, 12 January 2018, <https://progetti.unicatt.it/progetti-milan-eventi-la-dimensione-religiosa-nelle-scuole-multiculturali-identita-e-appartenenze-comportamenti>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

The report “Barometer of Hate” published by Amnesty International has monitored the hate speech present in the social profiles (Facebook and Twitter) of the candidates in the last electoral campaign in Italy.¹⁴ Most of the hate speech analysed came from League North (51% of statements) and Brothers of Italy (27%). The migration has been the key issue of the collected data (91%), followed by the Islamophobic attitudes (11%). The main topics concern the typical stereotypes attributed to Islam and the figure of the Muslim: invasion, too many mosques in the national context, the subordination/inferiorisation of women and, most importantly, “the perception of Islam not as a religion but as an imposition of its ‘own’ law and justice” (Amnesty International, 2018).

Some paradigmatic examples are the following statements by Matteo Salvini expressed in his electoral campaign:

Once we have the government, we will regulate every Islamic presence in the country. Exactly as in difficult times Oriana Fallaci claimed, we are under attack. Our culture, society, customs, lifestyle are at risk (...) The skin colour is not so important, there is a real danger: centuries of history that risk disappearing if the Islamisation prevails.

(ANSA, 1/15/2018)¹⁵

The cultural issue is if Islam, nowadays, can be compatible with our values, with our freedom and with our Constitution I have strong doubts (...) The fact that Islam represents a risk is obvious if the Islamic declaration of human rights stipulates that Islamic justice prevails over national justice. This is a problem for me, I'd rather not be like in Great Britain, with the Islamic courts instead of the English courts.

(*quotidiano.net* 2/8/2018),¹⁶

The anti-migration and Islamophobic climates continued after the end of the national elections, and they represent the most important topic in the political strategy of League North. In the official “Agreement of Government” signed by League North and Five Stars, the issue of immigration is significant in terms of a much stronger control and repression of the migration flows. Specifically, “the control and the immediate closure of all radical Islamic associations, as well as of irregular mosques and places of worship” was highlighted.¹⁷ Other significant political play-

14. The posts, tweets, videos of 1.419 candidates were monitored daily during the last three weeks of the electoral campaign; for all methodological information and the complete report see: “Un Osservatorio Sui Discorsi D’odio In Campagna Elettorale”, Amnesty.it, <https://www.amnesty.it/barometro-odio/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

15. “Il ritorno della razza”, *Cronache di ordinario razzismo*, 14 June 2018, (<http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org/il-ritorno-della-razza-lunaria>), (Access date: 3 September 2019).

16. “Elezioni 2018, Salvini Va All’attacco: ‘Islam Incompatibile Con La Costituzione’”, *Quotidiano.net*, 8 February 2018, <https://www.quotidiano.net/politica/elezioni-2018-programma-lega-nord-1.3711353>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

17. Pasini N. and Regalia M. “L’immigrazione Al Centro: Le Elezioni Del 2018 In Italia”, in *Fondazione Ismu, XXIV Rapporto sulle immigrazioni*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2018.

ers have been very active. The militants of extreme right parties, Forza Nuova and Fratelli d'Italia, organised different manifestations against the opening of Islamic centres or mosques, and the presence of Muslim communities. For example, on 6 October, in the city of Bologna, Forza Nuova organised a demonstration against the construction of a mosque and displayed banners against Archbishop Matteo Zuppi calling him a “heretic” because he was in favour of a dialogue with the local Muslim community. (Fig. 1) In January, before the electoral campaign, activists of Fratelli d'Italia, in a small city close to Florence, affixed big posters in the area where the local mosque would be built with the claims “No Mosque” and “Italians First”.¹⁸ In June, counsellors of the Municipality of Naples exhibited a big banner with the writing “Islam’s Square” (instead of “Garibaldi Square”) fuelling an argument with the Mayor of Naples Luigi De Magistris, who is considered “guilty of permitting the historical centre of the city to completely change because of the uncontrolled arrivals of asylum seekers and illegal migrants”.¹⁹



Figure 1: Protest against the mosque in Bologna by Forza Nuova (6 October 2018),²⁰

18. Cronache Di Ordinario Razzismo, www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

19. Redazione na, “Napoli, striscione vergognoso di FdI: ‘Piazza dell’Islam’”, FarodiRoma, 18 July 2018, <http://www.farodiroma.it/napoli-striscione-vergognoso-di-fdi-piazza-dellislam>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

20. Antonella Scarcella - Noemi Di Leonardo, “Forza Nuova: ‘Sradicare Islamizzazione’. Antifascisti Protestano, Traffico Bloccato”, Bologna Today, 6 October 2019, <https://www.bolognatoday.it/cronaca/forza-nuova-moschea-san-domenico.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 2: Large banner affixed by Fratelli d'Italia in a central square in Naples (18 July 2018).

Media

The aggressive articles from the traditional right-wing press (*Il Giornale*, *La Verità*, *Il Tempo*, and *Libero*) against migration, Islam, and Muslim communities continued in 2018, in line with a communicative xenophobic strategy in order to negatively represent the Islamic culture as incompatible with “our customs” and characterised by violence and terrorism. The rhetoric is aimed at promoting a vision of Islam in terms of public order and/or security linked with the so-called illegal Islamic centres or mosques. The anti-Islam communication strategy promoted by these newspapers is joined with the blaming of all the political, religious, and civil players involved at different levels in the defence of the rights of migrants and/or Islamic communities. Some important opinion leaders such as Marcello Veneziani, columnist for *Il Tempo*, and Giancarlo Mazzucca, columnist for *Il Giornale*, wrote different articles against Pope Francesco and the most progressive Catholic magazines (e.g. *Famiglia Cristiana*, *Avvenire*), which they consider guilty of opening a dialogue with Islam and of being the “enemies of real Christianity”.²¹

During the intense electoral campaign, *Il Tempo* published a front page claiming the following:

21. “I Nemici Della Civiltà Cristiana”, Marcello Veneziani, 27 July 2018, <http://www.marcelloveneziani.com/articoli/i-nemici-della-civilta-cristiana/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019); Giancarlo Mazzucca, “Il Papa Non Frena Il Dialogo Con L'islam”, *il Giornale.it*, 1 April 2018, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/politica/papa-non-frena-dialogo-lislam-1511169.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

It is important to highlight the numerous news and/or opinions strongly contrary to Pope Francesco and all the different figures of progressive Catholic clergymen, bishops and representatives of the Catholic Church who openly defend refugees, migrants, and Muslims.

Islam votes for the left parties. Exclusive: In the mosques and in the worship places Muslims are invited to vote against Salvini and Meloni. If the right wing wins, there will be no *Ius soli* and restrictions to migrants and irregular religious centres.

(*Il Tempo*, 18 February, 2018)

Some days later *Il Giornale* published a similar and irritating title:

Call of the iman: In the ballot box Allah sees you. Muslims, vote for the left parties.

(*Il Giornale*, 28 February, 2018)

The mass media discourse builds that we call the “Islamophobic common sense” which normalises the xenophobic and racist attitudes in the public opinion. The year 2018 has been paradigmatic of this dynamic in the media and it is only in part justified by the electoral period. Most of the news in the right-wing newspapers regarding Islam or Muslims emphasise a sort of obsession in terms of “submission to Sharia” or the “Islamist effect”. For example, *Il Giornale* on 5 May, 2018, published some news about a project promoted by a hospital in Lodi (an important city close to Milan) regarding Muslim women and their medical treatment by female doctors in the following terms: “Attempts of Sharia. Islam conquers Italian hospitals”.²² The word “submission” is very important, and it constantly recalls the “threatening configuration” of Islam. The “alchemy” consists in the transformation of normal situations of integration into risks of Islamisation of Italian society.

However, the obsession of representing Islam as a brutal religion is well exemplified by *Liberio*, which, after the tragedy of the collapse of the bridge in Genoa in August, published an Islamophobic article along with the following title:

For the Islamics it has been Allah: The bridge collapsed because you have not built the mosques.

(*Liberio*, 17 August 2018) (Fig. 3)

The newspaper *Il Giornale*, again, in 2018 published two books inspired by explicit anti-Islamic feelings. On 15 September, it published a book focused on the figure of Oriana Fallaci entitled *The Enemies of Oriana. Fallaci, Islam and the Politically Correct*, where the author repeatedly dwells on the rhetoric of the famous reporter against the menace of Islamisation towards Italian and European societies and the presumed “buonismo” (bleeding-heart liberalism) as an accessory to this potential threat. Later, on 8 November, the newspaper offered its readers the pamphlet *The Black Book of Italian Islam* that focused on an analysis that

22. Nico Di Giuseppe, “Lodi, L’ospedale S’inchina All’islam: Solo Personale Donna In Corsia”, *il Giornale.it*, 4 May 2018, <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/cronache/lo-di-ospedale-si-inchina-allislam-solo-personale-donna-1522465.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

took for granted that Muslims are an “internal enemy” and Islam is a religion of violence against which an intervention to defend our social, cultural, and moral order is needed.

Previously, at the beginning of February, a journalist of *Il Foglio* published the book *Il suicidio della cultura occidentale: Così l’Islam radicale sta vincendo* (The Suicide of Western Culture: This Is How Radical Islam Is Winning). The thesis of this book is a “typical” topic: the threat of Islamisation towards Europe, and the defeat of Christianity and Western cultures because of our “multiculturalist” decay and softness.



Figure 3. Front page of the newspaper *Libero*, 17 August 2018.²³



Figure 4: Cover of Alberto Giannoni's book *The Black Book of Italian Islam*.²⁴

23. Andrea Morigi, “Per Gli Islamici È Stato Allah ‘È Crollato Perché Non Avete Fatto Le Moschee’”, Pressreader, 17 August 2018, <https://www.pressreader.com/italy/libero/20180817/281668255817363>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. Alberto Giannoni, *The Black Book of Italian Islam*.

Justice System²⁵

In many cases, the role of the justice system is fundamental in applying the anti-discrimination law in Italy, in sustaining the legal citizenship rights of Muslim communities, and in avoiding verbal and physical attacks. Following are two paradigmatic examples: in June, the court of Milan based on the Anti-Discrimination Law condemned the mayor of Albettono (a village close to Vicenza), a proponent member of League North, for racist statements against migrants, Roma people, and Muslims during certain television and/or radio interviews. On a radio program, the mayor had declared, “We’ll be the largest European pig breeding farm if they want to open a mosque”.²⁶ In December, another important sentence was promulgated by the Regional and Administrative Court of Lombardy against the Regional Law adopted by the Government of Lombardy in 2015 regarding the construction of mosques. For the court, the regional law would be an obstacle to the freedom of religion enshrined in the Constitution as the former laid out explicit norms restricting the latter; this verdict was in line with the sentence in 2016 of the Constitutional Court over the illegitimacy of regional standards.²⁷

Internet

In continuity with the 2017 report, the relationship between the Internet, social media, racism, and fake news has been decisive in the widespread misrecognition and false representations of Islam and Muslim citizens.

In 2018, the NGO Vox Diritti published the report “Map of Intolerance in Italy”, a mapping of hate speech on Twitter. The analysis of 6.544.637 tweets showed the increase of hate tweets in 2018 (from March to May) to 36,93% compared to 32,45% in 2017 (from May to November). According to the results, the growth of hate tweets against Muslims is significant: Islamophobic tweets increased from 22.435 in 2016 to 64.934 in the period 2017/2018.²⁸

Regarding the presence on the Internet of extreme-right movements and neo-fascist groups directly involved in the “Islamophobic marketing”, there is a large

25. We want to thank lawyer Alberto Guariso, involved for many years in the defence of the rights of immigrants and Muslim communities, for his information on the justice system and employment.

26. “Odio Razziale: Joe Formaggio Condannato A Milano”, *Vicenza Today*, 07 June 2018, <http://www.vicenzatoday.it/cronaca/sindaco-albettone-joe-formaggio-condannato-tribunale-milano-razzismo-rom-migranti.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019). For the sentence see: “Il Sindaco Di Albettono Offende Profughi, Rom E Musulmani: Condannato A Risarcire Il Danno Alle Associazioni”, *Associazione Per Gli Studi Giuridici Sull’immigrazione*, 8 June 2019, <https://www.asgi.it/discriminazioni/il-sindaco-di-albettone-offende-profughi-rom-e-musulmani-condannato-a-risarcire-il-danno-alle-associazioni/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. “Legge Anti-Moschee, Altolà Del Tar Della Lombardia”, *Il Giorno Milano*, 24 August 2018, <https://www.ilgiorno.it/milano/cronaca/legge-anti-moschea-1.4104055>, (Access date: 3 September 2019); Redazione, “Legge Anti-Moschee, Nuovo Stop, Riforma”, *9 October 2018*, <https://riforma.it/it/articolo/2018/10/09/legge-anti-moschee-nuovo-stop>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

28. Redazione Vox, “Ecco Le Mappe Di Vox Contro L’intolleranza”, *Vox*, <http://www.voxdiritti.it/ecco-le-mappe-di-vox-contro-lintolleranza>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

variety of FB pages or Internet sites as outlined in previous reports. In this frame, it is noteworthy to underline the importance of the neo-fascist movements Forza Nuova and Casa Pound in the social media and the Internet with their anti-Islam and anti-migration discursive strategy. In 2018 both movements' FB pages reached 273.697 and 250.914 followers respectively, with a widespread presence of local headquarter FB pages, 97 and 101 respectively. In 2018, two news sites were born on Facebook: "No Islam Italia" (No Islam Italy) whose page reached 10.425 likes, and "No Invasion, No Islam" with 18.575 likes.²⁹

The electoral campaign and the formation of the new government played a determinant role in the increase of Islamophobic hate speech in terms of "sovereignism". Some Internet pages such as "Riscatto Nazionale" (National Liberation, www.riscattonazionale.org) or *Identità.com* (Identity) are paradigmatic of the relationship between the xenophobic news and online attacks against Islam and Muslim groups in defence of "Italianess". The increase of fake news or "bad news" about Islamic issues (and immigrants in general) is highlighted by the large audience of sites such as www.bastabugie.it linked to ultraconservative Catholic thought, or iNews24 with its recall to "Italians First" whose FB's page has reached 1.5 million likes in 2018.

Recently, the famous racist and Islamophobic site of fake news voxnews.info, repeatedly closed down by postal police, has been connected with another successful site, whose name is paradigmatic: "all the crimes of immigrants" (tuttiicriminidegliimmigrati.com).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The connection between opinion leaders, bloggers, newspapers, FB pages, Internet sites, and leaders (or leading figures) of far right parties or movements is the most significant issue of the Islamophobia network in Italy. This Islamophobic "nebula" present some main recognisable players that rely on a common strategy, but not a specific think tank. It is possible to identify a synergy between the ultraconservative sectors of the Catholic Church, mass media (the right-wing newspapers *La Verità*, *Il Giornale*, and *Liberò*), and the cultural system, with the political parties joined by the neo-fascist movements that promote and reiterate sovereignism and racist discourse (such as Lega Nord, Fratelli d'Italia, Casa Pound, and Forza Nuova). In 2018, the election time and the resulting government were critical factors in the increase of the pseudo-debate in negative terms against Muslims and Islam.

29. No Islam Italia, Facebook, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/NoIslamItalia>, https://www.facebook.com/Nicola-costanzoo/?ref=br_rs, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Political Initiatives

In certain occasions, the main centre-left party (Democratic Party) has played an important role in supporting the needs of Muslim communities at a local level. For example, the Democratic Party in Lodi, an important city close to Milan, gave its headquarters for the end of Ramadan; the event was participated by one thousand Muslim men and women from the city and the surroundings.

The role of the ANPI, the national association of Italian Partisans, in fighting the extreme right-wing party or neo-fascist movements in Italy by denouncing them to police and organizing public demonstrations in every part of Italy to sustain the dialogue with migrant and Muslims communities is also crucial. The ANPI represents a fundamental “enemy” of neo-fascist movements or groups in terms of resistance to racism and Islamophobia.

In May, the organizing committee of the Islamic constituent in Italy showed its concern over the draft of the “Government Agreement” signed by the League North and Five Stars. The text contains strong claims stigmatising religious practices of Islam and reaffirming typical stereotypes and prejudices that view Islam as a serious threat.³⁰ In a following interview, a spokesperson from the mosque of Turin and the imam of the mosque of Florence declared their worries about the statements of the Minister of Interior Matteo Salvini aimed at criminalising the Islamic communities.

The Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities of Trieste signed a historical shared document expressing strong dissent against the demonstration of Forza Nuova on the celebration day of the patron saint of the city.

From the perspective of fighting the anti-Islamic prejudice that is widespread in Italian society, the project “Donne Unite contro l’Islamofobia” (Women United against Islamophobia) promoted by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR)³¹ is significant. In this dialogical frame it is important to mention the organisation of meetings for the “Christian-Islamic Dialogue Day” on 27 October in Ravenna whose main theme was “No Mosque Is Illegal”. In these significant meetings, organisers have wanted to reaffirm the principle of “religious freedom” enacted in the Italian Constitution that cannot be subordinated to urbanistic rules or to any popular referendum in order to approve the construction of new places of worship.³²

30. Redazione, “Islamofobia E Xenofobia Nel Programma Di Governo. La Denuncia Della Costituente Islamica”, FarodiRoma, 18 May 2018, <http://www.farodiroma.it/islamofobia-e-xenofobia-nel-programma-di-governo-la-denuncia-della-costituente-islamica>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

31. “Donne Unite Contro L’Islamofobia”, Centro Per La Cooperazione Internazionale, <https://www.cci.tn.it/CCI/Eventi/Donne-unite-contro-l-islamofobia>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

32. “27 Ottobre, Giornata Ecumenica Del Dialogo Cristiano-İslamico”, Radio Voce Della Speranza, 24 October 2018, <https://radiovoceellasperanza.it/27-ottobre-giornata-ecumenica-del-dialogo-cristiano-islamico>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Another important step towards the dialogue between local public institutions and Islam is the “Progetto di formazione dei ministri di culto islamico” (Project of Training for Islamic Ministers) born from the impulse of the Prefecture of Brescia and realised through the collaboration between the University of Brescia and the Islamic Centres of Brescia and its district. At the beginning of December, more than 50 diplomas were handed out to all those who had joined the project. Some of these new “ministers” will be operative inside the prison of Brescia to combat the process of radicalisation.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Islamophobia in Italy is real. We can confirm the existence of two anti-Muslim feelings strongly connected. We have called the first one “Political Islamophobia” because of the expressions of the main leaders of right and extreme-right parties or movements, based on the notion of “securitisation”, criminalisation, fear of Islam as a “terroristic religion”, and a strong struggle against the mosque which is seen as a threat. The second one is “Cultural Islamophobia”, related to the specific opinions that part of the mass media release, by portraying Muslim people only in connection to the migration phenomenon, and Islamic culture as not integrable and as deeply sexist.³³

This double and interconnected configuration of Islamophobia in politics and culture needs to be fought with a multiplicity of instruments and players at every level of civil life.

Regarding NGOs, democratic and anti-racist movements, and left-wing parties, it is necessary that they act together at local and national levels to enhance the struggle against the widespread racism and Islamophobia in Italy. It is a difficult task in the current sociopolitical situation because consensus with the anti-migrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric of League North and of its leader Matteo Salvini is very strong.

As Censis, an independent centre of social research, highlighted in its last annual report, Italian society is experiencing a sort of “psychic sovereignty” defined by a closure, a retreat, and an intolerance towards diversity.³⁴

Another significant analysis has shown with extreme clarity that Italians bear negative feelings towards Islam and Muslims. The research promoted by the Social Change Initiative in partnership with More in Common on the attitudes of Italians toward immigration and refugees has highlighted that “the concern that people from Islamic backgrounds may not integrate into Italian society is reflected into the point of view held by 40 per cent of Italians, claiming that Italian identity and Islam are incompatible”.³⁵

33. This double representation is deeply present in the Islamophobic ideology; see: Padovan D. and Alietti A., “The Racialisation of Public Discourse”, *European Societies*, 14:2, 2012, pp. 186-202.

34. “About the final report”, CENSIS, http://www.censis.it/10?shadow_ricerca=121097, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

35. Tim Dixon, Stephen Hawkins, Laurence Heijbroek, Miriam Juan-Torres and François-Xavier Demoures, “Attitudes towards National Identity, Immigration and Refugees in Italy”, July 2018, <https://www.thesocialchangeinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Italy-EN-Execuative-Summary.compressed.pdf>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

According to a Eurispes report in Italy in 2018, just 28% of Italians know the right number of foreigners (8% of the entire population) and, above all, only 31.2% evaluate correctly the presence of immigrants following the Islamic religion, which is 3%.³⁶

On 29 May, the PEW Research Centre published the report “Being Christian in Western Europe” based on the survey carried out in 2017.³⁷ From the main empirical evidence, the Italian sample has the highest rate of people who know “not too much” or “nothing at all” about the Muslim religion and its practices (74%), and the highest rate related to negative responses regarding the “acceptance of a Muslim as member of the family” (43% of the sample compared with the average of the entire sample which stood at 24%) and “a Muslim as a neighbour” (21% compared with the average of 11%). Fifty-three per cent of the Italian interviewees declared that Islam is fundamentally incompatible with the “country’s culture and values” putting Italy at the second place in the whole European sample behind only Finland. Another significant source is the report “Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey Being Black in the EU” promoted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Among the most relevant “grounds for discrimination experienced in four areas of daily life in the 5 years before”, the Italian sample of black minorities declared to be discriminated on religious grounds in 10% of the cases, ending up at the third place behind Denmark and Sweden.³⁸

Another important observation regards Islamic organisations, which are fragmented and weakly represented. Consequently, there are different obstacles to find a unitary “voice” against the negative public discourse that affects Muslim collectives.³⁹

Moreover, under the League North-Five Stars government the path of institutional dialogue between the state and Islamic organizations signed by the previous government in December 2017 has been interrupted. Now, it is impossible to know when it will be possible to continue this necessary official dialogue.

In this frame of hostility and difficulty to react, the work of progressive forces should focus on building an anti-discrimination network on the different levels of everyday life and on the constant condemnation of discriminatory events/acts/laws which affect the rights of citizenship of migrants and Muslims. In this perspective, it

36. “About Rapporto Italia”, EURISPES, 2018, http://www.eurispes.eu/sites/default/files/Eurispes_Sintesi_Rapporto_Italia_2018.pdf, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

37. The survey has been realized on 15 European countries, including Italy. For all methodological information and the complete analysis, see: “Nationalism, Immigration And Minorities”, Pew Research Center, 29 May 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/05/29/nationalism-immigration-and-minorities/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

38. “Being Black in the EU”, Fra European Union Agency For Fundamental Rights, November 2018, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2018/eumidis-ii-being-black>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

39. We thank Reas Syed for his information about the dialogue between public institutions and Islamic associations and for his analysis of the fragmentation of Islamic representation at the local level.

is important to recall the significant role of the judiciary system in the application of the anti-discrimination law and in the defence of religious rights.

In terms of policy, we suggest:

1. The creation of a permanent worktable for interreligious dialogue; some significant examples of dialogue between Islamic and Catholic organisations at a local level represent a solid starting point.
2. Supporting the main Islamic organisations to find common grounds to claim their rights and to contrast the xenophobic and Islamophobic public discourses more effectively.
3. Creating a systematic and efficient system of data collection on Islamophobic, racist, and discriminatory events; some NGOs, as mentioned above, are important in this perspective but they must be supported in their job with the possibility to integrate all the main sources of data.
4. Strengthening the anti-discrimination network between NGOs, associations, trade unions, and left-wing parties, especially at a local level where it is possible to act more effectively to promote equality and justice.
5. Strengthening the fundamental political role of UNAR (National Office for Racial Anti-discrimination) in order to implement national policies against religious discrimination, above all in the contexts that are more close to inclusiveness of diversity; in this perspective it is important to sustain the work directed to create anti-racist networks inside civil society.
6. Implementing an educational policy in the school system that supports “religious literacy” to prevent conflicts and to deepen knowledge about Islam.

Chronology

- **12.01.2018** Sesto Fiorentino (Florence): Militants of the Brothers of Italy affixed a big billboard close to the lot of land designated for the construction of a mosque that stated, “No to Mosque” and “Italians First”.
- **17.01.2018** Bologna: A judge denied access to the court to a young lawyer because she was wearing the Islamic veil.
- **29.01.2018** Rome: Matteo Salvini declared that nowadays Islam is a danger and his future government would put a stop to the irregular Islamic presence in Italy.
- **03.02.2018** Macerata: Luca Traini, a supporter of far right movements such as Forza Nuova, shot a group of Nigerian immigrants; six immigrants (five men and one woman) were wounded.
- **08.02.2018** Milano: Matteo Salvini declared being against a project for the construction of an Islamic centre, claiming that “Islam is incompatible with the Italian Constitution”.

- **11.02.2018** Rome: In a working class neighbourhood of Rome, an Islamophobic writing appeared on the shutter of a shop managed by Egyptians citizens; it read, “Mohamed paedophile”.
- **12.02.2018** Turin: Giorgia Meloni, leader of Brothers of Italy, accused the director of the Egyptian Museum of promoting discounts for Arab visitors, a choice that pointed out “the sign of weak thought of Western countries”.
- **05.03.2018** Padova: During the night, unknown individuals set fire to the door of a mosque in a working class neighbourhood.
- **05.03.2018** Florence: An Italian citizen shot a Senegalese street seller, a well-known member of the local mosque.
- **07.04.2018** Milano: A young Moroccan girl was pushed into the metro by an Italian man who threatened and insulted her for wearing the Islamic veil.
- **04.06.2018** Orbassano (Turin): A Muslim worker was punished by Eurospin, a low-cost large distribution supermarket, with a transfer to another workplace because he had asked not to work during the nights of month of Ramadan.
- **25.06.2018** Giugliano (Naples): A migrant worker was assaulted at his home by three *Carabinieri* who falsified evidence (guns and the Quran) to accuse him of being an Islamist terrorist.
- **02.08.2018** Naples: A Senegalese street seller was wounded in the legs by gunfire close to the central station.
- **25.08.2018** Salerno: The keeper of the local mosque, an Italian convert, was brutally beaten up and offended while walking in the street.
- **15.09.2018** Veggia (Reggio Emilia): Demonstration of Forza Nuova against the opening of an Islamic centre leading to the decision of the local mayor to stop the project.
- **18.09.2018** Soresina (Cremona): Militants of Forza Nuova put up a banner in the central square with the writing “Your culture is only violence and fear” referring to the news of a Moroccan father who had beaten up his daughter.
- **06.10.2018** Bologna: Demonstration of Forza Nuova against the construction of a mosque. They also called Archbishop Matteo Zuppi a “heretic” because of his openness to dialogue with the Muslim community.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
KOSOVO
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

Islamophobia in Kosovo, a Muslim-majority country in Europe, differs from ‘typical’ Islamophobia in some member states of the European Union. There are two main assumptions illustrating this difference. First, modeled on Western characteristics of stereotyping Islam, Islamophobia is a ‘tool’ the country’s political elite uses in order to fully be accepted in Euro-Atlantic circles. Numerous state reports for example show that ‘radicalization’ issues are given highest priority in current Kosovar politics. Another example is a 2018 Kosovar NGO report arguing against a possible Kosovo membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) due to Kosovo’s Euro-Atlantic agenda.

Second, it is argued that Kosovar Islamophobia is one of the harshest in Europe in the sense that it systematically erases ‘Muslimness’ from Albanian, or Kosovar, identity in the national discourses. Islamophobic social media pages, for instance, represent ‘Muslimness’ as something that is not Albanian or Kosovar. The scapegoats of Islamophobia in Kosovo are, on the one hand, the Albanian diaspora living in the West and, on the other, homeland Muslims bearing Islamic signifiers stigmatized by Western Islamophobia, i.e. beards and hijabs. The 2018 verbal attacks on Kosovo-born and Swiss national football player Xherdan Shaqiri and the still ongoing controversies regarding the headscarf in public institutions have shown this.

Kosovar media still represents Islam in Kosovo through the following binary: ‘peaceful’ pre-war Islam vs. ‘radical’ post-war Islam. This discourse is challenged from times to times through articles published in widely read newspapers and written by scholars addressing more complex issues regarding Islam in Kosovo. When it comes to employment discrimination, Islamophobia tends not even to be considered. At the same time, the Kosovo-Albanian diaspora’s vital economic contribution to the country is conceptualized in Islamophobic dichotomies. Furthermore, ‘radical Islam’ is a key word used to delegitimize internal political enemies. The year 2018 represented no exceptions to these tendencies.

Përmbledhje Ekzekutive

Islamofobia në Kosovë, një shtet me një shumicë myslimane në Europë, dallon nga Islamofobia ‘tipike’ e Bashkimit Europian. Në këtë raport do të ilustruhet karakteri specifik i Islamofobisë në Kosovë përmes dy hipotezave: (1) Inspiruar nga karakteristikat perëndimore të stereotipizimit të Islamit, Islamofobia është një ‘mjet’ të cilin elita politike e vendit e përdorë për t’u pranuar plotësisht në qarqet euroatlantike. Shembull për këtë është numri i madh i raporteve shtetërore që merren me ‘radikalizimin fetar’. Një shembull tjetër është një raport i një OJQ-je Kosovare (Instituti i Prishtinës për Studime Politike) i vitit 2018 i cili shprehet kundër një anëtarësimi të mundshëm të Kosovës në Organizatën e Bashkëpunimit Islam (OBI) për shkak të agjendës euroatlantike të Kosovës.

(2) Islamofobia kosovare është një nga më të ashprat në Europë në kuptimin që sistematikisht e fshin aspektin mysliman nga identiteti shqiptar apo kosovar në ligjërimet dominuese. Faqet në rrjetet sociale të cilat shpërndajnë përmbajtje islamofobe e paraqesin aspektin mysliman si diçka që nuk ka të bëjë me identitetin shqiptar apo kosovar. Islamofobia në Kosovë e shënjestron, nga një anë, diasporën shqiptare që jeton në Perëndim dhe, nga ana tjetër, myslimanët në Kosovë të cilët bijnë në sy për shkak të shenjave myslimaneve që Islamofobia perëndimore i stigmatizon: pra mjekra dhe shamia. Sulmet verbale të vitit 2018 kundër Xherdan Shaqirit, një futbollist i cili ka lindur në Kosovë por luan për kombëtaren zvicerane, dhe polemikat rreth mbajtjes së shamisë në institucione publike e ilustronjë këtë.

Mediat kosovare ende e paraqesin Islamin në Kosovë nëpërmjet një dualiteti: Islami ‘paqësor’ i periudhës së paraluftës kundrejt ‘Islamit radikal’ të pasluftës. Ky ligjërim sfidohet herë pas here përmes artikujve të botuar në gazeta gjerësisht të lexuara dhe të shkruara nga akademikët të cilët trajtojnë çështje më komplekse lidhur me Islamin në Kosovë. Sa i përket diskriminimit në punësim mund të konstatohet që Islamofobia si shkaktar i diskriminimit rrallë merret parasysh. Në të njëjtën kohë, mënyra sesi (nën)vlerësohet kontributi jetësor ekonomik i diasporës kosovare bazohet në një klasifikim islamofob të kësaj diaspore. Për më tepër, ‘Islami radikal’ është një fjalë kyçe që përdoret për të delegitimuar armiqtë e brendshëm politikë. Viti 2018 nuk ka paraqitur ndonjë përjashtim në lidhje me këto tendenca.

Country Profile

Country: Kosovo

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary Government

Ruling Parties: PANA Coalition (Center-Right, Liberal, Center-Left) led by Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj

Opposition Parties: *Vetëvendosje* (left-wing); Social Democratic Party of Kosovo (Center-Left, the party was created due to internal split within *Vetëvendosje* after the 2017 elections); and LDK (Center-Right)

Last Elections: 2017 Parliamentary Elections (PANA government + reserved minority seats included: 61 seats; Albanian left-wing opposition [VV]: 32 seats; Albanian center-right opposition [LDK]: 25 seats)

Total Population: 1.7 million (2011)

Major Languages: Albanian

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: In the 2017 police report addressing incidents targeting religious objects, 38 crimes were recorded. The majority of these crimes, 21 in number, were directed against the Islamic community.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the 2010 Kosovo Human Development Report, which focused on social exclusion, the Kosovo Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian (RAE) communities are “the poorest and most excluded” ones.

Major Religions (% of Population): Muslim 95.6%, Roman Catholic 2.2%, Orthodox 1.5%

Muslim Population (% of Population): 1.6 million (96%) in 2011 (according to the last official census)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: BIK – *Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës* (Islamic Community of Kosovo) and BTK – *Bashkësia e Tarikateve të Kosovës* (Union of Kosovo Tarikats)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: N/A

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** Limitations and controversies regarding the wearing of headscarves in public institutions are still ongoing.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No

- **Burka Ban:** Limitations and controversies regarding the wearing of the burka in public institutions are still ongoing.
- **Prayer Ban:** In 2018, Kosovo limited the police officers' rights to attend prayers during their working hours.

Introduction

Kosovo is a Muslim¹ country situated in a continent, which discursively defines itself as exclusively Christian.² This Albanian position in Europe has provoked a vivid academic discussion with regards to Albanian identity over the last 20 years. Some argue that Europe used this Albanian feature in order to construct Albanians as the infinite internal 'other' since the 19th century.³ In local discourses, Albanian identity exists exclusively in orientalist dichotomies: either one is a 'Western' secular Albanian or an 'oriental' Muslim one.⁴ A third recurrent argument is that Albanian elites (be it in Macedonia, Albania, or Kosovo) use the 'good European Muslim' argument, i.e. Albanians, against the 'bad non-European Muslims' argument, e.g. Syrians, in the current debates about the 'Balkan route,' when dealing politically with the Euro-Atlantic hegemony.⁵ This approach necessarily produces Islamophobia.⁶

The Albanian situation within the *ummah* is vital in understanding the nature of Islamophobia in Kosovo. From this perspective, one can better grasp why a common theme of this report is that Kosovar Islamophobia should be contextualized in the strategy of the country's elite to get accepted fully in Euro-Atlantic political circles. Consequently, Islamophobia in Kosovo is modeled on Western characteristics of stereotyping Islam.⁷

In line with the prior argument, one can also suggest that this form of Islamophobia is one of the harshest in Europe in the sense that it systematically erases 'Muslimness' from Albanian, or Kosovar, identity. Furthermore, in a country with a 95.6% majority of Muslims, Islamophobia is not only hybrid but also self-humiliating.⁸ To put it differently, habits in daily life derived from Islamic practices are omnipresent in Kosovar society, but Kosovo-Albanian elites fail to reproduce discursively this reality in a non-Islamophobic way. The scapegoat in these discriminatory

1. Muslim piety is a pluralistic experience in Kosovo. The majority of Muslims are Sunnis (represented by BIK), but there are also Sufis (represented by BTK).

2. Fatima El-Tayeb, "Creolizing Europe", *Manifesta Journal* 17 (2004), pp. 9-11.

3. Isa Blumi, "The Commodification of Otherness and the Ethnic Unit in the Balkans: How to Think about Albanians", *East European Politics and Societies*, 12 (1998), pp. 527-530.

4. Enis Sulstarova, *Arratisja nga Lindja: Orientalizmi shqiptar nga Naimi te Kadareja*, (Tirana: 2007, third edition [first edition in 2006]), p. 10.

5. Piro Rexhepi, "Arab Others at European Borders: Racializing Religion and Refugees along the 'Balkan Route'", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 41 (2018), p. 2215; Behar Sadriu, "Grasping the Syrian War, A View from Albanians in the Balkans", *Nationalities Papers*, 45 (2017), pp. 540-541.

6. Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*, (New York: 2004), pp. 12-14.

7. Islamophobia is geographically not restricted to the West, see: Enes Bayraklı, Farid Hafez and Léonard Faytre, *Making Sense of Islamophobia in Muslim Societies*, (New York: 2018), p. 5.

8. "Regjistrimi i Popullsisë, Ekonomive Familjare dhe Banesave në Kosovë 2011: Rezultatet Përfundimtare - Të Dhënat Kryesore", Kosovo Agency of Statistics, <http://ask.rks-gov.net/media/2074/te-dhenat-kryesore.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

discourses are, first, the Albanian diaspora living in the West, one of the most vital factors of Kosovar society which is represented as the ‘oriental’ Muslim Albanian other, and, second, homeland Muslims bearing Islamic signifiers stigmatized by Western Islamophobia, i.e. beards and hijabs.⁹

All in all, the year 2018 represented no exception to these tendencies. The two common themes of this report will be substantiated with empirical evidence in the following sections.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2018, no official data regarding Islamophobic crimes were published.¹⁰ However, from January 2017 to July of the same year, 38 incidents targeting religious objects including property damage, thefts, and graffiti were reported.¹¹ The majority of these crimes, 21 in number, were directed against objects of the Islamic community.¹² The graffiti on mosques, tagged by opponents of the new mosque planned to be built in Prishtina, Kosovo’s capital city, aroused public attention in 2017.¹³ They were first sprayed on a building of the University of Prishtina on 1 August: “There will be no Turkish mosque in Dardania [a neighborhood close to the city center]” and “Death to Naim Tërnavë [Grand Mufti of Kosovo] and Hashim the Turk [allusion to Hashim Thaçi, Kosovo’s president]” (Figs. 1-2).¹⁴ The next day, one saw the same graffiti on different mosques in Prishtina.¹⁵ The Islamic Community of Kosovo (BIK) condemned the graffiti as hate speech and invoked the perpetrators to refrain from violence; the police arrested one suspect and looked for others involved.¹⁶

9. “Raporti Vjetor 2017”, Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo, https://www.bqk-kos.org/repository/docs/2017/BQK_RV_2017.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019). In 2017, it is estimated that Kosovo’s diaspora remitted around 760 million Euros to Kosovo. It is even believed that the number is twice as large due to unregistered amounts of money entering the country, which would mean that remittances from the diaspora are higher than the Kosovo state budget.

10. In the 2018 Kosovo police report, crimes against religious objects do not appear in the figures, whereas the countering ‘religious extremism’ is a priority, see “Annual Report 2018”, Kosovo Police, http://www.kosovopolice.com/repository/docs/RAPORTI_VJETOR_SHQIP.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

11. “Rreth 40 Raste Të Dëmtimeve Të Objekteve Fetare”, Radio Evropa e Lirë, 10 September 2017, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/demtimet-e-objekteve-fetare/28727122.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

12. “Raport Për Liritë Fetare Ndërkombëtare Në Kosovë Për Vitin 2017”, U.S. Embassy in Kosovo, https://xk.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/133/IRFReport_2017_Albanian.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

13. Ibid, p. 10.

14. Ibid.

15. “Grafite Të Reja Rreth Xhamisë: ‘Hashim Thaçi E Naim Tërnavë Do Të Vriten’”, Koha.net, 4 August 2017, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/36003/grafite-te-reja-rreth-xhamise-hashim-thaci-e-naim-ternave-do-te-vriten/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

16. “Mbishkrime Kërcënuese Në Ndërtesën E Fakultetit Filologjik Të Prishtinës”, TV Shenja, 1 August 2017, <http://shenja.tv/mbishkrime-kercenuese-ne-ndertesesen-e-fakultetit-filologjik-te-prishtines/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

In 2018, Islamophobic attacks were also directed against diaspora Albanians. The most prominent case is the attack on Kosovo-born Xherdan Shaqiri, football player of Liverpool F.C. and Swiss international. After scoring the decisive lead for Switzerland against Serbia, a group stage match of the 2018 World Cup, Shaqiri uploaded a photo with the comment “elhamdulillah” on Twitter (Fig. 3).¹⁷ This post provoked a vivid debate on social media, whose Islamophobic outburst is best captured by the response of a famous Albanian journalist. Here, is an excerpt: “He [Xherdan Shaqiri] can believe in whatever he wants, but greeting the fans of the Swiss national team with a Muslim message (“elhamdulillah”) shows [...] that he simply is an illiterate whose intellectual life can be summarized with *tallava* music [popular music] and meetings with Shefqet Krasniqi [an Albanian Islamic scholar]” (Fig. 4).¹⁸



Figure 1: Graffiti on a building of the University of Prishtina: “There will be no Turkish mosque in Dardania”. Source: TV Shenja, 1 August, 2017 (see Footnote 15).



Figure 2: Graffiti on the mosque property: “Death to Naim Tërëna [Grand Mufti of Kosovo] and Hashim the Turk”. (see Footnote 14).

17. Xherdan Shaqiri, Twitter, 22 June 2018, https://twitter.com/xs_11official/status/1010276354233896960?lang=en, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

18. “Islamofobi Enver Robelli Terbohët Se Pse Muslimani Xherdan Shaqiri Tha ‘Elhamdulillah’ Pas Golit”, Gazeta Impakt, 22 June 2018, <http://gazetaimpakt.com/islamofobi-enver-robelli-terbohët-se-pse-muslimani-xherdan-shaqiri-tha-elhamdulillah-pas-golit/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019). [Enver Robelli deleted his post after being harshly criticized; in the link, one can see a screenshot of his post].



Figure 3: Post by football player Xherdan Shaqiri that lead to the polemics. (see Footnote 17).



Figure 4: The original post commenting on Shaqiri by journalist Enver Robelli (later deleted from the Internet). (see Footnote 18).

Employment

Given Kosovo's structural economic problems (high unemployment, lack of physical and job security, and low wages – to mention a few), one can argue that this economic system can be understood as “racial capitalism.”¹⁹ Consequently, Islamophobia in the Kosovar labor market should be seen as an integral part of the intersectional marginalization of “racial capitalism,” which is characterized by the inextricable agglomerate of economic exploitation and the humiliation of racialized subjects.²⁰

Run by the country's elites, Kosovar NGOs working on economic questions tend not to even consider Islamophobia in employment.²¹ One could suggest that

19. Cedric Robinson, “Black Marxism”, *The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, (London: 1983), p. 9.

20. Ibid.

21. “Labour Market Discrimination: How Job Advertisements Create Gender Inequality”, GAP Institute, May 2017, http://www.institutigap.org/documents/20684_LABOUR%20MARKET%20DISCRIMINATION.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019); “Joaktiviteti I Grave Në Tregun E Punës:Faktorët Që Mbajnë Gratë Jashtë Tregut Të Punës”, Demokraci Për Zhvillim (D4D), https://d4d-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/D4D_PI_12_W4D_SHQ_WEB.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

this ignoring is deliberate and aims at erasing ‘Muslimness’ from Albanian identity. This becomes even more tangible when one compares these NGO reports with the experience of Islamic institutions in Kosovo. According to the BIK, observant Muslims are marginalized in the job market, especially in the public sector.²² Besa Ismaili, professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Prishtina, highlighted that this discrimination exists for observant Muslim women, too.²³

Even though their contribution is vital for Kosovar society, professional life of Albanians living in the West is not valued in Kosovo and is framed in an Islamophobic manner in the national discourse.²⁴ The Albanian diaspora is portrayed as ‘stuck in old (Islamic) traditions,’ and being exclusively employed at construction sites (men) or as cleaning personnel (women).²⁵ Every summer, when a lot of diaspora families spend their holidays at home, stereotypes of this kind get revived. In 2018, the widely shared satirical online newspaper *Kukunews*, for example, took an excerpt of a television interview, in which a homeland Kosovar tells about his brother living abroad and wanting him to buy an expensive iPhone this summer (Fig. 5).²⁶ What is conveyed here through humorous rhetorical devices is the widespread stereotype of an ‘oriental’ family relative working on a German construction site and whose ‘duty’ it is to dish out money for the economic needs of his family relatives in Kosovo.



Figure 5: The Kukunews post referring to the Albanian diaspora in Europe (called ‘shaci’) by the satirical newspaper. (see Footnote 26).

22. See: “Raport Për Liritë Fetare Ndërkombëtare Në Kosovë Për Vitin 2017”, U.S. Embassy in Kosovo, p. 1.

23. For the quote of Besa Ismaili see Shqipe Gocaj, “Një Shtresë Tjetër e Pëlhurës Shoqërore: Gratë e Mbuluara të Kosovës”, Kallxo.com, 29 July 2017, <https://kallxo.com/gjnk/nje-shtrese-tjeter-e-pelhures-shoqerore-grate-e-mbuluara-te-kosoves/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

24. “Raporti Vjetor 2017”, Central Bank of the Republic of Kosovo, p. 32.

25. Rahman Paçariza, “Schatz mirësevjen!”, Gazeta Express, 16 July 2016, <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/shkurt-e-shqip/schatz-miresevjen-227579/?archive=1>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

26. Kukunews, Instagram, 16 August 2018, https://www.instagram.com/kukunews/p/BmjLE0zBeW5/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=abwcrxt71lsz, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Education

When it comes to how Islam is treated in Kosovo's high schools, one notices the biased focus on narratives that are 'Albanian and European.' This discourse drastically sanctions voices criticizing these national figures, which are at the same time represented as "defender[s] of Christianity in the Balkans" or as "magnificent patriotic and European figure[s]" in school books.²⁷ Moreover, the complexity of the Albanian history during the Ottoman Empire is ignored at the expense of the focus on a Eurocentric account of history.²⁸

A second phenomenon worth mentioning is the tolerance the constitutional secular state of Kosovo shows toward teaching material with Christian symbols. Christmas songs, for example, are part of the music books of Kosovo's primary schools. In 2018, Husamedin Abazi, imam in Prishtina, criticized this (Fig. 6).²⁹ In 2015, books about the Bible were given as gifts to pupils of a high school in Krajkovë, a village in the Drenica valley.³⁰



Figure 6: A 2018 statement by Imam Abazi regarding Christmas songs in school books. (see Footnote 29).

27. Shkëlzen Gashi, *Historia e Kosovës në tekste mësimore të historisë në Kosovë, Shqipëri, Serbi, Mali i Zi dhe Maqedoni*, (Prishtina: 2016), http://kfos.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Historia_e_Kosoves_SHG_ALB.pdf, p. 45; "Si Mund Të Jetë Skënderbeu Kalorës I Krishtërimit? Ja Çfarë Shkruante Diplomati Francez..." Bota Sot, 19 April 2018, <https://www.botasot.info/historia-lajme/874948/si-mund-te-jete-skenderbeu-kalores-i-krishterimit-ja-cfare-shkruante-diplomati-francez-hellip/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

For discursive sanctions see "Vazhdon Seanca Kundër Fuad Ramiqit Dhe Të Tjerëve", Koha.net, 28 September 2017, <https://www.koha.net/arberi/47156/vazhdon-seanca-kunder-fuad-ramiqit-dhe-te-tjereve/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

28. Enis Sulstarova, *Islamizëm do të thotë lindje: Rrëfimi i kombit, Evropës dhe islamit në ligjërimin publik dhe në tekste shkollore të historisë*, (Tirana: 2016), p. 12-13.

29. "Hoxha Nga Prishtina Reagon Kundër Teksteve Me Përmbajtje Krishtere Në Librat E Shkollave Fillore", Insajderi, 30 October 2018, <https://insajderi.com/hoxha-nga-prishtina-reagon-kunder-teksteve-me-permbajtje-krishtere-ne-librat-e-shkollave-fillore/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

30. "Në Shkollën E Fshatit Krajkovë Të Drenasit Po Shpërndahen Libra Me Përmbajtje Fetare (FOTO)", Gazeta Express, 17 December 2015, <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/lajme/ne-shkollen-e-fshatit-krajkove-te-drenasit-po-shperndahen-libra-me-permbajtje-fetar-foto-152734/?archive=1>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Politics

Islamophobia is a ‘tool’ Kosovar foreign policy uses to show loyalty to Euro-Atlantic political circles. Published by the country’s Ministry of Education Science and Technology in 2018, the handbook for teachers on how to counter pupils’ Islamic radicalization is a case in point.³¹ It is emblematic in the sense that current Kosovar policy makers give ‘radicalization’ issues highest priority.³² Interviewed by a Western media, Kosovo’s current Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj unequivocally expressed his loyalty to the West in July 2018 by refusing the Albanian Muslim identity (“I’m Albanian. I’m not Muslim.”) (Fig. 7) and highlighting, “[Kosovo is] a Euro-Atlantic nation. When we were in trouble, the U.S. and NATO [were] with us, so we belong to this club.”³³

Islamophobia is also a ‘tool’ the Kosovo government uses to delegitimize internal political rivals – be it on a local or national level.³⁴ Mentor Nazarko, advisor of Kosovo’s foreign minister Behgjet Pacolli, attacked the chairman of the opposition party *Vetëvendosje* (VV, Self-Determination) Albin Kurti in a widely watched TV debate in May 2018 by stating that his party is flirting with religious extremism.³⁵ During the local electoral campaign in autumn 2017, Kurti used a local proverb with Islamic references in one of his speeches.³⁶ Although used only for rhetorical reasons, Kurti’s saying had such a huge impact that that even an influential U.S. newspaper used the saying out of context in order to present *Vetëvendosje* is an Islamic anti-Western party.³⁷

31. “Parandalimi I Ekstremizmit Të Dhunshëm. Doracak Për Mësimdhënës”, Ministry of Education Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosovo, May 2018, <http://www.ks.undp.org/content/dam/kosovo/docs/PVE/Parandalimi%20i%20ekstremizmit%2019%2006%202018%20per%20web.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

32. “Programi I Qeverisë Së Republikës Së Kosovës 2017-2021”, Government of Kosovo, September 2017, https://www.min-rks.net/repository/docs/programi_i_qeverise_se_republikes_se_kosoves_2017_2021.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019), p. 11, 19, 66, 91-92; “Strategjia Për Parandalimin E Ekstremizmit Të Dhunshëm Dhe Radikalizimit Që Shpie Në Terrorizëm 2015-2020”, Government of Kosovo, September 2015, http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/repository/docs/STRATEGJIA_parandalim_-_SHQIP.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019); “Strategic Development Plan 2016-2020”, Kosovo Police, http://www.kosovopolice.com/repository/docs/Plani_i_Strategjik_i_PK-se_-Shqip.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

33. James Reinl, “Islam Takes Backseat in Kosovo Politics as Country Pushes for EU Membership”, Middle East Eye, 10 July 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/islam-takes-backseat-kosovo-politics-region-pushes-eu-membership-117483433>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

34. Artan Haraqija, “Shkruan Artan Haraqija: Shteti “Kombëtar” Mysliman I Albin Kurtit”, Gazeta Express, 5 June 2017, <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/oped/shteti-kombetar-mysliman-i-albin-kurtit-383748/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

35. See “Kurti përplaset me këshilltarin e Pacollit, pasi e akuzoi për “Flirtim me fenë islame””, Indeksonline, 31 May 2018, <https://indiksonline.net/kurti-perplaset-me-keshilltarin-e-pacollit-pasi-e-akuzoi-per-flirtim-me-fene-islame/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

36. “Albin Kurti Betohet Në Kur’an (Video)”, Zëri, 17 October 2017, <https://zeri.info/zgjedhjet-lokale-2017/167330/albin-kurti-betohet-ne-kuran-video/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

37. Fron Nahzi, “Is Europe Pushing Kosovo into the Arms of Erdoğan?”, HuffPost, 26 November 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/is-europe-pushing-kosovo-into-the-arms-of-erdo%C4%9Fan_us_5a1abe30e4b0bf1467a84754?guccounter=1, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Vetëvendosje refrains from explicit Islamic policies.³⁸ Yet, it is the only political party to challenge Islamophobia. For example, Kurti repeatedly argues the following: (1) Islamic extremism is not the biggest threat to Kosovo, as the government puts it; the biggest threat is still Serbia, and (2) Islam is part of the Albanian tradition. Hence, using Islamophobia, which some Western states use against Muslim migrant communities, is pointless in the Albanian context.³⁹

**I'm Albanian. I'm not Muslim.
Religion is not my first identity**
- Ramush Haradinaj, Kosovo
PM

Figure 7: The quote of Kosovo's Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj in the 2018 *Middle East Eye* article "Islam Takes Backseat in Kosovo Politics as Country Pushes for EU Membership": (see Footnote 33).

Media

According to the BIK, Kosovar media portrays observant Muslims in a negative way.⁴⁰ Written in a very polemical way, a January 2019 *Bota Sot* op-ed criticizing Islam for being too 'Arab' and not 'Albanian' enough is a case in point. The article voices a view on Islam which is widely accepted within the Albanian elitist discourse (Fig. 8).⁴¹

More in-depth journalistic articles tend to create a binary between 'traditional' pre-war Islam and 'radical' post-war Islam.⁴² In these cases, journalists highlight that Islam in Kosovo is traditionally moderate, peaceful, and 'European', i.e. framing Albanians within the 'good vs. bad Muslim' dichotomy.⁴³ In the 2015 Kosovo European Islamophobia Report (EIR), Arber Fetiu argued that Islamophobic claims in Kosovar media are generally stated without proof.⁴⁴ The year 2018 was no exception in this regard.⁴⁵ An article in *Kallxo.com* (English version published at *Prishtina Insight*) in 2017 merits special attention. The article presents the communist measures

38. "Prioritetet e Republikës", *Lëvizja Vetëvendosje*, <https://www.vetevendosje.org/Al/prioritetet-e-republika-la-quo-s/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

39. See: "Kurti U Vardiset Islamistëve, Thotë Se Do Ta Lejojë Shaminë Në Shkolla Dhe Në Administratë (Video)", *Gazeta Express*, 5 June 2017, <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/lajme/kurti-u-wardiset-islamisteve-thote-se-do-ta-lejoj-shamine-ne-shkolla-dhe-ne-administrate-video-383471/?archive=1>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

40. "Raport Për Liritë Fetare Ndërkombëtare Në Kosovë Për Vitin 2017", *U.S. Embassy in Kosovo*, p. 9.

41. Gani Mehmetaj, "Shqiptarë Lindësh, Myslimanë Bëhesh!", *Bota Sot*, 9 January 2019, <https://www.botasot.info/opinion/1009707/shqiptare-lindesh-myslimane-behesh/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

42. Sulstarova, 2006, p. 10;

43. Rexhepi, 2018, p. 2215; Sadriu, 2017, p. 540-541.

44. Arber Fetiu, "Islamophobia in Kosovo. National Report 2015", *European Islamophobia Report 2015*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez (SETA, Istanbul: 2015), p. 305.

45. Lis Bukuroca, "Ndalunë e Hashimit", *Gazeta Express*, 15 June 2018, <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/oped/ndalu-pak-hashim-548410/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019); Taulant Qenaj, "Financimi Nga Organizata Të Dyshimta, Ka Prodhuar Imamë Radikalë", *Radio Evropa e Lirë*, 4 August 2018, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/financimi-nga-organizata-t%C3%AB-dyshimta-ka-prodhuar-imam%C3%AB-radikal%C3%AB/29410596.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019); Jakup Krasniqi, "Ndikimin E Vet Në Kosovë Serbia Po E Ushtron Edhe Përmes Fesë", *Koha.net*, 7 December 2018, <https://www.koha.net/veshtrime/133062/ndikimin-e-vet-ne-kosove-serbia-poe-ushtron-edhe-permes-fese/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

of removing the hijab as ‘emancipatory’ and, thus, addresses *hijabi* women in Kosovo by completely erasing the Serbian-Yugoslav colonial violence perpetrated against them (Fig. 9).⁴⁶ In line with a Eurocentric view on Islam, this article removes these women’s agency.

As the Islamophobic attack on Xherdan Shaqiri has already shown, the Albanian diaspora in the West is framed in an orientalist way. In May 2018, an article in *Bota Sot* addressed Islamic Albanian life in Austria. This article is of discursive relevance in the sense that it implicitly reinforces the Albanian elite’s claim of the difference between the ‘European’ secular Albanian living in Kosovo against the ‘oriental’ Muslim Albanian living in the West.⁴⁷

Even though articles addressing religion in a non-Islamophobic way are published from time to time, one can suggest that Islamophobia – even on an unconscious level – is part of the publishing policy of every influential Kosovar media.⁴⁸ Hence, it is difficult to highlight one media outlet that is known for non-Islamophobic coverage. Regarding 2018, Berat Buzhala’s *Gazeta Express* and Parim Olluri’s *Insajderi* were very active in reproducing Islamophobic stereotypes. The anti-Muslim content of *Gazeta Express* articles was already quoted in this report, whereas, for example, *Insajderi* spread fake news regarding ‘radical’ imams visiting Kosovo (Figs. 10-11).⁴⁹



Figure 8: 2019 *Bota Sot* op-ed “One Is Born Albanian, and one becomes Muslim” by Gani Mehmetaj. (see Footnote 41).

46. Shqipe Gjocaj, “Another Layer of the Social Fabric: Kosovo’s Hijabi Women”, *Prishtina Insight*, 25 July 2017, <https://kallxo.com/gjnk/nje-shtrese-tjeter-e-pelhures-shoqerore-grate-e-mbuluara-te-kosoves/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

47. Baki Ymeri, “Vlera Fetare Të Diasporës Shqiptare”, *Bota Sot*, 22 May 2018, <https://www.botasot.info/diaspora/892925/vlera-fetare-te-diaspores-shqiptare/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

48. Piro Rexhepi, “Albania’s Layered Homophobia”, *Prishtina Insight*, 18 April 2018, <https://prishtinainsight.com/albanias-layered-homophobia/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

49. “Imami Me Qëndrime Radikale Paralajmëron Vizitë Dhe Ligjëratë Në Kosovë”, *Insajderi*, 16 December 2018, <https://insajderi.com/imami-me-qendrime-radikale-paralajmeron-vizite-dhe-ligjerate-ne-kosove/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019); Jeton Maloku, Twitter, 17 December 2018, <https://twitter.com/jetonmaloku/status/1074624423326560256>, (Access date: 2 September 2019). Jeton Maloku currently is a BA student at the Islamic University of Medinah.

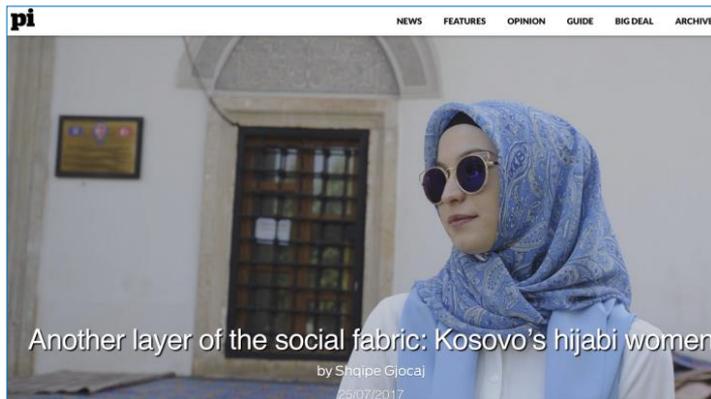


Figure 9: 2017 *Prishtina Insight* article addressing *hijabi* women in Kosovo, Albanian version published at *Kallxo.com*. (see Footnote 46).



Figure 10: The 2018 *Insajderi* fake news “Radical Imam Announces his Visit and Lecture in Kosovo” regarding ‘radical’ imams visiting Kosovo. (see Footnote 49).



Figure 11: Jeton Maloku’s tweet exposing the fake content of the news (translation of text in red box: “[The Imam] Mohamad Hoblos will not come to Kosovo, the page spreading this info is fake.”). (see Footnote 49).

Justice System

Laws and regulations defended with Islamophobic arguments or any laws restricting the rights of Muslims in their religious lifestyle are basically used when convenient for the ‘Albanians are good European Muslims’ argument. Prior to the approval of



Figure 12: An article that appeared in 2018 in *Balkan Insight* announcing that Shefqet Krasniqi was acquitted of inciting terrorism. (see Footnote 55).

a 2016 anti-terrorism law, the state closed down at least 14 Islamic NGOs.⁵⁰ Wearing the hijab in a public institution is another controversial issue that has yet to be resolved.⁵¹ A 2016 case suggests that the headscarf is not allowed for the staff of the Kosovo police.⁵² At the same time, Labinota Demi Murtezi wore the hijab as deputy at the Kosovo assembly during her

term from 2014 to 2017.⁵³ Controversial headlines about students or teachers wearing the headscarf at school, or prohibited to wear it at school, are regularly published in Kosovo's newspapers.⁵⁴ This arbitrary behavior by the Kosovar state suggests a lack of a consistent policy regarding the hijab. Furthermore, the former Pristina Grand Mosque Imam Shefqet Krasniqi was acquitted of inciting terrorism in March 2018 (Fig. 12).⁵⁵

Internet

Social media pages spreading Islamophobic messages in the Kosovar context are numerous. They all follow a certain pattern: erasing 'Muslimness' from Albanian, or Kosovar, identity. The only thing that differs is the explicitness of their undertaking. With around 50,000 followers, the Instagram account *sarcasm_al* has a considerable reach and promotes Western feminism and European values, which are represented as

50. "Miratohet Ligji Kundër Terrorizmit", Radio Evropa e Lirë, 25 May 2016, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/27756549.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

51. Luljeta Krasniqi-Veseli, "Bartja E Shamisë Në Shkollë, Mes Vendimit Politik Dhe Përcaktimit Individual", Radio Evropa e Lirë, 22 September 2016, <https://www.evropaelire.org/a/28006885.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

52. "A Duhet Lejuar Mbulesa Për Femrat Në Policinë E Kosovës?", Koha Islame, 14 June 2016, <https://kohaislame.com/a-duhet-lejuar-mbulesa-per-femrat-ne-policine-e-kosoves/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

53. "Fifth Legislation Period (17.07.2014 - 10.05.2017): Labinotë Demi-Murtezi", Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, <http://kuvendikosoves.org/?cid=2,158,902&csecid=102&legid=5>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

54. "Miratohet Kërkesa E Prindërve Për Mësuesen Me Mbulesë: Transferohet Në Shkollë Tjetër (Video)", Zëri, 21 November 2016, <https://zeri.info/aktuale/117964/miratohet-kerkesa-e-prinderve-per-mesuesen-me-mbulesë-transferohet-ne-shkollë-tjeter-video/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019); "Prishtina Lejon Shaminë Në Shkollë (Foto)", Zëri, 6 September 2015, <https://zeri.info/aktuale/49877/prishtina-lejon-shamine-ne-shkollë-foto/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

55. "Kosovo Acquits Ex-Imam of Inciting Terrorism", Balkan Insight, 23 March 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/03/23/kosovo-imam-released-from-inciting-terror-charges-03-23-2018/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

the opposite of Islamic Albanian values (Fig. 13).⁵⁶ Anti-Muslim messages are spread more aggressively on Facebook. *FMimages Albania* (more than 100,000 followers) and *Feja e shqiptarit është Europa* (“The Religion of Albanians Is Europe.” around 40,000 followers) are platforms that constantly post content stultifying imams and other signifiers of Islam in a way that is coherent with Western Islamophobia. Often, quotes of imams are taken out of context in order to present the ‘premodern’, ‘aggressive’ and ‘non-rational’ ‘essence’ of Islam. One such example is a posted video of an imam whose speech is summarized in this misleading quote: “One can be a killer, a terrorist, a pedophile, but if he prays he is a better person in the eyes of Allah than somebody who doesn’t pray” (Fig. 14).⁵⁷



Figure 13: An example of less explicit Islamophobic content posted by *sarcasm_al*. (see Footnote 56).

Viewed weekly over 200,000 times, the online series *Stupcat*, addressing current social and political issues in Kosovo, is interesting in at least three aspects. First, whereas *Stupcat* problematizes issues like the omnipotence of Western NGOs or gender inequality, Islamophobia is ignored. Second, *Stupcat* illustrates the presence of the society’s daily habits derived from Islam, which are never reproduced as such in elitist discourses. Three, the Albanian diaspora in the West is presented as the ‘oriental’ Albanian whose lifestyle is ‘trapped’ in Albanian tradition rooted in Islamic practices (Fig. 15).⁵⁸

56. Sarcasm_al, Instagram, 3 June 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/BjkmCA_nga4/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=1tfp9fgq4gaki, (Access date: 3 September 2019); sarcasm_al, Instagram, 6 January 2018, https://www.instagram.com/p/Bdn9OL5HHm-/?utm_source=ig_share_sheet&igshid=zq5qrhc82i9g, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

57. For the quote, see: Feja E Shqiptarit Është Europa, Facebook, 26 November 2018, https://www.facebook.com/pg/ILLYROPIAN/posts/?ref=page_internal, (Access date: 3 September 2019); Feja e shqiptarit është Europa, Facebook, 17 November 2018, https://www.facebook.com/pg/ILLYROPIAN/posts/?ref=page_internal, (Access date: 3 September 2019); *FMimages Albania*, Facebook, 29 December 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/FMimagesAlbania/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

58. “Stupcat Egjeli 2018: Season 2”, *Stupcat*, <https://video.gjirafa.com/egjeli>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 14: An example of explicit Islamophobic content posted by *Feja e shqiptarit është Europa*; translation of the post: “One can be a killer, a terrorist, a pedophile, but if he prays he is a better person in the eyes of Allah than somebody who doesn’t pray” - live from the Australian colleague of Shefqet Krasniqi! (see Footnote 57).



Figure 15: Sahit Plisi is a protagonist in the television series *Stupcat*, He plays the role of a Kosovo-Albanian living in Germany. His role is full of stereotypes. In this picture, one sees symbols of his hyper-romantization of his identity (Albanian eagle around the neck, Kosovar flag as a ring), dressed in white (another stereotype for diaspora Albanians), and wearing a *plis*, an old fashioned Albanian hat. (See Footnote 58).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In Kosovo, central figures in the Islamophobia network can be found in civil society, media, and politics. Their common conviction is that Kosovo is a Euro-Atlantic state and should hence refrain from its Islamic tradition (in a post 9/11 world). For example, in a 2018 report regarding Kosovo’s possible membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), an NGO based in Kosovo argued that “taking into account its Euro-Atlantic agenda, Kosovo should refrain from becoming a member.”⁵⁹

59. “Kosovo’s Membership into OIC: An Opportunity or a Dangerous Road”, Prishtina Institute for Political Studies, http://pips-ks.org/wp-content/uploads/publications/en/711859391_Kosovo’s_membership_into_OIC.pdf?fbclid=I-wAR1xvpG-PRrcvBUVjisf6ZCvMieKaYYXU7p_jjQJPXApFT5Ax7ipohvNtg. (Access date: 3 September 2019), p. 4.

Being regularly invited to TV shows addressing Islam and Albanians, the political advisor Blerim Latifi argues in favor of an Albanian identity which clearly distances itself from Islam.⁶⁰ Arbana Xharra, former editor-in-chief of the widely read daily newspaper *Zëri*, is another famous figure in the Islamophobia network. She made a name for herself with regularly writing about Islam in Kosovo in a way that is in line with the stereotyping of Islam encountered in some countries (Fig. 16).⁶¹ It is important to mention that she explicitly includes the Albanian diaspora in her anti-Islam arguments.⁶² The politician Alma Lama is also famous for her provocative takes on Islam. In November 2018, she made headlines after a state decree revoked her from her position as Kosovo's ambassador in Italy due to an interview containing once again controversial statements about Islam.⁶³ The work of the journalists Gani Mehmetaj, Artan Haraqija, and Berat Buzhala has already been cited in the media subsection of this report; these are names that must be kept in mind when it comes to Islamophobia in Kosovo.



Figure 16: An older article by Arbana Xharra which is in line with the European stereotyping of Islam (see Footnote 61).

60. Hobbes Macchiavelli, "Islami dhe Politika - Sekularizmi - Prof. Blerim Latifi - Kurani, Muhamedi dhe feja islame", 15 September 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNG2htzW2wk>, (Access date 3 September 2019).

61. Arbana Xharra, "Fissures in the Faith: Rise of Conservative Islamists Alarms Kosovans", *Balkan Insight*, 24 December 2012, <https://balkaninsight.com/2012/12/24/fissures-in-the-faith-rise-of-conservative-islamists-alarms-kosovans/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

62. Arbana Xharra, "Radikalizmi Fetar Ka Prekur Edhe Shqiptarët E Diasporës", *Zëri*, 23 December 2016, <https://zeri.info/zerat/122641/radikalizmi-fetar-ka-prekur-edhe-shqiptaret-e-diaspores/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

63. "Alma Lama Përgjigjet Pas Shkarkimit, Publikon Intervistën Ku Ka Folur Rreth Religjionit Në Kosovë", *Gazeta Express*, 1 December 2018, <https://www.gazetaexpress.com/lajme/alma-lama-pergjigjet-pas-shkarkimit-publikon-intervisten-ku-ka-folur-rreth-religjionit-ne-kosove-601018/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

Even though the media is a crucial driving force of Kosovar Islamophobia, some newspapers suggested how Islamophobia can be fought in 2018. For example, the renowned daily newspaper *Koha Ditore* regularly published articles challenging Islamophobia, especially through the writings of Middle East expert Muhamed Mufaku who reminded the Albanian discourse of the vivid links between Albanians and the Middle East.⁶⁴ Halil Kastrati, whose Islamic charity foundation *Jetimat e Ballkanit* (Orphans of the Balkans) built 120 houses for families in need in 2018, was named “Person of the Year” by the widely read online newspaper *Insajderi* (Fig. 17).⁶⁵ It is interesting to note that *Insajderi*, also known for its Islamophobic coverage (as shown in the media section), did not mention that Kastrati’s major motivation is his Islamic educational background.⁶⁶

On the local level, an initiative worth mentioning is the construction of social housing in 2018 by three municipalities in the south of Kosovo in collaboration with Kastrati’s charity foundation.⁶⁷ Moreover, it also should not be forgotten that *Vetëvendosje* challenges Islamophobia on the political level, as has been shown earlier in this report.

Given the importance Kosovar media has in spreading Western-style stereotyping of Islam, a measure Kosovar media regulation bodies could envisage are campaigns that raise the awareness of Islamophobic coverage.⁶⁸ Another measure against Islamophobia could be the foundation of an observatory institution that monitors to what extent secularism, as defined in Kosovo’s constitution, is respected by civil society and state institutions.

64. Muhamed Mufaku, “Kusari” Për Shqiptarët Në Gadishullin Arab Në Fillim Të Shekullit XIV”, *Koha Ditore*, 10 November 2018, <https://www.koha.net/kulture/128062/kusari-per-shqiptaret-ne-gadishullin-arab-ne-fillim-te-shekullit-xiv/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019); Muhamed Mufaku, “Libri I Zi’ Amerikan Dhe Planet Për Shqipërinë E Kosovën Më 1918”, *Koha Ditore*, 21 July 2018, <https://www.koha.net/kulture/106386/libri-i-zi-amerikan-dhe-planet-per-shqiperine-e-kosoven-me-1918/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

65. Parim Olluri, “Insajderi Shpall Halil Kastratin ‘Person I Vitit 2018’”, *Insajderi*, 29 December 2018, <https://insajderi.com/insajderi-shpall-halil-kastratin-person-i-vitit-2018/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

66. Ibid. For the piety of Halil Kastrati see his Instagram account, <https://www.instagram.com/halilkastrati/?hl=en>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

67. “Në Prizren, 28 Nëntori U Festua Ndryshe: ‘Jetimat E Ballkanit’, Dhuruan 28 Shtëpi Për Familjet Në Nevojë (Video)”, *Telegrafi*, 14 November 2018, <https://telegrafi.com/ne-prizren-u-festua-28-nentori-ndryshe-jetimat-e-ballkanit-dhuruan-28-shtepi-per-familjet-ne-nevoje-video/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

68. Kosovo has two media regulation bodies. Whereas the Press Council of Kosovo is a self-regulatory body and donor-dependent, the Independent Media Commission is the broadcasting media regulatory body funded by the state. Press Council of Kosovo: <http://presscouncil-ks.org/?lang=en>, (Access date: 3 September 2019). Independent Media Commission: <http://www.kpm-ks.org/?faqe=141&gjuha=3>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 17: Halil Kastrioti, head of the Islamic charity foundation *Jetimat e Ballkanit*, was named "Person of the Year" by the influential online newspaper *Insajderi*. (see Footnote 65).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

As the different state reports have shown, 'radicalization' issues are given highest priority in current Kosovar politics. This suggests that, on the one hand, Islamophobia in Kosovo is modeled on Western characteristics of stereotyping Islam and, on the other, that Islamophobia is a 'tool' Kosovar policy makers use in order to show loyalty to Euro-Atlantic political circles – the first major assumption of this report. The common pattern Islamophobic social media pages follow is that they represent 'Muslimness' as something that is not Albanian or Kosovar. This suggests that Kosovar Islamophobia is one of the harshest in the sense that it systematically erases 'Muslimness' from a majority-Muslim population – the second major assumption of this report. As the verbal attacks on Xherdan Shaqiri and the controversies regarding the hijab in Kosovar public institutions have shown, the two scapegoats of Islamophobia in Kosovo are, as indicated in the introduction, the Albanian diaspora living in the West and pious Muslims 'at home.'

Two policy recommendations for politics and NGOs have already been given: raising awareness of Islamophobia in media coverage, and founding an observatory body that monitors the respect of secularism, as defined in Kosovo's constitution, in civil society and state institutions.

Furthermore, it is essential to tackle Islamophobia on the governmental and NGO level, because Islamophobia is structural. In this sense, awareness campaigns for Islamophobia should not only focus on journalism but also on civil society and

institutional matters. To put it differently, it should be understood that Islamophobia is as unacceptable as racism, anti-Semitism, or misogyny in political discourses.

Even though numerous state reports on 'violent extremism' have shown that Islam is arbitrarily framed as a political danger in Kosovo, it should be made clear that this approach is a violation of the freedom of religion.

The employment policy in state institutions, be it on the national or local level, should be reviewed as well in order to make sure that there is no discrimination based on religion (or on certain practices of piety).

In Kosovo, Islam is an integral part of the local traditions. This crucial contextual difference in comparison to Western Europe should be used by state officials and civil society to adopt a non-Islamophobic stance toward Islam.

Chronology

- **23.03.2018:** The former Pristina Grand Mosque Imam Shefqet Krasniqi was acquitted of inciting terrorism in March 2018.
- **31.05.2018:** Mentor Nazarko, advisor of Kosovo's foreign minister Behgjet Pacolli, attacked the chairman of the opposition party *Vetëvendosje* (VV, Self-Determination) Albin Kurti in a widely watched TV debate by stating that his party is flirting with religious extremism.
- **23.06.2018:** After uploading a photo with the comment "elhamdulillah" on Twitter, Xherdan Shaqiri was verbally attacked by a famous journalist.
- **10.07.2018:** Interviewed by an international media outlet, Kosovo's Prime Minister refuses his Muslim identity: "I'm Albanian. I'm not Muslim."
- **30.10.2018:** Prishtina Imam Husamedin Abazi criticizes Christmas songs that are part of the music books of Kosovo's primary schools.
- **23.11.2018:** Kosovo's ambassador in Italy Alma Lama gets revoked from her position due to an interview containing controversial statements about Islam.
- **28.11.2018:** Inauguration of social housing built by the Islamic charity organization *Jetimat e Ballkanit* (Orphans of the Balkans) in collaboration with three municipalities in the south of Kosovo.
- **29.12.2018:** Islamic humanist Halil Kastrati, founder of *Jetimat e Ballkanit*, is named "Person of the Year" by the widely read online newspaper *Insajderi*.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
LATVIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

ANITA STASULANE

The Author

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Executive Summary

The report provides an overview of the main manifestations of Islamophobia and the negative attitude towards Muslims due to their religious conviction in Latvia in 2018. The report uses data obtained by analysing information available in the media, by questioning experts, and interviewing members of the Muslim community in Latvia.

Compared to the three previous years, Latvia did not see a strong increase in Islamophobic attitudes in 2018. No physical attacks on individuals and organisations were reported in 2018. Data on verbal Islamophobic incidents is missing since neither individual Muslims nor Muslim groups have reported such incidents.

There have been no events of Islamophobic nature in Latvia (meetings, pickets, demonstrations, etc.), but stereotypes, prejudices, and dislike towards Muslims are still observed. A contributing factor to the Islamophobic attitude was the entry into the Latvian book market of the Latvian translation of the book *Die verschleierte Gefahr* (The Veiled Threat) (*Aiz plīvura slēptās briesmas*) by the German politician and self-proclaimed feminist Zana Ramadani. For this reason, it would be misleading to think that Islamophobic attitudes have waned in Latvia compared to the data of previous studies, e.g. the results of the Pew Research Center study suggest that only 19% of Latvia's population would be ready to accept a Muslim in the family.

Islamophobic attitudes in Latvian society are shaped by an intolerant, hateful, and fearful attitude towards immigrants, which in the Latvian context has come to mean Muslims first and foremost.

In 2018, the political climate in Latvia was determined by parliamentary (*Saeima*) elections. The year was marked by the establishment of a new far right political association, *Latvijas Nacionālisti* (Latvian Nationalists), and by the strengthening of populism.

Although the Law on the Restriction on Wearing Face Coverings, steered by the Ministry of Justice (2015), was not approved in 2018, the parliamentary secretary of the ministry stated that the ministry had not abandoned the idea of restrictions on wearing face coverings in public places.

Though Islamophobic sentiment was not peculiar to the leading media of Latvia, the media in general still spread rumours and chase after sensations that are Islamophobic in nature.

The radical right-wing groups in Latvia are small and internally fragmented. Therefore, they were not able to mobilise their supporters for political campaigns in 2018, while the tendency to use the Internet as an instrument for attracting followers, disseminating radical-right ideology, and forming virtual groups emerged more strongly.

Kopsavilkums

Ziņojums sniedz pārskatu ar galvenajām islāmfobijas izpausmēm un negatīvu attieksmi pret musulmaņiem viņu reliģiskās pārliecības dēļ Latvijā 2018. gadā. Ziņojumā ir izmantoti dati, kas iegūti, analizējot informāciju plašsaziņas līdzekļos, iztaujājot ekspertus un intervējot Latvijas musulmaņu kopienas locekļus. Salīdzinot ar trim iepriekšējiem gadiem, 2018. gadā Latvijā nebija vērojams spējš islāmafobiskas attieksmes pieaugums. 2018. gadā nav ziņots par fiziskiem uzbrukumiem atsevišķām personām un organizācijām. Datu par verbāliem islāmafobijas incidentiem trūkst, jo ne atsevišķi musulmaņi, ne musulmaņu grupas par tiem nav ziņojušas. Latvijā nav notikuši islāmafobiska rakstura pasākumi (mītiņi, piketi, demonstrācijas u.c. akcijas), tomēr stereotipi, aizspriedumi un nepatika pret musulmaņiem joprojām ir novērojama. Islāmafobiskas attieksmes veicinošs faktors bija latviski tulkotās un 2018. gadā publicētās vācu politiķes un feministes Zanas Ramadani grāmatas „Aiz plīvura slēptās briesmas” (*Die verschleierte Gefahr*) ienākšana Latvijas grāmatu tirgū. Šī iemesla dēļ būtu maldīgi domāt, ka Latvijā būtu mazinājusies islāmafobiskā attieksme, salīdzinot ar agrāk veikto pētījumu datiem, piemēram, *Pew Research Center* pētījuma rezultātiem: tikai 19% Latvijas iedzīvotāju savā ģimenē būtu gatavi pieņemt musulmani. Islāmafobisko attieksmi Latvijas sabiedrībā veido netoleranta, naida un baiļu pilna attieksme pret imigrantiem, ar tiem saprotot pirmām kārtām musulmaņus. 2018. gadā politisko gaisotni Latvijā noteica Saeimas vēlēšanas. Šis gads bija zīmīgs ar jaunas galēji labējās politiskās apvienības *Latvijas Nacionālisti* izveidošanu un populisma nostiprināšanos. Lai gan Tieslietu ministrijas virzītais (2015) Sejas aizsegšanas ierobežošanas likums 2018. gadā netika apstiprināts, ministrijas parlamentārais sekretārs izteicās, ka ministrija nav atteikusies no idejas par sejas aizsegšanas ierobežojumiem publiskās vietās. Lai gan vadošajiem Latvijas plašsaziņas līdzekļiem nebija raksturīgs islāmafobisks noskaņojums, tomēr mediji nav atbrīvojušies no baumu un sensāciju izplatīšanas ar islāmafobisku raksturu. Latvijā pastāvošās radikāli labējās grupas ir nelielas un iekšēji sadrumstalotas, tāpēc 2018. gadā tās nespēja mobilizēt savus atbalstītājus politiskām akcijām, toties arvien izteiktāk iezīmējās tendence izmantot internetu kā instrumentu sekotāju piesaistīšanai, radikāli labējās ideoloģijas izplatīšanai un virtuālu grupu veidošanai.

Country Profile

Country: Latvia

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: *Jaunā Vienotība* (New Unity), *Jaunā konservatīvā partija* (New Conservative Party), *Attīstībai/Par!* (Development/For!), *KPV LV* (Who Owns the State Latvia?), *Nacionālā apvienība* (National Alliance).

Opposition Parties: *Saskaņa* (Harmony), *Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība* (Union of Greens and Farmers).

Last Elections: 2018 Parliamentary Elections: social democratic Party *Saskaņa* (Harmony) (23 seats); Populist Party *KPV LV* (Who Owns the State Latvia?) (16 seats); conservative party *Jaunā konservatīvā partija* (New Conservative Party) (16 seats); liberal political alliance *Attīstībai/Par!* (Development/For!) (13 seats); national-conservative political party *Nacionālā apvienība* (National Alliance) (13 seats); conservative political alliance *Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība* (Union of Greens and Farmers) (11 seats); liberal conservative party *Jaunā Vienotība* (New Unity) (8 seats).

Total Population: 1.93 million

Major Languages: Latvian is the official state language. Latvia provides ethnic minority education programmes in Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, and Belarusian.

Official Religion: No. In accordance with Article 99 of the Constitution of Latvia (*Satversme*), the Church in Latvia is separate from the state.

Statistics on Islamophobia: Statistics are not available since no quantitative studies have been carried out.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018, no incidents against Muslims were reported.

Major Religions (% of Population): The question regarding religion is not included in the population census in Latvia. According to a survey by the ISSP (International Social Survey Programme) (2015): Christianity (62.6 %), No Religion (36.7 %), Other Religions (0.7%), Islam (0.1%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): Estimated number of Muslims in Latvia (0.1%). The question regarding religion is not included in the population census anymore.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Latvian Islamic Centre, the Riga Muslim community “Iman”, the Muslim community in Riga “Miras”, the society of Tatars of Latvia “Idel”.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: The society “Shelter *Safe House*”, Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS.

Far Right Parties: *Latviešu Nacionālisti* (Latvian Nationalists), established in 2018.

Far Right Movements: *Tēvijas Sargi* (Fatherland Guards), *Latvijas Nacionālā fronte* (Latvian National Front).

Far Right Terrorist Organisations: *Gustava Celmiņa centrs* (Centre of Gustavs Celmiņš)

Limitations to Islamic practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Compared to the three previous years, Latvia did not see a strong increase in Islamophobic attitudes in 2018. No Islamophobic events have been recorded in Latvia (meetings, pickets, demonstrations, etc.), but stereotypes, prejudices, and dislike towards Muslims are still present. A contributing factor to Islamophobic attitudes was the translation of the book *Die verschleierte Gefahr* (The Veiled Threat)¹ by the German conservative politician and self-proclaimed feminist Zana Ramadani published in 2018 by Jumava, one of Latvia's famous private publishing houses. For this reason, it would be misleading to think that Islamophobic attitudes have waned in Latvia compared to the data of previous studies, e.g. the results of the Pew Research Center study suggest that only 19% of Latvia's population would be ready to accept a Muslim in the family.²

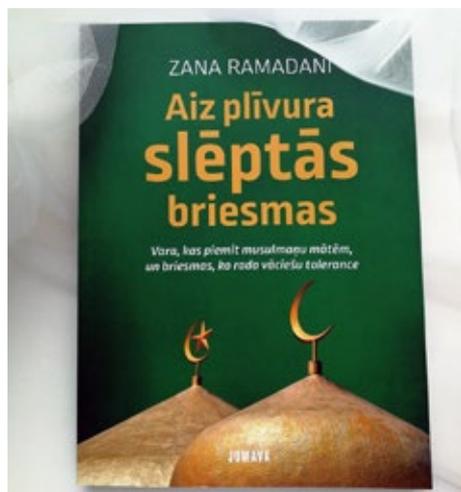


Figure 1: The Latvian translation of the book *Die verschleierte Gefahr* by the German conservative politician and self-proclaimed feminist Zana Ramadani published in 2018.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In Latvia, Islamophobia manifests itself primarily as a dislike of otherness, a fear of the unknown, and unjustified hostility towards Muslims. No physical attacks on individuals and organisations were reported in 2018. Data on verbal Islamophobic

1. Zana Ramadani, *Aiz plīvura slēptās briesmas*, (Jumava, Rīga: 2018).

2. Pew Research Center, "Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues: People in Central and Eastern Europe Are Less Accepting of Muslims and Jews, Same-Sex Marriage, and Legal Abortion, Pewforum, 29 October 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

incidents are missing since neither individual Muslims nor Muslim groups have reported any incidents. Individual conversations with Muslim women reveal that they have been subjected to verbal attacks in public places (mainly on the street) aimed at violating personal dignity, intimidation, and creating a hostile and degrading atmosphere. Social networks represent the key environment where hate speech appears on a regular basis.

Employment

The Ombudsman's Office received no complaints on discrimination in the labour market on the grounds of religious affiliation or religious conviction. However, given that the majority of immigrants received during the "refugee crisis" have left Latvia, cases of discrimination cannot be ruled out. Within the framework of the EU relocation programme for asylum seekers, Latvia had pledged to admit 531 refugees. Latvia has hosted 374 individuals (mainly from Syria and Eritrea). In 2018, the State Employment Agency registered only 24 persons, but a job was found for 18 people.³

Unofficial data of the Society Integration Foundation suggest that the majority of people, who received social workers' advice, have left the country due to the unemployment rate,⁴ low wages,⁵ and the threat of linguistic discrimination in the Latvian labour market as the Labour Law prohibits the recruitment of people who have not passed the official language examination. However, the private sector may employ people with no certificate of proficiency of the official language if their activities do not affect legitimate public interests such as public security, health, morality, health protection, protection of consumer rights and labour law, safety at work, and public and administrative supervision.

Education

Compared to what was reported in previous years, the situation in education has not changed: Islamophobia cannot be found in Latvian school curricula and textbooks, which are centred on gaining knowledge of Europe. The ESF (European Social Fund) project "Competency Approach to Learning Content" is currently being implemented in Latvia. It aims to develop, appraise, and introduce, within five successive years, the content of general education and a learning approach that would ensure the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed today.

3. Marčels Koluns, "Bēgļiem Latvijā Joprojām Trūkst Atbalsta", Unhcr Ano Bēgļu Aģentūra Latvija, 30 January 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/neu/lv/16703-begliem-latvija-joprojam-trukst-atbalsta.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

4. In the third quarter of 2018, the unemployment rate stood at 7.0% in Latvia. Cf. Centrālā statistikas pārvalde, "2018 Gada 3. Ceturksnī Bezdarba Līmenis Latvijā Bija 7,0%", cbs.gov.lv, <https://www.csb.gov.lv/lv/statistika/statistikas-temas/socialie-procesi/nodarbinatiba/meklet-tema/2427-bezdarbs-2018-gada-3-ceturksni>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

5. From January 1, 2018, the national minimum wage in Latvia is fixed at €430 per month.

A school is a reflection of society, and the prejudices and stereotypes existing in society are also present in educational institutions, but intolerance and various types of phobias are not monitored in Latvian educational institutions. Bullying, which takes the form of regular physical harassment, verbal humiliation, or the exclusion of someone from the group, are not rare in Latvian schools: 31% of the surveyed pupils reported being bullied frequently, i.e. at least a few times per month.⁶ Unfortunately, this problem is well hidden so as not to damage the image of the school. Therefore, cases when parents dare to mobilise the media in order to force schools to deal with problems are extremely rare. Most parents choose the easiest way, i.e. they find a new school for their children. The fact that the number of calls to the country's children's hotline increased in the first months of 2018 confirms the topicality of the problem.⁷

For decades, the Latvian education system has not been focused on preventing aversion to otherness and fear of the unknown; in other words, the competence of Latvian society in the field of intercultural tolerance is weak. A representative of the Muslim community described the situation as follows: "One can face the daily reality of the local [negative] attitude not only towards Muslims but also towards everything that is new and unfamiliar. Many Muslims have told me how they are doing here. Parents of a girl, who married an Egyptian, don't talk to their daughter's husband, they ignore him."⁸

Politics

In 2018, the political climate in Latvia was determined by parliamentary (*Saeima*) elections. The year was marked by the creation of a new far right political association, *Latvijas Nacionālisti* (Latvian Nationalists), and by the strengthening of populism.⁹ The pre-election programme of Latvian Nationalists included the slogan "Latvia – the State of Latvians! Objective: Prosperity of the Latvian people, defence of national, economic, social, cultural and other vital interests – economic and cultural nationalism. (...) Define the priority of national legal norms over international ones in the Constitution (*Satversme*). Limit migration and integration. Encourage repatriation."¹⁰

A similar position was expressed by the national-conservative political party *Nacionālā apvienība* (National Alliance): "The key objective of the National Alliance

6. OECD, "How Much of a Problem Is Bullying at School", *PISA in Focus*, 74 (2017), p. 2.

7. Vita Anstrate, "Bērnu Agresija Skolās Aizvien Ir Izplatīta; Eksperti Meklē Risinājumus", *lsm.lv*, 12 October 2018, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/bernu-agresija-skolas-aizvien-ir-izplatita-eksperti-mekle-risinajumus.a295850/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

8. "Latviešu Musulmanis: Latvijā Ne Tikai Nemil Islāmu, Bet Vispār Visu Jauno", *lna.lv*, 3 November 2018, <https://nra.lv/latvija/262629-latviesu-musulmanis-latvija-ne-tikai-nemil-islam-ut-vispar-visu-jauno.htm>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

9. *KPV LV* won 14.25% of the votes in the elections of the 13th *Saeima*.

10. "Latvijas Nacionālisti", Centrālā Vēlēšanu Komisija: 13. Saeimas Vēlēšanas, <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=nsyO%2BY%2BHVycgUH3KPh5BeQ%3D%3D>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

has always been and will be Latvian Latvia. (..) Let us support the increase in the proportion of Latvians in Latvia and avoid an irresponsible immigration policy.”¹¹ Although none of the political parties directly referred to Muslims or Islam in their pre-election programmes, they expressed their attitude indirectly, i.e. by mentioning refugees and immigration. The position of *Jaunā konservatīvā partija* (New Conservative Party) was worded as follows: “Opposition to inflows of economic refugees into Latvia and the EU.”¹² The slogan of *Rīcības partija* (Action Party) “Reception of refugees threatens Latvia’s security”¹³ smacked of identifying refugees from the Middle East with terrorists.

The peculiarity of Latvia’s political environment is the blurred border between the right and the left, which was also confirmed by the parliamentary elections in 2018. The left-leaning party *No sirds Latvijai* (For Latvia from the Heart) took the position of the right and declared clearly, “We are against the introduction of migrant quotas.”¹⁴ Meanwhile, *Latvijas Sociāldemokrātiskā strādnieku partija* (Latvian Social Democratic Workers’ Party), *Kristīgi demokrātiskā savienība* (Christian Democratic Union), and *Gods kalpot mūsu Latvijai* (Honour to Serve Our Latvia), which amalgamated in one association, declared their aim to “develop Latvia as a Latvian and national country where an individual with his needs plays the central role, where traditional cultural environment, Christian values and cultural values of other peoples living here are cultivated and preserved.”¹⁵

Media

The media in Latvia were confined to one-sided or highly politicised information addressed to the target audience of a political current. The prevailing topics were refugees-terrorists,¹⁶ refugees- profiteers of European social benefits,¹⁷ the destruction of Europe,¹⁸ etc. The refugee issue was reflected narrowly, i.e. as a European “refugee

11. “Nacionālā Apvienība”, Centrālā Vēlēšanu Komisija: 13. Saeimas Vēlēšanas, <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=axC8x4iKXxa2gCU9m7iC2A%3D%3D>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

12. “Jaunā Konservatīvā Partija”, Centrālā Vēlēšanu Komisija: 13. Saeimas Vēlēšanas, <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=iMR5h0uNG%2BaFdl%2Fs25ONAw%3D%3D>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

13. “Rīcības Partija”, Centrālā Vēlēšanu Komisija: 13. Saeimas Vēlēšanas, <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=ufQbYEZXSnsUE7AOfiFOB%2Fg%3D%3D>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. “No Sirds Latvijai”, Centrālā Vēlēšanu Komisija: 13. Saeimas Vēlēšanas, <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=sQIFuCZ%2BjnEocsfJhGWLQ%3D%3D>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

15. “LSDSP/KDS/GKL”, Centrālā Vēlēšanu Komisija: 13. Saeimas Vēlēšanas, <https://sv2018.cvk.lv/pub/CandidateLists/CandidateList?id=6fPIx9ZhMmU1giZeBOhQ2g%3D%3D>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

16. “Itālija Bīdina Par Teroristu Iespējamo Iefiltrēšanos Bēglu Laivās”, tvnet.lv, 6 February 2018, <https://www.tvnet.lv/4537134/italija-bridina-par-teroristu-iespejamo-iefiltršanasos-beglu-laivas>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

17. “Bēgļi Turpina Pamest Latviju. Nav Zināms Precīzs Palikušo Skaitis”, skaties.lv, 28 July 2018, <https://skaties.lv/zinas/latvija/sabiedriba/begli-turpina-pamest-latviju-nav-zinams-precizs-palikusos-skaitis/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

18. Valdis Bērziņš, “Vai Musulmaņi Pārņems Eiropu”, la.lv, 23 March 2018, <http://www.la.lv/vai-musulmani-par-nems-eiropu>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

crisis” (refugees want to arrive in prosperous Europe) rather than a humanitarian crisis that affects the entire world. The following causes of the so-called refugee crisis were ignored: violent conflicts, persecution, inequality, terrorism, repressive regimes, natural disasters, man-made crises, and persistent poverty.

The Latvian media still spread rumours and chase after sensations, thus representing low quality journalism and not reflecting the deliberate presence of Islamophobia, e.g. the heading of the publication about the National Day celebration organised by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Latvia on November 29 was “Arab National Celebration with Kalashnikovs in Riga.”¹⁹ The article dealt with the dance performed by Arab men with wooden sticks, faux swords, and even dummy firearms.²⁰ Although the article reflected the opinion of an expert, i.e. that Arabs see no aggression in this tradition, which is more than 1,500 years old, and perceive it as their folklore, the newspaper’s sensational headline contributed to the strengthening of the stereotype about Muslims as potential terrorists. This was confirmed by the comments following the publication of the article: “Let Us Not Allow Latvia to Be Flooded with the Third World Garbage!”, “They are just bloody killers and rapists! Yes, they know how to do it, they don’t have to be encouraged!”, “Islam is a geopolitical ‘religion’ aimed at subjecting everyone to Allah or killing. Read Quran to find out that ISIS is Islam in its purest form.”²¹



Figure 2: The heading of the publication about the National Day celebration organised by the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Latvia on November 29, 2018: “Arab National Celebration with Kalashnikovs in Riga.”

19. Toms Rātfelders, “Arābu Nacionālie Svētki Ar Kalašņikoviem Rīgā”, tvnet.lv, 3 December 2018, <https://www.tvnet.lv/6466294/video-arabu-nacionalie-svetki-ar-kalasnikoviem-riga>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

20. Viena no tām atgādināja PSRS laikā izgudroto automātu AK-47, sauktu par kalašņikovu.

21. “Komentāri”, tvnet.lv, 3 December 2018, <https://www.tvnet.lv/6466294/video-arabu-nacionalie-svetki-ar-kalasnikoviem-riga/comments>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Although Islamophobic sentiment was not characteristic of the leading Latvian media, the term “Islamic” was still used regularly when speaking about DAESH or other terrorist groups, thus strengthening the stereotype about Islam as a potential threat.²² Meanwhile, provocative anti-Muslim statements were found in marginal radical publications, e.g. the newspaper *DDD* of the National Front of Latvia published the article “Barbarians in Latvia and Barbarians in Europe” which stated, “They are Muslim ‘refugees’ who organise attacks, arson, sabotage. There is no doubt that they are barbarians. And it is absurd to say that we have to be compassionate towards them.”²³

Justice System

The Law on the Restriction on Wearing Face Coverings steered by the Ministry of Justice (2015) was not approved during the previous parliamentary term in 2018. Two draft laws were tabled to parliament to limit the wearing of face-covering clothing, including face-covering Muslim headscarves. The first draft law was rejected by the parliament, while the second draft law, following conceptual objections by a number of experts, including the *Saeima* Legal Office, was not forwarded by the *Saeima* Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee for the first reading. The parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Justice stated that the ministry has not abandoned the idea of face-covering restrictions in public places.²⁴ The compromise could be as follows: not to ban face covering in all public venues, but only in certain places and institutions, such as schools.

Internet

As in other countries, the most effective means of disseminating Islamophobia is the Internet in Latvia. Due to the fact that the number of Muslims is small in the country, social networks are the main place for expressing hate speech. The interactive environment and anonymity of the Internet are the key factors determining the activity of Islamophobes, racists, and other individuals expressing hate speech in cyberspace. In 2018, hate speech on the Internet was targeted at both the Muslim community and imaginary Muslims: “All evil comes from Christianity and Muslims!!!”²⁵, “When those immigrants sail in boats to Europe to get its huge benefits, they try to drown

22. Andris Kārkluvāls, “Karte: ASV Balstītie Kurdi Ieņem ‘Daesh’ Nocietināto Hadžīnu”, *delfi.lv*, 14 December 2018, <https://www.delfi.lv/news/arzemes/karte-asv-balstitie-kurdi-ienem-daesh-nocietinato-hadzinu.d?id=50668315>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

23. Līga Muzikante, “Barbari Latvijā un Barbari Eiropā”, *DDD*, 2 November 2018, <http://fronte.lv/2018/11/barbari-latvija-un-barbari-eiropa/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. Klūga, Māris. “Sejas Aizsegu Ierobežošanas Iecere Saeimā Uz Priekšu Nevirzās”, *lsm.lv*, 18 March 2018, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/sejas-aizsegu-ierobezosanas-iecere-saeima-uz-prieksu-nevirzas.a271773/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

25. “Foto: Kā Musulmaņi Visā Pasaulē Aizvadīja Dāsnošanos Svētkus”, *delfi.lv*, 25 August 2018, <https://www.delfi.lv/news/arzemes/foto-ka-musulmani-visa-pasaule-aizvadija-dasnos-upuresanas-svetkus.d?id=50332503&com=1&creg=1&no=0&cs=1>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Christians who share the boats with them. Then watch their behaviour on the streets of Europe, a woman can't even pass by without being raped with eyes. In addition, it does not matter whether she is a minor or granny.”²⁶ The notice regarding the prevention of a biological terrorist attack in Germany, organised by a Tunisian, was followed by the comment: “Death penalty! And pack all his relatives off to their native jungle!”²⁷ The news on the French Parliament's ban prohibiting MPs from wearing religious symbols was followed by a comment in which the *hamsa* amulet was called the “symbol of Islamofascism”.²⁸

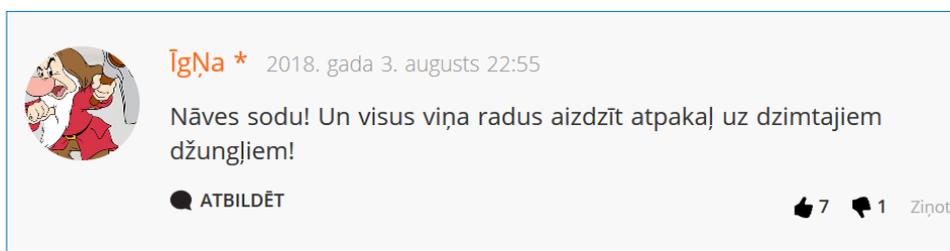


Figure 3: Hate speech in a posted comment online: “Death penalty! And pack all his relatives off to their native jungle!”

Central Figures In The Islamophobia Network

The radical right-wing groups in Latvia, e.g. *Tēvijas sargi* (Fatherland Guards) and *Latvijas Nacionālā Fronte* (Latvian National Front), are small and internally fragmented. Therefore, they were unable to mobilise their supporters for political campaigns in 2018 and joined events organised by other organisations to promote their ideology and counter immigration, the socio-political situation in the country, etc. The activity of these groups was reflected on the following websites: *nacionalisti.lv*, *fronte.lv*, *pietiek.com*, and *taustribunals.eu*. Similarly to the press, the topic of refugees also prevailed on the Internet.

A new trend is emerging, namely the radical right has transferred its activity to the Internet: the websites *pietiek.com* and *taustribunals.eu* are not the websites of officially registered associations, but they are groups or virtual communities established on the Internet. Thus, radical right activists in Latvia use the Internet as a tool to attract followers, disseminate their ideology, and build the group's identity. In 2018, the Internet promoted the mobilisation of radical right groups against the UN

26. “Foto: Dievlūdžēju Miljoni Kāpj Arafata Kalnā”, delfi.lv, 20 August 2018, <https://www.delfi.lv/news/arzemes/foto-dievludzeju-miljoni-kapj-arafata-kalna.d?id=50315925&com=1>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. Comment on the article “Ķelnē Aizturētais Tunisietis Plānojis ‘Bioloģiskās Bumbas’ Uzbrukumu Rosīgā Vietā, 3 August 2018, <https://www.tvnet.lv/6028460/kelne-aizturetais-tunisietis-planojis-biologiskas-bumbas-uzbrukumu-rosiga-vieta/comments>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

28. Comment on the article “Francijas Parlaments Aizliedz Deputātiem Valkāt Reliģiskus Simbolus”, Diena, 25 January 2018, <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/pasaule/eiropa/francijas-parlaments-aizliedz-deputatiem-valkat-religiskus-simbolus-14189699/comments#c>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

agreement entitled “The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”: “Both the UN migration pact and refugee pact make one thing very clear, i.e. the left multiculturalists feel that they are losing power. In one country after another, nationally oriented forces come to power, ranking interests of their peoples and countries first, distancing themselves from abstract ‘solidarity’ slogans which actually conceal interests of the international oligarchy.”²⁹



Figure 4: A cartoon illustrating the article entitled “UN Refugee Pact or Gambles of the Left Multiculturalists Continue” published on the site *pietiek.com* maintained by those voicing radical right views.³⁰

Observed Civil Society And Political Assessment And Initiatives

The Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS implemented the project “Integration of Society in the Workplace”. The project resulted in the development of the methodological material “Workplace Integration” containing examples of best practices, concerns of employees and employers about the integration process, as well as possible solutions.³¹ At the end of the project, a seminar was organised in which information on the prepared material was disseminated to employers and local government employees, while a discussion on integration issues in the working environment was also held.

Initiatives of artists include, first and foremost, the campaign “Openness Is Value” organised in December 2018. The Ģertrūde Street Theatre held a solo exhibition of artist Ieva Kauliņa entitled *Tales of the Road* devoted to the arrival of individual refugees to Latvia. The exhibition offered not only the opportunity to view illustra-

29. Raivis Zeltīts, “ANO Bēglu Pakts Jeb Kreiso Multikulturālistu Avantūras Turpinās”, *pietiek.com*, 18 December 2018, https://pietiek.com/raksti/ano_beglu_pakts_jeb_kreiso_multikulturalistu_avanturas_turpinas/, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

30. Ibid.

31. Integrācija darba vietā: Rokasgrāmata, (Providus, Rīga: 2018).

tions by Kauliņa but also to watch, in an interactive way, video stories about people who due to war, political persecution, and threats were forced to flee their homes. Secondly, director Kārlis Lesiņš, at Juris Podnieks studio, produced a documentary about the Muslim community of Latvia entitled *In the Sign of the Overturned Moon*. Before the premiere of the film, the head of the Islamic Culture Centre of Latvia expressed his hope that the film would enable a dialogue between the Muslim community and society of Latvia.³² During the production of the film, five people related to the local community of Latvia went to Syria to fight for the DAESH. The creators of the documentary explored how it was possible that people were radicalised in as small a country as Latvia, and why nobody noticed it in a timely manner.

In the academic environment, Inese Ruce, a researcher at the University of Latvia, provided an overview of media activity in Latvia, stressing the need for responsible journalism and the morality of honesty.³³ For the first time, a book was published in Latvia on a topic that frightens people around the world, i.e. terrorism. In his monograph *In the Crossfire of Terrorism. The Islamic State*, Māris Kūlis, a researcher of the University of Latvia, analyses the causes of the formation, history, and the current situation of the so-called Islamic State (DAESH). The author looks at Wahhabism and Salafism, the politics of Arab states, the consequences of the Iraq War, the geopolitical ambitions of the regional and global powers, and people's dreams of justice in the world.

In the media environment, the problem of anonymous commentators was addressed. To eliminate hate speech in the Internet environment, it is no longer possible to provide comments on material published on the portal *tvnet.lv* without registration. Latvian television regularly reports on the most important events of the life of Muslims, providing neutral information, e.g. on Ramadan, pilgrimage,³⁴ etc.

Conclusion And Policy Recommendations

Although Latvia did not see a strong increase in Islamophobic attitude, representatives of the state power have to call on Latvia's population to refrain from provocative actions against the cohesion of society and to promote the peaceful coexistence of different religious communities. The following measures need to be taken to combat discrimination and to address problems of social marginalisation:

32. "Latvijas Musulmaņi Aicina Sabiedrību Uz Dialogu", nra.lv, 10 April 2018, <https://nra.lv/izklaide/kino/241847-latvijas-musulmani-aicina-sabiedribu-uz-dialogu.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. Inese Runce, "Kā Nepazust Informācijas Un Dezinformācijas Džungļos: Bēglu Jautājums Un Kritiskā Domāšana." *Kritiskā domāšana, inovācija, konkurētspēja un globalizācija*, ed. Solveiga Krūmiņa-Koņkova, (LU FSI, Rīga: 2018), p. 156.

34. Paula Justoviča, "See LTV News Programme: Sācies Musulmaņu Svētceļojums Hadžs", lsm.lv, 22 August 2018, <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/arzemes/sacies-musulmanu-svetceļojums-hadz.s.a289570/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

- Measures to prevent the use of Islamophobic statements in the media.
- Monitoring of Internet publications to detect cases of Islamophobia and discrimination.
- Funding for research aimed at combating Islamophobia and discrimination.
- Measures to prevent young people from joining radical right groups by organising informative activities in educational institutions.
- Active explanatory work among the media on the need to ensure that the presentation of news is objective and does not contribute to the atmosphere of hostility and ill feelings towards Muslims.
- Measures to ensure that official language inspectors carry out a balanced implementation of the Official Language Law, paying particular attention to the principles of respect for human rights.
- Funding for the National Agency for the Latvian Language Training in order to fully meet the demand for official language training in Latvia.

Chronology

- **January 2018:** The publication of the Latvian translation of the book *Die verschleierte Gefahr* (The Veiled Threat) (*Aiz plīvura slēptās briesmas*) by Zana Ramadani.
- **18.03.2018:** The parliamentary secretary of the Ministry of Justice stated that the ministry has not abandoned the idea of face-covering restrictions in public places.
- **02.11.2018:** Anti-Muslim statements published in the newspaper *DDD*.
- **05.12.2018:** The Parliament of Latvia (*Saeima*) called on the government not to support the UN Migration Pact.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
MALTA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

SARA EZABE MALLIUE

The Author

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Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.

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Executive Summary

In 2018, Malta did not experience blatant Islamophobia. Nonetheless, Malta 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 ‘patriots’ – or, more correctly, far-right parties.

The ongoing establishment of far-right parties espousing Islamophobic and xenophobic views is on the rise especially during the period of preparation for the European Parliament elections, where there are candidates from two different parties contesting. The compilation of this report is 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 the publications quoted here are from 2018 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 recommendations.

In brief, the most prominent points discussed in this report include the recent rise of the new far-right party *Għaqda patrijotti Maltin*, which is contesting the European Parliament elections in May 2019. Another point is the rise of Islamophobic and hateful comments and memes on the Internet, especially on social media. Publications and reports in Malta which show statistical data are very sparse. There is little research by Maltese institutions on Islamophobia. There is an evident need for additional research and policies in Malta, especially by government entities. The Muslim community complains in closed groups unemployment as a result of the headscarf and other discrimination that the community encounters. On a national level, other than the publications and initiatives carried out by NGOs, the efforts made by the European Commission Coordinator David Friggieri are perhaps the most documented.

Sommarju Eżekuttiv

Fl-2018, Malta ma esperjenzax inċidenti jew diskors ta' Islamophobia sfaċċat. Madankollu, Malta baqgħet fuq ir-rotta ta' ċirkolazzjoni ta' dikjarazzjonijiet u stampi Islamofobiċi globali. Materjali bħal dawn, ħafna drabi ġew tradotti minn sorsi barranin u adattati għall-kuntest lokali minn "patrijotti" b'mod aktar korrett, partiti politiċi tal-lemin estrem.

L-istabbiliment kontinwu ta' partiti tal-lemin estrem li jesponu fehmiet Izlamofobiċi u Xenofobiċi huwa f'żieda speċjalment fiż-żmien tat-tnejn għall-elezzjoni tal-Membri tal-Parlament Ewropew, fejn hemm kandidati minn żewġ partiti differenti li ser jikkontestaw. Il-kumpilazzjoni ta' dan ir-rapport hija bbażata fuq informazzjoni primarjament mill-Internet, li tinkludi websajts ta' gruppi Izlamofobiċi, tal-midja, kif wkoll tal-midja soċjali. Flimkien ma' dan, tqiesu wkoll studji u rapporti mmexxija minn organizzazzjonijiet u aġenziji Ewropej. Uħud mill-Pubblikazzjonijiet kwotati huma mill-2018 u oħrajn ta' qabel din is-sena.

L-awtur qies ukoll laqgħat personali ma' Musulmani f'Malta, kemm Musulmani Maltin kif ukoll Musulmani barranin u l-esperjenzi u r-rakkomandazzjonijiet tagħhom.

Fil-qosor, l-aktar punti prominenti diskussi f'dan ir-rapport jinkludu l-Iżlam fl-iskejjel, iż-żieda reċenti ta' kandidati tal-partit tal-lemin tal-lemin godda li jikkontestaw l-elezzjonijiet tal-MEP f'Mejju 2019. Flimkien maż-żieda ta' kummenti u memes Islamophobic u mibegħda fuq l-Internet, speċjalment fuq il-midja soċjali. Pubblikazzjonijiet u Rapporti f'Malta li juru dejta u statistika huma skarsi ħafna. Riċerka minn istituzzjonijiet Maltin dwar l-Iżlamofobija hija ferm limitata. Hemm bżonn evidenti ta' riċerka u politika soċjali addizzjonali f'Malta, speċjalment mill-entitajiet tal-gvern. Il- "komunità Musulmana" tilmenta fi gruppi magħluqa dwar l-impjeg bil-Hijab u fatturi oħra. Fuq livell nazzjonali, l-isforzi li saru mill-Koordinatur tal-Kummissjoni Ewropea David Friggieri huma forsi l-iktar dokumentati, minbarra l-pubblikazzjonijiet u l-inizjattivi mwettqa minn Organizzazzjonijiet mhux Governattivi.

Country Profile

Country: Malta

Type of Regime: Parliamentary Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary System

Ruling Parties: Labour Party and Nationalist Party

Last Elections: Labour Party won by a majority of 54.83% (39 seats), Nationalist party has 30 seats.

Total Population: 460,297 (2017) (Eurostat)

Major Languages: Maltese and English

Official Religion: Catholicism

Statistics on Islamophobia: No data available

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: 71% of Maltese respondents thought that discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin was widespread. (ENAR Shadow Report 2013-2017)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 0.3% of the overall Maltese population (MaltaToday Survey)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: World Islamic Call Society and Ah-madiyya Muslim Jamaat Malta

Far-Right Parties: *Imperium Europa*

Far-Right Movements: *Moviment Patrijotti Maltin*

Limitations to Islamic practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

According to a research published in 2018, as shown in Figure 1, a significant number of Maltese people interact with immigrants on a daily basis. Yet, the perception of immigrants remains negative, especially for immigrants coming from non-EU countries. Around 0.3% of the overall Maltese population identify as practicing Islam.¹ Further to this, there are other Muslims in the country who are foreigners; however, overall under 3% of the population in Malta identify as Muslims.²

Much of the documented evidence on racism and Islamophobia in Malta and literature that also informs this study, tended to focus on the experiences of sub-Saharan African asylum refugees/undocumented migrants rather than a broader approach that explores the experiences of ethnic and religious minorities in Malta or the broader migrant community.³

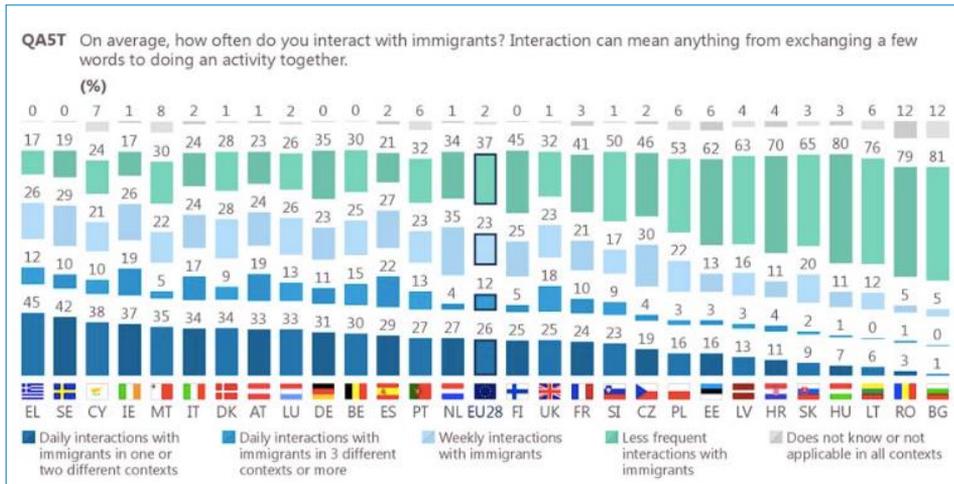


Figure 1: Interaction with immigrants.

This is a product of the fact that the Muslim community in Malta is generally homogenised. Terms such as ‘Arab’, ‘North African’ ‘illegal immigrant’ are taken to mean the same thing and to refer to a category of persons that are both ‘foreign’ and ‘Muslim’.⁴

1. Kurt Sansone, “Malta Today Survey | Maltese Identity Still Very Much Rooted in Catholicism”, *Malta Today*, 2 April 2018, https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/data_and_surveys/85738/maltatoday_survey__maltese_identity_still_very_much_rooted_in_catholicism#.XW0SzpMzagR, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. “Europe’s Growing Muslim Population”, *Pew Research Center*, 29 November 2017, <https://www.pewforum.org/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

3. Jean-Pierre Gauci and Maria Pisani, “Racism and Related Discriminatory Practices in Malta” *Enar Shadow Report*, http://www.humanrightsmalta.org/uploads/1/2/3/3/12339284/enar_shadow_report_2011-2012_racism_and_related_discriminatory_practices_in_malta_2013_discrimination.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

4 Ibid.

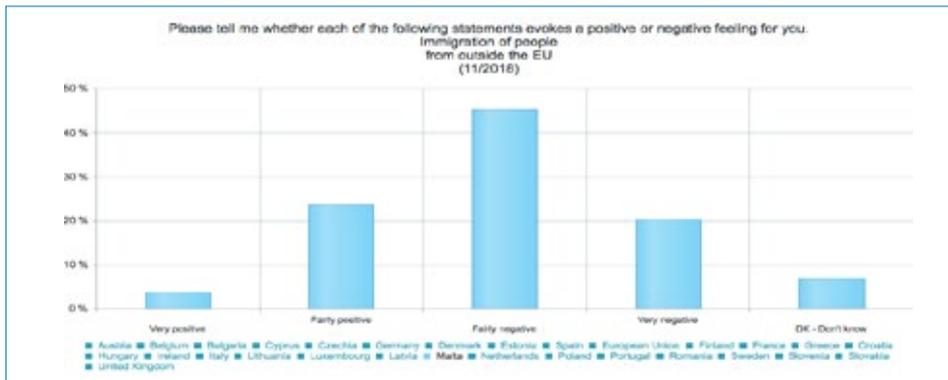


Figure 2: European Commission, Public Opinion, March 2018⁵

This indirectly influences the perception of Muslims in Malta, whereby Maltese Muslims are not identified as Maltese but rather as foreigners and this is also reflected in the research carried out by governmental entities and agencies in Malta. Figures 2 and 3, show that in March and in November 2018, there was a surge in the fairly negative outlook on immigrants in Malta, notwithstanding the lack of any incident.

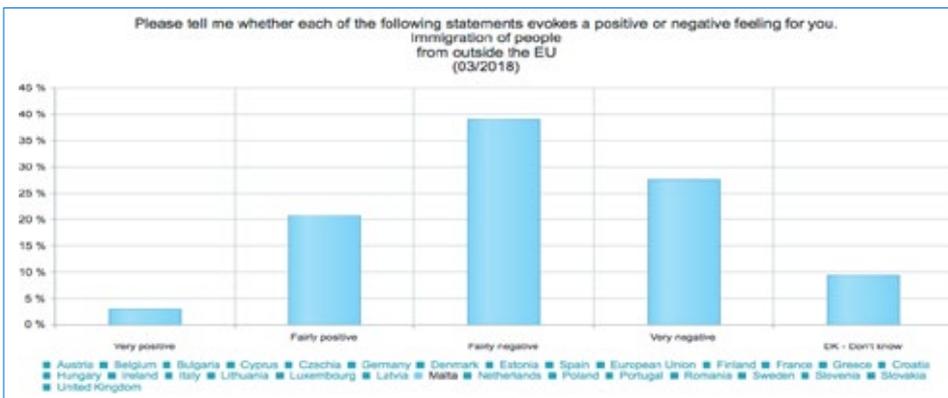


Figure 3: European Commission, Public Opinion, November 2018

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Employment

Women wearing the hijab in Malta have remarked many times that it is a struggle to find employment. From the data found on the website of the Department for Indus-

5. “Please Tell Me Whether Each of the Following Statements Evokes a Positive or Negative Feeling for you. Immigration of People Outside the EU (03/2018), *European Commission Public Opinion*, November 2014, <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Chart/getChart/themeKy/59/groupKy/279/chartType/barChart/savFile/880>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

trial and Employment Relations⁶ in Malta, there is no record of any reported racism or discrimination on the basis of alleged discriminatory treatment when employed or seeking employment for the year 2018. However, an article published in 2018 which tells the story of a Maltese woman who converted to Islam reveals that women wearing the hijab find it difficult to find employment.⁷ Furthermore, there is a lack of statistical data which documents the official numbers of the Muslims in Malta.

Relying on data of racism and discrimination, research found that 33% of sub-Saharan African immigrants feel discriminated on the basis of their skin colour. When it comes to employment in Malta, 20% of immigrant respondents declared having experienced discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or background when looking for work in the 12 months preceding the survey. Another 15% declared having experienced discrimination in the workplace.⁸

Education

As of the September 2018 academic year, Mariam Al Batool School, which offered primary and secondary education for Muslim students, closed its doors for secondary education because of financial difficulties. Imam Mohammed El Sadi, the most known imam and a leader in the Muslim community in Malta, requested that Islam religion lessons be provided in government schools in the absence of an Islamic school in Malta. To this day, most Muslim students sit for Ethics lessons at secondary school level instead of Catholicism lessons. However, students in primary school do not have an alternative to the lesson on Catholicism. This also follows a controversy in 2017 regarding Islam religion lessons in public schools.⁹

There has been no curriculum material reported as Islamophobic in content. Inclusion has been encouraged by educators in the last few years. However, there is a need for educators to be informed about Islam and Muslims, as such information is not provided to them and they struggle to deal with pupils in their classes who practice Islam.

Politics

The last general election in Malta was held in 2017. The far-right movement *Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin* (Maltese Patriots) participated in the election with a candidate in

6. "Department for Industrial & Employment Relations", *DIER*, <https://dier.gov.mt/en/Pages/home.aspx>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. "I Converted to Islam at 24", Lovin Malta, 16 February 2018, <https://lovinmalta.com/news/news-human-interest/converted-to-islam-at-24>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

8. "Racism and Discrimination in Employment in Europe 2013-2017", *Enar Shadow Report*, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/enar-shadow-report-racism-discrimination-in-employment-in-europe-2013-2017>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

9. Sara Ezabe Malliue, "Malta", *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraklı, Farid Hafez, (SETA, İstanbul 2018), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Malta.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

each district.¹⁰ Although, the party claims to be simply patriotic it has issued a number of controversial statements some of which can be categorised as Islamophobic, xenophobic, and racist. Fortunately, none of the candidates were elected to parliament. Most of their slogans oppose integration and foreigners in Malta.¹¹ They usually highlight their opposition to Islam, while they have been organising 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 organised prayer gatherings.¹²

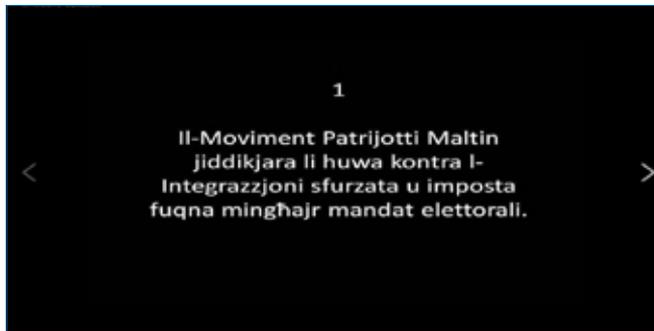


Figure 4: One of the electoral proposals by the Maltese Patriot Party for the European Parliament elections against integration.



Figure 5: Prominent member of the MPM (Maltese Patriots movement, far-right) claiming that by accepting migrants/ asylum-seekers/foreigners Malta risks the invasion of ISIS members.

10. “Maltese Patriots Announce They Will Contest Next General Election” *TVM*, 9 May 2017, <https://www.tvn.com.mt/en/news/maltese-patriots-announce-they-will-contest-the-next-general-election>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

11. Tim Diacono “Patriots Plan for Referendum on Forced Integration, Is Legally Impossible”, *Malta Today*, 31 December 2017, <https://www.tvn.com.mt/en/news/maltese-patriots-announce-they-will-contest-the-next-general-election/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

12. “Patriots Distribute Pork Sandwiches During Protest against Praying Muslims”, *Times of Malta*, 17 January 2016, <https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20160117/local/patriots-distributepork-sandwiches-during-protest-against-praying.599139>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

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.¹³ 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 where residents are the least comfortable with someone from a different religion; 46% of respondents expressed such a sentiment. Thirty-nine percent of respondents claimed to feel ‘totally uncomfortable,’ ranking Malta second in this category.¹⁴ Furthermore, in view of the 2019 European Parliament elections, certain candidates have also expressed Islamophobic and racist sentiments, especially in light of immigration.

Media

For the country level analysis, when comparing the average estimate given by respondents to the actual share of non-EU born persons residing in each EU Member State in 2017,¹⁵ on average in the EU, nearly three in ten (29%) respondents are not able to estimate the proportion of their country’s population that consists of immigrants. This proportion varies significantly across countries and an alarming 50% of the Maltese population miscalculates this number.¹⁶

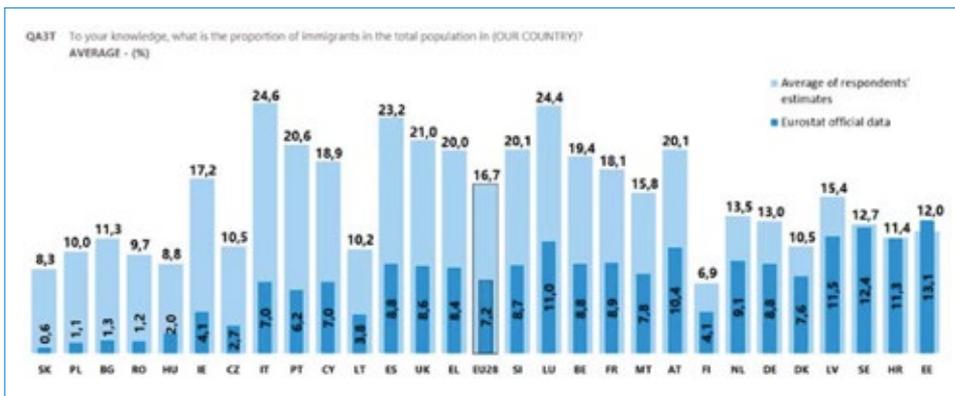


Figure 6: Interaction with immigrants. Source: Eurobarometer 2018, Integration of immigrants in the EU 2018.

13. Tim Diacono, “Minister Insists, Burqa, Niqab Ban No Threat to Religious Freedom” *Malta Today*, 21 October 2015, http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/58422/minister_insists_burqa_niqab_ban_no_threat_to_religious_freedom#.Wl0UG63MxE4, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. “Discrimination in the EU in 2015”, *European Commission: Special Eurobarometer 437*, May-June 2015, p. 31, <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/d629b6d1-6d05-11e5-9317-01aa75ed71a1>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

15. “Department for Industrial & Employment Relations”, *DIER*, <https://dier.gov.mt/en/Pages/home.aspx>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

16. “Integration of Immigrants in the European Union”, *European Commission: Special Eurobarometer 469*.

The media has been a contributing factor to distorting the figures of immigrants in Malta. As formerly discussed most Maltese do not distinguish between an asylum-seeker/immigrant/refugee and a Muslim. Although, there are no particular media outlets which promote Islamophobic content, 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. *Lovin Malta*, *Malta Today*, and *Time of Malta* are amongst the media outlets which encourage inclusion and integration of Muslims in Malta. As a newspaper, *Time of Malta*, has blocked the comments section when reporting on sensitive matters such as immigration and Muslims to avoid racist and Islamophobic comments. Furthermore, *Lovin Malta* creates content which challenges the Maltese people's perception about Muslims in a positive way.

Justice System

Hate speech continues to be one of the concerning priorities that need to be addressed adequately on both a legal and cultural level. Consequently, the justice system is now being faced with a number of reports of hate speech. One would hope that these decisions would then encourage new legislation to better deal with such occurrences.

In 2016, two people were fined 3,000 Euro each for inciting racial hatred through racist comments posted on a public Facebook page.¹⁷ Furthermore, the first judgement dealing with Islamophobic comments on Facebook was issued in 2018 and has since then been appealed. A report was filed online to the Cyber Crime Unit. The comments included ones against the hijab and swear words against a Maltese Muslim woman, with incitement that she is “sent her back to her country”. The magistrate in this case decided that the comments did not amount to hate speech and that whilst they were insulting, simply warned the computer user to be more cautious with online behaviour.¹⁸ As a reaction to this, several NGOs issued a joint statement to reject the decision.¹⁹

Internet

The Internet is the most prevalent space for Islamophobic comments (Fig. 5). Social media pages such as that of the *Ghaqda Patrijotti Maltin*¹⁶ are flooded with Islam-

17. “Submissions to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Malta: During its 31st Session 2018”, *The Platform of Human Rights Organisations in Malta (PHROM) on Human Rights in Malta*, 5-16 November 2018, p. 3.

18. “Il-Pulizzija vs Brandon Bartolo 30/01/2018 - Judgement Details”, *Converge*, 30 January 2018, <https://ecourts.gov.mt/onlineservices/Judgements/Details?JudgementId=0&CaseJudgementId=109986>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

19. Matthew Vella, “15 Human Rights NGOs Say Ezabe Hate Speech Acquittal ‘Condone Anti-Migrant’ Sentiment”, *Malta Today*, https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/84179/15_human_rights_ngos_say_ezabe_hate_speech_acquittal_condone_antimigrant_sentiment#.XW0dHZMzagR, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

ophobic comments and posters. Online comments and fake news are not monitored by any institution. Hate speech is codified under the Maltese Criminal Law Article 82A (1)²⁰ 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 campaign’s website the reporting procedures of the respective party countries are included to facilitate reporting. However, Malta is missing. Several other organisations 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.²¹ The above reporting mechanism has been relaunched in 2018, with the aim of encouraging reporting.



Figure 7: A post by the Maltese Patriots on their Facebook group page which states that saying that one is a Maltese Muslim is like saying that a cat is a lion.

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 Europa*, 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 organised protests all across the country. Alex Pisani and Henry Battistino, the moderators and leaders of this movement, are responsible for the organisation of such events and the sharing of material, which is then further circulated and shared.

20. Criminal Code, Chapter 9 of the Laws of Malta, Article 82A (1)

21. “People for Change Foundation”, <http://www.pfcmalta.org/report-racism-malta.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The most prominent and active groups in Malta which create initiatives and events to combat discrimination, racism, and Islamophobia are the following: People for Change Foundation (PFC), Integra, NCPE, aditus foundation, and the Jesuit refugee services. The NCPE is the governmental agency for equality; however, it focuses more on gender equality than on religious inclusion. NGOs in Malta focus primarily on racism and discrimination faced by foreigners (immigrants & refugees) rather than with the inclusion of Maltese Muslims. Some of the events which dealt indirectly with addressing Islamophobia are discussed below. Among them, one of the most prominent was “Youth Not Status”, organised by the aditus foundation. On December 14, 2018, the Maltese Ministry for European Affairs and Equality launched the Local Integration Charter at the first Annual Integration Conference. The charter addresses tensions related to social cohesion and presents community dialogue as a tool in addressing these tensions. The charter will be implemented by the Integration Unit of the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID), the Local Councils Association, and participating local councils.²²

On December 14, 2018, the Ministry for European Affairs and Equality (which includes the Human Rights and Integration Directorate) hosted the first Annual Integration Conference in Malta.²³ The *Karta tal-Integrazzjoni fuq Livell Lokali* (Local Integration Charter) was launched during the conference. The Intraministerial Migrant Integration Action Plan and the first Annual Report of Integration Unit of the Ministry were presented at this event. Furthermore, on October 29, 2018, the People for Change Foundation (PFC) hosted a roundtable event on racism in Malta, with a focus on reporting. The roundtable provided an opportunity to relaunch the platform Report Racism Malta, a PFC initiative,²⁴ which has recently been revised to be more user-friendly. The platform allows users to complete a short questionnaire detailing their experience of racism with the option to do so anonymously. Users will then receive tailored advice and guidance about where to seek help and where to go for further support.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

As evident from the above research, which includes informal interviews with Muslims, newspaper research and statistics, Malta is very underdeveloped on this

22. “Local Integration Charter Launched in Malta”, *European Website on Integration*, 14 December 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/local-integration-charter-launched-in-malta>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

23. “Malta – Annual Integration Conference”, *European Website on Integration*, 14 December 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/event/malta-annual-integration-conference>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

24. “Relaunch of the Report Racism Malta Platform at Roundtable Event” *European Website on Integration*, 29 October 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/relaunch-of-the-report-racism-malta-platform-at-roundtable-event>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

matter and requires research and policies 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 countering 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. Further recommendations include:

- Setting up alternative mechanisms to encourage victims to report hate crime and hate speech incidents, such as third-party reporting systems or dedicated telephone lines.
- A mechanism for collecting disaggregated data on hate crime incidents, including hate speech, on the ground of religion.
- Authorities need to press ahead with and intensify training for police, prosecutors, and judges in order to ensure a more effective fight against Islamophobia.
- The adoption of a strategy for the integration of all Muslims in the community as soon as possible, along with a clear message to the public that integration is a two-way process for both Muslims and the majority population.
- Authorities must organise a campaign to raise awareness among the public about Islam and Muslims.
- Policy documents and formal statistics about the Muslim population in Malta, both foreign and Maltese, are necessary.

Chronology

- **January 2018:** First judgement delivered by a court dealing with Islamophobic comments online.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
MOLDOVA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

AIDA AROSOAIE

The Author

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Executive Summary

Most of the Muslims living in Moldova are immigrants mainly from Middle Eastern countries. Another important Muslim group in Moldova are the local converts who have converted within the past decade. While official statistics claim the number of Muslims in Moldova to be around 3,000, informal sources claim that there are over 16,000 adherents of Islam living in the country.

Over the years, several international institutions, such as the Pew Research Center, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Council on Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality (CPEDEE) conducted surveys regarding the situation of Muslims in the country, revealing that only 30% of the Moldovan citizens interviewed are open to having a Muslim neighbor, that the social acceptance towards Muslims is lower than the social acceptance of Jews - an alarming fact especially if understood in historical perspective - and that Muslims have emerged as they most discriminated religious minority in Moldova. Currently, the Muslim community is represented by the Islamic League, an organization which was granted official authorization in 2012, following a decade of unsuccessful attempts.

In the past few years, Muslims in Moldova, including women, men, and children, have been victims of several harassment incidents, such as physical and verbal abuses in the realm of education and the justice system.

In 2018, there were no major incidents of Islamophobia. Instead, the media and the electoral runoff for the position of mayor of Chisinau represented the main vehicles for Islamophobic remarks in Moldova.

The key highlights marking the existing Islamophobic attitudes in Moldova were a TV show, *Vorbeste Moldova* (Moldova Speaks), and several newspaper articles which falsely accused liberal politician Andrei Nastase of having a pro-Muslim agenda.

The TV show also sensationalized and orientalized the experiences of Muslim converts, setting the emphasis on the social stigma related to the conversion to Islam, and the articles threatened of the imminent danger of thousands of incoming Muslim refugees from Syria, as well as Arab individuals.

Sumar Executiv

Majoritatea Musulmanilor care locuiesc în Republica Moldova în momentul de față provin din Oriental Mijlociu și din Asia Centrala. Deși în minoritate, un alt grup important de aproximativ 3000-4000 persoane este constituit de cetățenii moldoveni care s-au convertit la Islam în ultimul deceniu. De-a lungul anilor, mai multe instituții internaționale, precum Centrul de Cercetare Pew, Oficiul Înaltului Comisariat al Națiunilor Unite pentru Drepturile Omului și Consiliul pentru Prevenirea și Eliminarea Discriminării și Asigurarea Egalității (CPEDEE), au efectuat sondaje privind situația musulmanilor în care arată că doar 30% dintre cetățenii moldoveni intervievați sunt pregătiți să aibă un vecin musulman, acceptarea socială față de musulmani este mai mică decât acceptarea socială a evreilor, un fapt alarmant, mai ales dacă este înțeles în perspectivă istorică, și că musulmanii reprezintă cea mai discriminată minoritate religioasă în Moldova. În prezent, comunitatea musulmană este reprezentată de Liga Islamică, o organizație care a primit autorizație oficială în 2012, după un deceniu de încercări nereușite. În ultimii ani, musulmanii moldoveni, inclusiv femei, bărbați și copii, au fost victime ale mai multor incidente de hărțuire, precum abuzuri fizice și verbale, în special în domeniul educației și al sistemului judiciar. În 2018, nu s-au înregistrat incidente majore de islamofobie. În schimb, atitudini islamofobice au fost prezente în mass-media și în campania electorală pentru primarul municipiului Chișinău. În mod special, acestea au putut fi remarcate în emisiunea TV, Vorbește Moldova (Moldova Speaks) și câteva articole de ziare care l-au acuzat în mod fals politicianul liberal Andrei Năstase că are o agendă pro-musulmană. În emisiunea TV experiențele convertiților musulmani au fost senzationalizate, accentul fiind pus pe stigmatizarea socială legată de convertirea la islam, și articolele amenințau despre pericolul iminent de intrare a mii de refugiați musulmani din Siria și a cetățetcolul iminent deă.

Country Profile

Country: Moldova

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Unitary Parliament Representative

Ruling Parties: “Pro-European Coalition”: Liberal-Democratic Party of Moldova, Democratic Party of Moldova.

Opposition Parties: Democratic Party of Moldova, Dignity and Truth Platform Party, Republican Socio-Political Movement Equality Party.

Last Elections: 2016 Presidential Elections: incumbent Igor Dodon – Party of Socialists, 52.29% (the main conservative party in Moldova) and Maia Sandu – Action and Solidarity Party, 47.71% (often identified as a center-right, neoliberal party).

Total Population: 3,5 million (2015)

Major Languages: Romanian, Russian

Official Religion: Orthodox Christianity

Statistics on Islamophobia: No such statistics recorded; most Islamophobic incidents reported mainly by media outlets and NGOs are discursive events and verbal attacks.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: No data available.

Major Religions (% of Population): Orthodox Christianity (94%), Protestant Christianity (2%), No Religion (1%), Islam (2%), Judaism (0,8%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 3,000 (1%) in 2014 (Moldovan government), 17,000 (5%) in 2018 (Muslim League official records)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Liga Islamica (Muslim League)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: N/A

Far Right Parties: N/A

Far Right Movements: Noua Dreapta

Far Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

In 2015, the Moldovan population has been estimated at 3,5 million. According to the most recent census on religious affiliation in Moldova, 94% of the population adheres to either the Russian Orthodox Church or the Basarabia Orthodox Church. The remaining 5% includes both atheists and members of religious minorities; the latter comprising Catholics, Protestants, Presbyterians, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jews, Evangelicals, and Muslims.¹ The majority of Muslim individuals in Moldova have immigrated to the country from either the Middle East or Central Asia. The remaining 3,000-4,000 adherents to Islam have converted within the past decade.² In a study undertaken by the Pew Research Center from 2015 until 2017, only 30% of the Moldovan citizens interviewed are open to having a Muslim neighbor. In fact, the study highlights that the social acceptance towards Muslims is lower than the social acceptance of Jews, an alarming fact especially if understood in a historical perspective.³

In a 2016 study undertaken by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council on Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality (CPEDEE), Muslims emerged as the most discriminated religious minority in Moldova.⁴ While a legal framework in charge of preventing discrimination of any type was implemented in 2012, cultural prejudices and xenophobia remain important aspects of Moldovan society. Importantly, the Moldovan Orthodox Church and the Moldovan Socialist Party are the key sociopolitical and religious actors informing a public perception often injurious to a harmonious coexistence of minorities in Moldova. Given the political situation in Moldova that is torn between Russia and the European Union, most illiberal activities are part of a larger political agenda of partisanship.

The media and the electoral runoff for the position of mayor of Chisinau represented the most aggressive vehicles for Islamophobic remarks in Moldova. Islamophobia is also institutionalized in surveillance mechanisms, and manifested in verbal and physical harassment.

1. "Raport International Privind Libertatea De Religie in Moldova in Anul 2015", U.S. State Department, <https://md.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/210/2016/11/2015-IRF-MOLDOVA-RO.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

2. Vitalie Sprinceana, "Religie Si Libertate Religioasa in Republica Moldova", (Religion and Religious Freedom in the Moldovan Republic), *Platzforma*, 21 March 2016.

3. Liubomir Gutu, "Cat De Mult Moldovenii Sunt Toleranti? Care Este Rata De Acceptare A Persoanelor Musulmane Si De Origine Evreiasca In Calitate De Membru Al Familiei", (How Tolerant Are the Moldovans? What Is the Acceptance Rate of Muslim and Jewish-Origin Individuals as Relatives?), *Diez*, 31 October 2018.

4. Dumitru Sliusarenco and Ion Foltea, *The Rise of Illiberal Civil Society in Moldova*, (The Foreign Policy Centre Report, London: 2018).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

So far, the Muslim community in Moldova has yet to build a completed mosque. A key reason quoted on this matter is the fear of a potential backlash from the majority Orthodox Christian community. Instead, most of the prayers and gatherings take place in 3-4 makeshift public locations which belong to the Cultural Islamic Center. Indeed, sources from within the community note that this fear will remain the key issue which will prevent the community from having its own mosque in the future.⁵

Sergiu Sochirca, the president of the Islamic League, stated that the relationship between the Muslim community and state authorities has significantly improved since the official authorization of the Islamic League in 2012. Previously, Sochirca mentioned that all Friday prayers were attended by the police that would treat the community as a national danger and as a terrorist gathering. According to him, the authorities would photograph passports, keep records of each individual present at the prayer site, and arrest those without any form of identification.⁶ While such practices eventually diminished, Muslims continued to be harassed by law enforcement authorities. For example, the Islamic League reported discriminatory treatment of Muslims at entry and exit points of Moldova, including airports. League officials traveling to Saudi Arabia for the Umrah pilgrimage were subjected to additional processes of security checks, had their documents and religious literature photocopied, as well as their luggage hand-checked and their video equipment carefully scrutinized.⁷ Eduard Caraus, one of the co-founders of the Islamic League, recalled that even after the official registration of the league in 2012, he was stopped at an entry point from Ukraine into the Republic of Moldova and had to provide the customs officers with a handwritten declaration regarding his religious literature.⁸

NGOs have reported numerous incidents of Muslim women donning the headscarf in public places being verbally abused. In fact, several U.S. State Department reports highlight that Muslim women wearing the hijab in public places are particularly prone to harassment given the intersectionality between gender and religion, which has the potential to fuel greater feelings of isolation.⁹ One such example is

5. Sprinceana, "Religie si libertate religioasa in Republica Moldova".

6. Ibid.

7. "2014 Report on International Religious Freedom – Moldova", United States Department of State, <https://www.refworld.org/country,COI,,,MDA,,5621057413,0.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

8. Cristina Zavatin, "Sunt Muluman Si Cetatean Moldovean Insa Societatea Nu Ma Intelege", *Discriminare Media*, 30 May 2018, <http://discriminare.md/sunt-musulman-si-cetatean-moldovean-insa-societatea-nu-ma-intelege/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

9. "ECRI Report on the Republic of Moldova", The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-the-republic-of-moldova/16808de7d7>, (Access date: 5 September 2018).

Tatiana, a Muslim convert, who was confronted with repeated verbal and physical attacks in public places; one woman shouted at her in a supermarket for donning the veil, another poked her in a market for the same reason, while a group of young men threw walnut shells at her and her child on the street.¹⁰ Another such example is Natalia Marian, a woman fired from her job as a kindergarten teacher for donning the hijab, as parents complained to the school's management.¹¹ The situation, however, has significantly improved. As early as 2012, following the registration of the Islamic League, Moldovan officials agreed to allow Muslim women to wear the hijab in their ID photographs, as this right was previously denied.¹²

Education

Given the fact that Muslims in Moldova represent a small community, there is little information on acts of discrimination and no effort has been undertaken toward systematic data collection. In 2018, no such incidents have been reported. In a 2015 report released by the U.S. State Department, the Islamic League noted a decrease in Islamophobic incidents. The league noted that most anti-Muslim discrimination occurred in schools and other public institutions, manifesting in verbal abuse and harassment of Muslims by fellow students and in the professors' reluctance to intervene in such cases.¹³ In November 2017, a Muslim student was publicly humiliated by a school teacher in Chisinau, as the latter shouted in front of the classroom "You are those who kill" and "Islam itself kills."¹⁴

Politics

Xenophobia and racism have been commonplace in political campaigns in Moldova. Muslims have been particularly discriminated against in the country. For example, in 2011, two villages in the country, namely Chetris and Hiliuti, located in the Falesti county, strictly forbade the practice of Islam.¹⁵ The most recent political incident of Islamophobia is the 2016 presidential campaign. The runoff between the conservative candidate Igor Dodon and Maia Sandu was peppered with xenophobic and

10. Cristina Zavatin, "Lovita Cu Nuci Si Insultata Pentru Ca Poarta Val Islamic", *Discriminare Media*, 18 April 2012, <http://discriminare.md/lovita-cu-nuci-si-insultata-pentru-ca-poarta-val-islamic/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

11. Mariana Rata, "Discriminati Pentru Religie", *Centrul De Investigatii Jurnalistice*, 17 October 2012, <http://investigatii.md/ro/investigatii/discriminare/discriminati-pentru-religie/>, (1 September 2019).

12. "Femeile Musulmane Vor Putea Fi Fotografiate Cu Val In Actele De Identitate", *Discriminare Media*, 8 December, 2012, <http://discriminare.md/femeile-musulmane-vor-putea-fi-fotografiate-cu-val-in-actele-de-identitate/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

13. "2015 Report on International Religious Freedom – Moldova", United States Department of State, <https://www.refworld.org/country/COI,,MDA,,57add850c,0.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

14. "Moldova 2017 International Religious Freedom Report", United States Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/281180.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

15. "Spre Egalitate: Discriminare in Moldova", (On Equality: Discrimination in Moldova), Amnesty International, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/24000/eur590062012ro.pdf>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

sexist remarks, wherein the former candidate, whose agenda aligned with the political agenda of the Orthodox Church, claimed the latter candidate would welcome thousands of Muslim refugees if elected. Such remarks referred to these individuals as ‘aggressive Muslims’ and flyers warned Moldovan Christians that they would spread all over the country to rape women and girls and to rob locals.¹⁶

This rhetoric was also used in 2018 during the mayoral elections in Chisinau against the pro-European candidate Andrei Nastase. In addition to such Islamophobic remarks, opposition candidate Ion Ceban accused Nastase of planning a 50-year lease of Chisinau to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) if proved victorious.¹⁷ In fact, a video allegedly from the Qatar-owned media outlet Al Jazeera covered the story of the UAE potentially leasing Chisinau for the purpose of modernizing the city. The supposed news report also mentioned that such plans would also benefit the UAE diaspora in Moldova, the majority of whom are studying at the Medical School, as well as the other residing Muslims in the country through the construction of numerous mosques.¹⁸ The video, which was widely circulated on social media platforms with 370,000 views on YouTube and 7,300 shares on Facebook, turned out to be a scam. In reality, the news report which featured on Al Jazeera covered the conflict between the UAE and Yemen, and had been edited and dubbed with the story of the elections.¹⁹ Similarly, another video shot in London and entitled ‘YES – We will do it!’ featured Muslims from the Middle East expressing their support for Andrei Nastase ahead of the 20 May, 2018 elections.²⁰ In fact, a common theme during the election campaign was the accusations against Nastase of planning to accommodate around 30,000 Syrian refugees in Moldova, an allegation he himself often dismissed.²¹

Media

In 2018, most of the media reporting on issues related to Muslims evolved around the mayoral elections in Chisinau. In addition to the two videos reported in the previous section, many media outlets repeatedly reported negatively on Andrei Nas-

16. “ECRI Report on the Republic of Moldova”, The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

17. Dumitru Sliusarenco and Ion Foltea, *The Rise of Illiberal Civil Society in Moldova*.

18. Portalul Revolutiei, YouTube, 8 May 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qgtflb0vnW8>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

19. Lilia Zaharia, “Stop Fals: Reportajul Al Jazeera Despre Andrei Nastase Si Arabi A Fost Trucut; In Stirea Originala Nu Se Pomeneste De Rm”, (STOP, FALS: The Al-Jazeera Coverage on Andrei Nastase and the Arabs Was Edited; In the Official Coverage Report There Is No Mention of RM), *Jurnalul MD*, 10 May 2018.

20. “(video) Un Nou Fals Misesec La Adresa Lui Andrei Nastase: Video Filmat In Londra Cu Arabi Care Indeamna Chisinauenii Sa Il Voteze Pe Liderul Platformei DA”, ([video] Another Fake News Regarding Andrei Nastase: The Footage Shot in London with Arabs Who Are Encouraging Residents of Chisinau to Vote with the Leader of DA Coalition), *MediaNews*, 15 May 2018.

21. Sebastian Zachmann, “Alegeri Pentru Chisinau. Andrei Nastase: Plahotniuc Si Dodon Au Inventat Ca Am 11 Case, Ca Voi Aduce 30,000 De Sirieni Si Ca Voi Concesiona Chisinaul Arabilor”, (Elections for the Mayor of Chisinau: Plahotniuc and Dodon Make up a Story about My 11 Houses, Also Mentioning I Would Bring over 30,000 Syrians and That I Would Lease out Chisinau to Arabs), *Adevarul*, 31 May 2018.

tase in relation to Muslim matters. Another example is an article whose title read “He’s Done It! Andrei Nastase Replaced the Cross in Stephen the Great with the Arab Crescent!” The article claimed that Nastase focused on securing the vote of the Arab community resident in Chisinau, which numbered 33,000 members. Such incidents are part of a trend identified by the Islamic League, which has repeatedly reported a negative portrayal of resident Muslims in the coverage of any news related to Islam. For example, the league noted that whenever reporting global news related to terrorist incidents, such as attacks or threats, the media organizations would cite the Islamic League as the only registered Muslim organization in the country, thus implicitly claiming its links to violence and danger.²²

In May 2018, the TV show *Moldova Speaks* featured an episode on Muslim converts. From the very beginning, the reporting of conversions to Islam was peppered with orientalism and sensationalism, as the emphasis was set on revealing the mysterious nature of such conversions and the spectacular perseverance of converts in overcoming social hindrances and prejudices. For example, a couple confessed their families’ continued reluctance and objections to their decisions to convert, while another highlighted the lack of intolerance of the Moldovan society towards Islam. The show also featured instances of profound prejudices. The host highlighted that, following her conversion, a woman renounced her profession as a lawyer to be a housewife, a fact otherwise understood negatively in society, and centered the episode around the reasons why Muslim women don the veil; at many points, she compared the hijab with the headscarf worn by Christian women, openly criticizing the lack of emancipation of Muslim women. Also, the host asked their guests to spell out the meaning of ‘Allah Akbar,’ noting that the phrase is most often associated with terrorist incidents throughout the world.²³

In July 2018, an article entitled “Muslim Invasion in Moldova through Sold Citizenship?” warned Moldovan citizens about the imminent danger posed by the incoming Muslim invasion from Arab countries. The article claimed that the majority of Muslims seeking to relocate to Moldova are neither refugees nor economic migrants, but owners of huge capital who could potentially control the political life in the country. Criticizing the executive decision of implementing a citizenship acquisition program through investment, the article bemoaned such a “diabolical decision” stating, “for one thing, the ruler Stefan the Great would have commanded their heads to be cut off, and Vlad the Impaler would have set them on fire in the Great National Assembly Square.”²⁴ In addition to this, the article also expressed

22. “2015 Report on International Religious Freedom – Moldova”, United States Department of State, <https://www.refworld.org/country,COI,,,MDA,,57add850c,0.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

23. Vorbeste Moldova, YouTube, 2 May 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwTk28WoAm8>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. Ghenadie Vaculovschi, “Muslim Invasion in Moldova through Sold Citizenship?”, *Flux*, 18 July 2018.

concern about the fate of Moldovan society, warning that the incoming Muslims would “claim all kinds of rights, including religious ones” and demanding that people unite to “curb this evil.” The article added, “What could happen if the witnesses of this religion penetrate state institutions? Their aggressive behavior in the countries of Western Europe is evident.” The same media outlet, *Flux*, which was founded in Moldova in 1995 and has a monthly readership of 56,000, published a number of articles in 2018 warning about the threat of Muslims taking over Europe. Some of the headlines include “The Islamization of Europe Has Begun: A Church in Hamburg Has Been Transformed into a Mosque”,²⁵ “The Muslim Assault: A Call for the Islamization of Austria and the Implementation of Shari’a”.²⁶

Justice System

In 2018, there were no Islamophobic incidents reported in the context of the judiciary. In fact, Sergiu Sochirca has repeatedly expressed his content at the visibly improving legal situations of Muslims in Moldova. To this end, such improvements trace their origins in the official registration of the Islamic League in 2012 and the adoption of the anti-discriminatory law adopted in 2012. On 14 March, 2011, the Islamic League was officially registered by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), following a 10-year effort of the Muslim community.²⁷ Prior to this, two other Muslim organizations attempted to register the community but were discouraged by repeated refusals from the Ministry of Justice to continue with the registration application process. One of these, the Spiritual Gathering of Muslims of Moldova, eventually registered as an NGO after unsuccessful attempts to register as a religious organization. The organization reported that the MOJ’s refusal was justified with the claim of incorrect documentation.²⁸ Yet, the registration of the Islamic League sparked great backlash from the Moldovan Orthodox Church. Voicing concerns regarding the allegedly imminent threat posed by resident Muslims, the Moldovan Alliance of Orthodox Organizations organized a series of anti-Islamic protests on 18 May, 2011. Officials from the Islamic League noted that following the protests the general attitude towards Muslims in Moldova significantly deteriorated, wherein derogatory messages associated Muslims to pedophiles, homosexuals, and terrorists.²⁹ A professor at the Orthodox Theological Academy of Chisinau, Peter Pruteanu, was a staunch critic of

25. “A Inceput Islamizarea Europei: Biserica Transformata In Moschee La Hamburg”, (The Islamization of Europe Has Begun: A Hamburg Church Turned into a Mosque), *Flux*, 28 September 2018.

26. “Asaltul Musulmanilor: Apel Pentru Transformarea Austriei In Stat Islamic Si Introducerea Shari’ei”, (The Muslim Assault: Calls for Austria to Become an Islamic State and Introduce Shari’a), *Flux*, 10 May 2018.

27. “2011 Report on International Religious Freedom – Moldova”, United States Department of State, <https://www.refworld.org/country,COI,,,MDA,,5021059f2d,0.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

28. “2014 Report on International Religious Freedom – Moldova”, United States Department of State, <https://www.refworld.org/country,COI,,,MDA,,5621057413,0.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

29. *Ibid.*

the registration of the Muslim League, citing as a key concern the fact that an individual could only leave the Islamic faith through death; to this, he added that “the Arab states have a well-prepared agenda that is not secret or it is simply ignored by us because we are naïve. (...) Don’t think the sending of Muslim students to Moldova is accidental. It is easy to see that the first thing they do here is marry local Christian women, who are then forced to convert to Islam.”³⁰

The adoption of the anti-discrimination law (Law No. 121) was passed in the Parliament of Moldova on 25 May, 2012 and became effective on 1 January, 2013. The law put forward a comprehensive non-discriminatory framework with the intention of ensuring the equal rights of all individuals residing in Moldova, irrespective of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disabilities, etc.³¹ The adoption of the anti-discrimination law has been vehemently protested throughout the country. In April 2012, in the city of Balti, flyers were distributed which warned Moldovan Christians against the Muslim danger. The flyers made reference to the Ottoman occupation on Moldova in the 17th and 18th centuries, and warned against the Muslim refugees’ agenda of the widespread conversion to Islam or mass decapitation of Christians in Moldova. During the investigation, the local law enforcement authorities claimed that the Orthodox Church was behind the production and distribution of the flyers. While there was no evidence found to this end, the Bishop of Balti reaffirmed the content of such flyers.³²

Internet

In addition to the two videos detailed in the section on politics, the YouTube post of the TV show *Moldova Speaks* on the Moldovan Muslim converts received an overwhelming amount of negative attention. Most of the comments condemn the Moldovans who decided to convert to Islam and some of them also insult the women who converted following their marriage with a Muslim individual from the Middle East. Also, some of the comments denounced Islam itself, either labelling it as a heresy or as a quintessential religion of war: “Oamenii Razboiului” (The People of War); “Religia musulmana este criminal. Coranul spune sa-i prinda pe nonmusulmani si sa-i omoare” (The Islamic faith is a criminal creed. The Quran stipulates that non-Muslims should be captured and murdered).³³

30. Mircea Ticudean, “Conservatives Angered by Moldova’s Recognition of Muslims”, *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, 17 May 2011.

31. “Moldova: Various Forms of Discrimination are Banned by Law”, Library of U.S. Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/moldova-various-forms-of-discrimination-are-banned-by-law/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

32. “Spre Egalitate: Discriminare în Moldova”, (On Equality: Discrimination in Moldova), *Amnesty Radio Liberty*, 17 May 2011.

“Spre Egalitate Discriminarea În Moldova”, (Moldova: Various International), <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/24000/eur590062012ro.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. Vorbeste Moldova, YouTube, 2 May 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwTk28WoAm8>, (Accessed date: 5 September 2019).

Similar arguments were posted on the Internet as early as 2011. On 20 May, 2011, following the registration of the Islamic League, a blogpost featuring 12 videos by Professor Peter Pruteanu stated that Muslims in Moldova are deceiving, aiming to convince Christians that everything is fine, when, in fact, their religion is very dangerous, especially for the soul. He claimed that his blogpost was not intended to incite hatred or discrimination, but simply provide an objective perspective on Islam.³⁴

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

While it is hard to speak of an Islamophobia network in Moldova, the central figures at the forefront of such campaigns usually are the Moldovan Orthodox Church, the Socialist Party of Moldova, as well as a number of media outlets, the most prominent of which is *Flux*. As mentioned above in the Politics, Media, and Internet sections, Islamophobic remarks are voiced either as integral parts of political campaigns or as Christian propaganda of the Moldovan Orthodox Church.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

Given the small number of Muslims in Moldova, there are no civil society actors performing the role of watchdogs regarding discrimination against the Muslim community. Instead, important civil actors monitoring Islamophobic incidents or discursive events are the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights; the Council for Preventing and Eliminating Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, an independent NGO founded in 2013; and the Promo-LEX Association, an independent NGO aiming to promote the implementation of democracy in Moldova founded in 2002.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Given the small number of Muslims in Moldova, Islamophobia emerges mainly out of the Othering and sensationalism inherent in the reporting of Islam-related events. Whereas the Muslim diaspora is often projected as the threat of Islamization, justified in reference to some of the terrorist incidents throughout Europe, Moldovan converts to Islam are orientalized and projected as inherently mysterious. Either way, the political situation in Moldova, which is defined by a conflict between liberal pro-European and conservative pro-Russian actors, further contributes to the projection of Islam as the foreign Other by virtue of the Moldovan Orthodox Church's conservative stance.

34. Petru Pruteanu, "Adevarata Fata A Islamului Si A Musulmanilor. Orice Crestin Trebuie Sa Stie Asta", Blogul Ieromonahului Petru Pruteanu, 20 May 2011, <http://www.teologie.net/2011/05/20/islam-musulmani-coran-video/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Based on the current situation of Muslims in Moldova, key policy recommendations include:

- a. The systematic implementation of a data collection effort meant to closely monitor each Islamophobic incident and actor.
- b. The encouragement of key governmental bodies and institutions, such as the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, to establish educational campaigns regarding the situation of Muslims worldwide on a regular basis. These would emphasize the diversity and the social reality of the Muslim community around the world, aiming to discredit incoherent projections of the religion.

Chronology

- **02.05.2018:** TV show *Vorbeste Moldova* (Moldova Speaks) features an episode on “Moldoveni convertiti la Islam” (Moldovan converts to Islam).
- **08.05.2018:** Video is posted on YouTube entitled “Pierdem Chisinaul?” (Are We Losing Chisinau?)
- **10.05.2018:** Article in *Jurnalul MD* by Lilia Zaharia, “STOP FALS: Reportajul Al Jazeera despre Andrei Nastase si arabi a fost trucat; in stirea originala nu se pomeneste de RM,” (STOP, FALS: The Al-Jazeera Coverage on Andrei Nastase and the Arabs Was Edited; In the Official Coverage Report There Is No Mention of RM.)
- **15.05.2018:** Article in *MediaNews* - “(video) Un nou fals miselesc la adresa lui Andrei Nastase: Video filmat in Londra cu arabi care indeamna chisinauenii sa il voteze pe liderul Platformei DA,” ([video] Another Fake News Regarding Andrei Nastase: The Footage Shot in London with Arabs Who Are Encouraging Residents of Chisinau to Vote with the Leader of DA Coalition).
- **30.05.2018:** Blog entry by Cristina Zavatin on the discrimination of Moldovan Muslims, “Sunt musulman si cetatean moldovean insa societatea nu ma intelege,” Discriminare Media, <http://discriminare.md/sunt-musulman-si-cetatean-moldovean-insa-societatea-nu-ma-intelege/>.
- **31.05.2018:** Article in Romanian editorial *Adevarul* by Sebastian Zachmann, “Alegeri pentru Chisinau. Andrei Nastase: Plahotniuc si Dodon au inventat ca am 11 case, ca voi aduce 30,000 de sirieni si ca voi concesiona Chisinaul arabilor,” (Elections for the Mayor of Chisinau: Plahotniuc and Dodon Make up a Story about My 11 Houses, Also Mentioning I Would Bring over 30,000 Syrians and That I Would Lease out Chisinau to Arabs).
- **18.07.2018:** Report released by the Foreign Policy Centre Report by Dumitru Sliusarenco and Ion Foltea, *The Rise of Illiberal Civil Society in Moldova*, (The Foreign Policy Centre Report, London: 2018).

- **31.10.2018:** Article in *Diez* by Liubomir Gutu, “Cat de mult moldovenii sunt toleranti? Care este rata de acceptare a persoanelor musulmane si de origine evreiasca in calitate de membru al familiei,” (How Tolerant Are the Moldovans? What Is the Acceptance Rate of Muslim and Jewish-Origin Individuals as Relatives?)

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
MONTENEGRO
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

In comparison with other former Yugoslavian countries, Montenegro has the least violent past when it comes to the '90s wars and conflicts. Nevertheless, consequences are visible and the present situation is combined with a fragile economy and a deep political crisis. In 2017, Montenegro joined NATO, and advanced the EU integration process.

The position of the Muslim community has improved in the last 10 years, mainly due to the process of EU integration that requested the regulation of the legal framework in relation to the rights of minorities. The agreement that the Islamic Community signed with the government in 2012 was designed to define the legal platform for adopting the law on the legal status of religious communities and the law on the restitution of property rights. In 2018, a draft of the Law on Freedom of Religion was published, which should be passed in 2019.

The main problem of the Muslim community is that despite very well structured legislation, there is weak implementation. Poor rule of law can be observed in the fact that none of the Islamophobic incidents have been prosecuted. Another problem that Muslims face is the lack of mechanisms that would track and record anti-Muslim hate crimes, incidents, or speeches. There are no NGOs or official institutions that exclusively deal with Islamophobia. Authorities collect data on hate crimes in general but this data is not available to the public.

In 2018, we witnessed the presence of several hateful graffiti, and a few anti-Muslim comments by MPs and leading figures of the Orthodox Church. One can argue that the Islamophobic incidents are a sporadic occurrence in Montenegro. On the other hand, there is a strong Islamophobic sentiment that is visible every time the Muslim community requests certain changes or simply asks for its rights. The cases of Njegoš and the clock tower that are discussed in this report reveal the local anti-Muslim sentiment. Islamophobia in Montenegro has cleric-nationalist roots: Muslims regardless of nationality are seen as traitors of the country and its religion because they converted to Islam during the era of the Ottoman Empire.

Izvršni rezime

U poređenju sa ostalim državama koje su bile deo SFRJ, Crna Gora ima manje nasilnu prošlost kada su ratovi i konflikti 90tih u pitanju. Posledice su svakako vidljive u današnjoj slaboj ekonomiji koju prati duboka politička kriza. Crna Gora je 2017-te godine postala članica NATOa, što je pozitivno uticalo na proces evro-integracija.

Položaj Muslimana se znatno poboljšao u poslednjih 10 godina, uglavnom zbog procesa evropskih integracija koji zahtevaju regulisanje legalnih okvira kada su manjinske zajednice u pitanju. Sporazum koji je Islamska zajednica potpisala sa Vladom Crne Gore 2012-te godine je svakako jedan od najznačajnijih jer je dizajniran da oformi platformu gde će se dalji zakoni razvijati i implementirati, te rešiti pitanje kao što je legalni status vjerskih zajednica i zakon o restituciji prava o vlasništvu.

Najveći problem Muslimana u Crnoj Gori je taj što se dobro definisani pravni okviri i zakoni ne poštuju i retko implementiraju. Slaba vladavina prava se može videti u činjenici da se nijedan islamofobični incident nije procesuirao niti osudio. Nijedna nevladina organizacija ili oficijalna insitucija se ne bavi ovim problemom, kao ni sakupljanjem podataka. Prekršajni sud i Policija imaju arhivu podataka o zločinima iz mržnje ali su isti nedostupni za javnost.

U 2018-oj godini smo bili svedoci negativnih komentara od strane Narodnih poslanika i Pravoslavne Crkve, te nekoliko nacionalističkih grafita pa možemo reći da su islamofobični incidenti sporadična pojava u Crnoj Gori. Međutim u društvu postoje islamofobični osećaji i narativi prema muslimanskoj zajednici koji su itekako vidljivi kada Muslimani zatraže određene promene ili zahtevaju ispunjavanje svojih prava. Npr. u slučaju Sahat kule, ili debate oko Njegoševog Gorskog Vijenca antiislamski narativi su bili veoma prisutni.

Islamofobija u Crnoj gori ima klerikalno-nacionalističke korene, gde su Muslimani inače nazivani poturicama te viđeni kao izdajice svoje države.

Country Profile

Country: Montenegro

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Mixed parliamentary and presidential republic with a multi-party political system

Ruling Parties: Democratic Party of Socialists

Opposition Parties: Democratic Front Party, Democratic Montenegro, Socialist People's Party, Social Democratic Party, Democratic Alliance

Last Elections: 2016 parliament elections: Democratic Party of Socialists 41.4% of votes (36 seats in Parliament); Democratic Front 20.1% of votes (18 seats); Key Coalition 11% of votes (9 seats).

The 2018 presidential elections were won by former Prime Minister Milo Đukanović of the ruling Democratic Party of Socialists (DPS) in the first round.

Total Population: 629,364 (in 2019) based on the latest UN estimates.

Major Languages: Montenegrin (national and official), Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian, Croatian (in official use)

Official Religion: No official religion

Statistics on Islamophobia: Montenegro reports information on hate crimes to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Hate crime data is collected by the Montenegrin Prosecutor's Office and the Supreme Court. Data on hate crime is not made publicly available. There are no available statistics on Islamophobia.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018, 82 cases were reported to the Ombudsman (24 of them due to discrimination in employment; two of them were due to nationality and one due to religion). In its "Concluding Observations on the Combined Fourth to Sixth Periodic Reports of Montenegro," the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed concern for the violence against Roma people and for the absence of updated and comprehensive disaggregated data on hate crimes.

Major Religions (% of Population): 72.07% Orthodox Christians, 3.44% Catholic Christian, 19.11% Muslims

Muslim Population (% of Population): According to the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in Montenegro 2011, Montenegro's 118,477 Muslims make up 19.11% of the total population.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Community, Bosniak Forum

Main NGO's Combating Islamophobia: Ministry of Human and Minority Rights (The Directorate for Relations with Religious Communities)

Far-Right Parties: New Serbian Democracy, Democratic People's Party

Far-Right Movements: *Ravnogorski pokret* (forbidden by the government)

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The Balkans is a place where nationality, ethnicity, religion, and history interlace in a highly complex manner in relation to the issue of identity. According to the latest census, Muslims form the largest minority in Montenegro. Approximately 118,447 Muslims constitute 19.11% of the total population. One can say that the Muslim community is divided into two main groups and following subgroups: Slavic Muslims, consisting of Bosnian-speaking ethnic Bosniak Muslims; Montenegrin-speaking ethnic Montenegrin Muslims; and other Slavic Muslims like Gorani, Ashkali, who identify by religion rather than by ethnicity or nationality. The second group within Muslim community is the Albanian one, namely Albanian-speaking ethnic Albanian Muslims.

These communities are usually centralized in the northeastern municipalities, which are part of the Sandžak geographical region, and in municipalities where Albanians form a majority. Islam is the majority religion in Rožaje, Plav, Gusinje, Ulcinj, and Petnjica.

According to the Center for Democratic Transition, young people in Montenegro have a negative perception of Islam. Their research shows that this negative perception has formed hostile attitudes toward immigrants, and has enhanced the radicalization of political views and the feeling of insecurity due to political events and conflicts. On a scale of 1 to 5, Islamophobia in Montenegro rates at 2.5¹. The research also shows that Islamophobia does not depend on religious views but rather on the strength of national identity.² Islamophobia in Montenegro has deep historical roots inspired by mythological narratives. Throughout history, Muslims have been presented as individuals who betrayed their own people and faith by converting to Islam during the Ottoman era.³

There has been progress in the sociopolitical sphere and in the field of adoption of various sets of laws in conjunction with Montenegro's process of European integration. Nevertheless, very often the existing laws are not implemented.

1. "Empower for Change of Stigmatizing Attitudes", Center for Democratic Transition, 24 October 2017, <https://www.cdtmn.org/2017/10/24/mladi-su-islamofobicni-stigmatizuju-migrante/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. Ibid.

3. Adel Omeragic, "Montenegro: Anti-islamic Sentiment Is Increasing", Anadolu Agency, 4 November 2017, <https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/crna-gora-sve-vi%C5%A1e-elemenata-rastu%C4%87eg-antiislamskog-raspolo%C5%BEenja-/956552>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The municipality of Pljevlje has a long history of hateful graffiti. This municipality is located in north Montenegro and Muslims constitute 14% of the overall population. In 2014, the NGO Youth Forum requested the removal of the graffiti “Knife, wire, Srebrenica” that had been present for years.⁴ There is no information on whether it was removed. In 2016, graffiti stating “Muslims stink”⁵ was found in several locations. These hateful actions were condemned by the Socialist People’s Party. The graffiti was later removed. In 2018, graffiti giving support to war criminal Ratko Mladic⁶ was found.⁷ The first was on the elementary school Bosko Buha, where the words “There will be blood running through Pljevlja, our general should not be in the cage” were present. The second was on the entrance to the sports center Ada, where the name of Ratko Mladic was written.

The city of Berane also has a long record of nationalist and Islamophobic graffiti, a lot of it of an unknown date and still present throughout the city.⁸ The most recent is from 2017 and has not been removed yet. There was no police statement nor reaction regarding the graffiti that mostly call upon the slaughter of Muslims.⁹

Many Islamophobic statements have come from Metropolitan Amfilohije Radović. He is a Serbian Orthodox bishop, the current metropolitan bishop of Montenegro and the Littoral, making him the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro. The Islamic Community says he still has not apologized for a terrible statement he made in 2014. Back then, he said that “The Inquisition of the Turkified,” saved Montenegro.¹⁰ “The Inquisition of the Turkified” is an alleged historical event that took place on a particular Christmas Day in the early 1700s, during Metropolitan Danilo’s rule. This event was the mass execution of Montenegrins who had converted

4. “Grfit Mrznje Godinama Nikome Ne Smeta”, PVportal.me, 15 January 2015, <http://pvportal.me/2014/01/grfit-mrznje-godinama-nikome-ne-smeta/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

5. “Govor Mrznje Na Grafitima”, Radio i Televizija Crne Gore, 19 September 2016, <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/drustvo/141741/pljevlja-govor-mrznje-na-grafitima.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

6. Ratko Mladic was military commander who led the Army of Republika Srpska as a general during the Yugoslav Wars. He was later found guilty of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and Srebrenica genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY).

7. “Graffiti nacionalnih podjela”, PVportal.me, 24 January 2018, <http://pvportal.me/2018/01/graffiti-nacionalnih-podjela/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

8. “Teror Se Nastavlja”, Antenam.net, 28 March 2019, <https://www.antenam.net/drustvo/114909-teror-se-nastavlja-nakon-prebijanja-igoru-tomkicu-zapaljena-prodavnica>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

9. “Graffiti Oj Pazaru Novi Vukvaru Osvanuli U Beranama”, Info-ks.net, 21 October 2017, <https://www.info-ks.net/vijesti/regija/83415/u-beranama-osvanuli-graffiti-oj-pazaru-novi-vukvaru-i-kolji-siptare>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

10. Andrej Nikolaidis, “Zapaljive Poruke Crnogorskog Mitropolita”, Aljazeera Balkans, 16 August 2014, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/zapaljive-poruke-crnogorskog-mitropolita>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

to Islam and it is also the main theme of the epic poem by historical Montenegrin ruler P.P. Njegos, which will be discussed later in this report. Despite the difficulty of proving that an event of such magnitude and in such a manner as described by Njegos ever took place in Montenegro, Amfilohije Radovic apparently believes it did. Along with these words he said that Muslims are fake people of a fake religion.¹¹ Furthermore, he claims that Muslims spread spiritual death which is far worse than killing. In regard to the collaboration between the Islamic community and several Turkish organizations, Amfilohije Radovic warned the Montenegrin public that there is a neo-Ottomanism movement in progress. One of his most recent Islamophobic statements was regarding the restoration of a clock tower, a local historical symbol. The tower is one of the oldest symbols of the Montenegrin capital Podgorica. It is an Ottoman legacy built as a *waqf* by Hadzi Pasa Osmanagic in 1667. At the end of the 19th century, after the triumph over the Ottomans, local authorities placed a cross on the top of this 16-meter-high tower.

In the process of restoration, the cross was removed which revoked and divided Montenegrin society. It is also important to mention that this restoration is funded by TIKKA, the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency, a fact that fueled nationalist statements even more. Amfilohije said that the tower was actually a monument to those who died while they were liberating Podgorica and that many mosques are built on the remains of churches. The Islamic Community condemned his words and issued the following statement: “Not one mosque, in the far or near past was built on the foundation of Christian institutions. There is relevant documentation in the archive but also in the City Bureau for Surveying and Cadastral Affairs that proves our strong claim. The Islamic community would accept archeological research in order to disapprove claims by Amfilohije Radovic. On the other hand, Islamic architecture such as the clock tower cannot be the bearer of a cross.”¹² Another negative comment was made by the president of the NDS party Rados Zecevic who said that the cross from this tower was removed by the Islamic Informative Agency in order to cause division in Montenegrin society.¹³

In the case of the clock tower, the cross was indeed only removed for the purpose of restoration. The cross was put back on the tower despite requests not to do so by many Islamic and Bosniak organizations, as well as the Islamic Community.¹⁴ The

11. “Amfilohije: Istraga Poturica Spasila CG”, RTVCG, 3 August 2014, <http://www.rtcg.me/vijesti/drustvo/60768/amfilohije-istraga-poturica-spasila-cg.html>, (Access date: 4 September 2109).

12. “Fejzic o Sahat Kuli”, N1, 21 September 2017, <http://ba.n1info.com/Regija/a216029/Reis-Fejzic-o-krstu-na-Sahat-kuli.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

13. “Zecevic: Skidanje Krsta Cara Dusana Je Udar Na Pravoslavno Bice”, Vijesti, 14 September 2017, <https://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/politika/zecevic-skidanje-krsta-cara-dusana-sa-sat-kule-je-udar-na-pravoslavno-bice>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. “Crna Gora: Na Sahat Kulu Vrace Krst”, AlJazeera, 27 October 2017, <http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/crna-gora-na-sahat-kulu-u-podgorici-vracen-krst>, (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

Islamic Community has no power to influence such a decision and sees this initiative as an instance of clerical fascism. Although this historic object is a *waqf*, it is not under the jurisprudence of the Islamic Community as it should be. The Islamic Community is still waiting for the law regarding the restitution to be passed, according to which all property taken from the religious institution during the socialist period will be returned to it. Only when all the *waqfs* legally become property of the Islamic Community, including the clock tower, can changes in such cases be made.

Employment

Montenegro is a small and diverse country, with a high unemployment rate. The Center for Democracy and Human Rights states that the highest rate of discrimination in the country is the field of employment.¹⁵ Nevertheless, statistics¹⁶ say that religion is not one of the main causes of discrimination. The Ombudsman's report for the first seven months of 2018 has one complaint on religion-based discrimination but further details of this case remain unavailable.¹⁷ There are no records of cases of discrimination specifically driven by Islamophobia.

Education

History textbooks have been seen as a debatable and critical point in a democratic transition in the Balkans - Montenegro is not an exception to this. Although history should promote diversity and develop critical thinking, according to the Center for Civic Education (CCE), Montenegrin history textbooks are far from setting such a standard. Thorough their research, the CCE has analyzed the content of the textbooks available in the formal education system including primary, secondary, and higher level education. They concluded that "Montenegrin textbooks are practically 'cleansed' of all potentially 'dangerous' content, which restricts the potential of society to comprehend and evaluate that period based on facts, which further encumbers the already arduous process of facing the past."¹⁸

The consequences of such a relationship with contemporary history can be profound and catastrophic. The Center for Civic Education explains that creating gaps in historical education of pupils, we leave room for that void to get quickly filled with non-historical education imposed by the social environment¹⁹ Research from

15. Miloš Bešić, "Oblici, Obrasci I Stepen Diskriminacije U Crnoj Gori – Trendovi", CEDEM, March 2018, https://www.cedem.me/images/jDownloads_new/IZVJESTAJ_DISKRIMINACIJA_2018.pdf (Access date: 4 September 2019).

16. Ibid.

17. "Izveštaj O Zaštiti Od Diskriminacije Sa Stanovišta Djelovanja Institucije Zaštitnika Ljudskih Prava", Zaštitnik Ljudskih Prava I Sloboda Crne Gore, October 2018, https://www.ombudsman.co.me/docs/1541165543_izvjestaj--diskriminacija-01.011--31.07.2018.pdf (Access date: 4 September 2019).

18. Isidora Radonjić and at al. "Montenegrin Textbooks: What Do They Conceal and Reveal About The Contemporary History of Montenegro?", *Centre for Civic Education (CCE)*, (2016), <http://media.cgo-cce.org/2016/07/cgo-cce-montenegrin-textbooks.pdf>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

19. Ibid.

2015²⁰ indicated that non-historical education in Europe affects the formation of historical awareness by 30%. In post-conflict societies, that percentage goes up to 80%, primarily in relation to the creation of awareness concerning the conflict period. This further strengthens the extremist nationalist mentality through the aforementioned history of “pride and suffering” and hinders the reconciliation process.

Besides history textbooks, there is a debate regarding the literature curriculum. Several Bosniak associations and organizations have sent an appeal²¹ to the Ministry of Education where they requested withdrawing *The Mountain Wreath* from the school curriculum. *The Mountain Wreath* is a modern epic written in verse as a play and is considered a masterpiece of Serbian and Montenegrin literature. The Muslim community claims it draws on violent Islamophobic sentiment. The poem’s main theme is a subject of significant political and ideological debate. The author of this 200-year-old poem is Montenegrin ruler Petar II Petrovic-Njeegos, a historical figure that plays a significant role in Montenegrin but also Serbian history and identity.

Professor of Islamic History and Literature Michael Sells supports the argument, stating that the poem, a required reading in all schools in prewar Yugoslavia, is notable for its celebration of ethnic cleansing. In his view it “denotes Slavic Muslims as Christ-Killers, and plays a significant role in ethnic conflict and Bosnian War of the 1990s.”²² He points out that *The Mountain Wreath* was memorized and quoted by the radical Serb nationalists of the 1990s.

British reporter and political analyst Tim Juddah shares similar views. He states that “there was another side to *The Mountain Wreath* far more sinister than its praise of tyrannicide. With its call for the extermination of those Montenegrins who had converted to Islam, the poem was also a paean to ethnic cleansing ... it helps explain how the Serbian national consciousness has been molded and how ideas of national liberation are inextricably linked with killing your neighbor and burning his village.”²³

The appeal was denied with the explanation that the piece was written two centuries ago and it should be analyzed within that time framework and not within the present. This appeal was even followed by negative publicity and was considered to be scandalous since the writer is a very important historic figure who plays a great part in Montenegrin identity. Critics claim that his ideology trespasses time and that it should not be allowed a place in schools.

Bosniak Muslims in Montenegro have the right to education in their mother tongue. Nevertheless according to Professor Suljo Mustafic from the Bosniak Coun-

20. Ibid.

21. “Kakos U Njegos I Kis Postal Nacionalisti”, B92, 19 October 2018, https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2018&mm=10&dd=19&nav_category=12&nav_id=1457812, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. Michael Sells, “Bosnia: Some Religious Dimensions of Genocide”, *Religious Studies News*, 9 (1994), p. 4-5.

23. Tim Judah, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*, (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press: 1997), p.77.

the actual introduction of Bosniak literature and language in the classroom is not the least bit satisfying.²⁴ Mustafic claims that there is a lack of will but also of a proper model of implementation in order for this process to be successful.²⁵

The hijab is not common in Montenegrin educational institutions; there are almost no cases of the presence of hijabs in schools. Nevertheless, the hijab is allowed by the law that was confirmed in 2015 when a high school student in the city of Bar faced discrimination when she decided to wear a hijab.²⁶ Her math teacher refused to hold lessons while she was in the classroom. She was interrogated daily by the school's administration which along with the director tried to find out who made her to wear a hijab. She was also the subject of verbal abuse by her peers. The school decided to suspend her until they received an answer from the Ministry of Education on whether she was allowed to wear a hijab or not. The ministry stated that according to national law she is allowed to wear a hijab in school. Nevertheless, a group of teachers sent a complaint about this decision to the Supreme Court. By the end of the year, everything settled down, the student graduated, and left the school.

Politics

In 2018, Montenegrin political parties did not use Islamophobia as a political tool. Some examples can be offered from previous years, however. Theoretically, all political parties in the parliament advocate Montenegro's entry into the European Union. This integration process has without a doubt had an impact on the political parties. There are two parties representing minorities in the country: the Bosniak Party and the New Democratic Force (Albanian minority).

On occasion there are outbursts by politicians. For example, MP Marina Jovic (Democratic Front Party) delivered hateful comments on a Facebook group because she was bothered by the increased number of Muslim members in the parliament.²⁷ No one from the party condemned the comments. Another MP, Nebojsa Medojevic, wrote on his Facebook profile that voting for President Milo Djukanovic is the same as converting to Islam, becoming a Turk by betraying one's own country.²⁸ These words were reference to a coalition between Djukanovic's party and the Bosniak party.

24. "Bosanski Jezik: Potrebni Obuhvatniji Nastavni Program", CDM, 27 February 2019, <https://www.cdm.me/drustvo/bosanski-jezik-u-crnoj-gori-potrebni-obuhvatniji-nastavni-programi/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

25. Ibid.

26. "Ucenica Barske Gimnazije Zrtva Islamofobije", Bosnjaci.net, 24 January 2015, <http://bosnjaci.net/prilog.php?pid=54736>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. "Marini Jovic smetaju ministri islamske vjere", Analitika, 8 May 2018, <https://portalanalitika.me/clanak/301158/marini-jovic-smetaju-ministri-islamske-vjere>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

28. "Djukanoviceve glasace Medojevic nazvao poturicama", CDM, 27 March 2018, <https://www.cdm.me/arhiva/izbori-2018/predsjednicki/dukanoviceve-glasace-medojevic-nazvao-poturicama/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Media

According to the Council of Europe (CoE),²⁹ the media landscape in Montenegro is overcrowded and highly politicized. The media used to spread ethnic hatred during the civil wars and conflicts in the '90s; however, in the present traditional media, both on the websites of mainstream media and on news portals, hate speech has become a sporadic occurrence. In 2018, Montenegro also got its first Islamic radio that will be run by the Islamic Community.³⁰

On the other hand, the Media Institute states that the situation is quite bad when it comes to journalists' blogs, editorial comments, or citizens' news-related blogs, and it drastically degrades when it comes to user-generated content (UGC).³¹ In the later, hate speech is identified as the main problem. The Media Institute states that blatant curses, abuses, insults, and foul language could be found, and adds that, for the most part, they are being deleted by administrators, but with a certain time delay. Hate speech mainly targets Roma and the Albanian minority, refers to the deep interethnic division in Montenegro between the Serbs and Montenegrins, and expresses homophobic statements towards the gay population.

Justice System

The constitution guarantees equality and freedom to all religious communities. Any kind of religious hatred (mockery of religious symbols, spread or incitement of hatred, violence against persons on the basis of religion) is considered to be a crime by the law. The State Department's Report on Freedom of Religion states that violators may receive prison sentences ranging from six months to 10 years and if the violation is committed through the misuse of an official position or authority or leads to violence, or if the courts determine the consequences are detrimental to the coexistence of people, national minorities, or ethnic groups, the prison sentence ranges from two to 10 years.³² In addition, forbidding or limiting an individual's freedom to exercise one's belief can be fined from 200 EURO to 16,000 EURO or up to two years' imprisonment.

Within the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights (MHMR) there is the Directorate for Relations with Religious Communities that is charged with improving interfaith dialogue, protecting freedom of religion and its practices, and advancing the relationship and cooperation between the state agencies and religious communities. Ac-

29. "Analiza medijskog sektora u Crnoj Gori sa preporukama za usklađivanje sa standardima Savjeta Evrope i Evropske unije", *Council of Europe*, 29 December 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/analiza-medijskog-sektora-u-crnoj-gori-sa/16807b4d7d>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

30. "Crna Gora Dobila Prvi Islamski Radio", *Analitika*, 24 July 2019, <https://portalanalitika.me/clanak/320204/crna-gora-dobila-prvi-islamski-radio>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

31. Daniela Brkic, "Online Hate Speech Montenegro Country Report", *Montenegro Media Institute*, 31 May 2013, https://www.mminstitute.org/files/Online_Hate_Speech.pdf, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

32. "Reports", *The United States Department of State*, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/montenegro/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

According to the State Department's findings, the MHMR continued to provide funding to some religious groups; when it comes to the Muslim community, Islamic Community of Montenegro (ICM) received 38,765 EURO for 10 months in 2018.³³

There has been a lot of progress in the legislative field regarding the Muslim minority. The Islamic Community signed an agreement with the state that enhanced the legal position of the Muslim community in many ways.³⁴ In order to ensure this agreement is not just on paper, a commission was formed and works within the Directorate for Relations with Religious Communities. It is in charge of following the implementation of the agreement. The directorate in collaboration with the Islamic Community organizes academic debates, conferences, and sponsors publications mostly about combating violent extremism.

There has been a lot of debate regarding the draft of a new law on religious communities. The proposal itself has a lot of flaws, according to Imam Enis Budzurovic, who is a representative of Islamic Community, but at the same time it will regulate many things regarding the religious communities. The government continued its policy of not providing restitution of religious properties and the Muslim community hopes that this law will change this policy. Furthermore, the Islamic Community wants back the property that was expropriated by the former Yugoslav communist government. According to the latest findings - the law should be ratified in 2019 - the property of the religious communities (in the Muslim communities this property is also known as "waqf") can be returned to them only if it is proven to be a legal person's property and not the cultural heritage of the state that belongs to all Montenegrin people.³⁵

Internet

On online platforms, the webpage <https://www.in4s.net> had several Islamophobic headlines in 2018: "When restoration of Notre Dame gets finished, Europe will be Islamic!"³⁶, "Blatant Bosniaks: They want a crescent on the national Montenegro flag"³⁷, "They try to sell us a story about 'hounded Islam'"³⁸, "Bosniaks want to for-

33. Ibid.

34. "Novosti", Islamic Community of Montenegro, <http://www.monteislam.com/novosti/islamska-zajednica-u-crnoj-gori-i-vlada-crne-gore-potpisale-ugovor-kojim-se-definise-uredenje-medusobnih-odnosa>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

35. Služba Za Odnose S Javnošću Vlade Crne Gore, "Vlada Utvrdila Predlog Zakona O Slobodi Vjeroispovijesti Ili Uvjerenja I Pravnom Položaju Vjerskih Zajednica", 16 May 2019, <http://www.gov.me/vijesti/199409/Vlada-utvrdila-Predlog-zakona-o-slobodi-vjeroispovijesti-ili-uvjerenja-i-pravnom-polozaju-vjerskih-zajednica.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

36. "Kada Se Zavrsi Obnova Notr Dama, Evropa Ce Biti Islamska", Ins4s.net, 18 April 2019, <https://www.in4s.net/kad-se-zavrsi-obnova-katedrale-notr-dam-evropa-ce-biti-islamska/>, (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

37. "Bezobrazluk Domacih Bosnjaka, Opet Bi Polumjesec Na Crnogorsku Zastavu", Ins4s.net, 18 October 2018, <https://www.in4s.net/bezobrazluk-domacih-bosnjaka-opet-bi-polumjesec-na-crnogorsku-zastavu/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

38. "Opet Nam Se Namece Podvala O Progonjenom Islamu", Ins4s.net, 3 February 2019, <https://www.in4s.net/tanaskovic-opet-nam-se-namece-podvala-o-progonjenom-islam/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

bid Njegoš and Kiš”.³⁹ Along with the last article, this website published a caricature where a man wearing fez⁴⁰ (as a representation of Bosniak Muslims in Montenegro) throws balls at cups with the picture of Njegoš on them (Figure 1).⁴¹ This webpage is the eighth most-visited page in Montenegro.



Figure 1: Website ins4s.net published the caricature within the text “Bosniaks want to forbid Njegoš and Kiš- Radical Islam wants to belittle Njegos”

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Head of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Montenegro Amfilohije is s one of the most prominent Islamophobic figures in Montenegro The authorities are also responsible as they have never prosecuted him for his narratives that spread and incite national/religious hostilities and hatred. The crucial problem and the most worrying fact is that he is a leader of an important institution that enjoys great support not just in Montenegro but also in neighboring countries like Serbia.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

In Montenegro there are no NGOs or any initiatives dedicated to the suppression and monitoring of hate and hostilities against Muslims.⁴²

39. Literature works by Petar P. Njegoš and Danilo Kiš are considered to be Islamophobic and Muslims have requested the exclusion of these books from the school curriculum. The greater controversy surrounds the works of P.P.Njegoš, which will be discussed in a following section of this report.

40. A flat-topped conical hat made of red felt, identified with Turkey and the Ottoman Empire.

41. “Radikalni Islam Se Okomio Na Njegosa”, Ins4s.net, 18 October 2018, <https://www.ins4s.net/dr-budimir-aleksic-upozorava-radikalni-islam-okomio-se-na-njegosa/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

42. The Islamic Community is not an NGO or a political party.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Montenegro has a very good legal structure when it comes to freedom of religion, hate speech and hate crimes, but there is a lack of implementation of the laws. Data on cases of discrimination is collected by official institutions but has never become available. In order for civic society and organizations to tackle the issue of Islamophobia or any other hate crime, these facts are of crucial importance and should be made public. It is strongly recommended that the authorities increase transparency and make this information available.

The ODIHR also states that Montenegrin police does not have guidelines, policies, or databases to record hate crimes.⁴³ Developing clear instructions and policies that would advance prosecution and the fight against hate crimes is another recommendation. A mechanism that specifically follows Islamophobic activities does not exist despite strong evidence that Islamophobia exists within Montenegrin society. Therefore, this report recommends the establishment of mechanisms that will record and collect anti-Muslim hate crimes, incidents, and speeches.

There is a strong need for the education and development of critical thinking among the youth about Islam. A further recommendation is the focus on strengthening civil society and civic initiatives by providing training on Islamophobia. The state should also consider updating history textbooks and providing proper content. The first step would be providing facts about the wars and conflicts that took place in the '90s.

Condemning hate speech especially when it comes from officials or leaders of important institutions is necessary. It should not be neglected or ignored.

Chronology

- **24.01.2018:** Two instances of graffiti in support of Ratko Mladic appeared in the municipality of Pljevlje.
- **27.03.2018:** Islamophobic comments by MP Nebojsa Medojevic.
- **08.05.2018:** Islamophobic comments by MP Marina Jovic.

43. "Overview", OSCE Hate Crime Reporting, <http://hatecrime.osce.org/montenegro>, (Access date: 3 September 2018).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
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NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

The previous year's Islamophobic rhetoric overshadowed the elections in 2018. Yet, a few political parties like NIDA and DENK, which gave a platform for the excluded Muslims to speak out against their experiences of marginalization as a result of Islamophobia, took part in the elections too. The result was that these parties were able to capitalize on Muslim experiences and win seats in the parliament.

The three important national reports by the Verwey-Joncker Institute, the Dutch Security Agency (AIVD), and the National Coordinator for Counterterrorism and Security (NCTV) on the role of far-right groups were another important development in 2018. These reports gave a picture of the mutual effect of far-right parties like the PVV (Partij voor Vrijheid) and the FvD (Forum voor Democratie) on these groups. The report published by The Jonker-Verwey Institute warned about the growing political and social influence of far-right groups. On the other hand, the report published by the Dutch Security Agency (AIVD) also warned about the influence and danger of these far-right extremist movements. They underlined that these groups pass an essentialist negative judgement on Islam to stereotype Muslims and to justify vandalizing their buildings. The problem is that in this report the ideology and the practices of the far-right groups are not connected to racism but to certain anti-Islam debates. Neither their connection nor their influence on the far-right political parties like the FvD and the PVV is mentioned in the AIVD report. The report by the NCTV, on the other hand, did notice that “[t]here is growing self-confidence among far-right extremists.”

Every year the Ministry of Internal Affairs publishes its annual report on registered discrimination. According to the report the Anti-discrimination Agencies (ADVs) reported that 7% of discrimination was related to religious discrimination: from these two thirds consist of discrimination because of the Islamic faith. The same report indicates that 91% of a total of 151 incidents of religious discrimination reported to the police were related to Muslims. The Anti-discrimination Agencies received 304 reports of religious discrimination, two thirds of which were directed against Muslims. Police registrations often involved aggression in the living environment, while Anti-discrimination Agencies also registered reports which include many experiences like labour market discrimination.

Finally, attacks on mosques by Islamophobes continue to take place. Far-right groups regularly vandalize the buildings and organize protests against them. Despite the existence of more institutions in recent years which are monitor Islamophobia, there is still a large number of people who do not report Islamophobic incidents.

Samenvatting

Net als de verkiezingen in 2017 overschaduwde de islamofobe retoriek de verkiezingen van 2018. Echter, de aanwezigheid van enkele lokale partijen zoals NIDA of de nationale partij DENK vulde de lacune op van een partij die het behertigen van de belangen van de Moslims als zijn eerste prioriteit beschouwd. En tijdens deze verkiezingen hebben ze dit voornamelijk benadrukt en hierdoor zetels veroverd.

Een belangrijke ontwikkeling van dit jaar waren enkele rapporten die gepubliceerd werden over de rol van extreemrechtse groepen. Ze gaven onder andere een beeld van het wederzijdse invloed die rechtse partijen zoals PVV en FvD en deze extreem rechtse groepen op elkaar hadden. Een van deze rapporten was publiceerd door het instituut Jonker-Verwey waarin werd gewaarschuwd voor de groeiende politieke en sociale invloed van deze extreemrechtse groepen. Volgens een ander rapport gepubliceerd door de Nederlandse veiligheidsdienst, de AIVD, blijkt dat rechtsextremistische bewegingen een specifieke interpretatie gebruiken van de islam om moslims hiermee te stereotyperen en hun gebouwen te vernielen.

Een nieuwe stem was gehoord in het afgelopen jaar van de politici Sigrid Kaag, minister van Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking. Ze hield een lange toespraak tijdens haar Abel Herzberg lezing die een grote publieke hit werd. Ze betoogde dat er in Nederland een ‚donkere en dreigende stilte‘ heerst als het gaat om opkomend populisme en zijn bedreigingen voor de democratische rechtsstaat. Het maakte een grote indruk omdat sinds lange tijd weinig politici zo’n uitgesproken kritiek had geuit op racisme die specifiek gericht is op moslims.

Ten slotte, ondanks dat er in de afgelopen jaren meer instellingen bestaan die islamofobie monitoren, bestaan er nog steeds een groot aantal slachtoffers die nog steeds niet rapporteren. Er bestaat nog steeds een sterke opvatting dat het geen zin heeft. Zoals we gewend zijn van de afgelopen jaren, waren dit jaar de moskeeën opnieuw het doelwit van islamofoben. De observatie van afzonderlijke segmenten in de samenleving laten zien dat moslims nog steeds problemen hebben vanwege hun religie bij het vinden van een baan of een stage omdat ze een hoofddoek dragen. Het dragen van een hoofddoek kan vrouwen volledig uitsluiten van bepaalde soorten onderwijs, opleiding of banen.

Country Profile

Country: Netherlands

Type of Regime: Parliamentary representative democracy, constitutional monarchy and a decentralized unitary state.

Form of Government: Constitutionally consists of the King and the Cabinet Ministers; King's role is limited to the formation of government.

Ruling Parties: People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Christian Democrats (CDA), D66 party, and the faith-based party Christian Union (ChristenUnie).
Opposition Parties: Party for Freedom (PVV), Greenleft (Groenlinks), Animal Party (Pvd), Labour Party (PvdA), Forum for Democracy (FvD),

Last Elections: 2018 municipal elections. In terms of seats, the D66 (Liberal Democrats) was the biggest loser in this election, losing 6 of its 14 seats. The SP (Socialist Party) lost half of its 6 seats in the previous council, and the PvdA (Labor Party) dropped from 10 to 5 seats. The animal rights party PvdD gained two seats, going from 1 to 3. The VVD (Liberal Centrist Party) and the CDA (Christian Democrats) all remained stable. The new far-right party FvD of Thierry Baudet won 3 seats.

Total Population: 17.2 million people (in 2018)

Major Languages: Dutch

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The majority of religious discrimination reports, two-thirds of the numbers, come from Muslims who were confronted with discrimination because of their religion. In addition, in 2018, the police registered 151 reports of discrimination on religious basis. From the 151 reports, 90% were directed against Muslims. The reports registered by the police were mostly aggression-based ones.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018, the ADVs (Anti-discrimination Agencies) registered 304 reports on religious discrimination. The majority of these reports, two-thirds of the numbers, come from Muslims who were confronted with discrimination because of their religion. In addition, in 2018, the police registered 151 reports of discrimination on religious basis. From the 151 reports, 90% were directed against Muslims. The reports registered by the police were mostly aggression-based ones. The reports by the Anti-discrimination Agencies consist of discrimination in the labor market and most are due to wearing a headscarf.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (40%), No religion (50.1%), Islam (4.9%), Judaism (0.1%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 825,000 (5% of Dutch population, Source: CBS)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Contactorgaan Moslims en Overheid (CMO); Unie van Marokkaanse Moskeorganisaties in Nederland (UMMON); Stichting Platform Islamistische Organisaties Rijnmond (SPIOR); Samenwerk-

ingsverband Islamitische Organisaties Regio Haaglanden (SIOR-H); Islamitische Stichting Nederland- ISN-DIYANET, Raaad van Marokkanse Moskeen Nederland (RMMN); Stichting Milli Gorus Netherlands; Stichting Islamtische Centrum Nederland (Suleymanci Movement).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Meld Islamofobie, Collectief tegen Islamofobie. SPIOR

Far-Right Parties: PVV, FvD

Far-Right Movements: Voorpost, Identitair Verzet, Pegida.nl, Erkenbrand

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** In 2018, restrictions were set in place by the law. According to the new law, if an animal is not insensitive to pain within 40 seconds of slaughter, based on measures called “induced eyelid reflex” and “corneal reflex,” it must be shot.
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** On 26 June, 2018, the Dutch Senate approved the bill ‘Partial Prohibition of Face-Covering Clothing.’
- **Prayer Ban:** No it depends on local decision since the European Court of Justice ruled in March 2017 that employers can ban staff from wearing visible religious symbols, including taking time off from prayers.

Introduction

The public attention on anti-Muslim hatred is a recent phenomenon in the Netherlands. In earlier reports, one could observe from national and international research that there was a steady increase in Islamophobia in the Netherlands.¹ But recent national reports show a different picture. According to the latter, there is a decline in Islamophobia.² Nevertheless, there are indications that this decline does not show the whole picture, as will be elaborated in this report.

When we look separately at each sector, such as the labor market or politics, it becomes even more clear that the number of incidents reported to the police gives us insufficient insight into this phenomenon. According to certain surveys there is still a lack of reports on discrimination.³ An additional important explanation of the decline in numbers described in these reports is that Islamophobia has become more normalized in society and internalized by both Muslims and non-Muslims.⁴ Correspondingly, *Kennisplatform integratie en Samenleving* (Knowledge Platform of Integration and Society, from now on KIS)⁵ carried out a survey amongst the youth (between 16 and 20 years). The survey was conducted to evaluate the anti-discrimination guidelines developed by KIS in collaboration with the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, the National Ombudsman, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Internet Discrimination Hotline (MiND), and the National Association Against Discrimination. This survey showed that 94% of young people who had experienced discrimination did not report this to any authority. These young people think that it will not make any difference to report their experience.⁶ Therefore, the number of

1. Read more in Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Muslims Selected findings, Luxembourg: 2017, from <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2017/eumidis-ii-muslims-selected-finding>. (Access date: 3 September 2019) and MiND, “Meldpunt Internet Discriminatie”, Jaarverslag 2016, Access date: 4 April, 2017, from <https://www.mindnederland.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/170404-Jaarverslag-2016-MiND.pdf> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. For example, the report done by the Anne Frank House and the Verweij-Jonker Institute suggested that there would be a general reduction in the number of racist and anti-Semitic incidents. “Aantal Racistische Incidenten Neemt Af, Ernst Ervan Neemt Toe”, 6 December 2018, <https://www.annefrank.org/nl/over-ons/nieuws-en-pers/nieuws/2018/12/6/aantal-racistische-incidenten-neemt-af-ernst-ervan/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

3. Bas Tierolf, Lisanne Drost and Maaïke van Kapel, “Zevende Rapportage Racisme, Antisemitisme En Extreem-rechts Geweld In Nederland”, Verweij-Jonker Instituut, December 2018, https://www.annefrank.org/nl/downloads/filer_public/60/13/6013b703-0be3-4612-a13f-4e9f5e4f4a8a/racisme_2017_vji.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019); “Discriminatie Cijfers in 2017”, SCP (Social Cultural Planning Office), <https://discriminatie.nl/files/2018-04/discriminatiecijfers-in-2017.pdf>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

4. Rowaida Abdelaziz, “Muslims Are Internalizing Islamophobia, And Negative Media Coverage Is to Blame”, Huffpost, 4 December 2018, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/muslims-islamophobia-media-coverage_n_5ae73150e-4b04aa23f2598d5?ncid=engmodushpimg00000003&fbclid=IwAR0bM_DIJ6kUSO0ovccqXN63P9iYaJ0fp5vay-BanRHknau_RcP703lfybgQ, (Access date: 4 september 2019).

5. “Jongeren Melden Discriminatie Niet: “Het Heeft Toch Geen Zin”, KIS, 20 March, 2018, <https://www.kis.nl/artikel/jongeren-melden-discriminatie-niet-heeft-toch-geen-zin> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

6. KIS, *Jongeren melden discriminatie niet: “het heeft toch geen zin”*

cases of Islamophobia should by no means be restricted to the number of incidents that are known to the police.

Every year the Ministry of Internal Affairs publishes its annual report on registered discrimination. The report provides insight into the cases and experiences of discrimination that have occurred in that year and which have been registered by official agencies. The report's multi-agency approach is a result of the collaboration between police, different Anti-discrimination Agencies,⁷ and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations.⁸ According to the report the Anti-discrimination Agencies reported that 7% of discrimination was related to religious discrimination; from these cases, two thirds consist of discrimination because of the Islamic faith.⁹

According to the same report, 91% of a total of 151 incidents of religious discrimination reported to the police, were related to Muslims. The Anti-discrimination Agencies received 304 reports of religious discrimination, two thirds of which were directed against Muslims. Police registrations often involved aggression in the living environment, while Anti-discrimination Agencies also registered reports which involved other experiences like labor market discrimination. Women constitute the majority of the victims, especially when they wear headscarves. The Human Right Institute received 17 requests for an opinion on religious discrimination and 146 questions about religious discrimination. According to this report most of the discrimination cases were about race.¹⁰

Nevertheless, one can also observe positive developments in the Netherlands. The research done by "PEW" states that compared to residents from other European countries, the Dutch have the slightest objections to a Muslim or a Jew in the family. This is shown by a series of studies conducted by the Pew Research Center between 2015 and 2017 among nearly 56,000 adults (18 years and older) in 34 Western, Central, and Eastern European countries. There are fewer objections to Jewish family members in almost all European countries than to Muslim family members (Fig. 1).¹¹

7. These agencies are institutions such as the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights and the Internet Discrimination Hotline (MiND). The collaboration has been established within the framework of the project Regional Reporting Discrimination data, whose goal is to provide the discrimination numbers in a regional report and present it in a formal and therefore comparable way. Anti-discrimination offices in early 2019 had the obligation to report on the basis of the municipal anti-discrimination provisions law and make their data available for the national report.

8. "Discriminatie Cijfers in 2019", Rijksoverheid <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/04/02/rapport-discriminatiecijfers-in-2018>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. "Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion Views of Minorities and Key Social Issues", Pew Research Center, 29 October, 2018, <https://www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues/> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

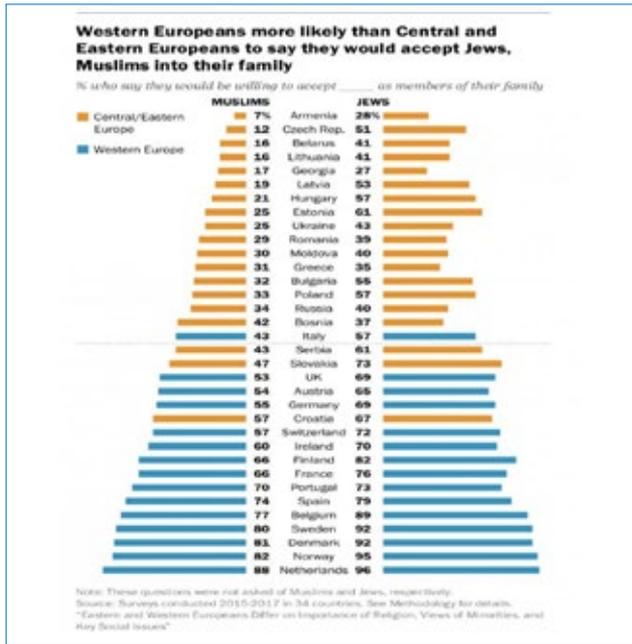


Figure 1: Source: 'PEW' Research Centre.¹²

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

On behalf of the Anne Frank Foundation, the Verwey-Joncker Instituut published the 7th report on racism, anti-Semitism, and far-right violence in the Netherlands.¹³ This report also includes an overview of the past five years, the period between 2013 to 2017. The themes they took into consideration were the quantitative development of anti-Semitic, racist, and anti-Muslim incidents in the police registration system. Additionally, they discussed the far-right organizations and violence. Furthermore, they examined whether the number of incidents of discrimination was related to social events. With this they wanted to gain insight into what extent the changes in numbers of discrimination incidents are explained by social events. The data indicated that in recent years there was a certain degree of habituation among the public due to the terrorist attacks in the name of Islam. When an attack happened in the name of Islam it does not always lead to an anti-Muslim incident. But it is also possible that anti-Muslim incidents still take place and are not known to the police.¹⁴ Furthermore, they stressed that racist and anti-Muslim incidents are taking

12. Ibid.

13. Tierolf, Drost and van Kapel, *Zevende rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland*.

14. This is also observed in the report published by Social Cultural Planning Office (SCP). <https://discriminatie.nl/files/2018-04/discriminatiecijfers-in-2017.pdf> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

more serious forms. One can also observe this in numbers: in 2016, 4% of the racist incidents included violent acts. This increased to 11% in 2017.¹⁵

In the second part of the report they focused on the decrease of membership in far-right groups. The authors suppose that this could be explained with the habituation to terror attacks in the name of Islam and low migrations which resulted in a shift towards lower membership. But what is worrisome is the growing political and social influence of these far-right groups. Far-right ideas get normalized as any other political thoughts. They gain entrance to public and social debates. Political parties like the PVV of Geert Wilders and the *Forum voor Democratie* (FvD) disseminate ideas that fit in well with the world of ideas of the far-right and normalize these ideas. This is partly reflected in the report, namely that the PVV actively distances itself from far-right groups but the FvD does not dissociate itself “too sharply” from them.¹⁶

In its 2018 report, the Dutch Security Agency (AIVD) also drew attention to the slight revival of far-right extremism in the Netherlands. Whereas in the past this was mainly characterized by a neo-Nazi, fascist, and anti-Semitic philosophy, nowadays it is characterized by an anti-Islam philosophy. In addition, the alt-right ideology is being spread from the United States. The (online) language they use is becoming increasingly violent and there is a great fascination with weapons. Generally speaking, violence is not quickly adopted, but the risk of loneliness or small groups reaching for violence is greater than in the past.¹⁷

In addition, in 2018, the research office Labyrinth published the report *Reporting Evaluation Regional Meetings, Guide for a Safe Mosque* on behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. According to this report, 21 out of 55 respondents from 18 different mosques reported that their mosque had occasionally been the target of hostile attacks.

In total, these mosques had to deal with 47 incidents, including 11 threats, the depositing of a pig's head occurred 7 times, and 6 times drawn with hurtful lyrics or symbols or verbal aggression against mosque visitors. All 21 respondents (every respondent represent one mosque) indicated that they experienced at least once an incident. In response to the incidents, sometimes the mosque board only had a talk about the incident with the police and 19 of them reported once an incident. Only

15. J.J.C. van Eerten L.and van Es E. Huijberts, “Rapportage Evaluatie Regionale Bijeenkomsten Handreiking Veilige Moskee, Labyrinth,Onderzoek En Advies”, Labyrinth Onderzoek & Advies, 25 May, 2018, https://www.labyrinthonderzoek.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/180525_Rapportage-Veilige-Moskee_DEF.pdf (Access date: 1 September 2019).

16. Ibid.

17. “Rechts- Extremisme In Nederland; Een Fenomeen In Beweging”, Algemene Inlichtingen En Veiligheidsdienst, <https://www.aivd.nl/actueel/nieuws/2018/10/02/lichte-opleving-rechts-extremisme-in-nederland> (Access date: 7 September 2019).

four of the 21 communicated with the media about the incident and only 1 reported the incident to the local anti-discrimination provision.¹⁸

The fact that mosques are targets of Islamophobes has not changed in 2018 - what has changed is the modality of the targeting. In the past, banners were hung up, graffiti was used on the walls and pig heads were dropped at mosques. The upcoming new trend is not only targeting the building but also targeting the mosques' worshippers. In 2016, the perpetrators who threw a firebomb at the mosque in Enschede, during a children's Quran classes, were sentenced to four years imprisonment. This year, in February, the four perpetrators went to high court and while the prosecutor asked again for four years, the court decided to reduce it to three years.¹⁹

Another example which must be mentioned is the case of As-Sunna Mosque in The Hague. On 5 October, 2018, a perpetrator planned to drive into the mosque during Friday prayer in order to both ruin the building and kill the worshippers. According to a board member of the mosque, it was only due to a quick investigation by the police that the perpetrator was stopped before carrying out his plan (Fig. 2).



Figure 2: Facebook post of board member As-Soennah Mosque in The Hague.²⁰

18. J.J.C. van Eerten L.and van Es E. Huiberts, "Rapportage Evaluatie Regionale Bijeenkomsten Handreiking Veilige Moskee, Labyrinth,Onderzoek En Advies", Labyrinth Onderzoek & Advies, 25 May, 2018, https://www.labyrinthonderzoek.nl/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/180525_Rapportage-Veilige-Moskee_DEF.pdf (Access date: 1 September 2019).

19. "Eis Ruim 3 Jaar Cel Tegen Terreurverdachte Vincent T.", Omroep Gld, November 2018, <https://www.omroepgelderland.nl/nieuws/2382816/Eis-ruim-3-jaar-cel-tegen-terreurverdachte-Vincent-T>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

20. Abdelhamid Taheri, Facebook, 5 October, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/abdelhamid.taheri>, (Access date: 1 September 2019). Further explanation of Figure 2: poster by *Identitair Verzet* (Holland-based part of extremist right group Generation Identity) which called people to protest before the mosque in the Hague (left). A WhatsApp conversation in which they warned the mosque about an attack (right top). Twitter account of Pegida in which they listed the protest dates and places of mosques (right bottom).

This same mosque has been the target of far-right groups several times. The poster above (Fig. 2) belongs to far-right groups and invites people to demonstrate against this mosque. The same group hung up banners on the mosque several times.²¹ This mosque is not alone: at other mosques, other far-right groups hung posters on which they call for de-Islamization and the forbidding of halal slaughter which they consider as barbaric (Fig. 3). This kind of organized protest actions with banners and posters are a common trend used by far-right groups.



Figure 3: Posters at the front of a mosque in the city Ede by the far-right group Voorpost.²²

A link between social events like terror attacks or political debates and anti-Muslim attacks is not always observed. Attacks on mosques occur in the form of protests on a regular basis and are often well-organized. The attacks and protests are announced on social media and nearly each municipality has its own movement, or they are mobilized on national level by national groups like *Pegida.nl*. Thus, Islamic schools and mosques are targeted by groups operating on both local and national levels. The members of these far-right groups are no longer afraid of being identified. On the contrary, they write their names on the posters they put up and try to catch the media's attention (Fig. 3). All of this indicates that far-right groups are not only aiming for the normalization of their actions but are portraying these attacks as legitimate (political) protest actions.

Employment

For Muslims in the Netherlands discrimination on the job market is a problem which mostly manifests itself in parallel with ethnic background. In recent years according to a report published in 2018 there is an increase in the unemployment of Muslims.²³ Letters of application with a Muslim name are regularly refused while the

21. Ibid.

22. "Hollandada Camiye İslamofobik Saldırı", Perspektif, <https://perspektif.eu/2018/11/26/hollandada-camiye-islamofobiksaldiri/?fbclid=IwAR0zNsS4a7Rh8qcliBfuA5hDtYa9oOCUKFEy2-GWOb63C9WLHoEB2qo22Og> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

23. Meldingen Bij Radar in 2018, <http://radar.nl/file/2828049/Webdossier+2018.pdf>, (Access date, 1 September 2019).

same letters using a Dutch name lead to an invitation for an interview.²⁴ The report *Discrimination Numbers 2018 (rapport Discriminatiecijfers 2018)* showed that at least 103 of the discrimination reports (34%) concerned experiences in the labor market. It often concerned women who were rejected because of their headscarves during an application. It is striking that in various cases those who later reported the incident started a conversation about how they could wear their headscarves in accordance with company rules, but the employer was not open to it.²⁵

Research was carried out by the Verwey-Jonker Institute into abrasive values; the research involved a literature survey and interviews with a small number of people. Their main question was the following: do values, norms, and behaviors cause friction due to different religious background and how do employers deal with religious frictions in practice? The conclusion of this research was that each company has its own coping strategy in dealing with a particular situation. Some wait until this kind of problem takes place and then intervene. But sometimes they avoid employees with Islamic background through explicitly describing the identity of their organization. This is mostly the case in the educational sector. When they need a teacher they explicitly express the Christian identity of the school. One remarkable situation described in this research describes a respondent in a municipality who talks about a Muslim colleague who deliberately makes a detour to the prayer room to escape intimidating glances from colleagues.²⁶

The principle of separation of church and state is sometimes also used by institutions. This is mostly the case with women who want to wear a headscarf.²⁷ Despite the ruling of the College of Human Rights (*College Rechten van de Mens*) to allow women with headscarves into police departments, the police still rejects women wearing headscarves. In Rotterdam, this year, political parties such as NIDA and other leftist parties such as the PvdA, Groenlinks and SP tried to vote in favor of allowing the headscarf in the police. But far-right-wing parties had the majority and they voted against it.²⁸ Another instance of problematizing the headscarf occurred when in the city of Tilburg an alderwoman wore a headscarf. A man from Tilburg applied to the College of Human Rights and assumed that by allowing an alderwoman to wear a

24. <https://fra.europa.eu/en/press-release/2017/muslims-eu-high-levels-trust-despite-pervasive-discrimination,%20http://radar.nl/file/2828049/Webdossier+2018.pdf>, (Access date, 1 September 2019).

25. "Discriminatie Cijfers 2018", Rijksoverheid <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/rapporten/2019/04/02/rapport-discriminatiecijfers-in-2018>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

26. Hans Boutellier, Suzan De Winter-Koçak, Mehmet Day, Ahmed Hamdi And Marthe Van Vugt, "Schurende Waarden Een Verkennend Onderzoek Naar Betekenis En Praktijk Van Religie In Het Onderwijs En Op De Werkvloer", Kennisplatform Integratie & Samenleving, November, 2018, <https://www.kis.nl/sites/default/files/bestanden/Publicaties/jongeren-religie-onderwijs.pdf> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. Ibid.

28. Matthij van Schie, "Links-Islamitisch Verbond Pleit Voor Hoofddoek Bij Politie", Elsevier Weekblad, 23 February 2018, <https://www.elsevierweekblad.nl/nederland/achtergrond/2018/02/links-islamitisch-verbond-pleit-voor-hoofddoek-bij-politie-589729/> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

headscarf, College van B en W of Tilburg (The College of Tilburg) was violating the principle of separation of church and state. But the B and W announced that the alderwoman must be seen “as a reflection of our city”, “let it be known now.” Furthermore, the B and W stated, “Tilburg is a very diverse city with room for different views. Alderwoman Lahlah has been appointed by the city council to implement the ‘Healthy and Happy Board.’”²⁹

In January 2018, the television consumer program *Radar* showed that discrimination by temporary employment agencies still occurs (Avrotros, 2018). *Radar*’s editors appeared during the broadcast as employees of a company that is looking for people for a temporary call center job. The editors called 78 temporary employment agencies. In the conversation the editors said that the office recently had an unpleasant experience with Moroccans, Surinamese, or Turks and asked the agencies whether they could take this into account. From the 78 temporary employment agencies approached, 47% answered positively, 14% explained that it was the client’s responsibility, 36 percent said ‘no’, and 3% made no decision.³⁰

Education

School is preeminently the place where young people have to learn to deal with differences, by practicing how to deal with conflicts and to impart respect for those who think differently. Unfortunately, the growing segregation of schools makes it impossible for children to acquire these skills. This was already mentioned in our Islamophobia report of 2017 but the problem continues and is increasing in 2018. In the recent report of the Education Council³¹ (*Onderwijsraad*) it was stressed that “the typical separation between school types, learning paths and study programs for the Netherlands means that pupils with different social backgrounds meet each other less automatically.” As a result of this, education can only make a limited contribution to social cohesion.³²

Another problem which deserves focus is the educational material which is in use at secondary schools. In 2014, people were stunned by a school textbook which was widely used at secondary schools. It also caught the media’s attention in 2015 when

29. Stephan Jongerius, “Wethouder Past Geen Hoofddoek’: Tilburger Stapt Naar College Voor De Rechten Van De Mens”, BD, 3 October, 2018, <https://www.bd.nl/tilburg/wethouder-past-geen-hoofddoek-tilburger-stapt-naar-college-voor-de-rechten-van-de-mens-a1e07745/> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

30. “Uitzendbureaus Werken Op Grote Schaal Mee Aan Discriminatie”, Radar, 29 January, 2018, <https://radar.avrotros.nl/nieuws/item/uitzendbureaus-werken-op-grote-schaal-mee-aan-discriminatie/> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

31. The Education Board is the advisory body of government and parliament in the field of the education. The council is independent and advises, both solicited and unsolicited, on the main lines of policy and application of legislation. It advises on the broad field of education, from preschool education to post-initial education and continuing education. In special cases of local education policy, municipalities can call upon the Education Board.

32. “Doorgesloten Differentiatie In Het Onderwijsstelsel, Hoofdlijnen Van Stand Van Educatief Nederland 2018”, Onderw Js Raad, <https://www.onderwijsraad.nl/upload/documents/publicaties/volledig/Publiekssamenvatting-sven.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

researcher Ineke van der Valk paid attention in her report *Monitor Moslim Discriminatie*³³ (Monitoring Muslim Discrimination) to the discrimination in education; she also discussed the book in question in her report. The book chapter contained gender stereotypes and prejudices towards Moroccan boys. It contained questions like ‘Are all Moroccan boys criminals?’ The book was intended to familiarize young people with multicultural society. Especially in the section about “growing up between two cultures” the section ‘Boys and Girls’ emphasized social divisions by origin and gender and stimulated ‘us-them’ thinking by imprinting stereotypes and prejudices. According to the textbook, the Quran expected the girls to behave submissively while the boys were expected to behave as mature men at a young age. The textbook stated further that headscarves “emphasize the differences between boys and girls” but sometimes there is criticism about this. Then it is stated that a headscarf shows that women are being oppressed.³⁴ After two years it appeared that this textbook still contains prejudice and stereotypes although this time Malmberg, the publisher, has issued a statement that they will not sell the book for the next school year. They also offered their apologies to people that felt hurt about the way the material was presented in the textbook.

For this report I also went through a few textbooks of history, social studies, and philosophy, and one textbook of citizenship from middle vocational school. When compared to Malmberg books, a clear improvement has occurred. But the teachers of citizenship and social studies, whom I spoke to, stressed that the information given in the books is inadequate. They argue that during lessons the role of teachers’ knowledge about Muslims and Islam has become very important as a result of the brief information given in the textbooks. The teachers have the freedom to choose the textbooks they consider more suitable.

In one of the textbooks used for social studies lessons at secondary school, social problems and phenomena are discussed. In the same textbook, attention is given to different religions. In the part about Islam, it first gives a summary of Islam and then gives information about the life of a Muslim (Fig. 4). A Muslim woman introduces herself and tells about her religious actions and at the end she explains that she started to wear a headscarf when she felt ready for it and she underlines that everybody was encouraging her by that they admire her for taking on a challenge like this. Then, she says that according to Islam women have to cover their heads, but she adds that if some women do not want to wear it, they are free to refuse it.³⁵ Her ideas are ex-

33. “Ineke Van Der Valk, Monitor Moslimdiscriminatie”, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2015, <https://www.geloveninsamenleven.nl/literatuuroverzicht/actuele-thema-s/349-ineke-van-der-valk-rapport-monitor-moslim-discriminatie> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

34. “Lesboek Staat Stijf Van Vooroordelen Over Moslims En Allochtonen”, Joop.nl, 9 September, 2014, <https://joop.bnnvara.nl/nieuws/lesboek-staat-stijf-van-vooroordelen-over-moslims-allochtonen>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

35. Jasper van den Broeke & et al., *Thema's Maatschappijleer, 2018-2019*, VMBO-KGT, (Uitgeverij Essener, Zaanweg: 2018).

pressed in a manner that implies ‘otherness’ and difficulty in carrying out Islamic duties. It gives the message that you need a lot of courage to wear a headscarf because it is something to be considered ‘not normal.’ Muslims with headscarves are not a new phenomenon for people in the Netherlands. Moreover, it creates a distance between Muslim girls and others by placing more emphasis on differences than common aspects of life. And having the prejudices about the headscarf as the symbol of being oppressed in mind this could unwillingly contribute to bigotry. The other textbooks I observed did not have any Islamophobic content, but as the teachers stressed the information was too brief. This makes the dependence on the teachers’ knowledge and attitude towards Islam crucial.



Figure 4: Picture of the textbook of social studies (maatschappijleer) the picture of the discussed textbook in which brief information about Islam and a story of a Muslim is offered³⁶.

Another persistent problem is the difficulty faced by Muslim girls in finding an internship. This is stressed by the Minister of Education Ingrid van Engelshoven who sent the new research to the House of Representatives. Fewer than half of the students with a non-western background (48%) can get an internship position with their first application.³⁷ According to a study by the Research Center for Education and Labor Market (ROA) of the University of Maastricht, 11% of them had to apply four times or more before getting a job. Girls wearing a headscarf are most

36. Van den Broeke and et al., *Thema's Maatschappijleer, 2018-2019*.

37. Rijksoverheid, “Minister Van Engelshoven: ‘Stagediscriminatie Is Onaanvaardbaar’”, 28 August 2018, <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/ministeries/ministerie-van-onderrwijs-cultuur-en-wetenschap/nieuws/2018/08/28/minister-van-engelshoven-%E2%80%9Cstagediscriminatie-is-onaanvaardbaar%E2%80%9D> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

affected by this problem.³⁸ A student with a headscarf was refused by a school which offered hairdressing training. Although pupils are not officially refused at the hairdressing course at the school (RAI) according to the student, this is implicitly the case. Students have to practice on each other, and in doing so, a headscarf is an obstacle. Those who cannot participate in practical lessons cannot follow the course, the school trainers told her. And they could not offer her the option of doing her practice on a doll. The school does not consider this as discrimination, but rather something practical. If she wished to be enrolled in the education program, she had to take her scarf off during practical trainings.³⁹

As is mentioned in the newspaper of the Education Council (AOB), Islamic schools often have the image of a closed stronghold of Quran schools with veiled girls. The impression is that these Islamic primary schools exclude pupils from society. However, according to researcher and teacher Marietje Beemsterboer this is not right. This was asserted in her dissertation which she successfully defended at Leiden University in Summer 2018. “Education at these Islamic schools contributes to integration and prepares students for a life in the Dutch society,” she wrote. She also states that the Islamic identity of the school gives students a sense of security. “At these schools, it is not strange to ask for halal food. A child can be himself without having to defend himself continuously, and parents too. From this sense of security, the school can offer educational content that can be experienced as exciting.”⁴⁰

Politics

The year 2018 started with elections - as the year 2017. This time it was about city councils at municipalities. Similar to national elections, at these local elections, the far-right party of Wilders won a clear victory. The same party participated in 2012 in just two municipalities but this time, in 2018, it won in 30 municipalities. The party stands on 74 seats in the parliament. This party led its campaign again with anti-Islam publicity. Wilders broadcasted a campaign video which was aired by the NPO (Nederlandse Publieke Omroep, Dutch broadcast) during broadcasting time for political parties, and which sparked the outrage and anger of Muslims and non-Muslims. With horror music in the background, in red letters, a text which read that Islam stands for hate against Jews, Christians, women, and homosexuals was displayed. At the end of the video, the words ‘Islam is

38. Hanneke, “Keultjes, Discriminatie Belemmert Stagekansen Allochtonen”, AD News, 28 August, 2018, <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/discriminatie-belemmert-stagekansen-allochtone-mbo-er-adbc5f37/?fbclid=IwAR2uicCaVxva8-Ukccgblt7fcznJvbWF0edR7szCaRdQyOMA8t1e564sP9Y> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

39. Lorianne Van Gelder, “Niet Naar De Kappersopleiding Met Een Hoofddoek”, 13 September, 2018, https://www.parool.nl/nieuws/niet-naar-de-kappersopleiding-met-een-hoofddoek-bd219785/?fbclid=IwAR2FCpcl9Xh_bkj8knLGbcC6RhTYff1PppksQO9DSKagJkCSN9ETmSXjpUc (Access date: 2 September 2019).

40. Tekst Rineke Wisman, “Juffrouw, Wilt U Ook Moslim Worden”, Aob, 2 October, 2018, <https://www.aob.nl/nieuws/juffrouw-wilt-u-ook-moslim-woorden/> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

deadly' written with red letters and this time with dripping blood on the screen appeared (Fig. 5).⁴¹

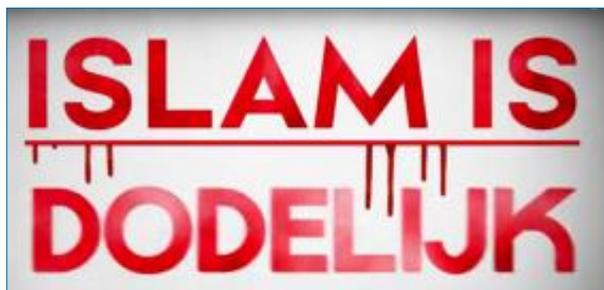


Figure 5: PVV broadcast campaign with the text: "Islam is deadly."⁴²

However, this campaign quickly instigated awareness. Instead of criticizing, the public actively took part in the discussion and on some boards slogans such as "Islam is great" with similar letters to those of the PVV campaign were written and disseminated. (Fig. 6).

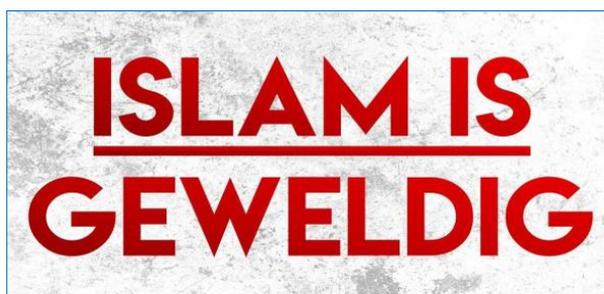


Figure 6: Contra campaign with the text: "Islam is Great."⁴³

Others made a counter-video in which the beautiful aspects of Islam were explained. Also, non-Muslims expressed their anger about this film. Many politicians, organizations, and people attempted to press charges against Wilders, which gave Wilders the attention and publicity he hoped to gain. Wilders's next move was to hold a cartoon contest on Prophet Mohammed. Although he claimed to have decided to cancel the competition because of death threats he had received.⁴⁴ The anti-discrimination bureau RADAR and four Islamic umbrella organizations RADAR, the CMO (*Contact*

41. Martijn de Koning, "Huis En Haat De Activerende Werking Van De Racistische Propaganda Van de PVV", 17 March, 2018, <https://religionresearch.org/closer/2018/03/17/huis-en-haat-de-activerende-werking-van-de-racistische-propaganda-van-de-pvv/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

42. PVV broadcast campaign "Islam is Dodelijk" (Islam is deadly) in Koning, *Huis en haat de activerende werking van de racistische propaganda van de PVV*.

43. Contra campaign towards Wilders campaign of "Islam is deadly." Some Muslim wrote with the same letters "Islam is Great!" in Koning, *Huis en haat de activerende werking van de racistische propaganda van de PVV*.

44. Janene Pieters, "Wilders Calls off Mohamed Cartoon Contest over Threat", *NLTimes.nl*, 31 August, 2018, <https://nltimes.nl/2018/08/31/wilders-calls-mohammed-cartoon-contest-threat>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

organ Muslims and Government), SPIOR (Foundation Platform Islamic Organizations Rijnmond), SMBZ (Cooperating Mosques Brabant and Zeeland) and SIORH (Foundation Islamic Organizations Region Haaglanden) wanted PVV leader Geert Wilders and his party to be prosecuted for the ‘Islam is deadly’ campaign. These organizations jointly started so-called Article 12 proceedings. Previously, the Public Prosecutor ruled that it saw no reason to prosecute the PVV for group insult or hate speech.⁴⁵

In recent years, the SGP (fundamentalist Christian party) has been getting closer to other anti-Islam parties. During the national elections it included anti-Islam rhetoric in its campaign through publishing an ‘Islam manifesto’ in which it called for the banning of radical Muslim organizations, restricting the number of asylum seekers in the Netherlands, and banning the call to prayer that includes faith texts. According to this manifesto, the Netherlands must also not allow any Muslim holiday to become official and revoke asylum seekers’ right to shelter if they are guilty of hate or violence.⁴⁶ This year, the SGP filed a motion regarding the right to refuse participation in school trips which involve visiting religious institutions (like mosques, churches, and synagogues) which is part of the school curriculum. Parents can apply for an exemption for their kids but the schools are not obliged to comply with the exemption request. The SGP proposed to remove this non-commitment and, therefore, proposed a change in the law.⁴⁷ By calling a ban on Muslim call for prayer, issuing the manifesto, and excluding visiting mosques, it is apparent that the SGP is attempting to split society in general and exclude Muslims in particular. First, they took steps against the call for prayer for Muslims, they continued with the Islam manifesto, and now they are against mosque visits. What confirms their anti-Islam position, is that they filled this motion after a commotion arose about the booklet *Classes on the Knees for Islam* by the SCC (*Stichting Civitas Christiana*), which aims to protect the norms and values of western civilization, rooted in Christianity, through the Culture Under Fire campaign. This foundation is known as a very conservative and mission-oriented Catholic.⁴⁸ In this booklet, they argue that imams give instruction to pupils during the school visit to mosque to get on their knees and recite the Islamic creed - something they consider as a first step to conversion.⁴⁹

45. “Moskeekoepels en RADAR Willen Wilders Toch Voor De Rechter”, Republiek Allochtonië, 8 July, 2018, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/moskeekoepels-en-radar-willen-wilders-toch-voor-de-rechter>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

46. Janene Pieters, “Small Christian Party Presents Anti-Islam Manifesto”, NLTimes.nl, 1 February, 2017, <https://nltimes.nl/2017/02/01/small-christian-party-presents-anti-islam-manifesto>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

47. Janene Pieters, “Allow Kids to Refuse Religious Ceremonies on School Trips: Dutch Mps”, NLTimes.nl, 7 November, 2018 <https://nltimes.nl/2018/11/07/allow-kids-refuse-religious-ceremonies-school-trips-dutch-mps>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

48. Roemer van Oordt, “SGP: Scholier Niet Laten Knien Voor Allah”, Republiek Allochtonië, 1 November, 2018, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/achtergronden/sgp-scholier-niet-laten-knielen-voor-allah> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

49. “SGP in Verweer Tegen Moskeeles: Laat Kind Niet Buigen Voor Allah”, AD, 30 October, 2018, https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/sgp-in-verweer-tegen-moskeeles-laat-kind-niet-buigen-voor-allah-a1114f4d/?fbclid=IwAR-311vA1e52y7VDrr4zww810_hm9iRrT8X143mio8xcf_SVf7F2k5QTI-x8, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Media

Although critical voices about the Dutch media for stereotyping and excessively reporting on Muslims in a negative way have been heard for years; unfortunately, there has been little research carried out on this subject. A new initiative has been taken by The Hague Peace Projects⁵⁰ in collaboration with Ewoud Butter⁵¹ and Nieuw Wij,⁵² which investigates the way the four largest newspapers portray Muslims. The project aims with this new exploratory study to fill the gap with the following research question: how are Muslims portrayed in the four largest Dutch newspapers? The researchers' method was to analyze the published background articles between November 2018 and March 2019.⁵³ The results indicate that in the *Volkskrant*, a leading newspaper, 55 reports were directly or indirectly concerned with women with a (possible) Muslim background. In 28 of these reports the image of the oppressed Muslim woman persists.⁵⁴ Only the Muslim as 'terrorist' scores more hits on the list. The Muslim as a 'terrorist' is still the favorite subject when it comes to reporting on Muslims in *Volkskrant*. This does not only apply to this newspaper. As far as 'terror' is concerned, it does not matter whether you read the *AD*, the *NRC* or *De Telegraaf*. In the four mainstream newspapers investigated, 'terrorist Muslims' are the most common topic if you specifically focus on Muslim reporting. More interesting is the way *De Telegraaf* writes about the way one can recognize a terrorist. It poses questions like: Where do you have to seek them? In refugee camps? Or questions like: Is he Moroccan? Or a Turk? After raising these question, they suggest that most terrorists have a Moroccan background and less have a Turkish background (Fig. 7).⁵⁵

50. The Hague Peace Projects was brought to life by four individuals who all work in the field of human rights and conflicts.

51. Ewoud Butter is an independent researcher, consultant, manager, project leader, trainer, and writer. He has been working in these positions since 1990 in the areas of diversity, emancipation, Islam, discrimination, and radicalization.

52. *Nieuw Wij* is an online platform of various academics and journalists. Their goal is to create an online platform where one can find articles, interviews, videos, and information about making connections between different groups in society. <https://www.nieuwwij.nl/>

53. Tayfun Balçık, "De Moslima In De Volkskrant, Republiek Allochtonie", 5 December, 2018, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/achtergronden/de-moslima-in-de-volkskran> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

54. Ibid.

55. T Tayfun Balcik, "99% Kans Dat Telegraaf Moslims Aan Terreur Koppelt", Republiek Allochtonie, 8 January, 2019, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/achtergronden/99-kans-dat-de-telegraaf-moslims-aan-terreur-koppelt>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 7: Page from newspaper *De Telegraaf*, 1 December, 2018, with the headline “The Terrorists Are Mostly European” with a pictures of terrorists⁵⁶

De Telegraaf also paid extensive attention to a PhD research on Salafists. This research turned out to be problematic in the sense of keeping scientific standards. But apparently this was not important for *De Telegraaf*. In its article, *De Telegraaf* tried to rely on a ‘scientist’ to convince Dutch people that Salafists in the Netherlands are dangerous and are not integrated into society. The headline used for the article on this PhD research read, “Mosque Visitor: ‘The Netherlands Is a Venomous Snake That Is Constantly Lurking.’” (Fig. 8).



Figure 8: Headline of the *De Telegraaf*, “Mosque Visitor: ‘The Netherlands Is a Venomous Snake That Is Constantly Lurking’”, 4 September, 2018.⁵⁷

56. Balçık, *99% kans dat Telegraaf moslims aan terreur koppelt*

57. Silvan Schoonhoven and Moskeebezoeker, “Nederland Is Een Giftige Slang Die Constant Op De Loer Ligt”, *De Telegraaf*, 4 September 2018, <https://www.telegraaf.nl/nieuws/2514097/moskeebezoeker-nederland-is-een-giftige-slang-die-constant-op-de-loer-ligt>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Justice System

The ritual slaughter and the burka ban are the main topics which are discussed in the context of law regulations and which, according to most Muslims, restrict their religious freedom. Ritual slaughtering has been discussed for years, but finally in 2018 restrictions were imposed by the law.⁵⁸ According to the new law, if an animal is not insensitive to pain within 40 seconds of slaughter, based on measures called “induced eyelid reflex” and “corneal reflex,” it must be shot. The animal rights activists and the animal rights party who has seats in the Dutch parliament are the driving forces behind this law. An agreement was present in this law on the development of a system which ensures that no more animals are ritually slaughtered in the Netherlands than necessary to meet the actual needs of the religious communities.⁵⁹ Some Muslims have become suspicious of the repeated interference in their diets and consider these discussions to be more about the quality and quantity of their food than the well-being of the animals.⁶⁰ The intention of these animal activists and the Animal Party are probably not to be anti-Islam, but their ideas about animal protection are taken over by far-right groups to bully Muslims, as we can see from their posters in front of mosques (Fig. 3) In their posters, these groups refer to ritual slaughter as ‘Halal=barbaric’ (Fig. 3). They take advantage of the susceptibilities of people and use this to bully Muslims. Again, in this case we see that they try to take advantage of every opportunity to create an anti-Islam voice in politics.

Another topic which is fully discussed was the burqa-ban in the public sector. Many critics describe this as ‘symbol politics.’ The ban was speedily accepted at the parliament but it is not clear when the law will be implemented. Consequently, it raised many questions such as how could someone not be accepted at hospitals and schools? Refusing these services to women with a burka will contradict their other constitutional rights which these people can lean on. According to Prof. Tom Zwart, the government banned face-covering clothing because they assume that it will raise communication problems and this can have negative consequences for the quality of services and safety. But, he states that, “in the field, no problems have occurred in the past. Moreover, in these sectors, neither the house rules nor other tools are sufficient to solve eventual problems. According to the Council of State (*Raad van State*), the government has not demonstrated the necessity of the law. The burqa ban is simply a solution in search of a problem.”⁶¹ Municipalities such as Amsterdam, Utrecht, and Rotterdam declared that

58. Abdel Ilah Rubio, “Deel Nederlandse Moslims Wil Offerfeest Boycotten”, AD, 13 July, 2018, <https://www.ad.nl/binnenland/deel-nederlandse-moslims-wil-offerfeest-boycotten-ab42e859/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

59. “Per 1 Januari 2018 Aangescherpte Regels Rond Ritueel Slachten” DWW Dierenwelzijnsweb, 1 August, 2017, <https://www.dierenwelzijnsweb.nl/nl/dierenwelzijnsweb/show/Per-1-januari-2018-aangescherpte-regels-rond-ritueel-slachten.htm>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

60. “Initiatiefwet Onverdoofd Ritueel Slachten”, Partij voor de Dieren, <https://www.partijvoordedieren.nl/initiatieven/initiatiefwet-onverdoofd-ritueel-slachten>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

61. Tom de Zwart, “Het Demasque Van Boerka Verbod”, De Nederlandse Grondwet, 19 December 2018, https://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl/id/vkuef4t6djql/nieuws/het_demasque_van_het_boerkaverbod?fbclid=IwAR1QH-bA4bxIKtbTF5y2Or1iWjH5wQwvVbZr8P5fTZ1OPzF1TZxL_17XnXRg, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

the pending ban on face-covering clothing such as the burqa in public buildings will not be a priority to enforce. Femke Halsema told local broadcaster AT5 that she would not enforce the ban in the Dutch capital. “I don’t think it really fits in with our city,” she said. “Instead, police capacity would be better used elsewhere.”⁶² The cabinet criticized the mayor of Amsterdam’s attitude. “No one is above the law, not even the mayor of Amsterdam,” said Secretary of State Visser (Defense). “It is not the case that you can shop in the law and say: what is important to me and what is not?” As it happens it seems that this decision was not made properly and the parliament did not think about how this will be practiced in daily life in the public sector.

Internet

The Internet has become the most important platform where Islamophobes find each other and spread their word. As Ineke van der Valk stated in her report, which we discussed in our report of 2017, *GeenStijl* is still one of the foremost Internet sites that frames Muslims as cultural and political threats. Not only Muslims, but also people who supported them or had any connections with them were portrayed negatively.⁶³

Far-right groups such as *Erkenbrand*, *Pegida.nl*, and *Identitair Nederland* make full use of Facebook and Twitter. They use these platforms to inform their fans about upcoming events like protests in front of mosques and to share their ideas. Important for these groups are the online publications of other alt-right groups especially American ones.⁶⁴ The activities of these groups vary from spreading hate to committing violence against Muslims.

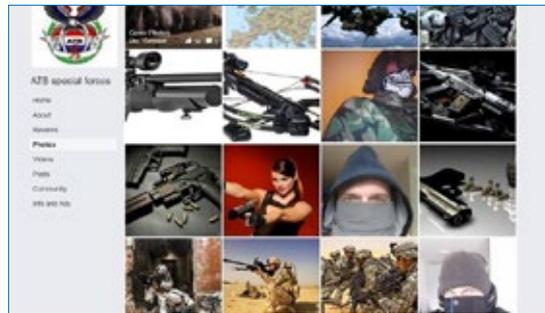


Figure 9: Screenshot of Facebook group of the far-right-wing terrorist Vincent T.⁶⁵

62. Willem Feenstra, “Net Als Amsterdam Gaan Ook Utrecht En Rotterdam Handhaving Boerkaverbod Geen Prioriteit Geven” de Volkskrant, 25 November 2018, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/net-als-amsterdam-gaan-ook-utrecht-en-rotterdam-handhaving-boerkaverbod-geen-prioriteit-geven-bed39cca/> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

63. Leyla Yıldırım “Islamophobia in Netherlands: National Report 2017”, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, İstanbul: 2017),

64. “Erkenb ‘Erkenbrand, alt-right in Nederland”, Antifascistische onderzoeksgroep, 13 December, 2017, <https://kafka.nl/erkenbrand-alt-right-in-nederland/> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

65. Extreme right terrorist suspect Vincent T. was a member of this Facebook group “Eis Ruim 3 Jaar Cel Tegen Terreurverdachte Vincent T.” Omroep GLD, 23 November, 2018, <https://www.omroepgelderland.nl/nieuws/2382816/Eis-ruim-3-jaar-cel-tegen-terreurverdachte-Vincent-T>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

On Tuesday, 28 December, the court of Oost-Brabant sentenced a 48-year-old man from Haren (NB) to a work sentence of eighty hours. He was sentenced after a complaint to Internet Complaint Line MIND, about his messages on Facebook between October and December 2015. He was guilty of incitement, group insult, and incitement to discrimination and violence. In his Facebook posts, he called on Dutch people to “arm themselves” and spoke about the “extermination” and “burning” of Muslims and black people. Facebook has now removed the messages.⁶⁶ Another man, Vincent T, was sentenced by the court in Zutphen to 40 months of unconditional prison. The 44-year-old man is suspected of preparing a terrorist attack on Muslims. Vincent T. has been detained in the heavily guarded prison in Vught since May. He was active at the Facebook group ATB Special Forces. His goal was to set up a civilian watch to protect the Dutch people against Muslims. According to the Public Prosecution Service Vincent T tried to recruit members and sought weapons.⁶⁷



Figure 10: Screenshot of the Internet site of the far-right group Voorpost.⁶⁸

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

In the Netherlands, some political figures foster Islamophobic campaigns and for years they stirred debates and lobbied for laws which restrict the life of Muslims. One prominent figure Geert Wilders is known worldwide and has close alliances with other Islamophobes. Besides Wilders, a new political figure Thierry Baudet

66. “Discriminatie Via Facebook Blijft Niet Ongestraft”, Liberties, 23 January 2018, <https://www.liberties.eu/nl/news/veroordeling-voor-discriminatie-via-facebook/13956> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

67. Omroep GLD, *Eis ruim 3 jaar cel tegen terreurverdachte Vincent T.*

68. Voorpost, <https://www.voorpost.org/> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

from the party *Forum voor Democratie*, appeared to gain popularity with his anti-Islam attitude. These two political parties came under special attention in 2018 because of the Verwey-Jonker Institute's report. This report indicates that there is mainly recognition and sympathy from far-right organizations for their ideas and ideology. This recognition has grown in recent times, especially in the direction of *Forum voor Democratie* (FvD). Both parties have generated ideas that fit in the ideological world of far-right groups.⁶⁹ The researchers also argue that the PVV cooperates with parties with a long history of racism and anti-Semitism, such as the AFD, FPO, Front National, Lega Nord, and Vlaams Belang in Europe. An important sidenote is that the pronounced pro-Jewish and pro-Israeli character of the PVV clashes with the often implicit or explicit anti-Semitic ideas within many far-right-wing organizations.⁷⁰ It seems that their anti-Semitic utterances are often received negatively but in the case of their statements about Muslims this negative reaction disappears.

Additionally, Wilders has always been very mysterious about the financial support of his own party. However, in 2018, Haaretz showed from a review of tax forms from the San Francisco Jewish Federation⁷¹ that the federation supported far-right extremist groups. The far-right-wing extremist Geert Wilders, leader and sole member of the political party PVV, has also received money from the fund.⁷²

The far-right groups which are also mentioned in the report by Verwey-Jonker Instituut are *Identitair Verzet*, *Voorpost*, *Pegida.nl*, and *Rechts in Verzet* that play huge roles in protests against mosques and Islamic institutions. They organize these and other actions and are the main forces exerting influence on politicians and states. As this report has also stressed their ideas seem to be increasingly stripped of the legacy of National Socialism in the Second World War and are gradually being perceived as yet another political opinion. The latest findings suggest that while their ideas about Islam and Muslims are accepted, their anti-Semitic and anti-Israel positions make even Thierry Baudet and Geert Wilders distance themselves from them.⁷³ Other figures who take part in Islamophobic rhetoric are the radical Christians like *Stichting Civitas Christiana*, which is a very conservative and mission-oriented Catholic association. They are primarily known for their action against the anti-Black Pete

69. Tierolf, Drost and van Kapel, *Zevende rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland*.

70. Ibid.

71. The Jewish Federation in San Francisco is a federation which supports all kinds of right-wing radical anti-Islam groups for many years in the US. See: Allison Kaplan Sommer, "From Project Veritas to the Tea Party San Francisco Jewish Federation Also Funding Far-right Fringe Groups, Not Just Canary Mission", Haaretz, 10 October 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/us-news/.premium-sf-jewish-federation-funded-far-right-groups-as-well-as-canary-mission-1.6547447>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

72. Sommer, *From Project Veritas to the Tea Party San Francisco Jewish Federation Also Funding Far-Right Fringe Groups, Not Just Canary Mission*.

73. Tierolf, Drost and van Kapel, *Zevende rapportage racisme, antisemitisme en extreemrechts geweld in Nederland*

movement.⁷⁴ But this year they gained attention with their report about school trips to mosques as a part of citizenship lessons. Based on their report, the SGP filed a motion in the lower house of the Dutch parliament.⁷⁵ This is another example of the way anti-Muslim groups gain influence in the parliament.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

During the 29th Abel Herzberg-lezing,⁷⁶ Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, gave a long speech which made a big impression. She argued that there is a “dark and threatening silence” in the Netherlands when it comes to emerging populism and its threats to the democratic constitutional state. She felt sad when sometimes in the Netherlands she had to confirm that her daughter who looks different is indeed her daughter. She added, “because of my marriage [she married a Palestinian man] and career, I am treated as a foreigner in my own country.” Without mentioning the PVV and the Forum for Democracy explicitly by name, the minister criticized the ideas of Geert Wilders and Thierry Baudet. Kaag thinks that these ideas receive too little reaction. “There is a certain silence in the society, in politics. The silence of hearing what is told, but not talking about it, and not really doing anything about it.” Kaag referred, among other things, to plans to ban the Quran, or the construction of new mosques, as the PVV had recently proposed. The D66 minister also warned that “people are tempted with a deceptive notion of romantic 19th-century nationalism.” That is an open hint to the far-right party Forum for Democracy. The minister also sees a silence outside politics that she does not like, from comedians who dare not make certain jokes out of fear of threats, to people who dare not protest against racist remarks.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, the ‘Nora’ project started on Friday, 23 February. Nora was a Dutch Muslim and a digital character - eloquent and expert. In the run-up to the municipal elections of 21 March, she registered Islam-related statements by (mainly) politicians, journalists, and opinion makers. Via e-posters she commented almost on a daily basis on statements that were discriminatory, stigmatizing or Islamophobic - or got close to it (Fig. 11). She explained her statements on

74. The anti-Black Pete movement is a group of people who are against the famous Dutch tradition of St. Nicholas and his black slaves called Black Pete. Generally, this movement considers *Zwarte Piet* to be part of the Dutch colonial heritage, in which black people were subservient to whites. Those portraying *Zwarte Piet* usually put on black-face make-up and colorful clothes, in addition to curly wigs and bright red lipstick.

75. van Oordt, *SGP: Scholier Niet Laten Knielen Voor Allah*.

76. The debate center ‘De Rode Hoed’ in Amsterdam and the newspaper *Trouw* have been organizing the lectures named after Jewish journalist and jurist Abel Herzberg (1893-1989) since 1990. They are held every September.

77. Sigrid Kaag, “Abel Herzberg-lezing Door Sigrid Kaag: Wees Niet Stil, Onze Stem Is Nodig”, *Trouw*, 30 September 2018, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/abel-herzberg-lezing-door-sigrid-kaag-wees-niet-stil-onze-stem-is-nodig-b9451790/> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

social media more extensively via the website *www.noraspreekt.nl*. The main goal of ‘Nora’ was to create more awareness about Islamophobia, stigmatization, and discrimination during the elections. The team of Project Nora consists of experts and people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, both men and women. It is an initiative of Enis Odaci/Stichting Human Islam and next to him the core team consists of two women and one man.⁷⁸ The *Nora Spreekt* initiative is subsidized by the Democracy and Media Foundation (SDM) within the framework of a Muslim discrimination tender.⁷⁹



Figure 11: Screenshot of the Internet site of *noraspreekt.nl*.⁸⁰

Other important initiatives to monitor Islamophobia, also mentioned before, were The Hague Peace Projects in collaboration with Ewoud Butter and Nieuw Wij. They are investigating the ways the four largest newspapers write about Muslims in the Netherlands. Unfortunately, there has been little research done in the Netherlands on this topic.

78. <http://noraspreekt.nl/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

79. Marc van Molenbeek, “Ik ben Nora! Dé islamofobie – watcher in verkiezingstijd”, The Post Online, 22 February 2018 <https://media.tpo.nl/2018/02/22/nora-islamofobie-watcher-verkiezingstijd/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019); Martijn de Koning, “Het Spektakel Nora Spreekt 1”, Closer, 1 April 2018, <http://religionresearch.org/closer/2018/04/01/het-spektakel-nora-spreekt-1-nieuwsgierig-onderzoekend-religieus-en-assertief/> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

80. See: <http://noraspreekt.nl/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

Mainly thanks to the efforts of social initiatives such as the Collective against Islamophobia and Discrimination (CTID), the *Meldpunt Islamofobie*, SPIOR, and Al Nisa, recently more attention has been paid to the subject and Muslim discrimination has been registered separately for several years by the police. Meanwhile, various hotlines have been established. Researchers such as Martijn de Koning and Ineke van der Valk have also devoted great attention to the subject. Ineke van der Valk started a new research together with Roemer Oordt and Ewoud Butter for the next monitoring, with a great deal of attention to the labor market discrimination of Muslims.⁸¹

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In the last two years, election campaigns have dominated the political scene of the Netherlands. During the election campaigns, Islamophobic groups and parties challenged the borders of free speech. They instrumentalized freedom of speech to target Muslims and misused various terror attacks and the so-called worldwide refugee crisis to gain popularity. In general, in politics there are parties that are openly anti-Islam and anti-Muslim like the PVV and the FvD. Other parties received much criticism in the local elections in 2018 for adapting populist tones to gain votes from right-wing parties.

In 2018, it was not only Muslim-related terrorist acts that gained attention but also far-right groups. Generally, one can speak of two groups who were active against Islam and Muslims: First, groups like the far-right who operated in the field, for example in front of mosques. Second, anti-Islam politicians acting in the political parties and in the parliament. The two influence each other and there is a certain interaction between them which we discussed in this report. In the same year, civil society groups, on the other hand, took many initiatives to combat Islamophobia.

While writing this report I discovered that important work has to be carried out in the field of education. The schoolbooks contain insufficient information about Muslims. With an eye on many negative images about Muslims, it is very important that what is written about them is formulated very carefully; otherwise, this can only feed prejudices instead of combating them. In this sense, more attention is needed in education on the issues of racism and diversity in society. The solutions seem to be distributing manuals against hate speech, human rights education to young people and teachers, and training teachers to recognize and effectively fight racism and discrimination. Combating Islamophobia in education is an urgent step since according to a report by *Kennisplatform integratie en Samenleving* (Knowledge Platform of Integration and Society) 94% of young people who have experienced discrimination do not report this to an authority.

81. Ewoud Butter, "Bezoek Van David Friggieri, Europees Coördinator Tegen Moslimhaat, Aan Nederland", *Republiek Allochtonie*, 12 April 2018, <http://www.republiekallochtonie.nl/blog/nieuws/bezoek-van-david-friggieri-europees-coordinator-tegen-moslimhaat-aan-nederland> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

We see more often that events of scholars from conservative angles that are thought to preach hatred are discussed by municipalities that also consider stopping them. These are often discussed in the context of the violation of the rule of law. One municipality has even discussed the closure of mosques that invite such scholars. But little is discussed when it concerns the far-right groups. Their possible violation of the rule of law or hatred towards a group in society is not discussed to the same extent. There is clearly a double standard. The municipalities must take more responsibility here and all forms of violation of the law by any group should be discussed proportionally - not only Muslim groups should be discussed in this sense.

Finally, one can conclude that still little attention is being paid to far-right groups and their danger to Dutch society. However, we could observe that the poor attention paid to these groups in reports, does not describe the real problem. This is most evident in the report published by the Dutch Security Agency (AIVD). The fact that they published a report about far-right groups is a good development but the problem is that their growth and attendance is linked to the anti-Black Pete movement and Islam which, in turn, has legitimized these groups and given them a protest group profile, which will cover up their danger and their dangerous worldview.

Chronology

- **18.01.2018:** Decapitated and blood-stained doll put before the Emir Sultan Mosque in Amsterdam.
- **03.02.2018:** Mosque under construction in the Hague graffitied with swastika.
- **07.02.2018:** Windows of a Moroccan mosque in Roosendaal were smashed (unclear if this was a hate crime).
- **10.02.2018:** Arson at Islamic center in Drachten.
- **23.02.2018:** The 'Nora' project launched. 'Nora' was a Dutch Muslim and a digital character - eloquent and expert. In the run-up to the municipal elections of 21 March, she registered Islam-related statements by (mainly) politicians, journalists, and opinion formers.
- **10.03.2018:** Dozens of crosses were placed on mosque construction site by *Pegida.nl* Netherlands.
- **12.04.2018:** The mosque board of a mosque in Enshede had plans to rebuild the mosque. far-right group *Rechts in Verzet* (Right in Resistance) placed banners and protest signs against this decision.
- **12.04.2018:** Far-right group *Rechts in Verzet* put banners against new mosque in Houten.

- **06.06.2018:** Far-right group *Pegida.nl* placed banners against new mosque in Assendelft.
- **07.06.2018:** *Pegida.nl* canceled its protest pork barbecue before the Lale Mosque in Rotterdam at the last minute after resistance from neighborhood.
- **02.07.2018:** Far-right movement *Rechts in Verzet* put banners against mosque in Oosterhout.
- **08.07.2018:** Anti-discrimination bureau RADAR and four Islamic umbrella organizations want PVV leader Geert Wilders and his party to be prosecuted for the ‘Islam is deadly’ campaign. They took a legal action against Wilders.
- **22.08.2018:** Far-right movement *Rechts in Verzet* took action at a mosque in Nijmegen. Police intervened.
- **09.09.2018:** Stone thrown at window of Yunus Emre Mosque in Alblasserdam.
- **09-30.09.2018:** Abel Herzberg lecture by Sigrid Kaag: “Do Not Be Silent, Our Voice Is Needed!”
- **25.09.2018:** Mosque in Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel smeared with tomato sauce.
- **01.10.2018:** *Pegida.nl* demonstrated with gruesome video against mosque in Enschede.
- **05.10.2018:** The police foiled attack on As-Soennah Mosque in The Hague. Board member of the mosque posted on his Facebook page that a man had plans to attack the mosque.
- **08.10.2018:** Demonstration by Pegida in Utrecht prematurely ended.
- **28.10.2018:** Far-right movement Identitair Resistance (*Identitair Verzet*) protested at the mosque in Leiden.
- **16.11.2018:** Banners put and gate locked at mosque in Geleen by far-right movement *Identitair Verzet*.
- **17.11.2018:** Posters against Islamization at mosque in Ede.
- **24.11.2018:** Far-right group *Voorpost* again put posters with Islamophobic texts like ‘Halal slaughtering is barbaric’ and ‘stop Islamization’ at Turkish mosque Ede.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
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NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

Despite the many issues that were brought to the forefront during the referendum for the name change in North Macedonia, the process did not lead to higher levels of religious intolerance within the community. However, as it has been the case previously, Albanians were targeted both with the Law on the Use of Languages which is supposed to make the Albanian language used nationally, and with the referendum where Albanians are viewed as citizens with no say on the name issue.

Discrimination, Islamophobia, and hate speech have been present during 2018; however, in a lower number of incidents as compared to previous years. Interethnic disputes have consequently led to some incidents on a religious level such as the burning of a mosque or cases of discrimination based on religious affiliation.

Few incidents that occurred in 2018 put North Macedonia on the Islamophobia map. A 350-year-old mosque was burnt as a hate crime in Prilep, the eastern part of the country, while on the western part, in Ohrid, heated discussions over the size of a minaret have stalled the restoration process of the mosque itself. Madrasas are still fighting to get legal recognition by the Ministry of Education, while a primary school in Radovish was fined for allowing an *iftar* dinner to be organized in its premises. Furthermore, a case of discrimination in employment of a *hijabi* teacher was reported to the Ombudsman but no mention of it was made in the annual report, let alone any action taken to shed light on the case. On the political level, 2018 saw clashes between the government and MPs, and the president of the Islamic Community of North Macedonia.

The Islamic Community of North Macedonia has not really positioned itself as the pioneer in the protection of the rights of Muslims in the country, leaving the space instead to human rights organizations. The involvement of the Islamic Community with the state institutions in detecting and fighting Islamophobia is more than necessary.

Извршно резиме

И покрај многуте прашања кои беа отворени за време на референдумот за промена на името во Северна Македонија, самиот процес не доведе до повисоки нивоа на верска интолеранција во самата држава. Сепак, како што беше случај претходно, Албанците беа таргетирани како со Законот за употреба на јазиците, кој предвидува употреба на албанскиот јазик на национално ниво, како и со референдумот каде што Албанците се сметаат за граѓани без глас во прашањето за името.

Дискриминацијата, исламофобијата, говорот на омраза врз верска основа беа присутни во текот на 2018 година, сепак, во помал број инциденти во споредба со претходните години. Меѓуетничките спорови доведоа до некои инциденти на религиозно ниво, како што се согорувањето на џамија или случаи на дискриминација врз основа на исламска верска припадност.

Неколку инциденти што се случија во текот на 2018 година, сепак, ја ставија Северна Македонија на картата на исламофобијата. 350-годишна џамија беше изгорена како злосторство од омраза во Прилеп, источниот дел на земјата, додека на западниот дел, во Охрид, разгорените разговори за големината на минарето го задушуваат процесот на реставрација на самата џамија. Медресите сè уште се борат за нивното признавање од страна на Министерството за образование, додека основно училиште во Радовиш беше казнето за тоа што дозволија ифтарска вечера да биде организирана во нејзините простории. Истотака, еден случај на дискриминација при вработување на наставничка со хиџаб бил пријавен кај Народниот правобранител, иако истиот не се споменува во годишниот извештај, камоли да биде преземена акција за да се разјасни случајот. На политичко ниво, во 2018 година се случија неколку судири меѓу владата и пратениците, и претседателот на Исламската заедница на Северна Македонија.

Исламската заедница на Северна Македонија не се постави како пионер за заштитата на правата на муслиманите во Македонија, оставајќи простор на организациите за човекови права да го дополнат вакумот. Погалемено вклучување на Исламската заедница во соработка со државните институции во откривањето и борбата против исламофобијата е повеќе од потребно.

Përmbledhja ekzekutive

Përkundër shumë çështjeve që u hapën gjatë referendumit për ndryshimin e emrit në Maqedoninë e Veriut, vet procesi nuk ka ndikuar në rritjen e nivelit të jotolerancës fetare brenda shtetit. Megjithatë, siç ka ndodhur edhe më parë, shqiptarët janë targetuar si me Ligjin për përdorimin e gjuhëve që supozohet të zgjerojë përdorimin e gjuhës shqipe në nivel kombëtarë, ashtu edhe me referendumin ku shqiptarët shihen si qytetarë pa të drejtë fjale në çështjen e emrit.

Diskriminimi, islamofobia, gjuha e urrejtjes në bazë të përkatësisë fetare islame kanë qenë të pranishme gjatë vitit 2018, megjithatë, në numër më të vogël incidentesh në krahasim me vitet e mëparshme. Në shumë raste, mosmarrëveshjet ndëretnike kanë rezultuar me incidente në nivel fetar, siç janë djegja e një xhamie apo rastet e diskriminimit të bazuara në përkatësinë fetare.

Disa incidente që kanë ndodhur gjatë vitit 2018 megjithatë kanë vënë Maqedoninë e Veriut në hartën e Islamofobisë. Një xhami e vjetër 350 vite u dogj si pasojë e një krimi të urrejtjes në Prilep, në pjesën lindore të vendit, ndërsa në pjesën perëndimore, në Ohër, diskutimet e nxehta mbi lartësinë e një minare kanë bllokuar procesin e restaurimit të xhamisë. Madreset ende po luftojnë për të marrë njohje ligjore nga Ministria e Arsimit, ndërsa një shkollë fillore në Radovish u gjobit për lejimin e një darke iftar në ambientet e saj. Për më tepër, një rast diskriminimi në punësimin e një mësueseje me hixhab u raportua te Avokati i Popullit, edhe pse rasti nuk përmendet në raportin vjetor, e lëre më të jetë marrë një veprim për të hedhur dritë mbi rastin. Në nivelin politik, gjatë vitit 2018 ka pasur përplasje mes qeverisë dhe deputetëve, dhe kryetarit të Bashkësisë Islame të Maqedonisë Veriore.

Bashkësia Fetare Islame e Maqedonisë Veriore nuk e ka vënë veten si pioner i mbrojtës të të drejtave të myslimanëve në Maqedoni, duke lënë hapësirën për organizatat e të drejtave të njeriut për të mbushur vakumin e mbetur. Përfshirja më e madhe e Bashkësisë Fetare Islame në bashkëpunim me institucionet shtetërore në zbulimin dhe luftimin e islamofobisë është më se e nevojshme.

Country Profile

Country: North Macedonia

Type of Regime: Representative democracy

Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: Coalition SDSM and DUI (leftist), RDK and Alternativa

Opposition Parties: VMRO-DPMNE and Coalition “For a better Macedonia” (right-wing), AA, Besa

Last Elections: 2016 Parliamentary Elections (VMRO DPMNE: 51 seats [39.4%]; SDSM: 49 seats [37.9%]; DUI: 10 seats [7.5%]; Besa Movement: 5 seats [5%]; Alliance for Albanians: 3 seats [3%]; DPA: 2 seats [2.7%]). Current government coalition is a leftist one.

Total Population: 2,022,547 (2002 Census)

Major Languages: Macedonian and Albanian

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism), although the constitution lists five religious groups: the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Religious Community in Macedonia, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Methodist Church, and the Jewish Community.

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Macedonian Orthodox 64.8%, Muslim 33.3%, other Christian 0.4%, other and unspecified 1.5% (2002 est.)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 700,000 (33.3%) according to 2002 Census (Macedonia 2017 International Religious Freedom Report)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of North Macedonia, NGO Legis

Far-Right Parties: N/A

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

For North Macedonia, 2018 was a decisive year. After almost 3 decades of diplomatic disputes with Greece, the country changed its name constitutionally from Republic of Macedonia to Republic of North Macedonia. The referendum that preceded this process opened up the way to several dichotomies: the patriots versus the traitors, the Macedonians versus the Albanians, the ones “with a homeland” versus the ones “without a homeland”, the West versus the East, the ones that boycott the referendum versus the ones that promote it. While previously any type of voting process would spark an array of interethnic incidents, the referendum passed without any major clashes between the two major ethnic groups.¹



Figure 1: “Death for Albanians” graffiti in Bitola.²

As noted in the previous *EIR* reports on Macedonia, in the Republic of North Macedonia religious and ethnic differences almost coincide³ and in many cases interethnic incidents also portray or are aided by interreligious intolerance. A case in point is portrayed in Figure 1 where on 18 January, 2018 a photograph of a graffiti on a building wall in Bitola was shared on social media. The graffiti “Смрт за Шиптари!” and “Vdekje për Shqiptarët!” (death for Albanians) was written in both the Macedonian and Albanian languages as an irony related to the bill on usage of minority languages.⁴ Many cases of ethnic hatred have elements of Islamophobia as well.

Additionally, there is an increasing trend of anti-Turkey and anti-Erdogan sentiments which in many cases border with an Islamophobic narrative. While the narrative

1. Given that this report covers the period from 1 January, 2018 to 31 December, 2018, for more information on the political situation in the previous year and how it has affected the Islamophobia-related incidents, please consult the Islamophobia in Macedonia: National Report 2017.

2. D.T., “Во Битола се почитува двојазичноста”, Civil Media, 18 January 2018, <https://civilmedia.mk/vo-bitola-s-pochituva-dvoazitchnosta/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

3. The majority of Albanians are Muslim, while the majority of Macedonians are Orthodox, thus the interethnic intolerance in many cases reflects interreligious intolerance.

4. “Во Битола се почитува двојазичноста”, Civil Media.

itself is more directed towards what is considered neo-Ottomanism, the language used indicates levels of anti-Islamic attitudes. Such a trend interestingly exists amongst individuals and groups that formally belong to Muslim families and portray any type of Turkish influence as Islamic thus anti-western and primitive. In the wake of elections - be those local, parliamentary, or presidential - there is a regular Islamophobic narrative towards the Besa Movement, an Albanian political party, which is constantly accused of having an Islamic background and being financed by foreign states.

Given that North Macedonia was part of the Balkan route of immigrants, the heightened level of Islamophobia was a result of the negative attitude of the locals towards the immigrants themselves (see Figure 2).⁵ Since the route decreased in frequency, there are fewer cases of direct Islamophobic incidents or comments although continuously there are reported cases of attacks on migrants.⁶

This report is mainly based on the reported cases within the office of the Ombudsman, the Commission for Prevention of Discrimination, media reports, contacts with NGOs, religious institutions and individuals that have helped in finding cases with subtle nuances of discrimination based on religious belief. Information has been gathered in the local languages⁷ spoken by the Muslim communities in North Macedonia.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks



Figure 2: The burnt mosque in Erekovci.⁸

5. Ibid.

6. There were 11 incidents due to refugee or migrant status in 2016, 2 in 2017, and 6 in 2018. See: http://www.zlostorstvaodomraza.mk/reports?l=en_US#, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

7. In the current report, translations from local languages (Albanian, Macedonian, Turkish, Bosnian) to English are by the author.

8. “Запалена џамија во прилепско стара 350 години, ИВЗ се сомнева во подметнат пожар”, *Religija*, 6 October 2018, <https://religija.mk/zapalena-dzamiya-vo-prilepsko-stara-350-godini-ivz-se-somneva-vo-podmetnat-pozar/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

On 14 November, 2018, a case of discrimination based on religious belief in Portofino-Osteria and Bar, a restaurant in Skopje, was reported. The victim of the discrimination reported the case to the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights Macedonia. The victim, who wears the *hijab*, together with two friends tried to enter the restaurant Portofino Osteria but were not allowed to enter with the excuse that reservations are needed. Ten minutes later, one of the friends, in an attempt to understand if the reason that they were denied entrance was the fact that the victim was wearing the *hijab*, tried to enter the restaurant and without any problem was given a table and served.⁹ The Commission for Protection from Discrimination after having received a complaint by the HCHR on 28 December, 2018 published an opinion stating that the restaurant by denying service to a *hijabi* customer had committed a direct act of discrimination based on religious belief.¹⁰ The commission asked the restaurant to stop this practice otherwise further punitive measures will be taken.¹¹

On 5 October, 2018, a 350-year-old mosque in the village of Erekovci, in the municipality of Prilep, was burnt (Figure 3). The Islamic Community has reported that indications from the villagers point to the fact that the fire was intentional and the case was reported to the police.¹² As of yet, the case has not been resolved.

Employment

Although not often reported, there are cases especially of *hijabi* women who are refused a job position on the basis of their visible Islamic appearance. In discussions with some Islamic organizations, many Muslim women have applied for job positions in education and the health sector and have been rejected only after the interviews where their Muslimness was considered too visible due to their headscarf. However, such cases are a lot fewer compared to previous years. One specific case was brought to the Office of the Ombudsman by a husband who claims that his wife was not allowed to teach in a primary school in Radovish because of her headscarf, although she had been accepted in the job position previously.¹³ Due to lack of supporting evidence, the office of the Ombudsman didn't pursue the case or report it as a case of discrimination based on religious affiliation. The report of the Ombudsman

9. "Дискриминација врз основа на религија и верско уверување во скопскиот ресторан Portofino-Osteria and Bar", Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of Republic of North Macedonia, 29 October 2019, <http://www.mhc.org.mk/announcements/841?locale=mk#>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

10. "КЗД утврди директна дискриминација врз основа на религија и верско уверување", Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of Republic of North Macedonia, 16 January 2019, <http://www.mhc.org.mk/announcements/888?locale=mk#.XJkoaChKjIV>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

11. "Државата потврди дискриминација кај скопски ресторан кој не и дозволи на муштерика со хиџаб да седне на маса", Faktor, 17 January 2019, <https://faktor.mk/drzavata-potvrdi-diskriminacija-kaj-skopski-restaurant-koj-ne-i-dozvoli-na-mushterijka-so-hidzab-da-sedne-na-masa>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

12. "Запалена џамија во прилепско стара 350 години, ИВЗ се сомнева во подметнат пожар", Religija, 6 October 2018, <https://religija.mk/zapalena-dzamiija-vo-prilepsko-stara-350-godini-ivz-se-somneva-vo-podmetnat-pozar/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

13. Personal interview with the personnel in the Ombudsman's office (January 2019).

published in March 2019 doesn't mention any case of discrimination based on religious belonging.¹⁴

Additionally, Muslims are not given legal means to have shorter working hours during Ramadan or to be exempt from working during the *Jummah* prayer, although unofficially employers allow their employees to attend the prayer.

Education

Although Islamic education on a high school level is provided at private institutions within the framework of the Islamic Community, the accreditation of these madrasas by the Ministry of Education and Science is still an open issue.¹⁵ The applications for university studies by the graduates from the madrasas in North Macedonia are rejected by many state universities leaving Islamic Studies in the country and outside of it as the only option for higher education. Some universities have opened their doors to the madrasa graduates although this seems to be an exception to the rule.

On another note, in an attempt to protect secularity in the schools, the state education inspectorate fined the primary school Krste Petkov Misirkov in Radovish with 1,600 euros for allowing an *iftar* dinner to be organized on its premises, where the *adhan* (*ezan*) was called, which normally signifies that the time to break the fast has arrived.¹⁶ Additionally, the principle of the school Olgica Stojanova was fined with 1,120 euros as the person in charge of the school who gave permission for the event. The inspectorate indicated that a request for the termination of the contract of the school principle will be sent to the municipality of Radovish on the basis that she acted against the law when she allowed a religious event to be organized on the school premises, while the Minister of Education Arber Ademi agreed with the verdict of the inspectorate.¹⁷ This reaction came as a result of very harsh reactions on social media after a video where the *ezan* is called was published, claiming that such an event is in direct breach of the secularity principle that the school is supposed to maintain. However, reactions from Muslims on social media pointed out that this event was taken out of proportion and shows clear Islamophobic sentiments given that the school in its official opening in 2008 was blessed by a religious cleric of the Orthodox faith.¹⁸

14. "Народен Правобранител, Годишен Извештај За Степенот На Обезбедувањето Почитување", Унапредување И Заштита На Човековите Слободи И Права 2018, March 2018, <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/Godisni%20izvestai/GI-2017/GI-2018.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019)

15. Laura Papraniku, "MASH-i nuk e njeh Medresenë", Koha, 12 February 2018, <https://www.koha.mk/mash-i-nuk-e-njeh-medresene/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

16. "Казни за директорката и училиштето во Радовиш каде оца држеше верски обред", Radio MOF, 4 June 2018, <https://www.radiomof.mk/kazni-za-direktorkata-i-uchilishteto-vo-radovish-kade-odzha-drzheshe-ver-ski-obred/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

17. Goran Simonovski, "Адеми го поддржа инспекторатот во казната за директорката за верскиот обред во училиште во Радовиш", Sitel TV, 4 June 2018, <https://sitel.com.mk/ademi-go-poddrzha-inspektorat-vo-kaznata-za-direktorkata-za-verskiot-obred-vo-uchilishte-vo>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

18. "Штипскиот муфтија за ифтарот во училиштето во Радовиш", Religija, 5 June 2018, <https://religija.mk/shtipskiot-muftija-za-iftarot-vo-uchilishteto-vo-radovish/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Politics

The restoration of the Ali Pasha Mosque in Ohrid, has been a contentious issue for a long time in the city and among different state and religious institutions. The reconstruction of the mosque which was supposed to get a 32 m tall minaret (assumed to be the original size of the minaret) as compared to the current one which is 6.5 m tall restored in the last century,¹⁹ has sparked huge debates and dissatisfaction in the city and the country as a whole, with the argument that the new minaret will dominate the landscape of the old bazaar in Ohrid. The former minister of culture in order to respond to the criticism from the local non-Muslim groups had promised to halt the construction work; however, a special commission within the ministry concluded that the minister has no such powers.²⁰

The issue of the renovation of the mosque in Ohrid was a topic of discussion with the Minister of Culture Asaf Ademi who said that no investment by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of North Macedonia will be a base for religious intolerance, which is why for the restoration of the mosque, especially when it comes to the height of the new minaret, a common language between the Directorate for the Protection of Cultural Heritage and the Islamic Community of North Macedonia needs to be found.²¹ Members of the Association Sovest, who are the ones who have been vocal against the renovation, claim that with the higher minaret the authenticity of the city of Ohrid will be lost, while the whole process will trigger religious hatred and interethnic intolerance.²² As of now, the issue has still not been resolved.



Figure 3: The burnt Carshi Mosque in Prilep.²³

19. Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Tempers Rise in Macedonian Resort over Tall Minaret", *Balkan Transitional Justice*, 28 November 2017, <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/11/28/mosque-restoration-plan-upsets-macedonia-s-lake-town-11-27-2017/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

20. "Министерство за култура: Нема причини да запре реконструкцијата на Али-пашината џамија во Охрид", *Meta.mk*, 7 February 2018, <http://meta.mk/ministerstvo-za-kultura-nema-prichini-da-zapre-rekonstrukcijata-na-ali-pashinata-dhamija-vo-ohrid/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

21. "Ademi, do te gjejme zgjidhje per xhamine e Ohrit", 5 July 2018, <http://shenja.tv/video-ademi-do-te-gjejme-zgjidhje-per-xhamine-e-ohrit/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

22. Makfaks, "Високи тонови на дебатата за Али-пашината џамија, охридани обвинуваат дека се гради незаконски", *Youtube*, 22 February 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nllZvEEgWlk>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

23. Bunjamin Kurtishi, "Vazhdon 'standardi i dyfishte' ndaj Çarshixhamisë së Prilepit", *Anadolu Agency*, 21 March 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkan/vazhdon-standardi-i-dyfishte-C3%AB-ndaj-carshi-xhamis%C3%AB-s%C3%AB-prilepit/1095132>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Another open case regarding a renovation of a mosque - this one being burnt - is the Carshi Mosque in Prilep. In August 2001, during the armed conflict in North Macedonia, an army convoy traveling from Skopje to Tetovo was attacked, where 10 soldiers from Prilep and its surroundings were killed. The citizens of Prilep, as a counter-attack and a gesture of revolt, burnt the Carshi Mosque of Prilep.²⁴ The rebuilding of the mosque is still a contentious issue although the Islamic Community received permission to rebuild it in 2006, 2010, and 2012. Currently, the structure, which is in ruins, is used as a shelter by alcoholics and has been further vandalized (Figure 4).

Continuing with cases in the political arena, an open question to be resolved is the Bektashi community's official registration/recognition and property issues. A decade-long dispute between the Bektashi order and the state was brought as a case to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) with the complaint that the domestic courts of North Macedonia have refused to "allow the Bektashi community to retain its status as a religious organization and to accept its new application for registration."²⁵ Another contentious issue related to the Bektashi community is the ownership of the Bektashi complex in Tetovo known as "Arabati Baba Tekke." The Bektashi community of Tetovo has brought the case to international courts, since the whole property is currently owned by the state.²⁶ Just to illustrate the complexity of the ownership of the *tekke*, the property is partly used by the Bektashis, the Islamic Community uses one building as a *masjid*, while the rest of the buildings (the hotel, the restaurant, the fountain, etc.) are left unmanaged and are in ruins.

There are also more direct political clashes between the government and the Islamic Community of North Macedonia. In 2018, there were several cases of clashes between the leader of the Islamic Community, Sulejman Redzepi, and the government. For the leader of the Islamic Community, the government is showing bias towards the Orthodox community by sponsoring the building of churches while the mosques are always built with the private money of the Muslims.²⁷

On that note, in August 2018, the government announced that it would check the legality of the work of the religious communities in the country right after MP Muhamed Zeqiri posed the question of whether the labor inspection will ever con-

24. Bunjamin Kurtishi, "Vazhdon 'standardi i dyfishitë' ndaj Çarshixhamisë së Prilepit", Anadolu Agency, 21 March 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/sq/balkan/vazhdon-standardi-i-dyfishit%C3%AB-ndaj-carshi-xhamis%C3%AB-s%C3%AB-prilepit/1095132>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

25. Frank Cranmer, "Registration of Religious Organisations Yet Again: Bektashi Community", Law & Religion UK, 13 April 2018, <http://www.lawandreligionuk.com/2018/04/13/registration-of-religious-organisations-yet-again-bektashi-community/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

26. Z. Andonov, "Арабати Баба Теке Слави 480 Години Со Спор За Имотот Меѓу Бектешите И Ивз", Sakam da Kazam, 7 February 2019, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/dopisna-mrezha/arabati-baba-teke-slavi-480-godini-spor-za-imotot-megu-bekteshite-ivz/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. "Лидерот на ИВЗ – Државата гради само цркви, а не и џамии", Religija, 3 January 2019, <https://religija.mk/liderot-na-ivz-drzavata-gradi-samo-crkvi-a-ne-i-dzamii/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

duct an inspection of the Islamic Community so as to detect the irregularities and misuse of funds that, according to the MP, are made by its president.²⁸ To this, the president of the Islamic Community, Sulejman ef. Rexhepi, responded by accusing the state of favoring the Orthodox Church while similar privileges that are given to the Orthodox Church are denied to the Islamic Community.²⁹

Media



Figure 4: Facebook status of Cvetin Chilimanov.³⁰

An article titled “THE EUROPEAN UNION WILL NOT ACCEPT US: We Will Change the Name, But Will You, Albanians Brothers, Change Your Religion to Enter the EU?” published on the news portal *Infomax.mk*, quoting a Facebook post of Cvetin Chilimanov (see Figure 5), a journalist and adviser to the ex-president of North Macedonia Gjorge Ivanov, claims that the problem of the leading EU powers is with the Muslim population in Macedonia, in the same way they have a problem with Turkey and Albania.³¹ The article and the Facebook post both emphasize that since ethnic Macedonians had to negotiate their identity and change the name of the country in order to enter the EU, the problem now is the “Muslim problem” which is the reason why the EU - they claim -is reluctant to accept North Macedonia as a full EU member.

28. “Инспекција по налог на Заев ќе влезе во верските заедници”, *Zase.Mk*, August 2018, <http://zase.mk/articles/361096/inspekcija-po-nalog-na-zaev-kje-vleze-vo-verskite-zaednici>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

29. *Ibid.*

30. Cvetin Chilimanov, Facebook, 27 May 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/cvetin/posts/10156308796374192>, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

31. “Европската Унија Нема Да Не Прими: Ние името ќе го смениме, но дали вие, браќа Албанци ќе ја смените верата за да влеземе во ЕУ?”, *Infomax*, 27 May 2018, <https://infomax.mk/wp/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 5: “In the Fight between Allah and the Dollar, the Loser is Erdogan – The Sultan with Threats to Trump”, Telma TV, 11 August, 2018.³²

Another article posted on the web portal of TV Telma, in reference to the clash between Erdogan and Trump, makes numerous Islamophobic comments, starting from the title of the article itself “In the Fight between Allah and the Dollar, the Loser Is Erdogan – The Sultan with Threats to Trump.” At the very start of the article the author sarcastically states, “After addressing Allah and then his people with an attempt to calm them, Erdogan, with a column in the *New York Times*, addressed Trump, who doubled customs for Turkey yesterday and further knocked down the Turkish lira.”³³ On several occasions in the text the author makes comments that are on the verge of Islamophobia such as “but Allah helps very little in the crisis [...]”³⁴ in addition to mocking Erdogan by calling him a “sultan.” The text overall shows how much Turcophobia and Islamophobia are linked as phenomena. The article sparked quite a mixed response, some deeming it very Islamophobic while others defended the author. Some activists on their Facebook accounts strongly opposed the way that TV Telma offends all Muslims through its criticism of the policies of Erdogan and posited that their insults are on the verge of being hate speech (Figure 7). Although TV Telma was asked by several viewers to retract the news or to formally apologize, in their response to the criticism (Figure 8), they not only defend their position, but also continue with the same line of thought with remarks such as “let Erdogan who addresses Allah apologize to you.”

32. Ивор Мицковски, “Во борбата помеѓу Алах и доларот, губитникот е Ердоган – Султанот со закани до Трамп”, Telma TV, 11 August 2018, <https://telma.com.mk/vo-borbata-pomegu-alah-i-dolarot-gubitnikot-e-erdogan-sultanot-so-zakani-do-tramp/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

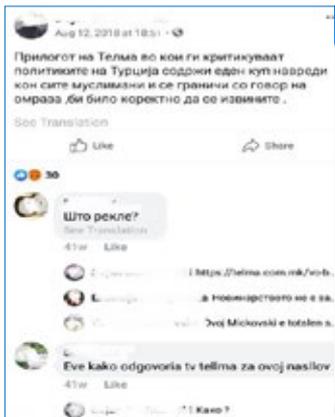


Figure 6: A comment on Facebook regarding the article “In the Fight between Allah and the Dollar.” (12 August 2018)



Figure 7-8: Response of TV Telma to a message by a viewer in response to the article “In the Fight between Allah and the Dollar” (11 August 2018)

The conversion of Sllavica Jakimovska, a member of the academic staff at the European University in North Macedonia who converted to Islam during a ceremony organized in Edrem, Turkey, attracted a lot of attention by the media.³⁵ This conversion was extensively promoted in the media, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. The whole issue sparked quite a negative reaction in the professor’s social circle and in the general public, who saw her conversion as an Islamic propaganda.

Justice System

For a longer period of time, the Muslims of North Macedonia have had a difficult relationship with the justice system. A culmination of this negative relationship came with the Monstrum case, in which 6 persons were given life sentence for having committed, as it was labeled, a terrorist act where 6 people were killed in Smilkovo Lake.³⁶ The government in a police action imprisoned dozens of Muslims, women included, on the grounds of Islamic extremism, and later proceeded with sentencing six of them. Although no real link could be made with religion as a basis for the act, the Ministry of Interior from the onset of the case denounced it as a terrorist act inspired by Islamic extremism; this conviction was viewed as Islamophobic by Muslims. With the new government and the famous “bombs”,³⁷ around the end of 2017, the Supreme Court annulled the verdict due to procedural mistakes and the case was

35. “Универзитетска професорка од Македонија премина во ислам”, Time.Mk News Engine, 27 February 2018, <https://time.mk/c/261fdbae06/univerzitetska-profesorka-od-makedonija-premina-vo-islam.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

36. Naser Pajaziti, “Skopje, Six Albanians Given Life Prison Sentences”, Independent Balkan News Agency, 30 June 2014, <https://balkaneu.com/skopje-albanians-life-prison-sentences/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

37. The “bombs” refer to the information that was leaked from the illegal wiretapping scandal in which state officials discuss their actions. For more info, read: Andrew MacDowall, “Fears for Macedonia’s Fragile Democracy Amid ‘Coup’ and Wiretap Claims”, *The Guardian*, 27 February 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/27/fears-macedonias-fragile-democracy-amid-coup-wiretap-claims>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

returned for retrial.³⁸ Later on, the case was taken over by the Special Prosecutors office which deals with material evidence that originates from illegal wiretapping.³⁹ The case is still being heard in court as of 31 December, 2018.



Figure 9: Twitter argument over the Radovish incident (top), response to the article “THE EUROPEAN UNION WILL NOT ACCEPT US: We Will Change the Name, But Will You, Albanian Brothers, Change Your Religion to Enter the EU?” (28 May and 1 June 2018)

There was an ongoing court proceeding on the obligation of the state to pay reparations for the destruction of the three mosques in Arachinovo (Skopje) during the armed conflict of 2001. In March 2018, the Supreme Court of the Republic of North Macedonia declined the request for the revision of the previous decision of the lower courts, and decided to fine the state with 152,000 euros as reparation costs to be paid to the Islamic Community as the suing party.⁴⁰ This decision of the Supreme Court was well-received especially by the Muslim community.

Internet

Several of the cases that were mentioned in the previous sections have sparked heated discussions on the Internet. On Twitter, influencers used their platforms to point out the level of Islamophobia stirred by some of the events. One of those cases was the

38. “The Supreme Court Abolished the Verdicts and Returned the “Monster” Case for a Retrial”, META, 24 November 2017, <https://meta.mk/en/the-supreme-court-abolished-the-verdicts-and-returned-the-monster-case-for-a-retrial/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

39. “Rasti ‘Monstra’ përfundimisht merret nga PSP-ja (Video)”, Portalb.mk, 21 March 2018, <https://portalb.mk/512781-rasti-monstra-perfundimisht-merret-nga-ppj-ja/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

40. “За оштетена цамија во Арачиново од воениот конфликт, државата треба да плати 152 илјади евра отштета”, Zhurnal, 13 March 2019, http://www.zurnal.mk/content/?id=183131511359&utm_source=daily.mk&utm_medium=daily.mk, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

iftar dinner that was organized in Radovich. While the initial tweet condemned the *iftar* dinner held at the school, the respondents defended the school decision to allow a religious event to take place outside of school hours. References to the western part of North Macedonia are made in a derogative way since that region has a high concentration of Muslims. In a similar vein, Twitter users were vocal against the article published by Infomax which asks if Albanians would change their religion (Islam) as a precondition to entering the EU.

On a positive note, in an effort to fight hate speech and hate crime, including the Islamophobic incidents discussed in this report, several videos were produced as part of the series of videos in the campaign against hate speech and hate crimes “Hate hurts, don’t tolerate it! Report it!” organized by the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights.⁴¹ One of the videos features Sumeja Ademi, a young Muslim girl, who in February 2017 was attacked in Skopje due to her *hijab*. Two boys and a girl not only offended her with Islamophobic comments but also with ultra-nationalist ones, assuming that she was Albanian. Sumeja was later attacked by the girl who tried to take off her veil, all the while all three of them shouted insults at her asking her to leave the country. In the video, Sumeja notes that the case was reported to the police, however, no action was taken due to lack of evidence.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

While there aren’t any specific organizations that deal with the issue of Islamophobia itself, the most vocal advocate against discrimination, including here discrimination based on religious belief (Islam), has been the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of North Macedonia.⁴² With its online reporting platform, *Zlostorstva od Omraza*,⁴³ it has established itself as the medium through which individuals are able not only to report the cases of discrimination, be it as a victim or a witness, but also to be aided through the whole process. Another NGO that has been active especially in indirectly fighting against Islamophobia is LEGIS, which has been the strongest advocate of migrant rights during the Balkan route crisis. One of its founding members, Mersiha Smajlovikj,⁴⁴ has also been a very vocal advocate against cases of Islamophobia, especially those related to *hijab*-wearing Muslim women.

41. Macedonian Helsinki Committee, Youtube, 21 December 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boKz-JwDi-28&fbclid=IwAR2y_Pa9ghSHviviWJE1e28-11fghJgv0PiquTbG48BiNtf5QOTu0XN77cLo&t=12s&cap=p=desktop, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

42. The official website of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of North Macedonia is <http://mhc.org.mk/?locale=mk>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

43. Refer to <http://www.zlostorstvaodomraza.mk/> for unofficial (and in some cases, unverified) cases of discrimination based on religion from 2013 and onwards.

44. Mersiha Smajlovikj is a human rights activist and lawyer, and the author of “Islamophobia in Macedonia: National Report 2017” in the *EIR*.

In February 2018, the NATIONAL STRATEGY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (2018-2022) prepared by the National Committee for Countering Violent Extremism and Countering Terrorism (NCCVECT) was adopted.⁴⁵ The whole procedure of drafting this strategy was aided by the U.S. Embassy in Skopje and the OSCE Mission to Skopje. A multi-stakeholder approach was taken in drafting the procedure by bringing together representatives of NGOs, educational institutions, activists, religious organizations, and state agencies. The general tone of the discussion on countering violent extremism reflected a bias on violent extremism and terrorism acts committed by Muslims;⁴⁶ however, the document itself makes an effort to reduce such biases.

A project that has had a very positive impact on tackling the issue of radicalization was the “Mother Schools for Countering Radicalism”⁴⁷ organized by Analytica Think Tank up to 2017. “Mother Schools: Parenting for Peace”⁴⁸ is a similar model that will be running until January 2020 and is organized by the ZIP Institute.

Another event that was received well in the community was the common *iftar* dinner organized in the city of Strumica by the Citizen Association “Dost Eli” together with the Bayrampaşa Municipality of Istanbul Turkey.⁴⁹ Given that the *iftar* was attended by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, it brought a sense of understanding and interreligious tolerance in the city of Strumica. The event was attended by municipality officials as well.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

While the number of incidents has decreased, there are still cases of Islamophobia lingering in North Macedonia. The negative sentiments coming either directly as expressions of hatred towards Muslims or indirectly through interethnic intolerance, have been reflected in cases of the burning down of mosques, protesting against the renovation of mosques, and discrimination based on Islamic religious affiliation in employment, education, and other services. In order to make an effort to reduce the level of Islamophobia and with it reduce the number of incidents stemming from it, the following policies are recommended:

45. “National Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia For Countering Violent Extremism (2018-2022), https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/cve_national_strategy_eng_translation_sbu.pdf, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

46. The author of this report has participated in several focus groups leading to the writing of the strategy.

47. Mother School Project: <http://www.analyticamk.org/en/programs/foreign-and-security-policy/631-mothers-schools-project>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

48. See the website of Zip Institute for more details: <http://zipinstitute.mk/projects/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

49. “Рамазанска Ифтарска Вечера Во Струмица”, MakPress, 20 May 2018, <https://makpress.mk/Home/Post-Details?PostId=222400>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

- The Islamic Community should play a more active role in fighting Islamophobia, given that human rights NGOs are the frontrunners of this fight.
- The Islamic Community in close cooperation with the state institutions should implement programs of raising awareness on issues related to Islamophobia, how to detect it, and how to respond to it.
- Imams should be trained to detect Islamophobia and hate speech and work closely with the members of their mosques to reports cases of discrimination based on religious affiliation and of hate speech/crime.
- More Muslim NGOs should focus on working with the local community in fighting Islamophobia, coming from non-Muslims and Muslims alike.
- Positive discrimination practices should be implemented in the employment and education sectors as to allow more *hijab*-wearing Muslim women to be present both in schools and in state institutions.
- Incidents related to Islamophobia should be legally recognized as a separate category so as to be able to have clearer statistics on hate speech and hate crimes related to this phenomenon.

Chronology

- **26.01.2018:** A *hijab*-wearing teacher was not allowed to teach after being employed by the primary school in Radovish.
- **04.06.2018:** The primary school Krste Petkov Misirkov in Radovish was fined for allowing an *iftar* dinner to be organized on the school premises.
- **14.09.2018:** A *hijab*-wearing customer was refused service at Portofino-Osteria and Bar, a restaurant in Skopje, due to her Islamic garment.
- **05.10. 2018:** A 350-year-old mosque in the village of Erekovci, municipality of Prilep, was burnt.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
NORWAY
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

The Norwegian discourse on immigration is mainly framed as a question of “integration.” This, however, presupposes a model of integration that is much stricter than the social organisation in the immigrants’ countries of origin. It is no wonder that the encounters between different social and cultural models have led to steep learning curves for all parties involved.

Besides general problems related to integration of new population elements, there are problems related more specifically to Islam. Certain aspects of the Muslims’ cultural background are an extra impediment to their integration in the Norwegian social model. On the other hand, in a historical perspective there is little experience with Islam in Norway. Many people have had no direct contact with Muslims, but relate to how they are depicted by others.

In this respect the media should be aware of its responsibility not to stigmatise Muslims as a group, but at the same time not shirk away from presenting problems in an objective and responsible manner. This may conflict with the media’s natural inclination toward sensationalism. News related to Muslims and Islam are overrepresented in the press compared to their share of the population.

Furthermore, it is disturbing to observe that certain politicians and media are consciously playing on prejudice that may promote hostility towards immigrants, in general, and Muslims, in particular. We can trace initiatives from the state and civil society to counter this, but it will be a long process and we have many challenges ahead of us.

In spring 2018, the think tank Minotenk expressed the need for an action plan against hostile attitudes towards Islam in Norway. This was meant to serve as a political tool and as a guideline for civil society. An appeal for such an action plan has since been repeated by several actors in civil society in order to put pressure on the authorities.

Kortfattet Sammendrag

Islam har ingen lang historie i Norge. Det begynte med arbeidsinnvandring sent på 1960 tallet. Etter innvandringsstoppen i 1975 har det hovedsakelig dreid seg om familiegjenforening og flyktninger. Ankomsten av nye flyktninger de siste årene har ført med seg store utfordringer. Den norske diskursen om innvandring dreier seg i vesentlig grad om integrering. Dette forutsetter imidlertid en integreringsmodell som er mye strammere enn den sosiale organiseringen i flyktingenes opprinnelsesland. Det er ikke til å undres over at det i mange tilfeller resulterte i en bratt læringskurve både for flyktninger og nordmenn. Ved siden av normale problemer som oppstår med integrering av ny befolkning, har vi problemer som gjør det vanskeligere for dem å integreres i den norske modellen spesielt forbundet med islam. På den annen side har Norge i historisk perspektiv liten erfaring med muslimsk befolkning. Mange har ingen direkte kontakt med muslimer, men kjenner dem bare av omtale. Her har massemedia et ansvar i å formidle et bilde som ikke stigmatiserer muslimer som gruppe, uten å stikke reelle problemer under stolen. Dette kommer naturligvis i konflikt med massemedias ønske om å presentere nyheter som vekker oppsikt. Det er påvist at nyheter relatert til muslimer og islam blir tildelt uforholdsmessig stor spalteplass i forhold til deres posisjon i samfunnet. Videre er det urovekkende at visse politikere og medieaktører spiller bevisst på fordommer som kan nøre opp om fremmedfiendtlighet i alminnelighet og fiendtlighet mot muslimer i særdeleshet. Vi kan spore initiativ fra staten og sivilsamfunnet for å motvirke dette. Våren 2018 tok Mironenk et initiativ til en handlingsplan mot muslimfiendtlighet som hadde til hensikt å fremskaffe både et politisk verktøy og en veiledning for sivilsamfunnet. Etter dette har flere instanser uttrykt nødvendigheten av en slik handlingsplan. Det kan forhåpentligvis sette i gang en prosess som det trenger tid og krefter for å gjennomføre.

Country Profile

Country: Norway

Type of Regime: Constitutional monarchy

Form of Government: Parliamentary democracy

Ruling Parties: Erna Solberg's Cabinet (Centre-right Coalition of Conservative Party and Progress Party. Joined by the Liberal Party in January 2018 and the Christian Democratic Party in January 2019)

Opposition Parties: Labour Party, Centre Party, Socialist Left Party, Green Party (environmentalist), and Red Party.

Last Elections: 2017 Parliamentary Elections (Labour Party: 49 seats; Conservative Party: 45 seats; Progress Party: 27 seats; Centre Party: 19 seats; Socialist Left Party: 11 seats; Liberals: 8 seats; Christian Democrats: 8 seats; Green Party: 1 seat; Red Party: 1 seat)

Total Population: 5.3 million (estimate in 2018)

Major Languages: Norwegian (*bokmål* and *nynorsk*), Sami

Official Religion: No official religion. Historically, the official religion was the Evangelical Lutheran church of Norway. The Church of Norway is an independent legal entity, rather than a branch of the civil service, effective from 1 January, 2017. The church remains state-funded.

Statistics on Islamophobia: Since 2006, the Norwegian Police register statistics for "hate crimes" in BL/STRASAK. These are crimes based on race, religion, sexual orientation, etc. According to the last available figures published in 2018 for the year before, 1.4% of respondents to a survey said they had been exposed to hate crime, down from 1.9% the previous year. Of those exposed to hate crimes, 30% had filed a complaint to the police. There were 549 complaints for hate crimes in 2017, 120 of them were connected to religion but there are no separate statistics for Islam. Hateful comments about Islam on social media such as Facebook abound.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: The BL/STRASAK, the Norwegian Police register statistics for "hate crimes", registered 373 cases of hate crimes related to race or ethnicity.

Major Religions (% of Population): Lutheran Church (70.6%), Catholic Church (2.9%), other Christian denominations (3.5%), Islam (4.0 %), unaffiliated (17%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): There are no official statistics for the total number of Muslims in Norway. A conservative estimate lists a little above 200,000 which corresponds to 4% of the population. Official statistics include only members of religious communities that receive government subsidy. In 2018, there were 166,861 registered Muslims (up from 148,189 in 2016), which amount to 25.5% of religious community members outside the Church of Norway. In the period 2014-2018, there was a 26.3% increase in registered Muslims.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: The Islamic Council Norway (IRN) has been the largest umbrella organisation in Norway. In April 2018, the IRN broke off its relations with the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway (STL- established in 1996). This led other Muslim organisations in Norway, with strained relations to the IRN to join the STL; these were the Muslim Dialogue Network (including the Pakistan World Islamic Mission in Oslo and Rabita) and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jamaat Norway.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Norwegian Centre Against Racism, Minotenk, Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities

Far-Right Parties: There are no far-right parties of any significance. The third largest party in parliament, the Progress Party, should rather be called moderate right-wing populist and self-identifies as a libertarian party. Some of its most high-profile politicians have made negative comments about non-western immigration, in general, and Islam, in particular. The far-right party Alliance received 0.1% of the vote in the 2017 parliamentary elections. The Democrats party received 0.1% of the vote on a national basis in the 2015 local elections, and was able to secure representation in 7 (of Norway's 428) municipalities.

Far-Right Movements: People's Movement Against Immigration; Norway against Migration Stop the Islamisation of Norway; Pegida – Norway (the police has intermittently closed the Facebook page of Pegida); Norwegian Defence League; Norwegian People's Party.

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** On 5 June, 2018, the parliament passed a bill banning cloth covering of the face during classes at educational institutions as well as day-care centres, which included face-covering Islamic veils such as the *burka* and *niqab*. There was no ban of wearing them outside the classroom.
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Norway does not have a significant historical Muslim population. They are immigrants that came in different waves and who, even in a Scandinavian context, made an impact later than in the neighbouring Denmark and Sweden. The treatment of Muslims is conditioned both on attitudes in Norwegian society and the Norwegian state model. Religion may play a role in popular attitudes, but the state is quite robust in exercising equality before the law. In many ways there are quite different issues than in South-East Europe, which I am familiar with through my other research. These are issues that may not be visible in statistics. In short, in South-East Europe we have weaker states and a tradition of religious communities with strong historical stereotypes against each other. These stereotypes serve the function of conserving the integrity of each religious group. However, when it comes to dealing with coexistence from a practical point of view there is also a greater experience of interaction between people with different religious and ethnic background and a large shared cultural space. Scepticism towards Muslims is lower in Oslo, where locals have greater experience of interaction with Muslims, than in other parts of the country with less direct experience. The Muslims in Norway do not represent a uniform group and differ considerably according to place of origin and time of arrival. The Norwegian state does not approach them primarily as a religious group, but as immigrants. One of the main issues is the question of integration. The Norwegian state model presupposes a much larger degree of conformity in the population than immigrants are used to from their countries of origin. This entails a stronger pressure to adjust to Norwegian culture from what you have in less uniform and homogeneous societies. From a practical point of view, it is also a question of acquiring the necessary skills demanded in an advanced economy. Statistics are based on land of origin without specifying religion. In many cases the immigrants are not typical of the country as a whole since they come from specific regions. The figures below include first and second generation immigrants from some key countries with second generation listed in parenthesis:¹

Somalia	42,406	(13,652)
Pakistan	39,074	(17,040)
Iraq	33,416	(10,298)
Syria	29,889	(2,497)
Iran	22,150	(4,422)
Afghanistan	20,762	(3,980)
Turkey	18,607	
Bosnia/Herzegovina	17,970	(4,300)
Kosovo	15,642	

1. "Fakta om innvandring 20 June 2018", Statistics Norway, <https://www.ssb.no/innvandring-og-innvandrerer/fakta-side/innvandring>; <https://www.ssb.no/statbank/list/innvbef>. (Access date: 4 September 2019). Source for Turkey and Kosovo: "Innvandrerer etter landbakgrunn. Antall og andel. 2017", KommuneProfilen, https://www.kommuneprofilen.no/Profil/Befolkning/DinRegion/bef_innvandrerer_land_region.aspx, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks



Figure 1: From Pegida's page on Facebook. Many of the postings are obviously "imported"²

Two recent Norwegian reports deal with prejudice against Muslims.³ Both have decided to avoid the term "Islamophobia" and prefer the term *muslimfiendtlige holdninger* i.e. "hostile attitudes towards Muslims." They define it as "prejudice, actions and practices that attack, exclude or discriminate people because they are, or are assumed to be, Muslims." Surveys 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. Prejudices against a group were more prevalent than antipathy and social distance. The reports strived to draw attention to hostile acts against Muslims, or perceived Muslims, and also to clarify transgression of what can be termed as fair-minded criticism of religion and religious acts.

Widely held stereotypes against Muslims were documented in 2017.⁴ The main issues drawn attention to in the most recent report are stereotypes against Muslims as terrorists or Muslims as inherently oppressive towards women. The so-called Eurabia conspiracy theory featured widely on far-right webpages in Norway. A survey about attitudes towards immigrants published in June 2018 includes questions about atti-

2. Pegida Norway, Facebook, 9 April 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/OfficialNorway/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

3. Christhard Hoffman and Vibeke Moe, "Holdninger til jøder og muslimer i Norge 2017", *Rapport fra Senter for Studier av Holocaust og livssynsminoriteter*, (Oslo: 2017).

Linda Noor et.al.(ed.), "*Muslimfiendtlige Holdninger i Norge – en kunnskapsgjennomgang*", (Minotenk, Oslo: 2018).

4. The results of the Hoffman and Moe report are covered in the *Islamophobia in Norway: National Report 2017* in the *EIR*.

tudes towards Muslims and Christians.⁵ Almost half of the respondents (47%) were sceptical towards Muslims, while scepticism towards Christians was much lower (21%). Men are generally more sceptical than women, and those with less education are more sceptical than those with more education. Negative attitudes towards the *niqab* are prevalent, while the *hijab* is much more accepted. Occasional incidents of abusive behaviour towards Muslim is reported, such as an episode where a Muslim woman was spit on and verbally abused on a street in Oslo.⁶

When it comes to more tangible incidents, the latest police statistics list 549 formal complaints about hate crimes on a national level in 2017.⁷ It ranged from hate speech to acts of violence. The most important categories of motives were: race/ethnicity with 373 cases, religion with 120 cases, and sexual orientation with 83 cases. The latest report from the Oslo Police is more specific in addressing problems related to negative portrayal of Muslims. Most hate speech is related to ethnicity (57%), before LGBT (20%), closely followed by religion (17%). It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish if a case is related to ethnicity or religion. In 2018, all religious hate speech was related to Islam. There were 40 complaints regarding hate speech based on religion to the Oslo Police in 2018, down from 43 cases the previous year. Of the 40 cases in 2018, 3 were related to people who had renounced Islam.⁸

Employment

Surveys are dealing with the Muslims in the category of immigrants and the figures are based on country of origin and not religion. The lowest employment rates concern people from Somalia and Eritrea with less than half of them employed. They are followed by people from Iraq, 53% of whom are employed. Iran, Afghanistan and Kosovo all hover around 63%. Among those who have resided in Norway for a longer time, Pakistanis have a lower employment rate than the average of the population and also Turks (56%).⁹ Generally, immigrants have lower employment than Norwegians, and the difference between men and women is greater. They work more often part-time and are more often overqualified for their job. Immigrants from Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan are most prone to encounter discrimination at their workplace. Pakistanis had 25% less chance of being invited for a job interview according to a survey from 2012. Muslim women have complained about widespread

5. Jan-Paul Brekke and Ferdinan Andreas Mohn, "Holdninger til innvandring og integrering i Norge – Integreringsbarometeret 2018", *Institutt for Samfunnsforskning*, Rapport 2018:8", (Oslo: 2018).

6. Carima Tirillsdottir Heinesen, "Trakassert på åpen gate – 'Kom dere hjem', sa han før han spyttet på venninnen min og gikk videre", *antirasistisk.no*, 03.08.2018, <https://antirasistisk.no/trakassert-pa-åpen-gate/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. "Hatkriminalitet - anmeldelser 2017".

8. *Hatkriminalitet. Anmeldt Hatkriminalitet 2018*, Oslo Politidistrikt, March 2019.

9. Kristian Tronstad, Marit Nygaard and Miia Bask, "Accumulation of Welfare Problems among Immigrants in Norway", (Oslo: 2018), p. 30-31.

discrimination when they wore the *hijab*, and Muslim women are stereotyped as passive and oppressed.¹⁰

Education

There are no reports about explicit Islamophobic education material. The discussion about education is subtler. Questions of Islamophobia must be related to the general aspects of the Norwegian educational system. It has been pointed out that racism is seldom thematised in the classroom as it is associated with historical, racist regimes. The pupils are, thus, not well equipped to express their experiences with everyday social exclusion. The Norwegian equality ideal and emphasis on shared values may also make the teachers less receptive towards specific needs related to different religious and cultural backgrounds. The equality ideology may also prevent the teacher from presenting differences among the pupils. In a report from 2009, 13% claim to have had negative experiences in the Norwegian education system because of their foreign background. There are higher numbers for Iraq (20%) and Pakistan with 22% of males and 15% of females reporting such experiences. Another report from 2007 noted that 14% of immigrant pupils in Oslo often felt unaccepted by Norwegians, while the majority rarely had such experiences.¹¹

Politics

In mainstream politics, the Progress Party (PP) most openly expresses hostility towards Muslims. This is mainly framed as an anti-immigration discourse, because of perceived threats to Norwegian values and prohibitive costs of integrating people from distant countries. Minister of Justice Sylvi Listhaug resigned in March after massive protests when she claimed on Facebook that the Labour Party cared more about terrorists than the security of the country after a discussion about Islamist fighters. After the resignation of Sylvi Listhaug, the most prominent PP deputy during the second part of the year was arguably Per-Willy Amundsen. On his Facebook account he expressed opinions such as that migration from Muslim countries should stop in order not to change the identity of Norway and Europe, and asylum should only be granted to people from neighbouring countries. He endorsed fully the controversial Human Rights Service (HRS). Recently he made a controversial proposal of restricting child support to large families. Although nominally neutral to all population groups, it was clearly targeting immigrants in general and Muslims in particular. His comment regarding a particular incident on his Facebook account on 8 November, 2018, can illustrate his rhetoric: “Muslims must adjust to Norway. The security personnel at Harstad/Narvik Airport, Evenes only carry out their job. If this Muslim feels harassed, she may return to her coun-

10. Linda Noor et al. (ed.), “Muslimfientlige Holdninger i Norge – en kunnskapsgjennomgang” p. 28-32.

11. Ibid., p. 17-18.

try of origin and live out her own ‘freedom’ there. That the executive at the airport Anne Britt Bekken apologised about the incident is just an incomprehensible act of political correctness. Stand up for your staff!” This tirade was occasioned by a polite complaint by a 17-year-old girl about the security check. She said she did not know how the press got wind of it as she had not intended to create an incident: “To be absolutely clear: I did not refuse a security check, and my complaint was not a protest against security measures. I simply wanted to know if there is a rule or a law that stipulates that I have to remove the scarf. In that case I want it to be confirmed so that I can turn up at the airport without *hijab* the next time. I certainly respect rules and regulations. But I cannot allow that opinions and ideas of individual persons are going to control me and my life.”¹² At other airports, she had usually been taken aside to an enclosed area and not been asked to remove the *hijab* in public. In August, the Minister of Justice Tor Mikkjel Wara (Progress Party) expressed the desire to end all public subsidies to Muslim communities in Norway independent of whether they contributed towards integration or not. He was in favour of continued subsidies to the Church of Norway.¹³ His statement was widely criticised in the press. It also runs counter to §16 of the constitution that provides the same right of economic support to all religious groups.¹⁴

Media

There are various opinions on the role of media and they are not unambiguous. A Norwegian report on extremism argues that the “open” debate on migration in Norway has marginalised right-wing violence. There has been more violence in Northern European countries that combine stigmatisation of voices critical to immigration in the public sphere with high immigration and low support for immigration-critical parties. There are, on the other hand, concerns that higher activity on social media may increase the influence and legitimise immigrant-hostile and Muslim-hostile rhetoric. Another survey detected two main tendencies on the far-right spectre: (1) groups that focus mainly on general reservation about immigration and (2) groups that are more specifically hostile to Islam. These two groups tended to converge over time. They are mainly concerned with national questions and display little interest for issues such as Islamic terror. There is also no sign that hostile remarks on Facebook have led to more tangible engagement. As for mainstream media, it has been pointed out that Islam attracts disproportionate attention compared to the number of Muslims in the population. In general, Norwegian media does not have a sensationalist approach to Islam. There is a broad consensus in mass media to promote tol-

12. “Jeg er den ‘muslimske kvinnen’ som sendte hijabklage til Avinor. Dette er hva som skjedde.”, Aftenposten, 12 November 2018.

13. Thomas Vermes and Mads Fremstad, “Wara vil ha slutt på all offentlig støtte til muslimske trossamfunn”, ABC Nyheter, 15 August 2018.

14. “Dagbladet mener: Tor Mikkjel Wara er statsråd for sine egne, ikke hele landet”, Dagbladet, 18 August 2018.

erance and condemn hostility towards foreigners.¹⁵ A particular incident that attracted much attention last year concerned a teacher substitute who could not extend his engagement because he refused to shake hands with female colleagues. An editorial in *Aftenposten* (09.08.2018) stressed an employer's right to demand equal behaviour towards men and women – in Norway you are free to greet other people any way you like, but you cannot avoid the consequences. An op-ed in *Aftenposten* stressed that every individual believer cannot impose what s/he thinks is right on the rest of society.¹⁶ An editorial in *Dagbladet* (07.12.2018) stressed that equal treatment of women has higher priority than sensitivities related to religious faith. The aforementioned incident of the Muslim woman who had to remove her *hijab* in a security check was presented in an unbiased manner, and the woman herself was able to present her case in a major newspaper. A very ugly incident took place in December 2018 when two backpackers from a Norwegian university were brutally murdered in Morocco by Muslim extremists.¹⁷ The incident received wide coverage centred on the brutality of the act, but not as a general condemnation of Islam, except in far-right websites

Justice System

Norway is not a litigating society to the degree that applies to many other countries. However, the justice system should guarantee a fair trial to Muslims who take recourse to it. Hate crimes are litigated according to §185 (hateful statements) and §186 (discrimination) of the penal code. In some instances, Norwegian legal practice may alienate Muslims. A case in point is Muhammad Qasim Ali, a Norwegian of Pakistani origin, who expressed a desire for legislation against blasphemy.¹⁸ The long defunct Norwegian blasphemy laws were abolished by an act of the Norwegian parliament in 2015. Norwegian laws against blasphemy have generally not been in use for the best part of last century after secular citizens challenged Christian sensitivities. There is no chance for a reversal of this practice. Norwegian hate speech regulations make a general distinction between attacks on a religious group or religious individuals, and attacks on religious beliefs, which are generally permitted.¹⁹ In this matter, Norway is aligned with practice in other western countries since this distinction is generally applied to hate speech. When it comes to concrete cases there were

15. Knut Lundby, "Mediebruk of konflikter om religion i Norge", *Norsk Medietidsskrift* Nr. 4-2017.

16. Ole Gjems Onstad, "Det kan gå galt hvis flertallet må tåle å bli krenket av mindretallets trosyttringer – Er håndhielsenekt en menneskerett?", *Aftenposten*, 16 October 2018.

17. "Murders of Louisa Vesterager Jespersen and Maren Ueland", https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murders_of_Louisa_Vesterager_Jespersen_and_Maren_Ueland, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

18. Åse Brandvold, "1300 muslimer ville demonstrere mot Geert Wilders karikaturkonkurranse i Oslo: Han vil forby karikaturer", *Klassekampen*, 27 September 2018.

19. Sindre Bangstad, "Complicating Hate Speech Matters", *The Immanent Frame*, 25 January 2019. See also: Olav Elgvin and Jon Rogstad, "Religious Threats and Institutional Change in Norwegian Mass Media" in Fredrik Engestrød, Håkon Larsen, Jon Rogstad, Kari Steen-Johnsen (eds.), *Institutional Change in the Public Sphere: Views on the Nordic Model*, (Poland: Warsaw, 2017), p. 161–178.

eight cases brought before the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal based on religion in 2018. Seven of these concerned Muslims.²⁰ Three of the cases resulted in a positive verdict for the claimant. The first case concerned a complaint by a Muslim woman who did not get her work contract extended after she started to wear the *hijab*. The second was a complaint about harassment by a colleague at the workplace. The third concerned a man who lost his unemployment benefits when he refused to take a job where he would need to shake hands with women. The general rule is that you lose your unemployment benefits if you refuse to take a job you are offered, but in this case he regained them since he refused on religious grounds. The tribunal did not accept the complaint of the teacher who refused to shake hands with female colleagues and consequently did not obtain a permanent job. This case attracted much attention and many comments in the mainstream press. It was stressed that there are certain occupations where you cannot discriminate against women by referring to religious beliefs.²¹

Internet

The Internet has made publishing much easier than previously and the possibilities to comment on articles have opened space for attitudes that would not pass the editors in the printed press. This is the area where you can encounter the most egregious utterances of hatred and hostility. This is in no way limited to Islam, but Islam is a favourite target for some people. Facebook is a favourite arena for those who express hostility towards Islam. The Internet is also a very dynamic arena and difficult to monitor. Certain web-based publications such as *document.no*, *rights.no*, and *resett.no* are highly critical of immigration in general and Islam in particular. Facebook figures have increased enormously in recent years. The number of followers according to the latest figures from 22 April, 2019 show: People's Movement Against Immigration 15,650 followers; Pegida-Norway 17,849; Stop the Islamisation of Norway 29,806; and Norwegian Defence League 30,190. In 2015, the numbers for the same organisations hovered around 1,000-5,000.²² As always, it can be difficult to distinguish between legitimate criticism and slanted news. In the least they could be criticised for espousing certain stereotypes of Islam and contributing towards cultivating hostility. (For concrete examples, see the comments on Hege Storhaug below).

20. "Diskrimineringsnemda", *Vedtak 2018*, <http://www.diskrimineringsnemnda.no/nb/innhold/side/vedtak>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

21. Ole Gjems-Onstad, "Det kan gå galt hvis flertallet må tåle å bli krenket av mindretallets trosytringer - Er håndhilsenekt en menneskerett?", *Aftenposten*, 16 October 2018 and "Lærer ville ikke håndhelse på kvinner, mistet jobben: Likestilling går foran religiøs tro - Signalet i denne saken er klart: Diskriminerende handlinger er ikke akseptert, selv om de har en religiøs begrunnelse", *Dagbladet*, 7 December 2018.

22. Tore Bjørge, *Høyreekstremisme i Norge*, (Oslo: 2018).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network



Figure 2: Banner heading NDLE Facebook page: "NDL is against the Islamisation of Norway"²³

In mainstream politics, the Progress Party expresses most clearly hostility towards immigrants and Muslims. There are, however, also Muslims in higher positions within the party. There exist several groups with nationalistic profiles that are anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim. Well-known actors include the People's Movement Against Immigration (*fmi.no*); Norway against Migration Stop the Islamisation of Norway (*sian.no*); Democrats in Norway (*demokratene.no*); Norwegian People's Party (*norskfolkeparti.no*); Pegida Norway (on Facebook); Norwegian Defence League (on Facebook). Some of these groups are of marginal influence, but it is worth commenting on one of the most profiled actors, namely Human Rights Service (HRS) led by Hege Storhaug, who is also the publisher of the state-funded blog *rights.no*. She is tapping into certain fears and prejudices among part of the population with a mixture of truth, half-truths, and slanted news that may be difficult to see through for the general reader. She falsely claimed that the UN would ask Norwegian authorities to investigate her; that young persons are against the *hijab* and *niqab* in the public space; that more and more women are wearing the *niqab* and *burka* in Norway; that 1/8 of the citizens in Oslo are members of a mosque, etc.²⁴ Another question relates to her publication *Islam The 11th Plague*. Such a book acts as mud-slinging towards a different cultural group and reinforces certain prejudices. She may be correct in pointing out issues relating to discrimination of women, but her criticism does not contribute constructively towards their elimination because of the racialisation (Islamisation) of the problem. It is encouraging to observe that some Muslim women in Norway are addressing patriarchal structures in their community. They are also met with accusations and there is no reason to believe that they will have less opposition than feminist movements have encountered in other societies. It is, however, a healthier criticism. Among other central actors in the Islamophobia online alternative news media sphere in Norway, one finds Hans Rustad of *document.no* and Helge Lurås and Lars Akerhaug of *resett.no*. The latter is funded by a

23. Norwegian Defence League, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/norwegiandll/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

24. This has been demonstrated many times by *faktisk.no* that tests the veracity of the press: *faktisk.no*.

group of Norwegian corporate billionaires supportive of the Norwegian right-wing government since 2013, and particularly known for its regular incitement of hatred against Norwegian public intellectuals and artists of Muslim background.



Figure 3: SIAN demonstration in Oslo: “No to Islam - Yes to Freedom”²⁵

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The increased focus on the situation of Muslims in Norway has now led to greater engagement to encounter and improve matters. Some of the initiatives to throw light on the situation have already been mentioned. Among the latest additions it is worth mentioning that in early 2018, the Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities published an extensive report presenting an overview of knowledge and measures against hateful utterances.²⁶ It stressed the need of measures based on deeper knowledge and the importance of long-term planning. In late 2018, the periodic report to the UN by the government agency Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombudsman provides an overview of the official view.²⁷ The report points out three trends: (1) More and more people are becoming positive towards immi-

25. “Sian stand Eidsvoll Plass”, Sian, 1 September 2018, <http://www.sian.no/aktivitet/sian-stand-eidsvollsplass-192018>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

26. Claudia Lenz et. al, *Tiltak mot hatefulle ytringer: Kunnskaps- og tiltaksoversikt*, (Senter for Studier av Holocaust of Livssynsminoriteter, Oslo: Januar 2018).

27. Likestillings- og Diskrimineringsombudet, *CERD 2018, Ombudets rapport til FNs rasediskrimineringskomité - et supplement til Norges 23.-24. periodiske rapport*, (CERD, Oslo: 2018).

gration and a majority thinks that with the help of time things will fall into place. (2) A significant proportion of the population is sceptical about Muslims and other minority groups. (3) A minority expresses vocally its disapproval and hatred of Muslims and other minority groups. The report was followed by an alternative report by civil society organisations spearheaded by the Norwegian Centre Against Racism.²⁸ It mentioned that the government should condemn and distance itself from a hostile discourse against foreigners by certain politicians and media so that their public utterance would not contribute to the promotion of intolerance, stigmatisation, and hatred. This recommendation had its background in hateful utterances by elected politicians and the lack of reaction by the authorities. Special mention was made of two PP deputies, who both had served as ministers in the government, Sylvi Listhaug and Per-Willy Amundsen. However, the report also commended the government for presenting a strategy against hateful utterances. The increased focus on hostility towards Muslims was also reflected in the financing by the Norwegian Research Council of a major project titled “Intersecting flows of Islamophobia” (INTERSECT) led by Iselin Frydenlund at the Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, University of Oslo.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

At the present there is quite a bit of activity directed at integrating the Muslims in Norwegian society. The question of social integration is not a new discourse, but previously it concerned domestic conditions and smaller groups of immigrants. As there has been an increase of refugees from areas with a greater geographic and cultural distance it is natural that the situation becomes more complex. I think it is important to acknowledge, as various actors are aware of, that we have to think in the long term. The immigrants will certainly benefit from adapting to Norwegian society, but it is important to recognise that the kind of conformity and homogeneity created by ideals of social democracy are not always necessary or even desirable. It is important to question both our own concepts and the concepts of new citizens. An open letter to the prime minister by the 15-year-old Bismah Ejaz expressed her desire to be accepted as a Norwegian Muslim.²⁹ In other words, Islam should not be considered a foreign element to our concept of “Norwegianess”.

28. Mari K. Linløkken, *Sivilsamfunnets alternative rapport til CERD 2018*, (Oslo : 2018).

29. Kjære Erna, “Jeg Vil Være Norsk Muslim| Bismah Ejaz”, *Aftenposten*, 18 November 2018.

Chronology

- **04.02.2018:** Two boys Sami (19) and Emmanuel (20) felt harassed when searched by the police at McDonalds. This led to several protests against police attitudes towards minority youth.
- **08.03.2018:** Prime Minister Erna Solberg warned against racist attacks on social media, in particular against the young Sumaya Jirde Ali.
- **20.03.2018:** Minister of Justice Sylvi Listhaug resigned after claiming on Facebook that the Labour Party cared more about terrorists than the security of the country after a discussion about Islamist fighters.
- **17.04.2018:** Two convictions in court for hate speech against Muslims.
- **08.06.2018:** The MP Per-Willy Amundsen criticised mainstream media on Facebook for avoiding negative news related to immigration and Islam.
- **22.07.2018:** Per-Willy Amundsen advocated once more on Facebook that immigration from Muslim countries to Norway and Europe must be restricted.
- **31.07.2018:** On Facebook, Per-Willy Amundsen blamed the underdevelopment in many Muslim countries on Islam.
- **03.08.2018:** Episodes on the streets of Oslo where Muslim women were spit on and verbally abused.
- **15.08.2018:** Minister of Justice Tor Mikkjel Wara (Progress Party) wants to stop all state subsidies to Islamic communities in Norway.
- **27.09.2018:** Norwegian-Pakistani Muhammad Qasim Ali prepared a demonstration (that was called off) against proponents of caricatures of Muhammad and demanded stronger laws against blasphemy.
- **08.11.2018:** Rant by Per-Willy Amundsen on Facebook about the needs for Muslims to adjust to Norwegian reality after complaints by a Muslim woman related to a security check.
- **December 2018:** The PP asked for official statistics about the number of children born to immigrant parents in Oslo, and we see the beginning of a discussion that carried over into the next year. There was a general consensus that certain areas of Oslo had problems absorbing the existing immigrants and new immigrants should be settled elsewhere.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
POLAND
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Her first monograph, titled *Muslim Women Online: Faith and Identity in Virtual Space*, and several academic journal articles (including in *New Media and Society*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Hawwa*, and *Contemporary Islam*) focus on gender, Islam, and online communities. She has recently edited two volumes, *Islam and the Media*, and *Islam and Popular Culture*, in the Routledge series *Critical Concepts in Sociology*.

Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.

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Executive Summary

Many Polish people are quite susceptible to prejudiced messaging about Islam from the right-wing Polish government and political organisations. There is a large discrepancy between the lived experiences of Polish Muslims who feel threatened by the sheer scale of anti-Muslim verbal and physical violence in Poland on the one hand, and the claims made by the Polish state apparatus which insists that the problem of anti-Muslim hate crime is declining.

In an effort to address this false claim, the Polish Ombudsman's Office, in conjunction with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), conducted a research project which shows that hate crime in Poland is heavily under-reported (only 5% of those targeted report hate crime to the police). Therefore, it appears that in order to obtain a realistic picture of hate crime in Poland, the official statistics would have to be multiplied by at least 20. This finding is the single most important one for this report, as it demonstrates that victims of hate crimes do not trust the Polish state to protect them at present.

The reluctance of the police to receive reports of hate crime continues, while mechanisms protecting minorities in Poland are being dismantled. Even official attempts by Polish Muslim organisations to establish dialogue with the government are being thwarted. In light of this, it is unclear whether Muslims living in Poland will be able to enjoy their constitutional protections as long as the ruling Law and Justice party is in power.

The government-controlled state media and right-wing media continue to uncritically spread Islamophobic discourse focused on terrorism and barbarism. Only progressive media and a selection of NGOs attempt to report on Islam and Muslims in a balanced, non-sensationalist manner. Therefore, they play an important, if limited, educational role in regard to Islam in Poland.

Streszczenie

Wielu Polaków jest podatnych na przekazy pełne uprzedzeń w stosunku do islamu płynących ze strony obecnego polskiego rządu oraz szeregu organizacji politycznych. Istnieje wielki rozdziew pomiędzy doświadczeniami polskich muzułmanów, którzy czują się zagrożeni skalą słownej i fizycznej przemocy wobec nich oraz stwierdzeniami urzędników, którzy upierają się, że liczba przestępstw z nienawiści wobec muzułmanów w Polsce spada. Wobec oczywistej nieprawdy tego ostatniego stwierdzenia, biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich, we współpracy z Organizacją Bezpieczeństwa i Współpracy w Europie przeprowadziło badanie, które wykazało, że jedynie 5% przestępstw z nienawiści jest w Polsce zgłaszanych na policję. A zatem, aby uzyskać rzeczywistą liczbę przestępstw z nienawiści, należałoby pomnożyć oficjalne statystyki o 20. Ten wynik badania jest najważniejszą informacją w tym raporcie, ponieważ pokazuje, że ofiary przestępstw z nienawiści nie ufają państwu polskiemu w kwestii ochrony ich praw. Analiza przypadków wykazuje, że policja nadal niechętnie przyjmuje zgłoszenia przestępstw z nienawiści. Mechanizmy ochrony praw mniejszości są rozmontowywane przez rząd. Nawet oficjalne próby kontaktu podejmowane przez organizacje muzułmańskie w Polsce są udaremniwane. Wobec tego, nie wiadomo czy i kiedy muzułmanie żyjący w Polsce będą objęci rzeczywistą ochroną, zagwarantowaną przez konstytucję podczas rządów Prawa i Sprawiedliwości. Przekaz mediów państwowych, kontrolowanych przez rząd oraz mediów prawniczych nadal pełen jest treści islamofobicznych, skierowanych na skojarzenia z terroryzmem i barbaryzmem. Jedynie media postępowe społecznie i kilka organizacji pozarządowych tworzy wyważone przekazy na temat islamu. Przez to wypełniają one ważną, choć ograniczoną, funkcję edukacyjną.

Country Profile

Country: Poland

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Semi-presidential System

Ruling Parties: PiS – Law and Order (Right-Wing, National-Conservative, Christian Democratic)

Opposition Parties: PO – Civic Platform (Centre-Right)

Last Elections: 2017 Presidential Election (Andrzej Duda, the right-wing candidate, won 51.55% of the vote against the centre candidate Bronisław Komorowski's 48.45%); 2015 Legislative Election (Law and Order: 237 seats, Civic Platform [centre-right]: 138 seats, Kukiz '15 [right-wing, populist]: 42, Modern [centre]: 22 seats, Polish People's Party [agrarian, conservative]: 14)

Total Population: 38.45 (in 2015)

Major Languages: Polish

Official Religion: No Official Religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: According to official statistics from the Ministry of Interior, in the first 9 months of 2018 there were 53 hate crimes against Muslims in Poland. However, recent research conducted by Polish NGOs indicates hate crime is severely under-reported (at 5%). Therefore, the actual figure representing Islamophobic hate crime in Poland in 2018 could be as high as over 1,000 incidents.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: For the first 9 months of 2018, the official statistics provide the figure of 132 hate crimes based on the non-white skin colour of the victim. Additionally, based on the victim's nationality or ethnicity, there were 441 reported hate crimes. In reality, these figures could be as high as 2,640 and 8,820.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (88.6%), Jehovah's Witnesses (0.34%), Buddhism (0.04%), Islam (0.013 %), Indigenous religion (0.01%), Judaism (0.004 %) (data for 2011 based on information from the Main Office for Statistics (GUS 2013))

Muslim Population (% of Population): (depending on sources) between 10,000 and 25,000 (*Newsweek* 2016; *Newsweek* 2015) (less than 0.1%)

Main Muslim Community Organisations: The Muslim Religious Association (*Związek Muzułmanów Polskich*) and the Muslim League in the Polish Republic (*Liga Muzułmańska RP*)

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: The Polish Ombudsman's Office, Never Again Association, Centre for Monitoring Racist and Xenophobic Behaviours, Hate Stop, *Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego*, Center for Research on Prejudice

Far-Right Parties: National Movement (*Ruch Narodowy*), National Revival of Poland (*Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski*)

Far-Right Movements: All-Polish Youth, National-Radical Camp, Christus Rex, Pride and Modernity (*Duma i Nowoczesność*)

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: National-Radical Camp

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Polish people are, on the whole, unfamiliar with Islam and the role it plays in the lives of its believers. Over 80% do not personally know a single Muslim.¹ This ignorance has significant consequences, as many Poles are quite susceptible to prejudiced messaging about Islam from the right-wing Polish government and political organisations. There is a large discrepancy between the lived experiences of Polish Muslims who feel threatened by the sheer scale of anti-Muslim verbal and physical prejudice in Poland, on the one hand,² and the claims made by the Polish state apparatus which insists that the problem of anti-Muslim hate crime is declining. The year 2018 saw the unfolding of events following the 2017 official letter from the major Polish Muslim organisations to Speaker of the Parliament Marek Kuchciński mentioned in the EIR 2017.³ They stated that “the intensity and scale of attacks on the Muslim community is rising, and Islam is abused in the political debate. It is obvious that without the assistance of the state we are unable to address this dangerous phenomenon”.⁴ Their argument is clearly evidenced by data on hate crime issued by the Polish Ombudsman’s Office and the Prosecutor General. The letter could have been addressed as a ‘desideratum’, a legal act expressing postulates issued by a Parliamentary Commission to the Prime Minister or another state office. The Commission of National and Ethnic Minorities (theoretically, a natural advocate of minority groups such as the Muslims) voted against taking up the desideratum which was then abandoned and the opportunity to address the problem of anti-Muslim prejudice in Poland, including the rise in physical attacks on Muslims, was lost. The members of the commission who voted against it were all members of the Law and Order party. One of them, MP Szymon Giżyński, who initially appeared to support the motion, said, “This one-sided desideratum attacks Polish interests and our national pride”.⁵

1. Anna Stefaniak, “Postrzeganie muzułmanów w Polsce: Raport z badania sondażowego”, (Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami, Warsaw: 2015), <http://cbu.psychologia.pl/uploads/images/foto/Postrzeganie-muzu%C5%82man%C3%B3w-w-Polsce.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. Maciej Chołodowski, “Negatywne postawy wobec muzułmanów. Dezyderat do premiera odrzucony”, *Wyborcza.pl*, 2 July 2018, <http://bialystok.wyborcza.pl/bialystok/7,35241,23624854,negatywne-postawy-wobec-muzulmanow-dezyderat-do-premiera-odrzucony.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

3. Anna Pielak and Anna Łukjanowicz, “Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2017”, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraktılı and Farid Hafez, (Istanbul, SETA), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Poland.pdf>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

4. Monika Prończuk, “Muzułmanie proszą o ochronę. PiS odmawia, bo broni ‘polskiej godności’”, *Oko Press*, 10 July 2018, <https://oko.press/muzulmanie-prosza-o-ochrone-pis-utraca-dezyderat-broni-polskiej-godnosci/> (Access date: 4 September 2019).

5. Ibid.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Polish authorities, while asserting that the number of hate crimes is insignificant and declining, continue to claim that they address hate crime satisfactorily. Adam Knych, an official at the Ministry of Interior, said on 2 July, 2018: “Our police force is effective in dealing with hate crime”.⁶ In an effort to address this propaganda claim, the Ombudsman’s Office, in conjunction with Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), conducted a research project which shows that hate crime in Poland is heavily under-reported (only 5% of those targeted report hate crime to the police).⁷ Therefore, it appears that in order to obtain a realistic picture of hate crime in Poland, the official statistics would have to be multiplied by 20. In response to my inquiry regarding hate crimes in 2018, the Ministry of Interior asserted that between January and September (figures were available only for this period of 2018), 813 such crimes were investigated. Of those, 53 were committed based on the target’s Muslim faith; 78 hate crimes were committed based on the target’s ethnicity that might be linked to Islam (Arabs, Chechens, Turks).⁸ Based on the projection suggested by the research commissioned by the Ombudsman’s Office, these numbers are likely to be 16,260 hate crimes in total; 1,060 hate crimes against Muslims, and 1,560 hate crimes against ethnicities commonly linked to Islam. This so-called “dark number” is a more realistic assessment of hate crimes against Muslims.

Employment

Recent research examining exclusionary attitudes in employment relations in Poland⁹ highlights that Muslims are the group that is the most likely to be rejected by the majority population. The authors found that 17% of Poles do not wish to have a Muslim manager, and 14% do not wish to have a Muslim colleague at work. According to a recent book on Muslim experience in Poland,¹⁰ especially female converts to Islam find it difficult to negotiate employment with their faith, either because of the nature of employment (such as work in a betting shop or a

6. Ibid.

7. “Jedynie 5% przestępstw motywowanych nienawiścią jest zgłaszanych na policję - badania RPO i ODIHR/OBWE”, Biuro Rzecznika Praw Obywatelskich, 2 July 2018, <https://rpo.gov.pl/pl/content/jedynie-5-przestepstw-motywowanych-nienawiscia-jest-zglaszanych-na-policje-badania-rpo-i-odihrobwe>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

8. Freedom of Information Request response (private email communication), Department of Security, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, 27 December 2018.

9. Elżbieta Ciżewska-Martyńska, Marcin Jewdokimow, Mustafa Switat and Bartłomiej Walczak, “Rynek pracy a równe traktowanie ze względu na wyznanie. Raport z badania”, (Warsaw University, Warsaw: 2018), https://siecobywatelska.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Raport_rynek-pracy-a-r%C3%B3wne-traktowanie-ze-wzgl%C4%99du-na-wyznanie.pdf, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

10. Anna J. Dudek, *Poddaję Się. Życie muzułmanek w Polsce*, (Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warsaw: 2016).

liquor store), or harassment in the workplace. In contrast, “born” or “heritage” Muslims appear to have fewer difficulties as they are often self-employed and have better access to the social networks of Polish Muslims. This was corroborated by a 2018 report¹¹ asserting that converts, in contrast to “born Muslims” have particular difficulties in the workplace due to their modest dress or a lifestyle that prohibits drinking alcohol and eating pork, both popular in Poland. In an interview conducted in 2018 with a Polish female convert to Islam I found that she left her high-powered job as a journalist due to mobbing (she was frequently asked to drink alcohol after work) and moved to the United Kingdom where she no longer experienced anti-Muslim prejudice. Muslims living in Poland have been found to adopt one or more of the following strategies: concealing one’s religious identity; striving to find work in workplaces where there are already other Muslims; secularisation of one’s demeanour; and attempting to negotiate a space in the workplace for their religious practices such as prayer.¹²

Education

Currently in Polish state schools at all levels there is no coherent effort to educate Polish students about faiths other than the Roman Catholic one – this extends to Islam. This state of affairs in itself is discriminatory. The information about the existence of other faiths is usually a footnote delivered in history classes. There, Islam is inevitably framed through accounts of war and conflict, for example the battles of Poitiers (AD 732), Lepanto (AD 1571), and Vienna (AD 1683). The consequences of this parochialism in the religious education of young Poles are clear – the less knowledgeable people are about Islam, the higher the levels of anti-Muslim prejudice they display.¹³ Civil society initiatives that aim to educate the society about Islam usually appeal to audiences who already have a positive attitude towards Islam.

Politics

The political discourse about Islam continues to be unapologetically prejudiced, as illustrated by the case of the Polish Muslim organisations’ open letter to the Speaker of Parliament described earlier in this report. The Law and Justice party’s 2018 municipal elections campaign released on 17 October, 2018 a fearmongering propaganda video which threatened that the rival Civic Platform party is keen to open Polish borders to “Muslim refugees” who would cause a great deal of unrest in the

11. Elżbieta Cizewska, Martyńska et al, “Rynek pracy a równe traktowanie ze względu na wyznanie. Raport z badania”.

12. Ibid.

13. Anna Stefaniak, “Postrzeganie muzułmanów w Polsce: Raport z badania sondażowego”, (Centrum Badań nad Uprzedzeniami, Warsaw), <http://cbu.psychologia.pl/uploads/images/foto/Postrzeganie-muzu%C5%82man%C3%B3w-w-Polsce.pdf>, (Access date: 6 September 2019).

country.¹⁴ The video presented a dystopian vision of Poland in 2020, after an imagined victory of Civic Platform: “enclaves of Muslim refugees...the tenth victim of an attack...people are afraid to leave home after dark...sexual assaults and muggings are happening everyday... Will we feel safe if Civic Platform makes this happen?” This state-licensed propaganda does not go unchallenged. The Polish Ombudsman reported this video to the district prosecutor who, according to the Ombudsman Act, is obligated to open an inquiry into acts suspected of inciting hatred towards minority groups. The prosecutor’s office refused to open an inquiry on the grounds that the video was assessed to be a legitimate expression of views on the influx of migrants. The Ombudsman appealed this decision in court and the case is ongoing.¹⁵

Media

In 2018, print and broadcast media spread a variety of messages about Islam. State-owned media (*Telewizja Polska* [TVP], *Polskie Radio* [PR]) continue to be controlled by the Law and Justice party since 2016.¹⁶ Content produced in 2018 by these outlets tends to draw links between Islam and terrorism, war, and violence. This is in contravention of its statute which claims neutrality and objectivity. Examples of Islam-tagged December headlines broadcast by TVP include “Morocco: An Extremist Has Been Detained Following the Murder of Two Tourists”; “Swedish Security Prevented an Attack. Three People Accused”, “Islamic State Flag Placed on the Damaged Berlin Rail Track”.¹⁷ In a surprising turn of phrase, the Polish Radio referred to Arab Muslim forces as “Saracenes” in a historical feature on the Battle of Poitiers (AD 732).¹⁸ While the term was in common use in Europe in the Middle Ages, today it has a definitive negative ring to it, and it was qualified only towards the end of the piece. However, despite such shortcomings, the Polish Radio also fulfils an educational role regarding the history of Islam. One of its offerings in 2018 included “From Makkah to Medina – How Muhammad Built Islam”,¹⁹ while in previous years Polish Radio broadcast educational pieces about Ayatollah Khomeini and Saladin.

14. “RPO: Spot wyborczy PiS ma antyuchodźczy i antymuzułmański character”, Wnp.pl, 24 October 2018, <https://www.wnp.pl/parlamentarny/spoleczenstwo/rpo-spot-wyborczy-pis-ma-antyuchodzczy-i-antymuzulmanski-character,34359.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

15. Katarzyna Kubicka-Żach, “RPO odwołuje się do sądu ws. spotu wyborczego PiS”, Prawo.pl, 10 December 2018, <https://www.prawo.pl/samorzad/spot-wyborczy-pis-o-migrantach-odwolanie-rpo-do-sadu,342372.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

16. Annabelle Chapman, “Pluralism under Attack: The Assault on Press Freedom in Poland. Report”, (Freedom House, Washington D.C: 2017), <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-reports/assault-press-freedom-poland>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

17. TVP Info, <https://www.tvp.info/szukaj?query=islam>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

18. “Bitwa pod Poitiers - zwycięstwo nad Saracenami”, Polskie Radio, <https://polskieradio24.pl/39/156/Artykul/2206561>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

19. “Z Mekki do Medyny - jak Mahomet budował islam”, Polskie Radio, <https://polskieradio24.pl/39/156/Artykul/1239976,Z-Mekki-do-Medyny-jak-Mahomet-budowal-islam>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

There are many right-wing daily and weekly titles that oppose Islam in any form, indeed anti-Muslim/anti-refugee prejudice seems to have become a part of their publishing strategy. These include, for example, *Gazeta Polska*, *Najwyższy Czas!*, *W Sieci*, and *Do Rzeczy*. Interestingly, their sales were declining in 2018.²⁰ Their columnists work from the established (if woefully incorrect and prejudiced) premise that forms the classic Islamophobic discourse. One example of such narrative is the article “Meeknes in Vienna” in *Do Rzeczy* which argues that Austria is being conquered by Muslim migrants, appropriating the Polish contribution to victory against the Turkish invasion in the 1683 Battle of Vienna as a symbol of Polish resistance to Islam at large.²¹ Tabloids (*Fakt*, *Super Express*) not only frequently link Islam to terrorism, but, predictably, exoticise and eroticise the faith as well. Sensationalised pieces about potential and thwarted “Islamist” terrorist attacks across Europe include, for example, “An ISIS Terrorist in Poland. Horrifying Details”.²² They also publish sex scandal-themed pieces such as “Sexual Orgies in Dubai: Sheikh’s Polish Wife Reveals Shocking Facts”.²³



Figure 1: The cover page of *Gazeta Polska* (30 August, 2017) which reads “Caliphate Europe” and references the perceived Islamisation of Western Europe.

Justice System

On 20 December, 2018, the man who spat at a teenage hijabi German Muslim in June 2017 was sentenced to 10 months in prison, with an additional two years’ probation. He was fined 1,500 PLN and ordered to pay the young woman 1,500

20. Sebastian Kucharski, “Tygodnik Powszechny wyprzedził Gazetę Polską. Duże spadki tygodników prawniczych”, *Wyborcza.pl*, 22 June 2018, <http://wyborcza.pl/7,156282,23581167,tygodnik-powszechny-wyprzedzil-gazete-polska-duze-spadki.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

21. Grzegorz Kucharzyk, “Wyznawcy islamu nie zdobyli Wiednia szturmem w XVII w., zdobyli go teraz, zasiedlając latami Austrię”, 13 September 2018, *DoRzeczy.pl*, <https://dorzeczy.pl/kraj/76919/Uleglosc-w-Wiedniu.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. Maziewski Łukasz, “Terrorysta ISIS w Polsce. Przeróżające szczegóły”, 20 March 2018, *Fakt.pl*, <https://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/polityka/szpiega-panstwa-islamskiego-w-polsce-byl-kierowany-z-syrii/kyrcet7>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

23. “Seksualne orgie w Dubaju. Żona szejka ujawnia szokujące fakty”, *Fakt.pl*, 10 November 2018, <https://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/polityka/zona-szejka-laila-shukri-dla-fakt24-o-zyciu-niewolnicy-w-zlotej-klatce/ghjmsbe>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

PLN and apologise to her in writing.²⁴ The sentencing was intended to demonstrate the “futility of committing hate crime” according to the prosecutor Anna Siwiec. In a similar case where a Chechen female refugee was publicly insulted, pushed, and kicked, a male was sentenced to four months in jail (with an additional 1-year probation). He was also ordered to read and deliver to the court an analysis of a book about Chechen women’s lives.²⁵ These sentences, as modest as they are, are not representative of the experience of most targets of hate crime in Poland. Meanwhile, 76% of hate crime investigations in Poland are discontinued.²⁶ While in 2018 there were no new laws introduced in Poland directly targeting Muslims, ignoring the real numbers behind the statistics is just one part of the problem. Kamil Fejfer from *Oko Press* pointed out that there are recently created structural problems which mean that police officers, border guards and prosecutors are simply not capable of identifying hate crime. Since 2015, Law and Justice has gradually removed professional development opportunities from these services which helped them learn to recognise hate crime. For example, a hate crime textbook for police officers has been withdrawn (it was described as “overly ideological”); the Human Rights Protection Team at the Ministry of Interior and Administration which monitored hate crime has been disbanded; the governmental Council for Fight against Racism and Xenophobia has been disbanded as well; and the tenders for training police officers and border guards by NGOs have been discontinued. This has visibly negatively affected the ability of a range of institutions to receive and act upon hate crime reports.

Internet

The cyberspace continues to be a breeding ground for hate speech in Poland. According to the statistics of the Ministry of Interior, Department of Security for the first nine months of 2018, 31% of all hate crimes in Poland (including crimes against different national, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities) were committed in cyberspace.²⁷ Specifically, hate speech comments occurred in 202 cases investigated by the police according to the same data set. If, using the coefficient suggested by the Om-

24. Jacek Szydłowski, “Napluł w twarz muzułmance w Lublinie. Kara ma uświadomić ‘nieopłacalność popełniania przestępstw z nienawiści””, *Dziennik Wschodni*, 8 December 2018, <https://www.dziennikwschodni.pl/lublin/naplul-w-twarz-muzulmance-w-lublinie-kara-ma-uswiadomic-nieoplacalnosc-popelniania-przestepstw-z-nienawisci,n,1000232792.html>, (Access date: 6 September 2019); Alina Pospichil, “Splunął w twarz turystce w hidżabie. ‘Przywiodła mi na myśl ataki terrorystyczne’. Wyrok”, *Wyborcza.pl*, 21 December 2018, <http://lublin.wyborcza.pl/lublin/7,48724,24303335,splunal-w-twarz-turystce-w-hidzabie-przywiodla-mi-na-mysl.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

25. Agata Łukaszewicz, “Książka do przeczytania i więzienie za pobicie muzułmanki”, *Rp.pl*, 5 December 2018, <https://www.rp.pl/Prawo-karne/312059943-Ksiazka-do-przeczytania-i-wiezienie-za-pobicie-muzulmanki.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

26. Monika Prończuk, “Minister Brudziński igra z ogniem: Polska to piękny, ‘czysty’ kraj. A nienawiść rośnie”, *Oko Press*, 24 July 2018, <https://oko.press/min-brudzinski-igra-z-ogniem-polska-to-piekny-czysty-kraj-a-nienawisc-rosnie/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

27. Freedom of Information Request (private email communication), Department of Security, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration, 27 December 2018.

budsman's Office, we assume only 5% of hate crime is reported, it can be estimated that the real number of incidents is closer to 4,000.

According to recent research, over 80% of Polish youth and 40% of adults encountered anti-Muslim hate speech on the Internet.²⁸ Central Islamophobia network figures listed below regularly contribute to websites willing to publish more extreme statements than traditional media outlets. These websites include *euro-islam.pl* (which adopts the mantle of secular rationality), the main hub of Polish Islamophobia on the Internet, and *pch24.pl*, a conservative Catholic outlet. Notably, both websites published fake news-filled responses to the previous editions of EIR Poland. Right-wing newspapers and magazines mentioned earlier also have their online editions where readers profusely exchange hate-filled views. These include *wRealu24.pl*; *wpolityce.pl*; *wsieci.pl*; *fronda.pl*; *chmnews.pl*; *ndie.pl*; and *polskaligaobrony.org.pl*. Hate speech also profusely seeps through to comments sections of online editions of progressive titles.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Islamophobia networks in Poland continue to thrive, and they are increasingly being mainstreamed by the state apparatus and the Church. While the international outcry over some of the most absurd and publicised Islamophobic/anti-refugee events in 2017 may have superficially tempered the political climate in Poland, it would be incorrect to assume that there is meaningful positive change as far as openness to diversity is concerned. Individuals listed in EIR 2017 continue to be active in the public sphere; this is not an exclusive list but a selection of the propagators of Islamophobia most prominent in the Polish public sphere in 2018.



Figure 2: The cover page of *Wprost* magazine (7 March, 2016) depicting Miriam Shaded advocating for a ban on Islam.

28. Mikołaj Winiecki et al. "Mowa nienawiści, mowa pogardy: Raport z badania przemocy werbalnej wobec grup mniejszościowych" (Report, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Warsaw) http://www.batory.org.pl/upload/files/pdf/MOWA_NIENAWISCI_MOWA_POGARDY_INTERNET.pdf, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Miriam Shaded, a Polish-Syrian Christian, a right-wing celebrity and the president of Estera Foundation (a self-styled humanitarian organisation which, controversially, has brought only Christian refugees to Poland from the war-torn Syria and whose financing sources are unclear according to the news website *Wp.pl*²⁹), who recently stated that Islam should be banned in Poland³⁰ and that rape numbers increase in locations with high populations of Muslim immigrants;³¹ Tomasz Terlikowski, editor and one of the hosts of the programme *Clash of Civilizations* on Television Republic, the author of the book *Caliphate Europe*, recently stated that “Islam is the religion of the Antichrist”;³² Marcin Rola, chief editor of the right-wing website *wRealu24.pl*, who apologetically qualified his hate speech when challenged in an interview by the BBC journalist Nawal Al-Maghafi;³³ Witold Gadowski, a propagator of fake news about Islam;³⁴ priest Prof. Dariusz Oko, lecturer at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow and a Catholic “freelancer” who delivers Islamophobic public lectures (conveniently ignored by Catholic bishops).³⁵ Others who merit a mention in this unfortunate list are the ex-priest-turned-far-right-activist Jacek Międlar who recently absurdly claimed that Muslim men want to immigrate to Europe in order to “be intimate” with European women³⁶ and Wojciech Cejrowski, a right-wing commentator who stated in 2018 on Facebook that “we have a choice between Jews who want to cheat us, and Arabs who want to slaughter us”.³⁷

29. Ibid.

30. “Miriam Shaded u Atora o Delegalizacji Islamu w Polsce Stop Acta 2 i PIS – Wywiad”, Wideoprezentacje, 1 July 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EDZ4uc4B2s>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

31. “Miriam Shaded wPolsce.pl: ‘Liczba gwałtów rośnie w miejscach, w których są muzułmańscy imigranci’”, WPolityce.pl, 4 January 2018, <https://wpolityce.pl/polityka/374882-miriam-shaded-wpolscepl-liczba-gwaltow-rosnie-w-miejscach-w-ktorych-sa-muzulmanscy-imigranci-wideo> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

32. Tomasz Terlikowski, Twitter, 21 January 2018, <https://twitter.com/tterlikowski/status/955005056914509824>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

33. Maciej Deja, “Marcin Rola w BBC. Prawicowy dziennikarz o mowie nienawiści”, Wp.pl, 26 June 2018, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/marcin-rola-w-bbc-prawicowy-dziennikarz-o-mowie-nienawisci-6266828577736321a>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

34. Jarosław Kociszewski, “Witold Gadowski w tygodniku ‘Sieci’ straszy islamem i uchodźcami. Sprawdziliśmy przykłady, które podaje”, Wp.pl, 10 January 2018, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/witold-gadowski-w-tygodniku-sieci-straszy-islamem-i-uchodzcam-i-sprawdzilismy-przyklady-ktore-podaje-6207861346592385a>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

35. Alicja Lehmann, “Echa islamofobicznego wykładu ks. Oko. Poznański imam prosi abp. Gądeckiego o reakcję”, Wyborcza.pl, 7 December 2017, <http://poznan.wyborcza.pl/poznan/7,36001,22747652,echa-islamofobicznego-wykladu-ks-oko-imam-prosi-abp-gadeckiego.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

36. “Europa to Raj dla Muzułmanów”, Wprawo.pl, 20 June 2018, <https://wprawo.pl/2018/06/20/europa-to-raj-dla-muzulmanow-jacek-miedlar-o-przyczynach-islamizacji-europy-i-sprawie-tommygo-robinsona-wideo/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

37. “Cejrowski ostro pojechał po Żydach i Arabach i mu Facebook wpis usunął”, Nczas.pl, 18 May 2018, <https://nczas.com/2018/05/18/cejrowski-ostro-pojechał-po-zydach-i-arabach-i-mu-facebook-wpis-usunął/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

In light of the failure of the state educational system to provide factual and objective information on Islam (barring specialised and elite university programmes), the role has been taken over to some extent by progressive media and other civil society actors.



Figure 3: "Islamophobias" issue of *Znak* magazine, February 2017.

Titles aimed at better-educated audiences, such as the prominent daily *The Electoral Gazette* (*Gazeta Wyborcza*), weeklies such as *Politics* (*Polityka*) or *Newsweek*, or the online-based *Oko Press* are most likely to both write about Islam and Muslims in a neutral manner and report on anti-Muslim prejudice occurring in Poland. They also depart from typical "framing" of the Muslim subject (historicisation, securitisation, eroticisation) and write engagingly about contemporary Polish Muslims and their allies. One excellent recent example of such journalism in *The Electoral Gazette* was the interview titled "Anna i Karol Wilczyński: Two Catholics Who Teach Respect for Islam. They Hear from Others: 'Y' All Are Strange".³⁸ In the absence of scholarship-based religious education at schools, these media help educate their audiences about Islam. Two other titles, the *Znak* (Sign) monthly and *Tygodnik Powszechny* (The Popular Weekly), a progressive Catholic weekly, deserve an honourable mention in regard to the quality of their reporting on Islam. For example, *Znak* published a series of on-point articles about Islamophobia in its February 2017 issue.³⁹

38. Renata Radłowska, "Anna i Karol Wilczyński: katolicy, którzy uczą szacunku do islamu. Słyszą: jesteście dziwni", *wyborcza.pl*, 26 November 2018, <http://wyborcza.pl/duzyformat/7,127290,24203980,anna-i-karol-wilczynscy-katolicy-ktorzy-ucza-szacunku-do.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

39. "Islamofobie", *Znak*, February 2017.



Figure 4: The cover page of the book *I Submit: The Lives of Muslim Women in Poland* by Anna J. Dudek (PWN, 2016).

There are some educational and bridge-building initiatives by a medley of progressive foundations, associations, and informal groups. A series of public lectures by Dr. Beata Abdallah-Krzepkowska, University of Silesia, hosted by the Raven Cultural Studies Institute, is a good example of such an initiative that discusses body and sexuality in Islam, Sufism, or Islamic social ethics, rarely addressed topics.⁴⁰ Dr. Katarzyna Górak-Sosnowska from SGH Warsaw School of Economics is another scholar using her expertise to counter ill-informed views about Islam.⁴¹ Recently, some books about the lives of Polish Muslims were published that approached the topic in a sensitive and insightful manner. *I Submit: The Lives Muslim Women in Poland* by Anna J. Dudek is representative of such literature. Unfortunately, expert voices and rigorous scholarship are often drowned out by the Islamophobic media din.

There are Muslim cultural centres in the largest cities in Poland including Warsaw, Poznań, Gdańsk, Lublin, and Katowice and these also offer resources, classes, talks, and workshops. Finally, the regional chapters of the Muslim League of the Republic of Poland organise talks such as “Facts and Myths on Animals in Islam” (this one was delivered in conjunction with the Ethnographic Museum in Gdańsk).

Since 2001, the Catholic Church annually celebrates “Islam Day”, which involves a range of ecumenical events and prayers across Poland.⁴² While this is a positive effort, the Church could speak out more forcefully against the rampant Islamophobia in Poland, including amongst its own clergy, exemplified by Fr. Oko mentioned earlier in this report.

40. Instytut Studiów Kulturowych Raven, *Raven.edu.pl*, <https://raven.edu.pl/wyklady/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

41. Magdalena Bryś, “Dr Hab. Górak-Sosnowska: Odreligijniać muzułmanina”, *Wiez.com.pl*, <http://wiez.com.pl/2018/08/29/odreligijniać-muzułmanina/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

42. “W piątek Dzień Islamu w Kościele Katolickim w Polsce”, *Wiez.com.pl*, 24 January 2018, <http://wiez.com.pl/2018/01/24/w-piatek-dzien-islam-u-w-kościele-katolickim-w-polsce/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Inevitably, however, these civil society initiatives cannot replace systematic, rigorous religious education as they appeal to audiences who already independently and actively seek out information about Islam.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The year 2018 was less eventful in terms of Islamophobic incidents at the national level than 2017. There were no prominent events with a significant Islamophobic undertone such as the 2017 Independence Day March, but it would be incorrect to assume that the problem of anti-Muslim prejudice has been resolved. Many state officials, as seen earlier in the report, have simultaneously insisted that Islam constitutes a threat to Polish values, while the problem of hate crime is decreasing. In other words, one problem is artificially constructed, and another swept under the carpet. The Polish Ombudsman's Office is the sole effective constitutional advocate of the Muslim minority in Poland. In absence of systemic protection for religious minorities in Poland, it falls to a range of human rights NGOs to record and monitor hate crime against Muslims. It is also these NGOs, along with some progressive media, who provide fact-based education about Islam. Regretfully, however, the scale of these efforts is insufficient to solve the problem of nationwide Islamophobia in Poland.

- This report therefore recommends that specialist, externally delivered training be delivered to police officers (especially those interacting with those reporting hate crime), border guards, and prosecutors to better recognise and address hate crime including crime based on religious belonging.
- The report also recommends that in order to tackle the problem of Islamophobia at the root, scholarship-based multi-religious education be introduced into the Polish education system. The confessional, insular Catholic instruction currently delivered in Polish schools does not promote inter-faith understanding or openness to difference that tend to flow from the knowledge of other faith traditions.

The policy recommendations made by the last two reports⁴³ have regretfully 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 dissolved governmental

43. Pędziwiatr Konrad, "Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2016", *European Islamophobia Report 2016*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2017), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/POLAND.pdf>. (Access date: 5 September 2019); Anna Piela, Anna Łukjanowicz, "Islamophobia in Poland: National Report 2017", *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Poland.pdf>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

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.

- Hate speech, contrary to what many right-wing organisations state, does not equal freedom of speech. There cannot be any tolerance of hate speech and all forms of hate crimes should be punished with outmost severity.
- A new mechanism of collecting data on hate crimes should be put in place.
- State institutions in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders (in particular within 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.
- 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.

Chronology⁴⁴

- **08.01.2018:** A Saudi student was attacked at the Łódź Gallery mall by a male who hit him in the face and shouted “If you want to explode, do it at home!” A 33-year-old man was later detained and charged with violence based on national background.
- **15.01.2018:** An Egyptian national was verbally attacked in Oława by two men who were later charged with public insult based on national background.
- **12.02.2018:** Two males attacked three Moroccan nationals employed at a kebab eatery in Gniezno. The perpetrators aimed a gun at the Moroccans and shouted that “they should get the fuck out of Poland” and “Poland is for Poles”. This was not the first time the eatery and its employees were racially abused. The District Prosecutor’s Office has qualified this hate crime as public exhortation of hate based on national difference and public insult based on national background.
- **15.03.2018:** A customer at a Warsaw store was verbally abusing and threatening a security guard who was a Moroccan national. The guard prevented the perpetrator from leaving the store and a fight ensued. Robert J. was detained and charged with punishable threats and public insult based on racial background.

44. Unless stated otherwise, these incidents are a selection from *Brown Book – Hate Crime Monitoring* (forthcoming), by the Never Again Association. Private email correspondence from 7 January 2019. I would like to thank the Never Again Association for kindly compiling the list of incidents for the purpose of this report.

- **March & April 2018:** 54-year-old Tomasz G. from Ząbki threatened Chechen refugees with death and insulted their background. He was detained and his apartment was searched - police found several guns, ammunition, and grenades. The prosecutor charged him with illegal threats and public insult based on national background.
- **06.04.2018:** A woman in a Muslim headscarf was attacked by a middle-aged man. When she passed him by, he shouted “Muslim woman, have you got a lighter?”, then he called her a “whore” and threw a lit cigarette at her.
- **Mid-April 2018:** According to the triathlete Mikołaj Luft, the director of the Sport and Rehabilitation Centre at the Warsaw Medical University banned visitors from bringing in backpacks. She explained that “there are Arab students here who might blow up the swimming pool”. She subsequently denied saying this.
- **13.05.2018:** Three people attacked the owner of a kebab eatery in Warsaw who was Egyptian. They beat him with a metal rod and kicked him all over his body. A woman who was accompanying the men was shouting racist slurs at him. They threatened him with death and broke a window. They have been detained and charged with public insult, beating with a dangerous tool, death threats, and damage to property.
- **28.05.2018:** Wioletta M., a woman living in the village of Mrowiny, publicly insulted a 15-year-old son of her neighbour who had a dark complexion. She was shouting “You’re an Arab, a fucking terrorist!” The boy’s mother reported this to the police, and subsequently Wioletta M. was charged with public insult of a minor.
- **17.05.2018:** Wojciech Cejrowski tweeted that “in the [Arab-Israeli] conflict we can choose to support either Jews who want to cheat us or Arabs who want to slaughter us”.
- **09.08.2018:** Two men attacked the Pakistani owners of a kebab eatery in Radom. They were threatening that they would burn the premises down and shouting racist slurs. One of the Pakistanis was also beaten and a window was broken. Both attackers were detained and charged with insult based on national and religious background as well as violence against the Pakistani national.
- **19.08.2018:** Two men wearing football scarves with Legia Warszawa symbols verbally abused a male with a darker complexion in a No. 33 tram by the Warsaw Central station. A female passenger (the only person who defended the man) was then also abused. The perpetrators were using racial slurs and shouted “Stop the Islamisation of Europe”!
- **30.08.2018:** A Polish-Egyptian married couple were attacked in their

restaurant in Krasnystaw. The attackers repeatedly threatened them with death, spat at them, and beat them with their fists. Despite the restraining order and the police inquiry, the attacks continued.

- **01.09.2018:** An unidentified male verbally attacked a passenger with a dark complexion in tram No. 6 between Katowice Centrum and Katowice Brynów Stations. Only one female passenger tried to defend the targeted man; the rest of the passengers and the tram driver did not react. The woman was then also attacked. The attacker shouted “Islam is terrorism”, “Fuck Islam”, and other slurs.
- **11.09.2018:** In a public speech aimed at students of the Jan III Sobieski High School in Krakow, the Lesser Poland Education Inspector Barbara Nowak said in the Main Market Square, “The patron of your school was a fantastic king who was able to defend entire Europe from Islam. What a wonderful role model for you”.
- **05.10.2018:** An unidentified male attacked four Turkish students in a No. 17 tram in Warsaw (between the Rondo ONZ and Warsaw Central Station stops). He hit one of the students on the head and verbally abused the group. The attack was reported to the police with the assistance of the Turkish Embassy officials but the attacker was not tracked down and the investigation was discontinued.
- **19.10.2018:** Wojciech Cejrowski incited anti-Muslim hatred by tweeting to his followers a request for photographs of Muslims in the streets. This resulted in a stream of photographs (illegally and non-consensually) posted in response and abusive comments. Cejrowski himself tweeted a photo of 3 women wearing Islamic dress. This prompted further anti-Muslim slurs.
- **11.11.2018:** Banners “Islam is Enemy of Europe” and “Delete Islam” displayed during the Independence March in Warsaw.⁴⁵
- **15.12.2018:** Five supporters of Legia Warsaw football club attacked two passengers of Turkish background in bus No. 521 in Warsaw. They sang a racist song and shouted slurs, and then one of them hit one of the targets in the face. The attackers fled after the bus driver reluctantly called the police. The attacked man tried to report this at three police stations, but the officers in charge refused to file the report citing “the lack of time”. Eventually the attackers were detained and charged.
- **21-22.12.2018:** A large group of males (over ten) attacked three Arab students at the Katowice Central Rail Station. Initially, they verbally abused them, but this quickly escalated. They hit one of the students in the back of

45. “Biało-Czerwony Marsz przeszedł ulicami Warszawy. Policja: 250 tysięcy uczestników”, Polskie Radio, 12 November 2018, <https://polskieradio24.pl/5/3/Artykul/2213499>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

the head and pushed him to the ground. Other students were also attacked, and one of them was pushed on the rail track just before the train departed. The security guards who were present did not intervene. Other passengers called the ambulance and police services.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
PORTUGAL
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

Compared to other Western European states, Portugal presents a unique case regarding Islamophobia since official anti-racist bodies have received only a few cases of complaints about anti-Muslim incidents. This report discusses the reasons for this lack of racial attacks or lack of complaints about them. First of all, the official narrative from the state stresses the successful integration of Portuguese Muslims who are presented as people who have a good education and high-ranked positions. In addition to this narrative, the Portuguese state backs these immigrants and provides them the necessary assistance for their social inclusion through political, legal, and sociocultural bodies. In 2016, Prime Minister Antonio Costa said Portugal would receive “10,000 Syrian refugees – double the number it might have taken under the EU’s relocation programme.”

This report provides both elements that support this discourse and elements that interrogate it. On the one hand, it shows how the arguments of “Lusotropicalism” and the narrative of “pluri-religious Portugal” are widespread in the Portuguese society. On the other hand, it warns against a deep-seated anti-Muslim sentiment that emerges at any moment when a so-called Muslim threat appears on the horizon. Indeed, the invisibility of the number of Muslims (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. Due to lack of data concerning the 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. Despite the fact that political authorities, journalists, and academics believe and want us to believe that Portugal is a paradise for Muslims, there are still instances of verbal abuse on the streets towards people who appear to be Muslims (intersection of race, gender, Islamophobia), vandal attacks on places of worship, and dissident voices from within society that claim that Muslims pose a threat to society’s secular base.

Sumário Executivo

Em comparação com outros estados da Europa Ocidental, Portugal apresenta um caso único quanto a Islamofobia desde que os corpos antirracistas oficiais receberam só alguns casos de reclamações sobre incidentes anti-Muçulmanos. Este relatório discute as razões desta falta de ataques raciais ou reclamações sobre eles. Em primeiro lugar, a narrativa oficial do estado realça fora a bem-integração de Muçulmanos Portugueses que são apresentados como gente que adquire boa educação e altas posições de fila. Além desta narrativa, o estado português suporta esses imigrantes e fornecendo-lhes ajuda necessária da sua inclusão social por corpos políticos, legais, e socio-culturais. Em 2016, o primeiro-ministro Antonio Costa disse que Portugal receberia “10 mil refugiados Sírios - o dobro do número que poderia ter recebido no programa de recolocação da UE”.

Este relatório fornece os dois elementos que suportam esse discurso e os elementos que o interrogam. Por um lado, mostra como os argumentos do “Lusotropicalismo” e a narrativa do “Portugal pluri-religioso” são difundidos na sociedade portuguesa. Por outro lado, adverte contra um profundo sentimento anti-Muçulmano que surge a qualquer momento quando uma ameaça chamada Muçulmana aparece no horizonte. De fato, a invisibilidade do número de Muçulmanos (atualmente, cerca de 0,6% da população nacional) e seu silêncio nos assuntos políticos, sociais, culturais e públicos parecem criar uma imagem de comunidade bem integrada. Devido à falta de dados sobre as discriminações rosto de muçulmanos em suas vidas cotidianas – por exemplo, as associações muçulmanas não manter dados estatísticos sobre qualquer tipo de violação — portanto, seria fácil dizer que Portugal está livre de Islamofobia. Apesar do fato de que as autoridades políticas, jornalistas e acadêmicos que acreditam e querem que acreditemos também que Portugal é um paraíso para os muçulmanos, existem ainda verbais abusos nas ruas nas pessoas que parecem ser os Muçulmanos (interseção de raça, sexo Islamofobia), vandalizado ataques sobre os lugares de culto e dissidente vozes da sociedade que os Muçulmanos pausar uma ameaça à base da sociedade secular.

Country Profile

Country: *República Portuguesa* (Portuguese Republic)

Type of Regime: Democratic republic

Form of Government: Semi-presidential system

Ruling Parties: *Partido Socialista* (PS), *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE, Left Bloc), *Partido Comunista Português* (PCP), and *Partido Ecologista “Os Verdes”* (PEV, The Greens).

Opposition Parties: *Partido Social Democrata* (PPD/PSD), *Centro Democrático e Social – Partido Popular* (CDS-PP), *Pessoas-Animais-Natureza* (PAN -People-Animals-Nature).

Last Elections: October 4, 2015, Legislative Elections: António Costa formed a Socialist-led coalition with PS 32.3%, B.E. 10.2%, PCP-PEV 8.3%; seats by party - PaF 102, PS 86, B.E. 19, CDU 17, PPD/PSD (Azores and Madeira) 5, PAN 1; composition - men 158, women 72; percent of women 31.3%.

January 24, 2016, Presidential Elections: Marcelo Nuno Duarte Rebelo de Sousa (Social Democratic Party) won 52% of the vote; António Manuel Seixas Sampaio da Nóvoa (Independent) 22.88% of the vote; and Marisa Isabel dos Santos Matias (Left Bloc) 10.12% of the vote.

Total Population: 10,31 millions (in 2017)

Major Languages: Portuguese

Official Religion: No official religion (dominantly Catholic, est. 81%)

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholic Church (81%), Other Christian Denominations (3.3%), Buddhism (0.6%), Islam (0.6%), Hinduism (0.1%), and “Popular-Folk Religiosity” (0.5%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 60,973 (0.6%) in 2019 (Number of followers estimated by CountryMeters, Monday, August 19, 2019)

Main Muslim Community Organizations: *Comunidade Islâmica de Lisboa* (CIL – Islamic Community of Lisbon) situated at the *Mesquita Central de Lisboa* (Central Mosque of Lisbon).

Main NGO’s Combating Islamophobia: N/A

Far-Right Parties: *Partido Nacional Renovador* (National Renewal Party), founded in 2000. Its highest percentage of votes was 0.50% in the 2015 elections.

Far-Right Movements: *Nova Ordine Social* (NOS, New Social Order) and the nationalist *Portugal Hammerskin* (PHS).

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

- **Limitations to Islamic practices**
- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No

- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Portugal, which is located in the westernmost part of the European continent, is one of the smallest countries in Europe with a population of approximately 10 million; according to the latest 2018 data this number is 10.276.617.¹ Despite the fact that Portugal remained under the rule of Muslims for six centuries (AD 711-1349) and even claimed to be influenced by Islam culturally, only a few architectural masterpieces have been preserved from this period. Perhaps in this reality they see themselves as one of the important elements of Christianity, and as a result of their hostile attitude, resentment and anger towards Muslims for six centuries, together with the “Reconquista,” everything that is left in the name of Islam has been destroyed.² Compared to the Spanish, the Portuguese were less belligerent towards both Muslims and Jews as there was a relative lack of anti-Semitism before the end of the fifteenth century. In the past, the three religions used to enjoy a better relationship.³ There is also relatively less academic or scholarly research on Islam and on the country’s Islamic past as compared to Spain.⁴ Islam and its inalienable civilizational elements like history, culture, language (there are some Arabic courses but no course for other languages like Turkish and Persian in Portugal), archaeology, or architecture are not studied in detail except in some exceptional academic courses like history or anthropology. Despite a very distant memory in the past, today one might encounter Portuguese individuals who are still afraid of Muslims and consider them as aliens due to the misrepresentation of Islam and Muslims as irreconcilable with contemporary “European values.” For centuries, Christians and Jews lived side by side (*convivencia*) in religious tolerance under the Muslim rule of this land called *al-Andalus*. However, following the Crusades, numerous battles were fought between the Muslim and Christian forces

1. According to “CENSOS 2013”, Instituto Nacional de Estatística, <https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/institucional/home/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019). The recently updated (14 June 2019) figures indicate that although Portugal received 11,570 immigrants in 2018, the total population has decreased by 300,000 (https://www.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&contecto=pi&indOcorrCod=0008273&selTab=tab0, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

2. António Henriques, “The Reconquista and Its Legacy, 1000–1348”, *An Agrarian History of Portugal, 1000-2000, Economic Development on the European Frontier*, ed. Dulce Freire and Pedro Lains, (Brill, Boston/Leiden: 2016), p. 11-44.

3. François Soyer, *The Persecution of the Jews and Muslims of Portugal: King Manuel I and the End of Religious Tolerance (1496–7)*, (Brill, Leiden: 2007). Perhaps, the Portuguese territories were far away from the center of the Islamic kingdom and they felt the Muslim influence less during that period. Today, when they express their thoughts about Islam, they claim they are proud of their so-called Islamic past and they begin to count a few words that they think are of Arabic origin. First and foremost is the word “Oxalá” (pronounced “oshala” which means “God willing”, originally, *inshallah*). And some words starting with the Arabic prefix *al-* that are still in use like *aldaia* (*aḏ-day‘a*, “village”), Faro (the city named after a local Muslim *qadi* called Haroon), Algarve (the southernmost part of Portugal, rooted in *al-garb*, “the west”). They also amuse themselves that the name of the country comes originally from the Arabic *al-Bortugal* (the orange fruit), but this is only a phonetical coincidence as the name was derived from *Portu Calle*, probably from *Port of Gallaecia*.

4. Maria Filomena Lopes de Barros, “From the history of Muslims to Muslims in History: Some critical notes on “Arab-Islamic Studies” in Portugal”, *Hamsa Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies*, 1 (2014), p. 29-40

to expel Muslims from the Iberian Peninsula. The so-called *Reconquista* was realized in a similar spirit to free Jerusalem from the Turks and the Christian forces fought against the Muslims in the West.

The Portuguese started maritime activities with Spain as the Mediterranean had become an “Ottoman lake”⁵ in the 14th and 15th centuries. With the efforts to reach India and the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and ultimately the Americas, these two countries reached the highest levels of colonial activities in that period. On the one hand, they tried to spread Christianity by claiming that they brought “civilization to the newly discovered continent” and on the other hand, they carried all the riches of the colonies to their countries.

Colonization Legacy and Relations with Muslims in Portuguese Society

Unlike other countries with a colonial tradition, such as Belgium, France, or the Netherlands, Portugal claims to have an approach towards its colonies which they call “Lusotropicalism.”⁶ This concept essentially supposes that the Portuguese can easily adapt to tropical climates and thus communicate more comfortably with the indigenous people they exploit, and that they are better colonists than other European states. However, in the history of colonialism, it is a well-known fact that indigenous peoples do not always have good feelings towards their masters. Although they did not face sharp resistance in their colonies in Brazil or Asia, especially during the dictatorship, Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau in Africa, and until recently, the island of Timor (specifically East Timor), bloody uprisings were organized and independence struggles systematically surfaced. Under the dictatorial regime, it was unimaginable to offer freedom to religions other than the Catholic Church,

5. Gugliuzzo Elina, “Sea Power and the Ottomans in the Early Modern Mediterranean World”, *A Military History of the Mediterranean Sea: Aspects of War, Diplomacy and Military Elites History of Warfare*, ed. Georgios Theotokis and Aysel Yıldız, (Brill, Leiden: 2018) p. 84.

6. A doctrine - or, a quasi-theory - formulated by the Brazilian sociologist and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre (*O luso e o trópico: Sugestões em torno dos métodos portugueses de integração dos povos autóctones e de culturas diferentes da europeia num complexo novo de civilização, o luso tropical*, Lisbon, Comissão Executiva das Comemorações do V Centenário da morte do Infante D. Henrique, 1961), attempts to justify the Portuguese colonialism as if it provides a kind of capacity to deal with different political situations to understand the Other, to accept the Other, and to have curiosity and respect towards the Other (see Anna Klobucka,, “Lusotropicalism, Race and Ethnicity”, ed. Poddar, P., Patke, R. S., & Jensen, L., *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures: Continental Europe and Its Empires*. (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh: 2018), pp. 471-476 and Cristiana Bastos, “Luso-tropicalism Debunked, Again. Race, Racism, and Racialism in Three Portuguese-Speaking Societies”, ed. Anderson, W., Roque, R., Santos, R. V., *Luso-tropicalism and Its Discontents: The Making and Unmaking of Racial Exceptionalism*, p. 243-264. (Berghahn, New York, Oxford: 2019). After the disestablishment of the Estado Novo, the doctrine of the authoritarian regime seems to disappear to the extent that today it is called a “protector myth” or a justification tool for the atrocities committed in the past (Joana Gorjão Henriques, *Racismo em Português — O lado esquecido do colonialismo*, (Edições tinta-da-china, Lisbon: 2017); Joana Gorjão Henriques , “Portugal é dos países da Europa que mais manifestam racismo, interview with Jorge Vala”, *Público*, 2 September 2017, <https://www.publico.pt/2017/09/02/sociedade/entrevista/portugal-e-dos-paises-da-europa-que-mais-manifesta-racismo-1783934>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

except for those who could establish close relations with the administration. It is understandable that one cannot establish friendly or brotherly relationships with everybody but in the case of Portugal it was expected that all religious groups would receive an equal treatment from the state due to the lusotropicalist claims. If Portugal was to be a *casa grande* (great house or the quarter of the 'white' ruler) that would keep everybody under its roof, even in a *senzala* (slave quarter), the relationship between the conquerors and conquered could not be of an equal nature. Yet, Freyre⁷ claims that because of the scarcity of white women, an inevitable miscegenation and racial crossing occurred between the Portuguese colonists and the native Brazilians. The result was that a different type of relationship developed to bridge the gap between the rulers and the colonized. Therefore, it is not surprising that even today research is being carried out at a micro-regional scale to uncover genetic backgrounds at places where Muslims used to live centuries ago in the Iberian Peninsula like Mértola, Southern Portugal.⁸ Nonetheless, lusotropicalism cannot and would not provide "immunity or protection against negative intergroup attitudes. But as a social representation, lusotropicalism could provide the properties to prevent people from the impression of falling into a non-desirable prejudiced expression."⁹ The term could have been useful in the past when the racial paradigm was in use, today culture has become the most important form in expressing racism or xenophobia.

The Official Discourse on Multiculturalism and Muslims in Portugal

The official discourse of the Portuguese state is that it is an open society with religious pluralism. The Portuguese Empire of the past could have been a multireligious, multi-language and multicultural society but during the Estado Novo regime¹⁰ it became a fascist dictatorship with a monocultural structure. So, the Portuguese have the ability to adapt to changing situations in the state structures; they colonized almost half of the world and claim they had all along been benign towards the natives and when they lost this empire they developed a longing for their glorious past (*saudade*). After the 1974 Revolution, they had to come to accept the release of their former colonies by giving them their independence. The result was that some students and then their

7. Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-Grande & Senzala*, (Maia e Schmidt Ltda, Rio de Janeiro: 1934).

8. Luis Pereira et al, "The Islamization of Iberian Peninsula: A Demographic Shift or a Cultural Change? Search for an Answer Using Extant and Ancient DNA from Mértola (Southeast Portugal)", *International Congress Series*, 1288 (2006.) p. 828–830.

9. Joaquim Pires Valentim and Ana Maria Heleno, "Luso-tropicalism as a Social Representation in Portuguese Society Variations and Anchoring", *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 62 (2018), p. 34–42.

10. Abdool-Karim Vakil, "From the Reconquista to Portugal Islâmico: Islamic Heritage in the Shifting Discourses of Portuguese Historiography and National Identity", *Arqueologia Medieval*, 8 (2013), p. 5–15. The author correctly interprets the situation that the regime further advertised that Portugal was a multicontinental, multiracial, and pluri-religious society.

families immigrated to the “mainland” and established their new lives in Portugal. As their origins were from mainly Mozambique (they had immigrated earlier from India and Goa) and Angola and other former colonies, they were mostly Muslims. The official discourse goes that since they could speak the language and were familiar with the culture, they did not have any difficulty in adapting - or rather assimilating - into Portuguese society. If the recent immigrants are also well-integrated in society, there would be no problems and there would be peace in society. The simple result was that there is no racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia. It seems that as long as the latecomers accept obtaining Portuguese citizenship or naturalization, they can continue to be Portuguese *and* Muslims.¹¹ So, the lack of research on racism, in general, or on Islamophobia, in particular, could be explained by the unwillingness to deal with the issue of the *Muslim identity* in an elaborate way. Therefore, if we are to understand and deal with Islamophobia beyond the shallow statements like “Islam is a religion of peace” or “The majority of Muslims are moderate,” such declarations themselves clearly indicate a relationship of domination.¹² These kind of statements are themselves a challenge to Islamophobia as they implicitly proclaim that Muslims are both violent and radical. They are other attempts to define Muslims by dominating powers *à la* Saidian mode.¹³ Similarly, the regular use of the term “presence” implicitly refers to something alien like in the formulations of “the Muslim presence in Europe or Portugal,” etc. The “new presence” ultimately refers to the fact that these people are not supposed to belong here (Europe or West) and that (“hopefully”) they will go back to where they came from.

Absence of Islamophobia or the Silence of Muslim People?

The claim that “there is no Islamophobia in Portugal” is nothing more than an acknowledgement of the silence of the Muslim community living in the country. Consequently, addressing this lack of interest and research on the subject, some researchers have begun to address the issue with an interesting title: the counternarrative to Islamophobia.¹⁴ The challenge is to answer whether if there is no narrative on something does that mean it does not exist? In last year’s report, I referred to this fact by stating

11. Joana Gorjão Henriques, “São portugueses, são muçulmanos”, *Público*, 8 February 2015, <https://www.publico.pt/2015/02/08/sociedade/noticia/saoportugueses-sao-muculmanos-1685260>. (Access date: 2 September 2019).

12. Salman Sayyid, “A Measure of Islamophobia”, *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 2-1 (2014) p 10–25. Also see: Salman Sayyid, “The Homelessness of Muslimness: The Muslim Umma as a Diaspora”, *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 8-2 (2010), p. 129-145.

13. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (Pantheon, New York: 1978).

14. See: Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, “Emerging Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia in Portugal: An Overview”, *Counter Islamophobia Kit*, University of Leeds, 2018; Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, Dominant Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia – Portugal, *CIK Project*, Working Paper 15, 2018b; Marta Araújo, Dominant Islamophobic Narratives – Portugal, *CIK Project*, Working Paper 5, 2017.

that there was a lack of institutional (at the state level) and organizational attempts to report racist, xenophobic, or Islamophobic cases on the communal level.¹⁵ Compared to other European countries, Portugal seems to be slow in arranging and organizing the necessary bodies to tackle such violations. It is obvious that some more *empirical* research is needed to delineate the problem of xenophobia or hate crime at large.

Compared to France or Germany, the Muslim population is almost negligible¹⁶ as it is estimated around 50,000 within the total population of 10,276,617¹⁷ - this is only 0.4%. The relatively small size of the Muslim community could explain why there is little interest in studying Muslims. The research conducted on the Muslim population mainly falls into disciplines like anthropology, sociology, history, political science, and international relations. Studies that come from anthropology and sociology usually deal with issues like immigration, religious practices, identity formation, and gender issues. The majority of studies dealing with Muslims offer socio-demographic analyses that try to define minorities living in various parts of Portugal. Another type of study is the historical background of Muslims in Portugal, and finally, there are some works that have emerged after international threats of violence or terrorism.¹⁸ I agree with Marta Araújo,¹⁹ senior Researcher at the Centre for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra, that in most of these studies the concept of Islamophobia is either ignored or simply mentioned in a passing reference. If nobody mentions Islamophobia, it is perceived as non-existent. Yet, some previous work had to remark on certain Islamophobic instances like in education²⁰ or in the media²¹ but they were not systematic studies on the subject. Nevertheless, new empirical research like Marta Araújo²² and Silvia Rodríguez Maeso²³ is being carried out specifically on

15. Ali Murat Yel, "Islamophobia in Portugal: National Report 2017", *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed Enes Bayraklı and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018).

16. The number of Muslims in Portugal varies according to which source is taken into consideration; for instance, the INE (*Instituto Nacional de Estatística*, 20,640), the Church (26,782), or the CIL (*Comunidade Islâmica de Lisboa*, 50,000). These figures are undoubtedly only estimates (José Pereira Coutinho, "Minorias religiosas em Portugal", *Rever*, 19-1 (2019), p. 172.

17. See the latest figures given by the Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE): https://ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=ine_indicadores&contecto=pi&indOcorrCod=0008273&selTab=tab0 (Access date: 2 September 2019).

18. Marta Araújo, "Dominant Islamophobic Narratives – Portugal", *CIK Project*, Working Paper 5, 2017, p. 5-6; Nina Clara Tiesler, "No Bad News from the European Margin: The New Islamic Presence in Portugal", *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, 12-1 (2001), p. 73.

19. See: Marta Araújo, "Dominant Islamophobic Narratives – Portugal", *CIK Project*, Working Paper 5, 2017.

20. Hélia Regina Gaspar dos Santos, "Jovens Muçulmanos, Identidades e Escola Pública: um estudo de caso", (unpublished MA dissertation Faculdade de Economia da Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, 2009).

21. Teresa Toldy, "Cautela com os amores' Declarações do Cardeal de Lisboa vistas pela imprensa portuguesa", *e-cadernos ces*, 16 (2012), p. 32-65; and Verónica Ferreira, "Representações Mediáticas da 'Noite que Mudou Alemanha': A Violência Sexual como veículo de Islamofobia?", *Observatório Político*, 61 (2016), p. 15.

22. Marta Araújo, "Dominant Islamophobic Narratives – Portugal", *CIK Project*, Working Paper 5, 2017.

23. Silvia Rodríguez Maeso, "Dominant Counter-Narratives to Islamophobia – Portugal", *CIK Project*, Working Paper 15, 2018b

Muslims and the potential threats of racism, hate crime, and Islamophobia. These fieldwork studies suggest that in the areas of employment, education, politics, media, and the justice system Muslims are not exposed to hatred in a significant manner. In the case of education, there are some restrictions as a result of being in a Catholic country, and the parents and school administration need to consult with each other. Interestingly, Muslims do not demand political visibility at all: they have neither founded political organizations nor are they involved with political bodies in terms of negotiations for further rights. Yet, if we subscribe to Sayyid's wide understanding of Islamophobia as the "undermining of the ability of Muslims as Muslims, to project themselves into the future"²⁴ beyond discrimination or hatred, then we can consider that Portuguese society keeps Muslims into an unfavourable environment.

The Positive Effects of Anti-racist Discourse on Religious Coexistence

Today, the understanding of anti-Semitism has established itself in a manner that Jews are not subjects of direct attacks or hatred; an attitude, sometimes a straightforward action, or even a police officer's treatment can now be considered as anti-Semitic. Of course, there have been violent attacks on Jewish cemeteries or kosher shops but anti-Semitism makes itself felt even in the minds of the perpetrators before they go into action. Islamophobia, however, has not established itself in a similar manner; if there is no direct attack on Muslims or discrimination against them, it is assumed that there is no Islamophobia. In the case of Portugal, unlike in other European countries, cases of hate crimes or religious discrimination have not been systematically and officially reported. The public appears to be unaware of the reality of Islamophobia and consequently denies it. Meanwhile, academic circles²⁵ despite their empirical research and knowledge-production capacities, appear to lack the courage to declare the existence of Islamophobia in the Portuguese mind-set. The Portuguese grow with the historical fear of Muslims clearly exhibited in their school textbooks and with the fear of terrorist attacks, not only in their own country but in any European country, and their fear emerges to the surface and they begin to question whether Islam is compatible with Western values. As long as the common view of Islamophobia is a "hatred and fear of Islam," society will claim that they do not treat Muslims in these terms and as a result Islamophobia does not exist. Nevertheless, this is a cynical approach and hides the truth that "Muslimness" is the main cause of exposition to discrimination.

24. Salman Sayyid, "A Measure of Islamophobia", *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 2-1 (2014), p. 14

25. Abdool Vakil, "Aqui não há islamofobia. Portugal é um paraíso, devíamos orgulhar-nos", *Diário de Notícias*, 11 February 2017, <https://www.dn.pt/sociedade/interior/aqui-nao-ha-islamofobia-portugal-e-um-paraiso-deviamos-orgulhar-nos-5661240.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Conclusion

Since Portugal was and is not an attractive country for economic migrants, the public might not consider Islam and Muslims as relevant to their individual lives. Furthermore, if the small number of Muslims do not excessively exhibit themselves in the public space, the discourse repeats itself: the Muslim minority is well-integrated into Portuguese society and they stand as proof that Muslims are compatible with the European identity. If the historical ties between Islam and Europe could truly be traced, they could definitely be found in the streets of Lisbon today. Apart from some negligible incidents, the Muslim community - whether third-generation immigrants from former colonies or recent refugees fleeing the monstrous warfare in the Middle East or economic difficulties in developing countries of Asia and Africa - has relatively better living conditions in Portugal. Yet, further empirical research is needed to analyse the everyday experiences of Islamophobia.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
ROMANIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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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. Although no significant incidents regarding Muslims and immigrants have been recorded in Romania during 2018, hostility and increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric in the public sphere has been present, especially in the context of the debate regarding the adoption of the UN Global Compact for Migration.

Romania's initial endorsement of the UN Global Compact for Migration generated criticism from politicians, sparked small protests organised by far-right movements, and increased the use of bombastic headlines, factual misrepresentations, and stereotypical depictions of immigrants and Muslims in media coverage.

During 2018, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant articles and campaigns were recorded, especially in nationalist and Christian Orthodox media outlets. Activities in cyberspace of anti-Islam activists and sympathisers of extremist political parties continued to spread hate speech directed at Muslims, although to a lesser extent than in previous years. In February 2018, the National Council for Combatting Discrimination ruled that the statements and actions of a professor from the University of Bucharest against persons who wear Islamic veils in public institutions (such as universities) amount to discrimination, limit the right to education, and infringe the right to dignity, and issued a fine for RON 2,000 (about EUR 430).¹

Hate crimes and cases of incitement to hatred remain underreported. Few official complaints have been made compared to the large number of people reportedly experiencing incidents of racial/ethnic or religious discrimination. Still, there is no systemic data collection regarding hate crimes and other types of violence directed at immigrants or Muslims by the Romanian authorities.

The most significant development affecting Muslims during the reporting period was the rejection by the Chamber of Deputies of the legislative proposal to ban face covering with any material that prevents physiognomic recognition in educational institutions. At the time of writing this report, the proposal was up for review in the Senate.

1. "Press Release on the Decisions Taken by the CNCD College of Directors in the Meeting of 22.02.2018", (Comunicat de presă referitor la hotărârile adoptate de Colegiul director al CNCD în şedinţa din data de 22.02.2018), NCCD, 22 February 2018, <http://cncd.org.ro/2018-02-22-comunicat-de-presa-referitor-la-hotararile-adoptate-de-colegiul-director-al-cncd-in-edin-a-din-data-de-22-02-2018>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Sumar

Aproape 65.000 de musulmani trăiesc în România, reprezentând 0,34% din totalul populației. Prezența și integrarea musulmanilor în România rămâne, ca și în cazul imigrației în ansamblu, o problemă marginală pe agenda politică și publică. Deși în anul 2018 în România nu s-au înregistrat incidente semnificative cu privire la musulmani și imigranți, în sfera publică a fost totuși prezentă ostilitatea și retorica anti-imigrație, în special în contextul dezbaterii privind adoptarea Pactului Global ONU pentru o migrație sigură, ordonată și reglementată.

Susținerea inițială acordată de România Pactului Global ONU pentru o migrație sigură, ordonată și reglementată, a generat critici din partea politicienilor, a declanșat mici proteste organizate de mișcări de extremă dreaptă și a sporit folosirea în mass-media a titlurilor bombastice, a denaturării faptelor și reprezentările stereotipice ale imigranților și musulmanilor.

În decursul anului 2018 au fost sesizate articole și campanii islamofobe și anti-imigrație, în special în mass-media naționalistă și creștin ortodoxă. În spațiul cibernetic, activiștii anti-Islam și simpatizanții partidelor politice extremiste au continuat să răspândească discursul instigator la ură față de musulmani, desi într-o maniera redusă comparativ cu anii anteriori.

Infracțiunile motivate de ură și cazurile de incitare la ură rămân insuficient raportate. Au fost făcute puține plângeri oficiale în comparație cu numărul mare de persoane care susțin că se confruntă cu incidente de discriminare rasială / etnică sau religioasă. În plus, la nivelul autoritatilor nu există un sistem unitar de colectare a datelor privind infracțiunile motivate de ură și alte tipuri de violență îndreptate împotriva imigranților sau musulmanilor. În februarie 2018, Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării (CNCD) a hotărât că afirmațiile unui profesor de la Universitatea din București împotriva persoanelor care poartă vălul islamic în instituții publice, precum universitățile, reprezintă discriminare, limitează dreptul la educație și încalcă dreptul la demnitate. CNCD a aplicat o amendă contravențională în valoare de 2000 RON (aproximativ 430 EUR).

Cel mai important eveniment care a afectat musulmanii în perioada de raportare, a fost respingerea de către Camera Deputaților a propunerii legislative de a interzice acoperirea feței cu orice material care împiedică recunoașterea fizionomică în instituțiile de învățământ. La momentul redactării acestui raport, propunerea a fost înaintată la Senat pentru dezbateri.

Country Profile

Country: Romania

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Semi-Presidential System

Ruling Parties: *Partidul Social Democrat* - PSD (Social-Democrat); *Alianta Liberalilor si Democratilor* – ALDE (Liberal)

Opposition Parties: *Partidul National Liberal* – PNL (Liberal); *Uniunea Salvati Romaniaia* – USR (Centre-Right); *Partidul Miscarea Populara* – PMP (Centre-Right)

Last Elections: 2014 Presidential Election (Klaus Iohannis of PNL – National Liberal Party won with 54.4% of votes against Victor Ponta of PSD – Social Democrat Party 45.6%); 2016 Legislative Election (PSD: 221 [Centre-Left], PNL: 99 [Centre-Right], USR: 43 [Centre-Right], UDMR: 30 [Centre-Right], ALDE: 29 [Centre-Right], PMP: 20 [Centre-Right], Minorities: 17)

Total Population: 20,121,641 (2011 census)

Major Languages: Romanian (official) 85.4%, Hungarian 6.3%, Romani 1.2%, Other 1%, Unspecified 6.1% (2011 est.)

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: No statistics available

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: There are no designated procedures for recording hate crimes by the Romanian police. Consequently, criminal offenses committed with a bias motivation cannot be identified through the system. According to the National Council for Combatting Discrimination (NCCD), in 2017, there were 652 petitions registered, out of which the largest number of petitions received were on the grounds of belonging to a social category (114) and the smallest numbers were on the grounds of race (2). There were 18 petitions submitted on the grounds of religion. The NCCD found discrimination in 117 cases.

Major Religions (% of Population): Eastern Orthodox (86.45%), Roman Catholic (4.6%), Reformed Protestants (3.19%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 0.34%

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Romanian Muftiyat, Diyanet Foundation

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: *Centrul Cultural Islamic “Islamul azi”* (The Islamic Cultural Centre “Islam Today”), *Liga Islamica si Culturala din Romania* (The Islamic and Cultural League in Romania), The Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees (CDMiR), ActiveWatch.

Far-Right Parties: The New Right Party – PND (*Partidul Noua Dreaptă*), United Romania Party - PRU (*Partidul Romania Unita*), Greater Romania Party – PRM (*Partidul Romania Mare*)

Far-Right Movements: N/A

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

Hijab Ban: In December 2017, a legislative proposal for banning face coverage with any material that prevents the recognition of physiognomy in educational institutions was launched by 26 MPs. The proposal was overwhelmingly rejected by the Chamber of Deputies in April 2018 and further submitted to the Senate for deliberation.

- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

Romania features mostly as a country of emigration, registering a population decrease of 6% since 2007, the third highest decrease in the European Union.² As such, the presence and integration of immigrants in Romanian society remains marginal in the political and public debates.

According to the 2011 Census there were 64,337 registered Muslims in Romania that make up for under 1% of the total population. Most Muslims in Romania live in urban settlements (49,795) with the Turks and Tartars being the largest Islamic communities. A total of 20,561 Turks and 14,376 Tartars live in urban areas, whereas 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).

Islam is one of the 18 registered religious denominations specified in Romanian law.³ At the last census Muslims accounted for 0.34% of the population.⁴

Despite the small number of immigrants living in Romania hostility towards Muslims and anti-immigrant rhetoric were present in the public sphere during the year. The findings of a recent Pew Research study revealed that among Europeans, Romanians were among the least accepting of Muslims, with only 29% of surveyed Romanians being open to the idea of welcoming Muslims into their families or neighbourhoods.⁵

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

Based on the sources consulted, no information on racially motivated violence and incidents directed at Muslims could be found during the reporting period. There is no systemic data collection regarding hate crime and hate speech by the Romanian authorities. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU-FRA) also

2. It is estimated that around 3.4 million Romanian citizens are living and working abroad. "How Romanians Became Second at Emigration. Causes and Consequences" (Cum au ajuns românii pe locul doi în lume la emigrație, Motive și Consecințe), *Adevarul*, 16 August 2017, https://adevarul.ro/news/eveniment/cum-ajuns-romanii-locul-doi-in-lume-emigratie-motive-consecinte-1_599473bc5ab6550cb80c2cdc/index.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

3. "Law 489/2006 on Religious Freedom and the General Status of Religions", (Legea nr. 489/2006 - libertatea religioasă și regimul general al cultelor), *LegeAZ*, <https://legeaz.net/monitorul-oficial-201-2014/legea-489-2006-libertatea>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

4. "2011 Census – Religion" (2011 Recensământul despre Religie), National Institute for Statistics, October 2013, http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/pliante%20statistice/08-Recensamintele%20despre%20religie_n.pdf, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

5. "Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views of Minorities, and Key Social Issues", Pew Research Center, 29 October 2018, <http://www.pewforum.org/2018/10/29/eastern-and-western-europeans-differ-on-importance-of-religion-views-of-minorities-and-key-social-issues/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

noted that Romania's law enforcement agencies have not recorded the bias motivations of hate crimes.⁶ The same source further pointed out that there is a lack of understanding among police officers regarding what a hate crime is and how to investigate the bias motive of a crime. Representatives of NGOs mentioned that public authorities in Romania do not collect disaggregated data on hate crimes and other type of violence directed at Muslims. As such, hate crimes remained underreported.

The OSCE ODIHR's reporting on hate crime in Romania also illustrates the shortage of data.⁷ No information is available for 2018 while the only incident recorded against Muslims was the March 2016 assault on two young Muslim women in Bucharest for wearing the hijab.

Romania's initial endorsement of the UN Global Compact for Migration in November 2018 sparked small protests in Bucharest. These protests were organised by small and obscure nationalistic and neo-fascists movements rallied around *Noua Dreaptă* (PND), a far-right movement that supports militant ultra-nationalism and strong Orthodox Christian religious convictions. The protests were organised under the title "Marș Împotriva colonizării României" (March against the colonisation of Romania) and were directed at immigrants in general; Muslims were mentioned as one of the 'major threats' to Romania that could result from the migration treaty.⁸



Figure 1: "Refugees not welcome in Romania." "The Romanians Who Do Not Understand Anything about Migration, But Protest about the 'Colonisation of the Country'" (Românii care nu înțeleg nimic din migrație, dar protestează față de 'colonizarea țării').⁹

6. "Hate crime recording and data collection practice across the EU", European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 2018, http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-hate-crime-recording_en.pdf, p. 78.

7. Data on Romania's hate crime reporting to the OSCE ODIHR is available at <http://hatecrime.osce.org/romania>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

8. Vlad Popovici, Andree Pociotilă, "The Romanians Who Do Not Understand Anything about Migration, But Protest about the 'Colonisation of the Country'" (Românii care nu înțeleg nimic din migrație, dar protestează față de 'colonizarea țării'), *Vice*, 6 December 2018, <https://www.vice.com/ro/article/nepqv8/romanii-care-protesteaza-fa-ta-de-colonizarea-tarii>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

9. *Ibid.*

Employment

No significant developments with regard to the employment of Muslims were reported during the period under investigation. In the last data available (for 2017) the NCCD registered 273 petitions about access to employment. Fines were issued in 18 cases, and a warning in 14. The data, however, is not disaggregated by ethnic origin or religion.

The main risks faced by foreign workers in Romania are related to exploitation and differential treatment. There have been reports of behaviour related to individual employment contracts (not having a contract, having fewer working hours registered in the contract 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 recognised academic degrees and other certifications often result in unemployment or employment without a legal contract and its related benefits and protections.

A 2016 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.¹⁰ Also, interviewed persons who had or have small businesses (especially Arabs) complained about being a preferred target for controls by the Financial Guard.¹¹ 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

The education system in Romania guarantees a high degree of support for minority languages. In 2011, Romania adopted an education law which provides tuition for a minimum number of pupils in minority languages at various levels.¹² The only educational institution for the training of imams in Romania is the Kemal Atatürk National College in Medgidia, where a theological profile class operates.¹³ Turkey offers scholarships for graduates of the college but due to the shrinking number of Muslims in Romania very few apply.¹⁴

10. 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, http://sar.org.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/DIM_Raport-cercetare_final_26_10_15.pdf, p. 52, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

11. Luciana Lazarescu (et. al.), *The Impact of Immigration upon the Romanian Labour Market, (Impactul Imigratiei asupra Pietei Muncii din Romania)*", (EMINET Raport, Bucharest: 2016), http://eminet.ccdi.ro/sites/default/files/arps/EMINET_Raport%20Impactul%20migratiei%20pe%20piata%20muncii.pdf, p. 100, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

12. Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Second Report of the Committee of Experts in Respect to Romania*, 21 December 2017, https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016807766d3#_ftn1, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

13. *The State and the Religious Affairs*, (Statul și cultele religioase), (State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, Bucharest: 2018), <http://culte.gov.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/BookRO.pdf>, p. 162.

14. Andrei Crăciun and Vlad Stoicescu, "Let There Be Light, Open Islam!" (Să fie Lumina, Islam deschide-te!), Să fie Lumina, 8 February 2018, <https://safielumina.ro/islam-deschide-te/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

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. In February 2018, the NCCD ruled that the professor's statements constitute discrimination, limit the right to education, and infringe the right to dignity, and issued a fine for RON 2000 (about EUR 430).¹⁵

Politics

Romania's decision in November 2018 to adopt the UN Global Compact for Migration reignited the debate on migration which wasn't present on the public and political agenda throughout the year. However, in the context of a variety of views among European Union Member States and as the 2018 President of the European Union Council, Romania considered it "important to maintain a balanced approach". As such, the delegation abstained from the final vote.¹⁶ Earlier in the month, small protests against signing the treaty were organised by nationalistic, racist, and xenophobic organisations in Bucharest and other cities.¹⁷

In April 2017, the nationalistic parties United Romania Party (PRU), the Greater Romania Party (PRM), and *Noua Dreaptă* (PND) formed an alliance, the National Identity Bloc in Europe (BINE), with the objective of participating in the upcoming elections for the European Parliament as well as presidential, local, and legislative elections that will take place during 2019 and 2020.¹⁸ All three parties made derogatory statements and encouraged negative attitudes towards immigrants and Muslims. In December 2018, *Noua Dreaptă* (PND) also sponsored street protests against the adoption of the UN Global Compact for Migration considering that the pact would transform Romania into "a colony saturated with Muslims and Africans".¹⁹ The protests were low in turnout and impact.

15. "Press Release on the Decisions Taken by the CNCD College of Directors in the Meeting of 22.02.2018", (Comunicat de presă referitor la hotărârile adoptate de Colegiul director al CNCD în ședința din data de 22.02.2018), NCCD, 22 February 2018, <http://cncd.org.ro/2018-02-22-comunicat-de-presa-referitor-la-hotararile-adoptate-de-colegiul-director-al-cncd-in-edin-a-din-data-de-22-02-2018>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

16. "Romania Abstained from the Final Vote on the UN Migration Pact", (România s-a abținut la votul de la ONU privind Pactul pentru migrație), Digi24, 24 December 2018, <https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/mapamond/romania-s-a-abtinut-la-votul-de-la-onu-privind-pactul-pentru-migratie-1054867>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

17. "The Romanians Who Do Not Understand Anything about Migration, But Protest about the 'Colonization of the Country' (Românii care nu înțeleg nimic din migrație, dar protestează față de 'colonizarea țării")", Vice.

18. Liviu Dadacus, "The PRU, PRM and PND Nationalistic Parties Will Form a Political Alliance Called in Short BINE", (Partidele naționaliste PRU, PRM și PND vor constitui o alianță politică, intitulată prescurtat BINE), Mediafax, 2 April 2017, <https://www.mediafax.ro/politic/foto-partidele-nationaliste-pru-prm-si-pnd-vor-constitui-o-aliana-politica-intitulata-prescurtat-bine-16217815>, (Access date: 6 September 2019).

19. "Nationalists, United as Never Before in the Year of the Centenary!", (Naționaliștii, mai uniți ca niciodată în anul centenarului!), Noua Dreaptă, 24 December 2018, <https://www.nouadreapta.org/noua-dreapta-actiuni.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

The centre-right People's Movement Party (PMP) founded by former President of Romania Traian Basescu 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.

The project of building a large mosque in Bucharest initiated in 2015 after an agreement between the Romanian and Turkish governments was cancelled in 2018. The Romanian Muftiyat, which represents Muslims in the country, said they could not afford the overall costs of this investment. However, Turkey's ambassador to Bucharest told Romanian journalists that Ankara would not insist on concluding the project if it threatened bilateral relations with Bucharest.²⁰ The project was criticised by a series of Romanian politicians in previous years and sparked some protests by small right-wing and anti-Islamic groups.

Media

The media discourses in Romania overemphasised the “Islamic threat” by perpetuating the idea of the imminent “Muslim invasion” and its “dangerous impact” on the European Union.

As immigration has been mainly a non-issue on the public agenda during the year, only a small number of nationalistic and Orthodox media outlets continued to report on immigration issues using stereotypes, bombastic headlines, and factual misrepresentations of Muslims for gaining online exposure. Several mainstream media outlets also published depictions of Muslims using stereotypes, often taking facts out of context, or deliberately publishing fake news to manipulate public opinion. Below are a number of headlines that illustrate this kind of approach.



Figure 2: “The Silent Jihad. Alarming Discoveries about the Muslim Immigrants, in an Undercover Investigation. Radical Islam and Hatred towards Europeans” (Jihadul tăcut. Dezvăluiri alarmante despre imigranții musulmani, într-o investigație sub acoperire. Islam radical și dispreț față de europeni)²¹.

20. Ana Maria Luca, “Romanian Muslims Cancel Grand Mosque Project”, Balkan Insight, 18 July 2018, Balkan Insight, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/romania-muslim-cult-tables-turkish-grand-mosque-project-07-17-2018>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

21. “The Silent Jihad. Alarming Discoveries about the Muslim Immigrants, in an Undercover Investigation. Radical Islam and Hatred towards Europeans”, (Jihadul tăcut. Dezvăluiri alarmante despre imigranții musulmani, într-o investigație sub acoperire. Islam radical și dispreț față de europeni), Evenimentul Zilei, 25 February 2018, <https://evz.ro/jihad-tacut-imigranti-musulmani.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 3: "Germany Expels Europeans out of the Country and Muslim Refugees Are Paid to Stay" (Germania expulzează europeni din țară, iar refugiații musulmani sunt plătiți să rămână)²², *Napoca News*, 23 September 2018, <http://www.napocanews.ro/2018/09/germania-expulzeaza-europeni-din-tara-iar-refugiatii-musulmanii-sunt-platiti-sa-ramana.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 4: "PRO-ISLAM Manipulating Advertising Panels in Large Cities. Do the Authorities Notice to Take Them Down?" (Panouri publicitare manipuloare PRO-ISLAM în orașele mari. Pe acestea nu se sesizează nimeni să le dea JOS?).²³



Figure 5: "Liberty for Immigrants in Romania! Iohannis and Dancila Open Wide the Borders for Anyone" (Liber pentru migranți în România! Iohannis și Dăncilă deschid larg granițele pentru oricine)²⁴, *Evenimentul Zilei*, 29 November 2018, <https://evz.ro/iohannis-dancila-migranti.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. "Germany Expels Europeans out of the Country and Muslim Refugees Are Paid to Stay", (Germania expulzează europeni din țară, iar refugiații musulmani sunt plătiți să rămână), *Napoca News*, 23 September 2018, <http://www.napocanews.ro/2018/09/germania-expulzeaza-europeni-din-tara-iar-refugiatii-musulmanii-sunt-platiti-sa-ramana.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

23. "PRO-ISLAM Manipulating Advertising Panels in Large Cities. Do the Authorities Notice to Take Them Down?", (Panouri publicitare manipuloare PRO-ISLAM în orașele mari. Pe acestea nu se sesizează nimeni să le dea JOS?), *Ortodox Info*, 28 September 2018, <https://ortodoxinfo.ro/2018/09/28/panouri-publicitare-manipuloare-pro-islam-in-orasele-mari-pe-acestea-nu-se-sesizeaza-nimeni-sa-le-dea-jos/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. "Liberty for Immigrants in Romania! Iohannis and Dancila Open Wide the Borders for Anyone", (Liber pentru migranți în România! Iohannis și Dăncilă deschid larg granițele pentru oricine), *Evenimentul Zilei*, 29 November 2018, <https://evz.ro/iohannis-dancila-migranti.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 6. “The Migration Pact or How Soros Threaded the Camel through the Needle” (Pactul pentru Migrație sau cum Soros strecoară cămila prin urechile acului)²⁵, *România Liberă*, 4 December 2018, <https://romanalibera.ro/opinii/pactul-pentru-migratie-sau-cum-soros-strecoara-camila-prin-urechile-acului-763819> (Access date: 8 January 2019).

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 were registered during the reporting period.

Justice System

The most significant legal development affecting the rights of Muslims that took place during the year was the rejection of the draft bill proposing to prohibit covering the face in educational institutions without providing for a religious exemption.

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. Initiated in December 2017 by a group of 26 MPs from the three parliamentary parties Popular Movement Party (PMP), Alliance of Liberals and Democrats Party (ALDE), and the National Liberal Party (PNL), the bill received a negative advisory opinion from the government and was overwhelmingly rejected by the Chamber of Deputies in April 2018. The bill was further submitted for assessment to the Senate.²⁶

Critics of the proposal have pointed out that there are very few women in Romania who wear such coverings.²⁷ Furthermore, the president of the national equal-

25. “The Migration Pact or How Soros Threaded the Camel through the Needle”, (Pactul pentru Migrație sau cum Soros strecoară cămila prin urechile acului), *România Liberă*, 4 December 2018, <https://romanalibera.ro/opinii/pactul-pentru-migratie-sau-cum-soros-strecoara-camila-prin-urechile-acului-763819> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

26. At the time of writing this report, there weren’t any developments: http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck2015.proiect?idp=16761.

27. 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 Yilmaz, 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?)”, *Adevărul*, 22 December 2017, http://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/lege-antiburka-scolile-romania-masura-siguran-ta-manifestare-urii-fata-islam--1_5a3bdf44d7af743f8d957e58/index.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019). There were no other figures on women wearing the Islamic veil in Romania in the sources consulted.

ity body has stated that “the association of the Islamic veil with terrorism is a proof of hate speech against a minority culture in Romania”.²⁸

Internet

Romania has its own radical groups that have been fuelled mostly by the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 and that still actively promote anti-Muslim sentiment - although with less frequency - in the context of migration in the European Union and the recent adoption of the UN pact on migration. Most anti-immigration, anti-Islamist activists have ties with nationalistic movements such as the New Right party (*Noua Dreaptă*).

An EU assessment of the removal of online hate speech by IT companies in the online environment published in January 2018 found that across the EU hate speech has been directed most commonly towards ethnic origin (17.1%), anti-Muslim hatred (16.4%), and xenophobia (16%). In Romania, 63 such cases of illegal online hate speech have been reported, with a rate of removal from the online platforms of 76.2%.²⁹

The Facebook page “We don’t want a mega-mosque in Bucharest”,³⁰ created to oppose the building of a grand mosque in Bucharest, although not as active as in the past years, has saluted the cancellation of the construction, considering it a victory and a consequence of the protests they organised against the project. The page still posts or shares anti-Muslim content frequently that receives moderate engagement, such as the racist photo shared on 30 November, 2018 that states, “Over 60% of refugees are Muslims. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait are all 99% Islamic countries and ZERO refugee intake. This PROVES they’re INVADERS – not REFUGEES” (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. “Over 60% of refugees are Muslims. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait are all 99% Islamic countries and ZERO refugee intake. This PROVES they’re INVADERS – not REFUGEES”³¹

28. Ibid.

29. “Results of Commission’s Last Round of Monitoring of the Code of Conduct against Online Hate Speech”, European Commission Directorate for Justice and Consumers, http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/document.cfm?doc_id=49286, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

30. The page can be consulted here: <https://www.facebook.com/NuVremMegaMoscheeInBucuresti/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

31. The post can be consulted here: <https://www.facebook.com/NuVremMegaMoscheeInBucuresti/posts/920071684849885>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The main actors that are promoting Islamophobia are small far-right movements and parties that combine a nationalistic agenda, strong Orthodox Christian religious convictions, and elements of the fascist ideology of the Legionary Movement (the Romanian fascist movement during World War II). They are active in trying to gain public exposure and political support by adopting a strong stance on immigration and xenophobic rhetoric.

Most of these movements are relatively obscure and group themselves around the more established *Noua Dreaptă* (PND), which was registered as a political party in 2015. The PND is known to have branches abroad, including the Republic of Moldova and according to some sources it also maintains political relations with similar anti-European and anti-NATO groups from different countries.³²

During the year, the PND and other lesser known movements³³ have been at the forefront of organising the protests against the adoption of the UN Global Compact for Migration. Their exposure and impact, however, has been minimal.

The parliamentary party People's Movement Party (PMP) has been the main initiator of the 2017 legislative proposal to ban face covering in educational institutions. (See Justice System section). PMP senator Vasile Cristian Lungu has advocated for the rejection of the UN Global Compact for Migration stating that most refugees originating from Syria and Iraq are “young, illiterate or semi-illiterate men, without papers, and this fact must be emphasised, overwhelmingly, of Muslim religion” and that in European cities the “violent crimes - especially rape, crimes and robberies, and terrorist attacks are committed in overwhelming numbers by Muslims”.³⁴

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The National Council for Combatting Discrimination has become increasingly effective in its work. It has received a growing number of petitions over the years

32. William Totok, “Small Glossary of Movements That Oppose Romania Signing the UN Migration Pact”, (Mic glosar al mișcărilor care se opun semnării de către România a Pactului ONU pentru Migrație), Radio Free Europe, 5 December 2018, <https://www.europalibera.org/a/mic-glosar-al-mi%C5%9Fc%C4%83rilor-care-se-opun-semn%C4%83rii-de-c%C4%83tre-rom%C3%A2nia-a-pactului-pentru-migra%C8%9Bie/29639490.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. The 13 signatories of the December 2018 “March against the colonisation of Romania” were *Asociația Noua Dreaptă, Frăția Ortodoxă Sfântul Mare Mucenic Gheorghe, Asociația pentru Cultură, Educație și Valori Europene, Asociația Bucovina Profundă, Asociația Calea Neamului, Asociația Gogu Puiu, Asociația Pro Consumatori, Asociația pentru Revigorarea Tradiției, Asociația Scut Botoșănean, Fundația Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu, Fundația Sfinții Martiri Brâncoveni și Asociația pentru Toleranță în Spațiul Public*.

34. Vasile-Christian Lungu, “Migration Global Pact or How to Cancel the Romanian Constitution” (Pactul Global pentru Migrație sau cum să anulezi Constituția României), *Adevărul*, 28 November 2018, https://adevarul.ro/news/societate/pactul-global-migrație-anulezi-constituția-româniei-1_5bfe55badf52022f75e26bc1/index.html, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

and has provided its expert opinion on judicial proceedings.³⁵ The equality body's activity has, however, been criticised by conservative politicians who view it as the "policeman of political correctness" and there are more and more calls in the public space targeting the NCCD. The vice-president of the National Liberal Party (PNL) Ben Oni Ardelean and other politicians asked for the institution to be closed down. He specified that "the NCCD is a Gestapo-type institution which does nothing else but trying to oppress any form of freedom of expression as well as belief and religious freedom".³⁶

The NCCD partnered with 20 other organisations across seven European countries, including four national ministries, several regional public authorities, universities, and NGOs on an Erasmus project to combat radicalisation and promote inclusion.³⁷

The Coalition for the Rights of Migrants and Refugees (CDMiR), established in 2017 by a group of eleven Romanian NGOs active in the field of migration, human rights, and public policies, welcomed four more members in 2018, including the national branches of two prestigious international organisations, Save the Children and Terre des Hommes. The CDMiR now has 20 NGO members, and four supporters (three academic institutions and the Romanian UNHCR Office) and strives to improve the perception of migrants and refugees in the public space, and advocates for the improvement of their access to basic rights and services. The coalition's priorities going forward focus on education, citizenship, and access to the labour market.

The main NGOs committed to protecting and advancing the interests of Muslims in Romania are *Centrul Cultural Islamic "Islamul Azi"* (The Islamic Cultural Centre "Islam Today")³⁸ and *Liga Islamica si Culturala din Romania* (The Islamic and Cultural League in Romania).³⁹

ActiveWatch is a human rights organisation that advocates for free communication for public interest. Among other activities, ActiveWatch strives to tackle racism and discrimination in the media and produces an annual report on hate speech in Romania.⁴⁰

35. UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Official Documents System of the United Nations, 5 April 2018, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/084/74/PDF/G1808474.pdf?OpenElement>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

36. Marinela Angheluş, "Ben-Oni Ardelean Wants to Abolish the NCCD: It's a Gestapo-Type Institution. It Stops Free Expression!", (Ben-Oni Ardelean vrea desfiinţarea CNCD-ului: E o instituţie de tip Gestapo. Oprează exprimarea liberă!), PS News, 17 October 2018, <https://psnews.ro/ben-oni-ardelean-vrea-desfiintarea-cncd-ului-e-o-institutie-de-tip-gestapo-opreaza-exprimarea-libera-exclusiv-236421/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

37. IARS Press Release, €1.5m Youth-Led Project Funded by Erasmus to Tackle Radicalisation and Promote Inclusion, 1 March 2017, The IARS International Institute, http://api.components.ro/uploads/1d3a0bf8b95391b825aa56853282d5da/2017/03/IARS_PR_YEIP_announcement_1.3.17.pdf, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

38. IslamulAzi, <http://www.islamulazi.ro/>.

39. IslamRomania, <https://islamromania.ro/contact/>.

40. ActiveWatch, <https://activewatch.ro/ro/acasa/>.

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 in populist speeches by politicians, have facilitated a growing trend of manifestations of intolerance and hate speech towards Muslims. The authorities' lack of preparation, collaboration, and interest in tackling racism and discrimination, as well as the civil society's insufficient resources to provide support are the main issues that need to be addressed.

- Authorities should adopt a strategy on preventing and combatting discrimination, and annual action plans for its implementation.
- Relevant authorities should develop and promote the harmonisation of data collection in areas of hate crime and racism, recognising anti-Muslim bias as a category.
- Including hate crime and speech as well as anti-discrimination legislation in the compulsory initial and continuous training of all law enforcement and legal professionals.
- Implementing a long-term monitoring mechanism to prevent ethnic and Islamophobic hatred in mass media and cyberspace.
- Initiating a collaboration between competent authorities in the field of immigration, labour and institutions combating discrimination and NGOs in order to elaborate integrated public policies.
- NGOs should strengthen their relationship with the Muslim community and enhance their legal capacity to assist victims of discrimination and hate crime.

Chronology

- **22.02.2018:** A fine for discrimination, limiting the right to education, and infringing on the right to dignity was issued by the NCCD for a professor of Political Science at the University of Bucharest who asked a Muslim student not to wear the Islamic veil during class.⁴¹
- **18.04.2018:** The draft bill proposing to prohibit covering the face in educational institutions without providing for a religious exemption was overwhelmingly rejected by the Chamber of Deputies. The bill was further submitted for assessment to the Senate.⁴²

41. "Press Release on the Decisions Taken by the CNCD College of Directors in the Meeting of 22.02.2018", (Comunicat de presă referitor la hotărârile adoptate de Colegiul director al CNCD în ședința din data de 22.02.2018), NCCD, (Access date: 3 September 2019)

42. At the time of writing this report, there weren't any developments: http://www.cdep.ro/pls/proiecte/upl_pck2015.proiect?idp=16761.

- **05.12.2018:** A protest organised by nationalistic movements against the adoption of the UN Global Compact for Migration took place in Bucharest.⁴³

43. “The Romanians Who Do Not Understand Anything about Migration, But Protest about the ‘Colonisation of the Country’”, (Românii care nu înțeleg nimic din migrație, dar protestează față de ‘colonizarea țării’), Vice.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SERBIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.

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Executive Summary

Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić, who were among the most prominent advocates of the nationalist politics which resulted in the crimes during the nineties, came to power in 2012 when they seized power from the pro-democratic political parties that had ousted the nationalist regime of Slobodan Milošević back in 2000. From 2012 to the present day, there is a process of systematic political rehabilitation of people who played the most sinister role in the events during the 1990s, together with the process of the reaffirmation of the nationalist ideology of Great Serbia.

In such an atmosphere, anti-Muslim sentiment and narrative are on the rise, which is most evident in pro-government media and the rise of right-wing organizations. Needless to say, in addition to the hate speech present in the media on a daily basis, we are witnessing a resurgence of the most vicious Serbian Islamophobes in various fields of the public sphere, championed by the same extremists from the 1990s.

Serbia's cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and the prosecution of war crimes suspects from the 1990s before local courts of law was on a very low level. Likewise, in July 2018, the Court of Appeals in Belgrade upheld the acquittal of the members of paramilitary unit "Sima's Chetniks" for the demolition of the mosque and the murder of 27 Roma Muslims in the village of Skočić, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1992. Furthermore, those responsible for crimes committed in the 1990s in the Serbian territory, i.e. in Sandžak, have not been prosecuted.

Ultimately, one of the crucial problems that Serbia is facing regarding Islamophobia and tackling it is the lack of any available data on hate crimes. The report from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination stressed their concern resulting from the fact that Serbia has no available statistical data or any other information regarding claims and appeals, investigations or outcomes in cases of offences committed from religious, racial, national, or ethnic hatred. The conclusions from this report refer to the lack of statistical information not only in cases of particular physical assaults, but also in instances of hate speech in the public sphere, the media, and the Internet. For the reasons mentioned in the committee's conclusion it is actually impossible to provide accurate information regarding physical assaults and verbal attacks against Muslims, or members of predominantly Islamic ethnic groups, such as Bosniaks, Albanians, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians.

Izvršni rezime

Tomislav Nikolić i Aleksandar Vučić jedni od najznačajnijih prtagonista velikosrpske nacionalističke politike koja je dovela do zločina tokom devedesetih godina došli suponovo na vlast 2012. godine kada su smenili prodemokratske snage koje su 2000. godine srušile s vlasti nacionalistički režim Slobodana Miloševića. Od 2012. Pa do danas odvija se sistematična rehabilitacija ličnosti koje su imale najmračniju ulogu u dešavanjima tokom devedesetih, kao i ponovna reafirmacija veliko srpske nacionalističke ideologije. U takvoj atmosferi dolazi i do izuzetnog porasta antimuslimanskog narativa koji se pre svega ogleda u radu prorežimskih medija, kao i jačanju ultra-desničarskih organizacija. Naravno, osim govora mržnje u medijima došlo je i do pop-tunog povratka na javnu scenu najstrašćenijih srbijanskih islamofoba iz devedesetih godina u najrazličitijim segmentima društva.

Osim toga, Evropska komisija je u izveštaju za 2018. godine ocenila saradnju Srbije sa Haškim sudom, kao i procesuiranje osumnjičenih za ratne zločine tokom devedesetih godina pred domaćim sudovima, veoma niskom ocenom. Takođe u julu ove godine Apelacioni sud u Beogradu potvrdio je oslobađajuću presudu protiv pripadnika jedinice "Simini četnici" za rušenje džamije i za ubistvo 27 Roma muslimana u selu Skočić, u Bosni i Hercegovini, u julu 1992. godine. Isto tako, odgovorni za zločine počinjene na samoj teritoriji Srbije – konkretno u Sandžačkoj regiji tokom devedesetih godina – takođe nisu još uvek procesuirani.

Takođe, jedan od krucijalnih problema s kojim se Srbija suočava kada je reč o islamofobiji i borbi protiv nje, jeste nepostojanje dostupnih podataka koji se tiču zločina počinjenih iz mržnje. U svojim zaključnim zapažanjima iz decembra 2017. godine Komitet za eliminaciju rasne diskriminacije pri Ujedinjenim nacijama izrazio je zabrinutost jer Srbija ne raspolaže statističkim, niti bilo kakvim drugim podacima, o pritužbama, istragama i ishodima za slučajeve koji su počinjeni iz verske, rasne ili nacionalno-etničke mržnje. Zaključci se odnose na nepostojanje statističkih podataka ne samo u slučajevima konkretnih fizičkih napada, već i na govor mržnje u javnom, medijskom i virtuelnom prostoru. Posledicom toga nemoguće je dati tačne podatke koji se odnose na fizičke i verbalne napada na muslimane, kao i na pripadnike etničkih zajednica koje su predominantno islamske veroispovesti poput Bošnjaka, Albanaca, Roma, Aškalija i Egipćana.

Country Profile

Country: Serbia

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary Republic

Ruling Parties: Serbian Progressive Party (populist conservative party)

Opposition Parties: See Below.

Last Elections: 2017 Presidential Election (Leader of Serbian Progressive Party Aleksandar Vučić won 55.08% of the vote against 16.36% of independent candidate Aleksandar Saša Janković); 2016 Parliamentary Election (Populist Conservative Coalition around Serbian Progressive Party 131 seats, Socialist Party of Serbia [the party which was led during the nineties by Slobodan Milošević] 29 seats, Far-Right Serbian Radical Party 22 seats, Center-Left Coalition around Democratic Party 16 seats, Neoliberal Movement “Enough is enough. Restart” 16 seats, Far-Right Movement “Dveri” and Democratic Party of Serbia 13 seats, etc.)

Total Population: 7.03 million (in 2017)

Major Languages: Serbian

Official Religion: No state religion. The dominant Serbian Orthodox Church and other “traditional” religious communities receive preferential status based on the “Law on Churches and Religious Communities” adopted in 2006.

Statistics on Islamophobia: No official/unofficial statistics available.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: No official/unofficial statistics available.

Major Religions (% of Population): Orthodox Christianity (84.59%), Catholicism (4.97%), Islam (3.10%), Protestantism (0.99%), No religion (1.11%), Others (5.24%).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 222,829 people (3.1%) in 2011 (official census). This number is without Albanians who boycotted the census as well as significant number of Bosniaks. The reason why they boycotted the census is that they didn't have questionnaires in their mother tongue. Also, the number of Roma and Ashkali Muslims is much higher, because of extremely poor conditions they don't possess any documents so they remain “unrecognized citizens”. The number of Muslims living in Serbia is approximately around 400.000-500.000.

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Islamic Community in Serbia; Islamic Community of Serbia.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: There is no particular NGO that deals with Islamophobia. Data and work is done only by certain individuals.

Far-Right Parties: Serbian Radical Party, Movement “Dveri”, Democratic Party of Serbia.

Far-Right Movements: Otadžbinski pokret Obraz, Srpski sabor Zavetnici, Srpski narodni pokret “Naši”, Srpski narodni pokret “1389”, Nacionalni srpski front, Organizacija “Alternativa.”

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

It is not possible to understand the current status of Muslims in Serbia without referring to the nationalist ideology of Great Serbia, which was formed back in the 19th century, in the times of liberation from the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The perception of Muslims as the archetypical enemy, that is, the epitome of the Other, is probably one of the key factors that constitute the Serbian nationalist identity. It is precisely on that basis that on several occasions in the 20th century, the Serbs perpetrated ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Muslim population living in the territories of Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The last in a series of crimes against the Muslim population was carried out in the wake of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, and it took place in the territories of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the Republic of Kosovo. During that period, the Serbian forces held Sarajevo under siege for three years, and were responsible for mass killings in the locality of Prijedor Municipality, the genocide against Muslims in Srebrenica, as well as ethnic cleansing committed against the Albanian population in Kosovo. Tomislav Nikolić and Aleksandar Vučić, who were among the most prominent advocates of the nationalist politics which resulted in those crimes, came to power in 2012 once again, when they seized power from the pro-democratic political parties that had ousted the nationalist regime of Slobodan Milošević back in 2000.¹ From 2012 to the present day, there is a process of systematic political rehabilitation of people who played the most sinister role in the events during the 1990s, alongside the process of reaffirmation of the nationalist ideology of Great Serbia. In such an atmosphere, anti-Muslim sentiment and narrative are on the rise, which is most evident in pro-government media and the rise of right-wing organizations. Needless to say, in addition to the hate speech present in the media on a daily basis, we are witnessing a resurgence of Islamophobia in various fields of the public sphere, championed by the same extremists from the 1990s - an issue that will be addressed in more detail later in this report.

The main features of the Serbian national identity are best described in a recent Pew Research Center study published in 2018 entitled *Eastern and Western Europeans Differ on Importance of Religion, Views on Minorities, and Key Social Issues*. As much as 78% of the Serbian citizens believe that religion (in this case, Orthodox Christianity) is the key aspect of their national identity. Likewise, 78% of Serbs believe that “their culture is superior to other cultures,” a fact that positions them among the

1. Tomislav Nikolić was vice-president and Aleksandar Vučić secretary general of the ultra-nationalist Serbian Radical Party, which sent volunteers to war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. From its foundation to the present day, the leader of this right-wing party has been Vojislav Šešelj who was found guilty at The Hague Tribunal and sentenced to 10 years in prison for instigating crimes with his nationalist speeches, given in Vojvodina back in 1992, during the war. Moreover, one of the most notorious statements given by Aleksandar Vučić, currently the Serbian president, dating from that period came barely a few days after the genocide in Srebrenica, when at the National Parliament he publicly said, “For every Serb killed, we will kill 100 Muslims.”

top-rated nations in that respect. Within the context of their views on Islam, namely when asked if they would accept a Muslim as a member of their family, only 43% answered positively.² This statistical data undoubtedly testifies to the exclusivist and racist nature of Serbian national identity.

However, it is important to point out that the current opposition parties, which led to the toppling of the regime of Slobodan Milošević back in 2000, are largely pro-nationalist as well. It is precisely this fact that best explains why there has basically been no fundamental political change after the fall of Milošević, and consequently no coming to terms with the past and the crimes committed. In other words, one of the greatest problems in Serbian politics is the current lack of any significant alternative force which could result in the affirmation of a civic identity open to the inclusion of members of other ethnicities and different religious denominations and confessions.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In the conclusion of their report from December 2017, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination stressed their concern resulting from the fact that Serbia has no available statistical data or any other information regarding claims and appeals, investigations or outcomes in cases of offences committed from religious, racial, national, or ethnic hatred. The conclusions from this report refer to the lack of statistical information not only on cases of particular physical assaults, but also on instances of hate speech in the public sphere, the media, and the Internet.³ For the reasons mentioned in the committee's conclusion it is actually impossible to provide accurate information regarding physical assaults and verbal attacks against Muslims, or members of predominantly Islamic ethnic groups, such as Bosniaks, Albanians, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians. Therefore, for the requirements of this report, it was necessary to conduct a series of interviews with representatives of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as Belgrade Centre for Human Rights, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, Roma Center for Women and Children "Daje", Sandžak Committee for Human Rights, the NGO Lighthouse (*Svetionik*) from Novi Pazar, as well as official representatives from the Bosniac National Council, Roma National Council, Egyp-

2. This number should be taken with due caution, given that there are some public opinion polls that claim this percentage is significantly lower if the question is defined in terms of ethnicity. In general, Bosniaks, Roma, and Albanians are the least wanted as family members.

3. The report of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is available at: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/SRB/CERD_C_SRB_CO_2-5_29702_E.pdf (Access date: 2 September 2019).

tian National Council, and Ashkali National Council. I also talked with representatives of two Islamic communities active in Serbia, that is, the Islamic Community of Serbia and the Islamic Community in Serbia. The most brutal physical assault took place on 7 October, in Novi Sad, when two young men of Albanian ethnicity were beaten up by four men of Serbian ethnicity. As a consequence of this attack, the life of one of the Albanians was in danger, but he was given adequate medical assistance and eventually his condition became stable. One of the young men who were attacked said that they were assaulted when a group of young men standing nearby heard him speak to his friend in Albanian. This incident also provoked an official reaction by the Albanian National Council in Serbia.⁴



Figure 1: Left: followers of the Serbian Radical Party start to gather in front of the Orthodox Saint Sava Church. Middle: Vojislav Šešelj, leader of the Serbian Radical Party. Right: protesters clash with the police forces.

There was another case which should be mentioned. It was a series of incidents related to the festival “Mirdita, Hello” organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights. The festival was focused on the Kosovar cultural scene and the works of Albanian artists, with the aim of normalizing the relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Two days before the festival was to take place, ultranationalist right-wing parliamentary party Dveri and the Democratic Party of Serbia organized a street protest under the slogan “Mirdita, Goodbye.” This protest was held without any major incidents. However, on the day the festival was inaugurated there was another protest which was organized by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) led by convicted war criminal Vojislav Šešelj, which prompted police forces to intervene in order to protect the participants at the festival from the protesters. During the incident numerous cases of hate speech occurred based on racial and religious discrimination. This led to legal charges against the offenders being pressed, which will be commented in more detail further on in this report.

In addition to the assault mentioned above, there were also other incidents that took place at sports events. One of the major incidents was when during the basketball game played by their club against Olympiakos from Greece, the Red Star fans displayed a banner which read, “*Shqiptars, Croats, Balija* ain’t no brothers of mine.” This was a protest because the club had just signed Alen Omić, a player of Bosniak

4. “Dva Albanca pretučena u Novom Sadu, jedan životno ugrožen”, *Danas*, 7 October 2018, <https://www.danas.rs/drustvo/dva-albanca-pretucena-u-novom-sadu-jedan-zivotno-ugrozen/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

ethnicity. During the game, the Red Star fans also displayed another banner which read, “We thank the management for all the joy and trophies, but don’t count on us while there are unwanted players,” which was a clear message that they would boycott the games as long as Muslim player Omić played for their club.



Figure 2: Banner displayed during the game played between Red Star and Olympiakos, which reads, “*Šiqiptars, Croats and Baliija* (derogative term for Turks and South Slavs who accepted Islam) ain’t no brothers of mine.”⁵

Furthermore, it has become quite common that derogatory graffiti is sprayed across houses in which Muslim families live. Following the football match played between Switzerland and Serbia at the World Cup in Russia, when the Swiss player Xherdan Shaqiri celebrated scoring the goal which sealed the victory against Serbia by making the sign of two-headed eagle, the emblem from the Albanian flag, the wall of the Alomerović family house in Belgrade was sprayed with the graffiti “Kosovo and Metohija are Serbian lands.” Around the same time, eggs were thrown at the house of another family living in the same Belgrade vicinity.



Figure 3: Wall surrounding the Alomerović family house in Belgrade.⁶

Employment

As in the case of physical and verbal assaults, there are no official statistics or information regarding cases of discrimination in employment on a religious, racial, na-

5. “Delije’ Brutalno Dočekale Omića: ‘Šiptar, Hrvat, Baliija Nisu Moja Bratija!’”, *Novosti*, 26 January, 2018, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/sport.295.html:708442-DELIJE-BRUTALNO-DOCEKALE-OMICA-Siptar-Hrvat-Baliija-nisu-moja-bratija>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

6. The photograph of the Alomerović family house was provided to the author by the family members.

tional, or ethnic basis in Serbia. However, there is no doubt that it is the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptians who definitely face discrimination the most. Representatives of their respective national councils said that they actually face “double discrimination”: firstly based on their skin color, and secondly based on their religion.⁷ Moreover, the situation described in the previous annual report regarding unemployment in areas with predominantly Muslim population, such as Sandžak (Bosniak population) and the Preshevo Valley (Albanian population) has remained the same. It is important to point out that the average salary in Sandžak, in particular in the town of Novi Pazar, is the lowest in entire Serbia. In January 2018, the average salary in Serbia amounted to RSD 50,048 (approximately EUR 425), whereas in Novi Pazar it only amounted to RSD 38,423 (approximately EUR 325).⁸ In addition to this imbalance in income, another problem stressed by all the representatives of councils of Islamic ethnic minorities is the fact that there is inequality with regard to the percentage of employees at state institutions with national structure. This is indirectly related to the number of employees in the police and judiciary.

Education

With regard to the issue of education, members of Islamic ethnic minorities face significant problems. In the first place, there is a problem with the textbooks for primary and secondary schools in the languages of the respective ethnic minorities, as well as the formation of classes for Bosniak and Albanian children. Talking to the representative of the Bosniak National Council, we were informed that they are under constant pressure by school principals and teachers for their children not to enrol in Bosniak classes. Moreover, there are no textbooks in minority languages for vocational secondary schools such as ones for medicine, economics, and art design.

Likewise, since its introduction back in 2001, classes of religious education at schools are a huge problem for Muslims. Representatives of the Islamic community stated that Muslims face systematic discrimination and a whole range of practices aimed at hindering the implementation of the law on religious education for Muslim children.⁹

Nevertheless, as is the case with other issues, it is the children from Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian ethnic minorities who are least favored and find themselves in the worst situation. Only 6% of Roma children enroll in preschool institutions, and 46% of them complete obligatory primary school education, while barely 13% finish high school, with the number of girls being half that of boys. These figures are

7. In conversation with representatives of the Ashkali community, we were informed that in the case of this ethnic group unemployment rate hovers around 90%.

8. S. Novosel, “Novopazarske plate na začelju”, *Danas*, 27 March, 2018, <https://www.danas.rs/ekonomija/novopazarske-plate-na-zacelju>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

9. For more information about Islamic religious education in Serbia see Ivan Ejub Kostić, “Serbia”, *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, ed. Scharbrodt, O., Volume: 8, (Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 603.

actually even lower in the case of Ashkali and Egyptian children who are not guaranteed affirmative actions as their Roma counterparts.

Meanwhile, the problem with history textbooks that was highlighted in the previous year's report on Serbia remains unchanged. The main problems are the completely "distorted representations of the Ottoman period and the depiction of the basics of Islamic faith and culture."¹⁰ These textbooks are widely in use not only among Serbian Orthodox children but among Albanian, Bosniak, and Roma children as well.

As regarding halal food in Serbian schools, preschool institutions and primary schools do not provide such meals for Muslim children.

Politics

As we already pointed out in the introduction, the biggest problem in the political arena is the revival of the political actors who held the power in the 1990s. At the moment, the ruling party in Serbia is the Serbian Progressive Party, which emerged from the extremist right-wing Serbian Radical Party, which was the most aggressive advocate of the nationalist ideology of Great Serbia. Moreover, the Serbian Progressive Party holds power in the coalition with the Socialist Party of Serbia, which ruled the country during the 1990s, and whose president was Slobodan Milošević. The ruling Serbian Progressive Party and the media under its influence use many occasions to spread narratives that are not necessarily openly anti-Muslim, but in general refer positively to events from the past when Muslims in the territory of the former Yugoslavia were expelled or murdered for their religion or ethnicity.¹¹ Serbian Muslims, who are also mostly members of ethnic minorities such as Bosniak, Albanian, Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian, feel insecure and threatened due to the re-emergence of such a political climate.

The most blatant instance of hate speech in the political arena in 2018 was when Vjerica Radeta, MP from the Serbian Radical Party, referring to the death of Hatidža Mehmedović, president of the civic association Mothers of Srebrenica, whose husband and two sons were murdered in the Srebrenica Genocide, posted on her Twitter profile: "I heard that the head of the Srebrenica businessmen's association Hatidža Mehmedović died. Who is going to bury her? Her husband or her sons?"¹²

10. Ivan Ejub Kostić, "Islamophobia in Serbia: National Report 2017", *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraklı & Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018), p. 548.

11. The reasons that most often serve as motive for hate speech include Serbia-Kosovo negotiations, as well as secessionist acts and the constant efforts to undermine the statehood of Bosnia and Herzegovina carried out by Milorad Dodik, currently chairman and Bosnian Serbs' representative at the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

12. For more about this tweet: Tony Wesolowsky, "Death of Outspoken Srebrenica Mother Mocked by Top Serbian Official", Radio Free Europe, 25 July 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/serbian-parliament-deputy-speaker-mocks-srebrenica-mother-s-death/29390764.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).



Figure 4: Vjerica Radeta's tweet.

What is more, The Hague Tribunal is currently conducting a legal procedure against Vjerica Radeta because during the trial against Vojslav Šešelj she influenced court witnesses by threatening or bribing them in order to change their statements or to drop their charges. In this year's report, the European Committee criticized the Serbian government because of their unwillingness to arrest Vjerica Radeta and to send her to The Hague Tribunal, and their failure to dismiss her from the National Parliament.¹³ In addition to this, Vjerica Radeta was also the most vocal in the call to prevent the festival "Mirdita, Hello" from taking place, which is why the Belgrade Center for Human Rights pressed criminal charges against her based on a number of her statements.

The speech by Aleksandar Vučić on 9 September at Lake Gazivode, located on the territory of Kosovo, is exceptionally important.¹⁴ During his speech, among other things, President Vučić said to the gathered Serbs that "Milošević was a great Serbian leader, his *intentions* were certainly *best*, but the results were bad." Such a statement by President Vučić clearly shows his stance on the ultra-nationalist politics of Slobodan Milošević, as well as his view that the sufferings of the Muslim population during the 1990s can be understood as "best intentions." Likewise, this statement makes it evident that he is only sorry that things turned out bad for "us" (Orthodox Serbs).¹⁵

In addition to President Vučić's controversial speech on that occasion, in which he actually rehabilitated Milošević's politics and relativized its effects, in an interview for *Deutsche Welle*, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić explicitly denied that there was a

13. "Serbia 2018 Report", European Commission, http://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/ec_progress_report_18.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. When considering this speech by President Vučić we must bear in mind that in 1989 Slobodan Milošević gave his famous speech at Gazimestan, which, as many historians believe, augured the forthcoming bloody disintegration of Yugoslavia.

15. Gordana Knežević, "Vučić's 'Great' Milosevic Remark Evokes Ghost of 'Greater Serbia'", Radio Free Europe, 12 September 2018, <https://www.rferl.org/a/vucic-s-great-milosevic-evokes-ghost-of-greater-serbia-/29486327.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

genocide in Srebrenica.¹⁶ Moreover, this instance of genocide denial by the prime minister was only one in a series of statements aiming to minimize the crimes committed during the 1990s, made by high-ranking officials from the ruling Serbian Radical Party, which bore no consequences for such claims.

The situation is no better among the so-called democratic opposition, which united in 2018 in the newly formed Alliance for Serbia. Political parties and movements united in this alliance also include the far-right clero-fascist movement Dveri, as well as the right-wing People's Party. In their public statements, representatives of the Serbian Movement Dveri usually deny the genocide in Srebrenica, while openly claiming that Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić are in a class with the greatest “heroes” in the entire Serbian history.¹⁷

Furthermore, the Serbian Movement Dveri staunchly advocates anti-immigrant policies. The most radical example of such a stance was the statement made by Srđan Nogo, MP from the ranks of the Dveri Movement, who said, referring to Prime Ministers' signature on the Dublin Regulation, that “she (Prime Minister Ana Brnabić) should be immediately hanged on Terazije Square. With (President) Aleksandar Vučić by her side.”¹⁸

The attitude of the state authorities toward the legal status of the Islamic community still remains a moot point. Since the breakup of Yugoslavia, there has been a number of Islamic communities active in Serbia. Since the Law on Churches and Religious Communities was passed back in 2006, the question of recognizing the legitimacy of a single Islamic community remains open. As a result of this situation, the restitution of property of the Islamic community is simply not possible, nor the exercise of rights guaranteed under the law.¹⁹ Regarding this issue, the European Commission in its aforementioned annual report stated that “the lack of transparency and consistency in the registration process of religious communities remains one of the main obstacles preventing some religious groups from exercising their rights.”²⁰

16. “Serbian PM Ana Brnabic: Srebrenica ‘a Terrible Crime,’ Not Genocide”, Deutsche Welle, 15 November 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/serbian-pm-ana-brnabic-srebrenica-a-terrible-crime-not-genocide/a-46307925>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

17. Xenophobic views advocated by Boško Obradović are most evident on the debate television show which featured Obradović and Vojislav Šešelj and aired on the TV channel Studio B during the campaign for the election of Belgrade mayor. Војвода Шешелј, ТВ ДУЕЛ: Проф. др Војислав Шешелј - Бошко Обрадовић - Студио Б - 24.02.2018, Youtube, 24 February 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDFdk9iKzo0>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

18. Srđan Nogo - Anu Brnabić treba obesiti na terazijama, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8s_jBW7axzU, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

19. No property confiscated after World War II claimed by the Islamic community has been returned. So far, the Islamic community has filed 56 requests for the restitution of property. In the cases of other religious communities and churches, the situation is far better. For instance, the Jewish community was given back 91% of its land and 67% of its buildings, whereas the Serbian Orthodox Church was given back 77% of its land and 28% of its buildings, and so on. For more information about the property returned until the end of 2018, see Jelena Calija, “Crkvama vraćeno 90 odsto oduzete imovine”, Politika, 28 October 2018, <http://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/414387/Crkvama-vrace-no-90-odsto-oduzete-imovine>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

20. “Serbia 2018 Report”, European Commission, http://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvestaji_ek_o_napretku/ec_progress_report_18.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Media

Since the Serbian Progressive Party came to power, traditional media such as television and the press became significantly less independent. The vast majority of TV channels with national frequencies (like TV Pink, Radio-Television of Serbia, Happy TV, TV Prva, etc.) are under direct or indirect control of the ruling power structures.²¹ As regarding the contents of its program, the most disreputable TV channel is undoubtedly the privately owned Happy TV. Its director is Milomir Marić, a journalist who also hosts the talk show “Cyrillic,” in which he often interviews Vojislav Šešelj, as well as other war criminals such as Veselin Šljivančanin, Vladimir Lazarević, and others. What is more, in November 2018, the morning show on Happy TV had a live broadcast of Ratko Mladić, who is responsible for the genocide in Srebrenica, while Vojislav Šešelj was in the TV studio. Mladić finished his appearance on this talk show by saying, “Kisses to all of you from Grandpa Ratko.”



Figure 5: Ratko Mladić live from The Hague on the air in the morning show hosted by Milomir Marić.²²

Just like in the previous year, tabloid newspapers, most flagrantly the daily *Informers*, regularly publish stories and articles with the most vulgar examples of hate speech. On a daily basis, its front pages feature headlines full of derogatory terms for the members of Albanian ethnicity, while openly sabre rattling and warmongering,

21. Gjeraqina Tuhina, “Izveštaj EK: Srbija nije napredovala u ključnim oblastima”, Radio Free Europe, 15 November 2018, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/evropska-komisija-interni-dokument-srbija-bez-napretka/29602334.html?fbclid=IwAR0dq_8k9Km7hOE4I80Ik9L6CXEDGOKAICHZylMurZxXdf15cHPstbBx-Tk, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

22. Jutarnji Program TV HAPPY, EKSKLUZIVNO - Telefonsko uključenje Ratka Mladica iz Haga!!! - DJS - (TV Happy 16.11.2018), Youtube, 16 November 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ILHfcl_YuI, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

constantly scaring the readers that Serbia is threatened by the Jihadists. To illustrate this, I enclose several photos of its front pages below.



Figure 6: Left: "ISIS Is Preparing a Massacre of Serbs in Kosovo." (11.10.2018) Middle: "Serbia under Al Qaeda's Siege." (27.09.2018) Right: "ISIS Has 46 Cells in Bosnia and Kosovo. They Are Preparing to Launch an Attack on Republic Srska and Serbia."(07.08.2018)



Figure 7: Left: "They Put a Knife to My Throat. They Shouted: Allahu Akhbar, and Cursed at My Mother, Serbia, Vučić, etc." (28.03.2018) Middle: "Thaçi Threatens: We're Gonna Kill All Serbian Soldiers." (31.03.2018) Right: "Shiptars Want a War." (8/9.09.2018)

Justice System

In its 2018 report, the European Commission assessed that Serbia's cooperation with The Hague Tribunal and the prosecution of war crimes suspects from the 1990s before local courts of law was at a very low level.²³ Likewise, in July 2018, the Court of Appeals in Belgrade upheld the acquittal of the members of paramilitary unit "Sima's Chetniks" for the demolition of the mosque and the murder of 27 Roma civilians in the village of Skočić, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1992.²⁴ Furthermore,

23. "Serbia 2018 Report", European Commission, http://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/eu_dokumenta/godisnji_izvjestaji_ek_o_napretku/ec_progress_report_18.pdf, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

24. Fonet, "Simini četnici" oslobođeni za ubistvo 27 romskih civila", *Novosti*, 5 July 2018, <http://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/dosije/aktuelno.292.html:736619-Simini-cetnici-oslobodjeni-za-ubistvo-27-romskih-civila>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

those responsible for crimes committed in the 1990s in the Serbian territory, i.e. in Sandžak, have not been prosecuted. In view of this fact, in June 2018, the Sandžak Committee for Human Rights in Novi Pazar held a conference under the title “Attitude of the State toward Crimes Committed in Sandžak in the 1990s.”

Moreover, historical revisionism of World War II is still in progress. On the other hand, the court ruling which rehabilitated the notorious Chetnik commander Nikola Kalabić, responsible for crimes against Roma Muslims, among other things, was referred back for retrial, while the motion to rehabilitate Milan Nedić, quisling prime minister of the Serbian government during World War II, was rejected.

In addition, a court sentence to five members of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights for interrupting a panel discussion held by the Serbian Progressive Party, on which the audience was addressed by Veselin Šljivančanin, convicted war criminal already mentioned above, also testifies to the current rehabilitation of those responsible for war crimes and the readiness of the state and the ruling party to allow them to freely take part in social and political life.

Internet

On the Internet, there is huge number of Facebook pages that spread xenophobic, nationalist, and extremist right-wing views and values. In addition to Facebook, YouTube is the main channel for promoting such ideas and contents. There are many YouTube channels where conversations with exponents of the far-right are posted and promoted. In the first place, such views are championed by the news channel Balkan Info, which in 2018 hosted many politicians, intellectuals, and public figures who advocate extreme anti-Islamic opinions. The most prominent of them are certainly Prof. Dr. Darko Tanasković, Prof. Dr. Miroljub Jevtić, Dr. Srdja Trifković, Dragan Vanja Bokan, Dževad Galijašević, and many others. People such as Darko Tanasković, Miroljub Jevtić, and Srdja Trifković have already been extensively written about by Norman Cigar in his book *The Role of Serbian Orientalists in Justifying the Genocide against the Muslims in the Balkans* (Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, Sarajevo, 2000). For the purposes of this report, I will mention only some of the titles of the shows which have hosted some of the aforementioned individuals: “Europe Is Swallowed by Islam, Is There Salvation?”; “Muslims Are Ready to Do Anything to Conquer the World”; “The Concept of Green Transversal Is Worse than Great Albania”; “Jews Are Massively Leaving France Because of Muslims”; “American-Islamic Anti-Serb Jihad”; “Turkey Is Pursuing the Politics of Neo-Ottomanism and Expansion in the Balkans”; and so on.

However, it is very important to call attention to the deeply Islamophobic contents on the Radio Free Europe (RFE) Facebook page “Not in My Name.” This page is a project carried out by the RFE through social media with the aim of

“fighting various forms of extremism.” However, although its aim is declaratively to fight *all* forms of extremism, the attention that this Facebook page pays to other forms of extremism is in significant disproportion to the emphatic condemnation of “Islamic” extremism. This is especially worrisome in light of the fact that “Islamic” extremism is just an incidental phenomenon compared to the abundance of right-wing clero-fascist groups in the region. Furthermore, this Facebook page often has negative comments on the role Turkey has in this region, using language identical to the extremist, far-right groups. For instance, RFE warns about the process of re-Islamization of the Balkans and the imminent threat of “neo-Ottomanism.” In addition, contents posted on this Facebook page usually promote a highly Orientalist perspective of the Middle East by selectively presenting the most negative examples so its readers get the picture of Islamic societies as retrograde, patriarchal, aggressive, and militant.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The greatest responsibility for the negative attitude toward Muslims surely lies with the Serbian policymakers and officials who pursue the Serbian ultra-nationalist agenda, which portray “Muslims” as the archetypal enemy. Of course, there are several factors which make up this network. The first of these consists of a number of factions within the Serbian Orthodox Church which have been doing their best for many decades to impose the mythical notion of Muslims as “converts who betrayed their forefathers’ faith.” Apart from the Church, an important role is played by the nationalist intellectual elite which provides academic validation to such mythical notions and phantasms, as well as political organizations aiming to implement this exclusivist nationalist agenda in reality.²⁵ Needless to say, racist and xenophobic ideas and values are also massively spread and popularized by right-wing groups and movements which mostly target younger generations, as well as the ultras of various football clubs.²⁶

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

There were no significant initiatives in 2018 that targeted Islamophobia as such.

25. Previously, those intellectuals used to flock around the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, but that is not solely the case anymore. Now, they hold functions and positions within various institutes and faculties (mostly in the humanities). As regarding the political parties, this is primarily the case of the parliamentary Serbian Radical Party and the Serbian Movement Dveri, as well as non-parliamentary Democratic Party of Serbia.

26. Apart from the political parties mentioned above, there is a number of right-wing groups and organizations such as the *Zavetnici* (Oath-Takers), *Srpska čast* (Serbian Honor), *Nacionalna avangarda* (National Vanguard), *Obraz* (Face), and *Pokret Naši* (Our Movement), as well as many others that are very active in that respect. Some of these groups also have (in) direct contacts with the Serbian Orthodox Church and with some right-wing political parties.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In the fight against Islamophobia, the most important form of engagement cannot be framed solely in terms of the situation of Muslims, but instead must aim at raising the awareness about the benefits of a civil society which would be inclusive of everyone. Only then it can be possible to stand up against the Serbian nationalist political ideology and confront it in the political arena. In this respect, it is necessary to work with the Muslims themselves in order to improve their capacities and enable them to take a much more active part in social, political, and public life, and to work actively on achieving cooperation between Muslims and non-Muslim organizations and individuals who are active in the development of a pluralist, multicultural, multi-confessional civil society.

Furthermore, it is crucial that Muslim organizations start to collect unofficial data of hate crimes and reach out to those who have suffered discrimination on the basis of belonging to the Muslim community, and to offer them legal, moral, and any other help that they need.

Also it is of utmost importance that civil society as a whole and international organizations pay close attention to the rise of far-right movements in Serbia and start to address more openly and directly the problems of anti-Muslim hatred. They also must reach out to the Muslim organizations and help them build their capacities.

Chronology

- **26.01.2018:** Red Star fans displayed a banner which read “*Shqiptars, Croats, Balija* ain’t no brothers of mine” in protest to the club which had just signed Alen Omić, a player of Bosniak ethnicity.
- **30.05.2018:** A series of incidents related to the festival “Miridita, Hello” organized by the Youth Initiative for Human Rights.
- **05.07.2018:** Court of Appeals in Belgrade upheld the acquittal of the members of the paramilitary unit “Sima’s Chetniks” for the demolition of the mosque and the murder of 27 Roma civilians in the village of Skočić, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in July 1992.
- **25.07.2018:** Instance of most blatant hate speech by Vjerica Radeta MP from the Serbian Radical Party regarding the death of Hatidža Mehmetović.
- **04.09.2018:** The morning show on Happy TV broadcasted Ratko Mladić live from The Hague; Mladić is convicted for the genocide in Srebrenica.
- **09.09.2018:** Speech given by President Aleksandar Vučić at Lake Gazivode, Republic of Kosovo.
- **07.10.2018:** Brutal physical assault in Novi Sad on two young men of Albanian ethnicity who were beaten up by four men of Serbian ethnicity.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SLOVAKIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

Public Islamophobic speeches were transferred from social networks to the grounds of the Slovak Parliament in 2018, but in contrast to 2017, no law was passed that would be directed directly against the Muslim community in Slovakia. Spreaders of Islamophobic views have, however, received a relatively large media space. In particular, this occurred during debating the proposal to tighten the abortion law and the parliamentary debate on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and the so-called Istanbul Convention. Politicians who spread Islamophobic views had a larger media space not only during parliamentary debates but marginalised expressions of Islamophobia also emerged during municipal elections and by the end of 2018, when a campaign for the presidential election in March 2019 began.

Some politicians (coalition and from the opposition) used Islamophobic narratives for media communication, communication with voters on social media, and during election campaigns before local elections (autumn 2018). Politicians in Slovakia repeatedly ignore the fact that Muslims are citizens of the Slovak Republic and that they have the same rights and obligations as other citizens such as members of currently registered churches and religious communities. Slovak Muslims are repeatedly associated with terrorism, illegal migration, and labelled as a security threat to Slovakia.

A positive change in 2018 was that the legislative position of Muslims didn't worsen. Several times, President Kiska publicly supported the Slovak Muslim community. In 2018, several non-governmental organisations, in cooperation with the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, joined a series of discussions on interfaith dialogue to mitigate the effects of Islamophobia.

Zhrnutie

Verejné prejavy islamofóbie sa v roku 2018 preniesli zo sociálnych sietí na pôdu slovenského parlamentu, v ktorom sa však oproti roku 2017 neprerokovával žiaden zákon, ktorý by bol namierený priamo proti moslimskej komunite na Slovensku. Širitelia islamofóbných názorov napriek tomu dostávali relatívne veľký mediálny priestor. Bolo to najmä v období diskusie o návrhu sprísnenia zákona o interrupciách a v parlamentnej diskusii o Globálnom rámci o riadenej a kontrolovanej migrácii a tzv. Istanbulskej dohovore. Politici, ktorí šíria islamofóbné názory, mali väčší mediálny priestor nielen počas parlamentných debát, ale okrajovo sa prejavy islamofóbie objavili počas komunálnych volieb a tiež na konci roka 2018, keď sa začala kampaň k prezidentským voľbám v marci 2019.

Niektorí politici (vládnej koalície aj opozície) islamofóbnymi naratívami využívali tiež v mediálnej komunikácii, v komunikácii s voličmi na sociálnych sieťach a počas volebnej kampane pred voľbami do miestnej samosprávy (obce a mestá). Politici na Slovensku opakovane ignorujú, že moslimovia sú občanmi Slovenskej republiky, a že majú rovnaké práva a povinnosti ako občania iných – dnes registrovaných cirkví a náboženských obcí. Slovenskí moslimovia sú tiež opakovane spájaní s terorizmom, nelegálnou migráciou a označovaní za bezpečnostnú hrozbu pre Slovensko.

Pozitívnu zmenou roku 2018 bolo, že sa postavenie moslimov nezhoršilo. Slovenských moslimov sa niekoľkokrát verejne zastal prezident republiky Andrej Kiska. V roku 2018 sa viaceré mimovládne organizácie v spolupráci s Islamskou nadáciou na Slovensku zapojili do série diskusií s cieľom zmierniť dopady islamofóbie.

Country Profile

Country: Slovakia

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary System

Ruling Parties: Coalition of Smer-SD, SNS, and Most-Híd (Left-Wing Populism, Nationalism, Centre)

Opposition Parties: SaS (National Liberalism, Euroscepticism); OĽaNO-NOVA (Conservatism); K-LSNS (Neo-Fascism); Sme Rodina (National Conservatism)

Last Elections: 2014 Presidential Election (Andrej Kiska [Independent] won 59.4% of the vote against 40.6% of Robert Fico [Smer-SD]); 2016 Legislative Election (Smer-SD; Robert Fico: 49 seats, SaS; Richard Sulik: 21 seats, OĽaNO-NOVA; Igor Matovič: 19 seats, SNS; Andrej Danko: 15 seats, K-LSNS; Marian Kotleba: 14 seats, Sme Rodina [We Are Family]; Boris Kollár, 11 seats, Most-Híd; Béla Bugár, 11 seats, Siet'; Radoslav Procházka, 10 seats)

Total Population: 5.45 million (in 2018)

Major Languages: Slovak

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: The Slovak Republic doesn't have official statistics that report Islamophobia and hate crimes against Muslims.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018, 950 racist incidents were reported to the police, down 16% from 2017, which itself saw a fall from the 2,000 reported in 2016.

Major Religions (% of Population): Catholic Church (62.0%), No Religion (13.4%), Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession (5.9%), Greek Catholic Church (3.8%), Reformed Christian Church (1.8%)

Muslim Population (% of Population): 4,800 – 5,000 people (0.001%) in 2017

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Islamic Foundation in Slovakia (ISN), Foundation al-Huda in Kosice, Association of Muslims in Central Slovakia – al-Bakara

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Islamic Foundation in Slovakia, Forum of the World Religions Slovakia, Open Society Foundation, Centre for Research of Ethnicity and Culture

Far-Right Parties: Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia (*Kotleba – Ľudová strana naše Slovensko*, K-LSNS)

Far-Right Movements: *Slovenské hnutie obrody* (Slovak Revival Movement, SHO)

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No

- **Minaret Ban:** No. In 2017, members of the far-right and the populist party We Are Family - Boris Kollar - submitted a law banning the construction of mosques to the Parliament, which was not accepted.
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The year 2018 was different from the last few years. Political expressions of Islamophobia weren't passed into concrete draft laws that would exacerbate the legal and social position of Muslims. Nevertheless, several parliamentary debates emerged during the year, in which, in particular, the deputies of the far right-wing party Kotleba – The People's Party Our Slovakia (*Kotleba – Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko*, K-ĽSNS)¹ expressed attitudes that had signs of Islamophobia.²

At the beginning of 2018, Muslims were supported by the president of the Slovak Republic when the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia received a grant from the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic aimed at improving the image of Muslims and carrying out an interreligious dialogue.³ This was a positive effort towards improving the perception of Muslims in Slovakia.

In the first half of 2018, some extremist organisations (political parties or minority Christian groups) tried to combine the issue of tightening the abortion law with the protection of Slovakia against migrants (Muslims). This position was particularly true of MPs of the political party K-ĽSNS.⁴

The second half of 2018 was influenced by the cases of two citizens of the Slovak Republic accused by the Czech Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina of terrorism, and the parliamentary debate on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM). In the first case, Muslims were again linked to terrorism, which was reflected in a negative outlook on Islam and Muslims.⁵ In the second case, the parliamentary debate derailed to lies about immigrants, and the alleged threats to Christian values and deterioration of security in Slovakia.⁶

Significant events in the context of Islamophobic activities in Slovakia included the parliamentary debate on the tightening of the Artificial Abortion Act and on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM); the dissemination of false reports on the so-called Istanbul Convention; media reports on Slovak

1. "About K-ĽSNS", Kotleba – Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko, 22 July 2018, <http://www.naseslovensko.net/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

2. "ODHALENIE: Pellegriniho vláda dala 30-tisíc eur na propagáciu islamu a LGTB", K-ĽSNS, 22 June 2018, <http://www.naseslovensko.net/nase-nazory/odhalenie-pellegriniho-vlada-dala-30-tisic-eur-na-propagaciu-islam-a-lgbti/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

3. "Zmluva o poskytnutí dotácie na presadzovanie, podporu a ochranu ľudských práv a slobôd a na predchádzanie všetkým formám diskriminácie, rasizmu, xenofóbie, antisemitizmu a ostatným prejavom intolerancie", Centrálny register zmlúv, <http://www.crz.gov.sk/index.php?ID=3516669>, (Access date: 3 September 2019) .

4. Ria Geherová, "Kotlebov návrh sťažiť prístup k interrupciám zvažujú podporiť poslanci opozície aj koalície", Dennikn.sk, 16 May 2018, <https://dennikn.sk/1123532/kotlebov-navrh-stazit-pristup-k-interrupciam-zvazuju-podporit-poslanci-opozicie-aj-koalicie/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

5. "Toto je príbeh Erika, prvého Slováka, ktorého naverboval Islamský štát", Tvnoviny.sk, 1 August 2018, http://www.tvnoviny.sk/domace/1929251_toto-je-pribeh-erika-prveho-slovaka-ktoreho-naverboval-islamsky-stat, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

6. "Parlament žiada vládu, aby odmietla migračný pakt", Aktuality.sk, 29 November 2018, <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/645942/parlament-ziada-vladu-aby-odmietla-migracny-pakt/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Muslims suspected of belonging to a terrorist organisation; the activity of certain extreme far-right organisations that spread lies about Islam and Muslims; and the election campaign before the presidential election in March 2019.⁷

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The year 2018 witnessed certain direct physical attacks against Muslims that had Islamophobic characteristics or were directly motivated by Islamophobic statements by politicians⁸ or Islamophobic statements of alternative media.

Verbal attacks were directed against representatives of the Muslim community, who regularly express themselves in the media or try to respond to attacks against Muslims by Slovak politicians.⁹ Most of the attacks were after the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia published a report (and videos) from the common *iftar* (the breaking-fast dinner during Ramadan), which it organised for both Muslims and non-Muslims.¹⁰ What was particularly striking was that the people who according to their profile photos appeared to lead ordinary, law-abiding lives and were and were photographed with their children, on social networks expressed vulgar, Islamophobic opinions on Muslims..

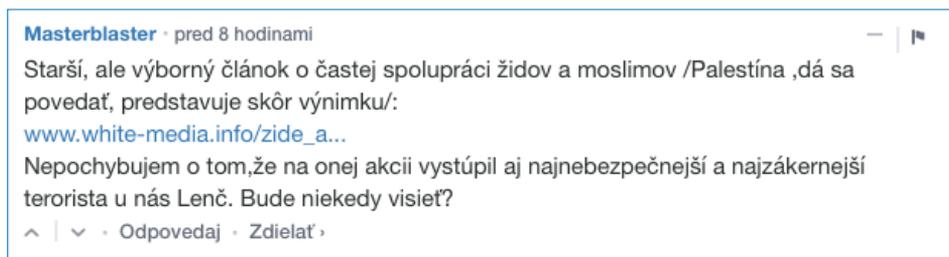


Figure 1: "I do not doubt that in this meeting there was the most dangerous and most obscure terrorist in our country, Lenč. When will he be hanged??" Commentary on grant allocation from the Ministry of Justice.¹¹

Source: Islamic Foundation in Slovakia.

7. Tibor Habo, "Kotlebovci strašia islamom na novom webe, propagujú ho aj bilbordy", Aktuality.sk, 9 January 2019, <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/654792/kotlebovci-strašia-islamom-na-novom-webe/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

8. "Komentár Jozefa Lenča: Ľuboš Blaha, komunista, ktorému vadia mešity", Islamonline.sk, 8 July 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/07/komentar-jozefa-lenca-lubos-blaha-komunista-ktoremu-vadia-mesity/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

9. "Prestížna štúdia potvrdzuje nárast nacionalizmu a restriktív voči náboženstvám vo svete", Islamonline.sk, 10 July 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/07/prestizna-studia-potvrduje-narast-nacionalizmu-a-restriktii-vo-ci-nabozenstvam-vo-svete/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

10. "Duchovní lídri a osobnosti večerali cez ramadán so slovenskými muslimami", Islamonline.sk, 11 June 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/06/duhovni-lidri-a-osobnosti-vecerali-cez-ramadan-so-slovenskymi-muslimami/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

11. Islamic Foundation in Slovakia.

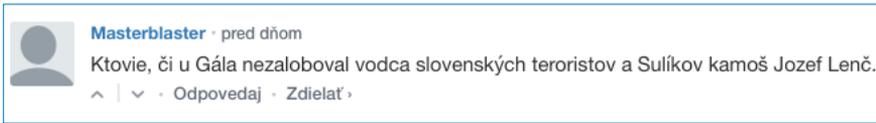


Figure 2: “Who knows if the leader of Slovak terrorists and Sulik’s (chairman of the party SaS) friend, Jozef Lenč lobbied at Gal (Gabor Gal is Minister of Justice).” Commentary on grant allocation from the Ministry of Justice.

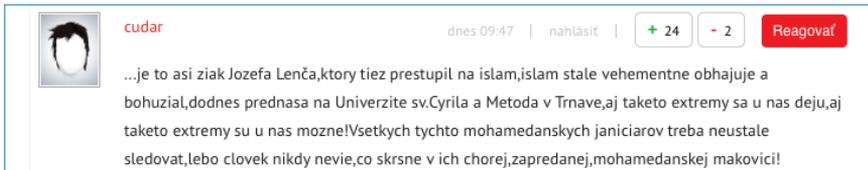


Figure 3: “...is probably the pupil of Jozef Lenč, who also converted to Islam and vehemently defended him. All these Mohammedan traitors have to be watching.” Commentary on the news of the arrest of a Slovak accused of terrorism.¹²

In addition to attacks against Muslim representatives in Slovakia, verbal and physical assaults against women in hijabs were also recorded.¹³ Furthermore, certain Muslim women have complained that they have become victims of “stalking”, often due to hate speech and articles shared by politicians and the encouragement of certain websites.



Figure 4: The pictures are a screenshot of published photos of the persecution of Muslims in a Slovak shop. Photos were subsequently published in Islamophobic groups on Facebook. (October 2018).¹⁴

12. Ibid.

13. “V Bratislave bola napadnutá muslimka s kočíkom. Ktosi ju sotil a nadával jej”, Islamonline.sk, 31 August 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/08/v-bratislave-bola-napadnuta-muslimka-s-kocikom-ktosi-ju-sotil-a-nadaval-jej/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. “Žena sa pochválila ako v Bratislave prednasleovala muslimku”, Islamonline.sk, 16 October 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/10/zena-sa-chvalila-ako-v-bratislave-prenasleovala-muslimku/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Employment

I have not recorded any significant Islamophobic instances that could be labelled as discriminatory in the context of the employment of Muslims in Slovak workplaces in 2018.

Education

The education system in Slovakia is largely responsible for spreading Islamophobia. The insufficient hourly subsidy for the humanities, the lack of education on world religions, and the low qualifications of teachers for teaching religion and civic or political education can be seen as the source of the problem. Addressing these shortcomings requires a comprehensive approach, vision, and a lot of active work from the Ministry of Education, pupils, and especially teachers.

At most Slovak schools, space is not given for clarifying the contribution of Muslims and Islam to contemporary medicine, science, art, and philosophy.. Text-books don't mention the contribution of Muslim travellers from the early Middle Ages to the historical knowledge of Central and Eastern Europe at the time.. In Slovakia, students know only a fraction of information about Muslim communities in Hungary (for example, in the vicinity of Nitra) or the contribution of Tatars, settled in Poland, Lithuania, and Belarus to the Polish army and society. All this is a significant reason why public and latent Islamophobia is widespread in Slovakia and Central Europe.¹⁵

Young people rely on three sources of information, or a combination of them, to create attitudes: (a) they may speak with parents or other relatives and acquaintances, or with teachers who, through discussion, are involved in shaping student views on a subject; (b) some of them have access to quality literature, documentary series, or Internet resources to help them find objective information about Islam and Muslims; (c) others look for support points on the Internet and among peers who are often lost in the world of information and do not know how to discern the truth from lies.

The Slovak education system has long depicted Muslims as an alien element that threatens the traditions and future of Slovak society. We can say that the standard education system in Slovakia contributes to the negative mystification of Islam and Muslims.

Politics

At the beginning of 2018, there were reverberations of the 2017 parliamentary debate, which accompanied the negotiations on the amendment of Law No. 308/1991 Coll. on the Freedom of Religious Faith and the Position of Churches and Religious Communities, and the effort of the party We Are Family – Boris Kollár (*Sme Rodina – Boris*

15. Radoslav Štefančík and Jozef Lenč, "Mladí migranti v slovenskej spoločnosti, Medzinárodná migrácia, moslimovia, štát a verejná mienka", (Tribun EU, Brno: 2012), p. 104-121.

Kollár; SR-BK) to ban the construction of mosques in Slovakia.¹⁶ The topic of migration, the threat of Islamisation of Slovakia, and the threat to the security of the state from the so-called “Islamic terrorists” have gradually disappeared from the political debate. In 2018, politicians were only marginally involved in debates full of Islamophobic innuendos or attempts to further limit the rights of Muslims in Slovakia. Despite this improvement in policy debates and policy content – especially by the government coalition and part of the opposition – deputies who represent the far-right politics in the Slovak Parliament found several occasions to express their Islamophobic rhetoric.

Muslims were depicted negatively when an amendment to the Artificial Abortion Act was discussed in Parliament, at the end of May 2018. The law, which was supposed to ban abortions and even punish women who decide to have an abortion, was presented by MPs of K-ĽSNS. As part of the argument in favour of adopting an amendment to the law, they - as in the past - were not shy about using statements that attacked Slovak Muslims. In order to defend the proposal, MPs in Parliament created bizarre ideological clusters of conspiracy, hatred, and xenophobia directed especially against Islam and Muslims.¹⁷ In his speeches, MP Stanislav Mizik repeatedly “warned” against the threat of Islamisation to Slovakia, which may also be caused by liberal legislation in the field of abortion. He criticised the opponents of the law, whom he described as “persons wielding human rights, furious decency, fierce protection of otherness, protection of Muslims, protection of trees, protection of dogs, protection of cats, or protection of slugs and lizards”. He said that the opponents of the law “protect the Islamic occupants of Europe who do not recognise abortion and the first whom they will exterminate when they enforce the Shari’a law, will be exponents of wicked NGOs.” Mizik and some of his party colleagues warned that by not adopting this law, Slovakia would “become a caliphate in the future”.¹⁸

In November 2018, the Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Andrej Danko (Slovak National Party; *Slovenská národná strana*, SNS submitted a draft statement to the Slovak Parliament asking for a rejection of anti-Semitism. In particular, the MPs of the K-ĽSNS stood up against this proposal. They even combined the draft of this statement with the 2015-16 so-called migrant crisis. MP Grausová proclaimed, “It is worth noting that the definition of anti-Semitism was created and adopted only a year after the launch of the Muslim invasion of the European Union.”¹⁹ K-ĽSNS member Grausová said, “The increase in attacks against

16. Jozef Lenč and Monika Závaš, “Islamophobia in Slovakia: National Report 2017”, *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraktli and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018), p. 557-570.

17. Katarína Filová, “Politici chcú z potratov vytkať politické body”, *Pravda.sk*, 12 June 2018, <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/472963-politici-chcu-z-potratov-vytkat-body/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

18. “Poslanci ĽSNS v parlamente: Zákaz interrupcií ako ochrana pred islamizáciou”, *Islamonline.sk*, 20 June 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/06/poslanci-ls-ns-v-parlamente-zakaz-interrupcii-ako-ochrana-pred-islamizaciou/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

19. “Kotlebova poslankyňa v parlamente: Cieľom boja proti antisemitizmu je svetovláda islámu”, *Islamonline.sk*, 30 December 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/12/kotlebova-poslankynya-v-parlamente-cielom-boja-proti-antisemitizmu-je-svetovlada-islam/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

Jews and their institutions is proven to be associated with a sharp increase in Muslim populations, immigration to Europe. and their radicalisation.” In her opinion, this is concealed by non-governmental organisations that support the Islamisation of Europe. Similarly to Andrej Danko in 2015, she warned against the Muslim world government: “The goal is world government of Islam ... in the holy book of the Koran, Muslims and the Shari’a legal system, we will find everything – from the way to behave to slaves, women and Jews, Christians and other religions.”²⁰

In November 2018, the Slovak Parliament began a debate on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) and Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as the “Istanbul Convention”). The politicians of the government coalition (Smer-SD²¹ and SNS) and most of the opposition (SaS²², SR-BK) and the far right (K-LSNS) rejected both documents and often argued that Slovakia will be “flooded” by migrants who disrupt the Christian traditions. Aversion to migration was associated with the spread of hatred of Muslims. “Economic migrants pose, many risks to the security of the Slovak people,” said MP Kéry (Smer-SD). “As shown by the pictures from European metropolises, they also increase the risk of terrorism.”²³

“Hundreds of thousands of migrants from African, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries will come and they suddenly will not understand that a European woman is not a whore, how they tell them especially in Germany and France. And they don’t understand at all that they can’t rape them,” MP Mizík said. His fellow MP Mazurek again spoke of the so-called no-go zones, Muslim criminals, and Islamic extremists who would threaten Slovak citizens. In connection with Muslims, they also mentioned Ottoman expansion, and the threat of decapitation of Slovak citizens and of their domestic animals. The result of the whole parliamentary hysteria was the creation of a constitutional majority (90 votes from Smer-SD, SNS, K-LSNS, SR-BK and some of the independent deputies), which rejected Slovakia’s participation in the UN conference in Marrakech.²⁴

At the turn of 2018-19, an electoral campaign for the presidential elections in March 2019 began. Part of the candidates supported by the far right – Marián

20. “Kotlebova poslankyňa v parlamente: Cieľom boja proti antisemitizmu je svetová vláda islámu”, Islamonline.sk, 30 December 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/12/kotlebova-poslankyňa-v-parlamente-cielom-boja-proti-antisemitizmu-je-svetovláda-islam/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

21. “About Smer-SD”, Smer – Sociálna demokracia, <https://www.strana-smer.sk/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. “About SaS”, Sloboda a Solidarita, <https://www.sas.sk/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

23. “Parlamentné prekáračky o isláme. Mizík sa hnevá, že mu iné strany preberajú agendu”, Islamonline.sk, 31 December 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/12/parlamentne-prekaracky-o-migracii-kotlebovec-mizik-klusovi-teraz-mi-preberate-agendu/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

24. “Parlament odmietol Globálny pakt OSN o migrácii. Pozrite sa, kto ako hlasoval!”, Parlamentnelisty.sk, 29 November 2018, <https://www.parlamentnelisty.sk/arena/monitor/Parlament-odmietol-Globalny-pakt-OSN-o-migracii-Pozrite-sa-kto-ako-hlasoval-307267>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Kotleba, Štefan Harabin²⁵ – and who represent conservative ideas – Milan Krajniak, Juraj Zábajník – again used Islamophobic rhetoric, promoted fear of Muslims, and supported the need to protect Slovakia and Christian traditions from migrants and Islamisation.²⁶

Media

In the Slovak media, the same phenomenon that indirectly supports rooted stereotypes about Islam and Muslims is present. The year 2018 was no exception: Slovak media repeatedly used tabloid-style information about Muslims and Islam in news and commentaries. Some of them, when informing about Muslims, approached the form of processing used by the so-called conspiracy media (fake news).

The most common is the use of inappropriate imagery to accompany parts of published texts. In most cases, when Slovak media publish a reports about Islam, they use the image of a woman in a niqab or burqa or display a violent event that took place in the Middle East or cities in Western Europe. Such illustrative pictures support deep-rooted stereotypes about Islam and Muslims and propagate the Islamophobic tropes of the inequality of women in Islam and the violent nature of Islam.

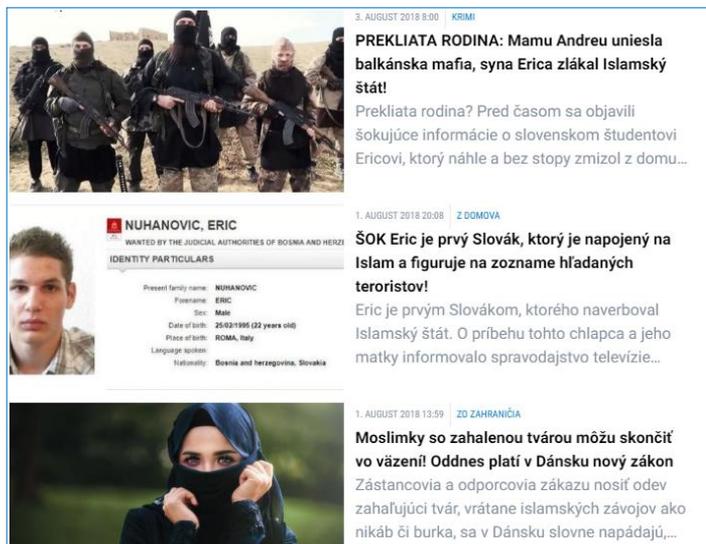


Figure 5: Several articles from the newspaper *Plus 1 deň*. Reports from Slovak media showing a negative image of Islam and Muslims. “Cursed Family: Mum Andrea Was Kidnapped by Balkan Mafia, the Islamic State Attracted Her Son, Eric”; “Shock: Eric Is the First Slovak Who Is Linked to Islam and Is on the List of Wanted Terrorists!”; “Muslim Women with a Veiled Face Can End up in Prison! From Now on, a New Law Applies in Denmark.”²⁷

25. Jana Čunderlíková, “11 tisíc migrantov z Afriky na Slovensko. Harabín šíril hoax”, *Aktuality.sk*, 16 July 2018, <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/606766/11-tisic-migrantov-z-afriky-na-slovensko-harabin-siril-hoax/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

26. “Malo by Slovensko prijímať utečencov? (prezidentská anketa)”, *Aktuality.sk*, 1 March 2019, <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/664559/prezidentske-volby-2019-kandidati-anketa-malo-by-slovensko-prijimat-migrantov-a-utečencov/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

27. <https://www1.pluska.sk/vyhľadavanie/islam>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Another negative phenomenon in the context of most Slovak media, which contributes to the spread of Islamophobia, is the selection of tabloid and often-irrelevant messages to increase readability. Most of the information about Islam presented to the Slovak reader concerns terrorism, political violence, civil wars, the threat of migration, or false reports of religiously motivated attacks in Muslim countries. Thus, stylized media coverage of topics about Islam and Muslims fosters the public's fear of Islam.²⁸



Figure 6: Headline of an article from TV NOVINY (website of TV Markiza) "Al-Qaeda Leader Has Posted a New Video: He Calls on Muslims to Attack US Targets." This is a typical example of the usual image of Islam and Muslim messages, which are often associated with terrorism, (September 2018)²⁹.

Incorrect use of Islamic terminology in the news and commentaries of Slovak journalists is a factor that also exacerbates the image of Muslims in Slovakia. The problem is that the deeds and actions that are contrary to Islam are called "Islamic". The media create the image that rape is part of Islam, that abuse of social benefits is a religious practice, etc. The media refer to all Muslims as "Islamists", while the public has the word "Islamists" connected with terrorists.

28. Marián Děd, "Mediálny obraz islamského náboženstva", Mediasres.cz, 9 October 2016, <http://www.mediasres.cz/politika/3006-marian-ded-medialny-obraz-islamskeho-nabozenstva.htm>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

29. "Vodca al-Káidy zverejnil novú videonahrávku: Moslimov vyzýva, aby útočili na americké ciele", Tvnoviny.sk, 12 September 2018, http://www.tvnoviny.sk/zahranicne/1934445_vodca-al-kaidy-zverejnil-novu-videonahravku-moslimov-vyzyva-aby-utocili-na-americke-ciele, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 7: Headline of an article from *Nový Čas* stating “Former Chief Muslim Spiritual Leader in Slovakia Samer: Does he Recruit Terrorists in Bratislava?!” One example of a media connection between Slovak Muslims and terrorism. (January 2018)³⁰. Source:

Most of the Slovak media (*Denník N*, *.týždeň*, *Pravda*, *Nový Čas*, *RTVS*, *TV JoJ*, *TV Markíza* and also radio stations and online media) use the word “jihad” as a synonym for terrorism. They create a standard view that all Muslims who perform jihad are terrorists and that terrorism is an essential part of Islam.

The most active in spreading Islamophobia are the conspiracy media. Among them are the quasi-news pages of the *Hlavné správy*,³¹ *Slobodný výber*,³² and *Parlamentné listy*, which until 2018 was known as *Medzičas*. Another Islamophobic media source in Slovakia is the journal and internet portal of Tibor E. Rostaš *Zem a Vek*.³³

Justice System

Since 2017, legislation has been tightened in Slovakia. The National Council of the Slovak Republic finally approved the amendment of Law No. 308/1991 Coll. on Freedom of Religious Faith and the Status of Churches and Religious Communities. The law: (a) increased the number of signatures required to register churches and religious communities in Slovakia from 20,000 to 50,000; (b) determined that the

30. “Bývalý hlavný moslimský duchovný na Slovensku Samer: Verboval teroristov v Bratislave?!”, *Nový cas*, 24 January 2018, <https://www.cas.sk/clanok/647856/byvaly-hlavny-moslimsky-duchovny-na-slovensku-samer-verboval-teroristov-v-bratislave/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

31. “Hlavne spravy about Islam”, *HLAVNÉ SPRÁVY*, <https://www.hlavnespravy.sk/vyhľadavanie/?h=islam>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

32. “Slobodný výber about Islam”, *SLOBODNÝ VÝBER*, <https://slobodnyvyber.sk/?s=islam>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

33. “Zem a vek about Islam”, *ZEM A VEK*, <https://zemavek.sk/?s=islam>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

signatories must be citizens of the Slovak Republic who are members of the church or the religious community; (c) the signatories must confirm their signature by submitting personal data. These conditions of registration are discriminatory because only four churches from the 18 currently registered churches and religious communities in Slovakia meet the conditions. Of these, thirteen did not meet the original registration requirement of over 20,000 believers.³⁴

In 2018, no other manifestations of Islamophobia stemming from the Slovak justice system were recorded in Slovakia. No members of the judiciary dealt with the issue of Islamophobia in 2018 or were directly involved in proceedings that we could call discriminatory in the context of the Slovak Muslim community.

Internet

In addition to the pages of conspiracy media, the most active in spreading Islamophobia in Slovakia were the webpages of extremist political parties, movements, and organisations (K-LSNS, SR-BK, etc.). The above is also true for some of the presidential candidates' websites – Štefan Harabin, Marian Kotleba, and Robert Švec – which appeared at the end of 2018.



Figure 8: The newspapers of the political party Kotleba – LSNS: “Western Europe Is Already Lost. Don’t Let It Happen in Slovakia!” The Kotleba-LSNS party repeatedly reports on the decline of the West on the pages of its newspapers, for which migrants and Muslims are responsible, (September 2018)³⁵.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Indeed, the list of individuals we can consider as the main figures of the Islamophobia network in 2018 is very wide and diverse.

34. Act No. 308/1991 Coll., <http://www.zakonypreludi.sk/zz/1991-308>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

35. <http://www.naseslovensko.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/noviny-lsns-2018-09.pdf>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

MPs for Smer-SD, SNS, K-ESNS, and SR-BK have repeatedly framed Muslims as problematic. In particular, the latter two and the Slovak National Party (SNS) have been active in the dissemination of Islamophobia in the parliamentary debates.

Andrej Danko (SNS) has repeatedly presented his negative attitude towards Muslims, mosques, and his desire to prohibit the burka in Slovakia.³⁶ The chairman of the party Smer-SD, Robert Fico, has repeatedly said that he will “not allow the creation of an integrated Muslim community in Slovakia”,³⁷ while the chairman of the party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) and an MEP Richard Sulík claimed that “Islam is incompatible with democracy”³⁸ and also shared and wrote several articles, commentaries, and blogs with Islamophobic content.³⁹

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

During the parliamentary discussions in which Islamophobic narratives appeared, the opposition deputies Ondrej Dostal and Martin Klus (both SaS) and members of the movement Ordinary People and Independent Personalities (OLaNO) defended the Slovak Muslim community. The most active advocate in civil society is the Islamic Foundation in Slovakia,⁴⁰ the Forum of World Religions (Mário Nicolini), the Centre for Ethnicity and Culture Research (Elena G. Kriglerová), the Open Society Foundation (Ján Orlovský), and the League for Human Rights (Zuzana Številová).⁴¹

From the media, photographer and publicist Andrej Bán, journalists from the *Denník N*, *SME*, and *Pravda*, and members of the editorial staff of *IslamOnline.sk* stand out. Some church organisations, the Jewish community, and teachers at certain primary and secondary schools help to alleviate Islamophobia.

36. Radovan Krčmárik, “Danko vedie križiacku výpravu proti islamu”, *Aktualne.sk*, 15 October 2018, <https://aktualne.centrum.sk/slovensko/politika/kriziacka-vyprava-proti-islam-danko-chcesprisnit-registraciu-cirkvi.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

37. Juraj Koník, “Premiér Fico je opäť svetový, prerazil výroky o moslimoch, ktorých k nám nepusti”, *Dennikn.sk*, 8 January 2016, <https://dennikn.sk/338314/premier-fico-opat-svetovy-prerazilvyrokmi-moslimoch-ktorych-nam-nepusti/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

38. Katarína Ragáčová and Roman Cuprik, “Sulík: Islam nie je kompatibilný s našou kultúrou rovnako ako nacizmus”, *Sme.sk*, 19 August 2016, <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20246047/sulik-islam-nie-jekompatibilny-s-nasou-kulturou-rovnako-ako-nacizmus.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

39. Martin M. Šimečka, “Richard Sulík: Áno, som slovenský nacionalista”, *Dennikn.sk*, 21 February 2017, <https://dennikn.sk/688253/richard-sulik-sas-som-slovensky-nacionalista-rozhovor/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

40. “Islamská nadácia a ďalšie organizácie si v Starej tržnici pripomenuli Svetový deň utečencov”, *Islamonline.sk*, 4 July 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/07/islamska-nadacia-a-dalsie-organizacie-si-v-starej-trznici-pripomenuli-svetovy-den-utecencov/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

41. “Rabín, kňaz a imám cestujú po slovenských školách a hovoria so žiakmi o tolerancii”, *Islamonline.sk*, 3 January 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/01/rabin-knaz-a-imam-cestuju-po-slovenskych-skolach-a-hovoria-so-ziakmi-o-tolerancii/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The level of Islamophobia in Slovakia in 2018 was modest compared to previous years. Although there has been a reduction in the public expression of Islamophobia, it has permanently settled in parliamentary debates, where it is mainly expressed by MPs of the far right.

The most prominent problem is that Islamophobia has definitively shifted from social networks into Slovak politics. It has become part of the de facto political communication of all political parties (coalition and opposition). It continues to influence elections and has become part of the election campaign before the presidential elections in March 2019. An unpleasant finding is that Islamophobic content has been consciously and unconsciously established in all Slovak media (conspiracy, tabloid, and mainstream).

The biggest challenges for the coming period will be the spread of general awareness that Islamophobia is as dangerous to Slovak society and democracy as xenophobia. Society – politicians, media, and teachers – should realise that the destruction of democracy and the onset of totalitarian regimes in the 1930s were triggered by anti-Semitism, manifested in the same accompanying phenomena that characterise Islamophobia in Slovakia.

Chronology

- **20.06.2018:** The start of a parliamentary debate on the law regarding abortions during which far-right MPs used Islamophobic narratives.
- **08.07.2018:** MP Blaha (Smer-SD) repeatedly criticises the Pohoda music festival and uses Islamophobic narrative.⁴²
- **31.08.2018:** A Muslim woman with a small child was attacked in Bratislava.⁴³
- **16.10.2018:** Another case of harassment and persecution of Muslim women in Bratislava.⁴⁴
- **November 2018:** Parliamentary debate about the Global Migration Pact.
- **December 2018:** The publication of a book on interreligious dialogue entitled *A Christian, A Muslim, And A Jew Will Meet*.⁴⁵

42. “Komentár Jozefa Lenča: Luboš Blaha, komunista, ktorému vadia mešity”, Islamonline.sk, 8 July 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/07/komentar-jozefa-lenca-lubos-blaha-komunista-ktoremu-vadia-mesity/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

43. “V Bratislave bola napadnutá muslimka s kočkom. Ktosi ju sotil a nadával jej”, Islamonline.sk, 31 August 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/08/v-bratislave-bola-napadnuta-muslimka-s-kocikom-ktosi-ju-sotil-a-nadaval-jej/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

44. “Žena sa pochválila ako v Bratislave prednasleovala muslimku”, Islamonline.sk, 16 October 2018, <http://www.islamonline.sk/2018/10/zena-sa-chvalila-ako-v-bratislave-prenasleovala-muslimku/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

45. Mário Nicolini, “Stretnú sa kresťan, moslim a žid...”, Vydavateľstvo Art Forum, <https://www.vydavatelstvoartforum.sk/sk/knihy/mario-nicolini/stretnu-sa-krestan-moslim-a-zid/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

- **2018:** Discussions at high schools organised by the Forum of the World Religions, which aims to alleviate the manifestations of Islamophobia in Slovakia.⁴⁶

⁴⁶. Jozef Lenč, "Ako hovoriť o náboženstve", Sme.sk, 8 March 2019, <https://kultura.sme.sk/c/22070023/ako-hovoriť-o-nabozenstve.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SLOVENIA
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

In 2018, xenophobia and Islamophobia have been closely connected to migration issues in Slovenia. Due to the national and local elections, the discourse of migrant threat was used to spread fear among the population and gather political support for right-wing parties. Some right-wing party leaders exposed migrants as a threat to Slovenia, its nation and family system, depicting migrants as dangerous and violent people. The connection between Islam and migrants is, however, more explicitly established in the right-wing media and Internet in an Islamophobic manner.

Right-wing media announced that “migration pressure is rising” and that a “new migrational wave and a new catastrophe” is upcoming. They connect migration to Islam and represent it as an Islamic invasion. This type of media heavily reports on activities undertaken by Muslims in Slovenia, scrutinizing any event in a xenophobic and Islamophobic manner. Columnists widely write about the incompatibility of Islam and Europe. A very active xenophobic group on the Internet called *Upor Slovencev* (Uprising of Slovenians) published many articles on Muslims in Slovenia exposing Islam and Muslims as occupiers that threaten to invade Slovenia.

In September, a paramilitary armed group (*Štajerska varda*) under the leadership of Andrej Šiško, the leader of the Movement United Slovenia (*Gibanje Zedinjena Slovenija*), known for its nationalistic and xenophobic views, gathered and performed exercises in the woods of the Štajerska region. Videos of this group spread on social media and gained wide attention from the public and the media. In August and November, the premises of the Islamic Community in Koper and Kranj were vandalized with pork and anti-Islamic stickers.

Another important decision hampering Muslims rights has been that of the Constitutional Court in April that unanimously rejected the constitutional initiative of the Muslim Community for assessing the constitutionality of Article 25 of the Law on the Protection of Animals, which stipulates that every animal must be stunned before slaughter. According to the court the aim of Article 25 is to ensure the welfare of animals and it relied on the constitutionally prescribed protection of animals against torture explicitly required by Article 72 of the constitution.

Povzetek

V letu 2018 so bile v Sloveniji ksenofobija in islamofobija zelo povezane z migracijskimi vprašanji. Zaradi nacionalnih in lokalnih volitev je bil diskurz migrantske grožnje uporabljen za širjenje strahu med prebivalstvom in za pridobivanje politične podpore desničarskim strankam. Nekateri desničarski voditelji strank so migrante izpostavili kot grožnjo Sloveniji, njenemu narodu in družinskemu sistemu, ter migrante opisali kot nevarne in nasilne ljudi. Povezava med islamom in migranti pa je bolj izrecno vzpostavljena v desničarskih medijih in internetu na islamofobičen način. Desničarski mediji so napovedali, da se »migracijski pritisk povečuje« in da prihaja »nov migracijski val in nova katastrofa«. Migracije povezujejo z islamom in jih predstavljajo kot islamsko invazijo. Tovrstni mediji močno poročajo o dejavnostih, ki so jih izvedli muslimani v Sloveniji in preučujejo vsak dogodek na ksenofobičen in islamofobičen način. Kolumnisti pogosto pišejo o nezdržljivosti islama in Evrope. Zelo aktivna ksenofobična skupina na internetu, imenovana Upor Slovencev, objavlja številne članke o muslimanih v Sloveniji, ki islam in muslimane izpostavljajo kot okupatorje ter grožnjo zavojevanja Slovenije. V septembru se je v štajerskih gozdovih zbrala in vodila vaje oborožena paravojaška skupina imenovana Štajerska varda pod vodstvom Andreja Šiška, vodje Gibanja Zedinjena Slovenija, znanega po svojih nacionalističnih in ksenofobičnih pogledih. Videi te skupine so se razširili na družbenih medijih in pridobili veliko pozornost javnosti in medijev. Avgusta in novembra so bili prostori Islamske Skupnosti v Kopru in Kranju napadeni z ostanki svinjskega mesa in protiislamskimi nalepkami. Še ena pomembna odločitev, ki ovira pravice muslimanov, je bila aprilska odločitev Ustavnega sodišča, ki je soglasno zavrnilo ustavno pobudo muslimanske skupnosti za oceno ustavnosti 25. člena Zakona o varstvu živali, ki določa, da mora biti vsaka žival omamljena pred zakolom. Po mnenju Sodišča je cilj omenjenega člena zagotoviti dobrobitje živali in se opira na ustavno predpisano zaščito živali pred mučenjem, ki jo izrecno zahteva 72. člen Ustave.

Country Profile

Country: Slovenia

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary System

Ruling Parties: Coalition of List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ); Social Democrats (SD); Party of Modern Center (SMC); Party of Alenka Bratušek (SAB); Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS), with formal support of The Left; (main ideology: Central-Left, Liberal, Social-Democrat)

Opposition Parties: Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), New Slovenia (NSi), Slovenian National Party (SNS); (main ideology: Right-wing, Christian Democrat, Conservative, Nationalist).

Last Elections: Presidential election in 2017 (President Borut Pahor won 53,09 % of vote against 46,91 % of vote of Marjan Šarec). Parliamentary and local elections in 2018: right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) of Janez Janša won the election with 24.92% of votes with 25 seats; List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ) won 13 seats; Social Democrats (SD) 10 seats; Party of Modern Center (SMC) of Miro Cerar 10 seats; The Left (*Levica*) 9 seats; New Slovenia (NSi) 7 seats; Party of Alenka Bratušek (SAB) 5 seats; Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) 5 seats; Slovenian National Party (SNS) 4 seats; Italian and Hungarian national communities each 1 seat automatically. The government was formed by the coalition LMŠ-SD-SMC-SAB-DeSUS with the support of The Left.

Total Population: 2,070,050 (1 July, 2018)

Major Languages: The official and majority language is Slovenian; official minority languages are Italian and Hungarian. Serbo-Croatian is also spoken by ex-Yugoslav immigrants although it is not an official language.

Official Religion: No official religion (secularism), but the majority is Christian Catholic.

Statistics on Islamophobia: N/A

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the last available Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2017, there were 3 cases reported (mostly in employment) (3.80%) of discrimination based on nationality, 10 cases (12.66%) of discrimination based on race or ethnic origin and 10 cases (12.66%) of discrimination based on religion or belief.

Major Religions (% of Population): According to the 2002 Census: Christian Catholic 57.8 %, Protestant 0.8%, Orthodox 2.3%, Islam 2.4%, Other 0.2%, No religion 3.5%, Atheist 10.2%, No answer 15.7%, Unknown 7.1%.

Muslim Population (% of Population): Around 47,000 people (2.4%) in the 2002 Census (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia).

Main Muslim Community Organizations: The Islamic Community in Slovenia

(*Islamska skupnost v Sloveniji*); The Slovenian Muslim Community (*Slovenska muslimanska skupnost*).

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Peace Institute (*Mirovni inštitut*); Slovene Philanthropy (*Slovenska filantropija*); Amnesty International; Society UP Jesenice (*Društvo UP Jesenice*); ROG Factory (*Tovarna ROG*); SLOGA - Slovenian Global Action; PIC - Legal Informational Center.

Far-Right Parties: Slovenian National Party (*Slovenska nacionalna stranka*)

Far-Right Movements: Movement United Slovenia (*Gibanje Zedinjena Slovenija*), Uprising of Slovenians (*Upor Slovencev*), Generation Identity Slovenia (*Generacija Identitete Slovenija*)

Far-Right Terrorist Organizations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No (limited with mandatory stunning of animals before slaughter)
- **Minaret Ban:** No (the minaret should not be higher than 40 m)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

In 2018, Slovenia experienced two elections, one on national and one on local level. Parliamentary elections were to be held on 10 June, but because Prime Minister Miro Cerar announced his resignation from the post on 14 March, the elections were held a week earlier on 3 June. Prime Minister Cerar explained that he had resigned due to bad relations within the coalition and complications in the planning of the construction of the second railway track connection between Koper and Divača. On 3 June, the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) received most of the votes (24.92%) in the parliamentary elections. The president of the SDS Janez Janša was, therefore, expected to be granted a mandate to form a coalition government. However, the SDS could not form a coalition, since other center-left and left-wing parties (LMŠ, SD, SMC, the Left, SAB and DeSUS)¹ publicly declared that they would not join a government under Janša and the SDS. The 13th government of the Republic of Slovenia was finally formed on 13 September by a LMŠ-SD-SMC-SAB-DeSUS coalition with support from the Left and Marjan Šarec was appointed as the prime minister. Marjan Šarec and his party List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ – *Lista Marjana Šarca*) was a novelty in the Slovenian National Assembly. Marjan Šarec formed the party in 2014 while running for mayoral elections. Previously to his post as prime minister he served twice as mayor of Kamnik, while his profession is a theater actor, comedian, and political satirist. He also ran for the presidential elections in 2017 and lost in the second round to former president Borut Pahor.

On 18 November, the first round of local elections was held in Slovenia and on 2 December, the second round was held. The local elections of 2018 were the elections of mayors of municipalities, members of municipal councils, and members of the councils of city quarters, local and village communities. The first round of local elections was attended by 51.18% and the second round by 49.15 % of voters.²

On 3 September, news spread about paramilitary groups (*Štajerska varda*) which under the leadership of Andrej Šiško, the leader of the movement United Slovenia Movement (*Gibanje Zedinjena Slovenija*), had gathered and performed exercises in the woods of the Štajerska region. Pictures and videos of this group first spread on social media and gained wide attention from the public and the media. Andrej Šiško is known for his nationalistic and xenophobic views. He also announced that similar

1. The division of votes between the parties was as follows: Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) 24.92%; List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ) 12.60%; Social Democrats (SD) 9.93%; Party of Modern Center (SMC) of Miro Cerar 9.75%; The Left (Levica) 9.33%; New Slovenia (NSi) 7.16%; Party of Alenka Bratušek (SAB) 5.11%; Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS) 4.93%. The Slovenian National Party (SNS) received 4.17% of votes. See *Republika Slovenija, Državna volilna komisija* (Republic of Slovenia State Election Commission), <http://dvk-rs.si/arhivi/dz2018/#/rezultati>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

2. “Lokalne volitve 2018 (Local elections 2018)”, *Republika Slovenija, Državna volilna komisija* (Republic of Slovenia State Election Commission), http://volitve.gov.si/lv2018/udelezba/obcine_naziv.html, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

groups and activities would soon be held in other regions of Slovenia. The event was immediately brought under control and charges were brought against the movement with the allegation of a threat to national security since experts are sure that the group's formation has signs of a paramilitary organization.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In front of the Islamic Community's facility in Koper, pork was deposited on 31 August, 2018. The building of the Islamic Community in Kranj was covered with anti-Islamic stickers on 30 November, 2018 (Fig. 1). Both events were reported to the police by the Islamic Community and the perpetrators remain unknown. The message on the sticker states, "Eurorabia? No, thanks! Let's stop the Islamization of Europe and the spreading of Islamic extremism. Europe to Europeans." (Autonomous Nationalists of Slovenia).

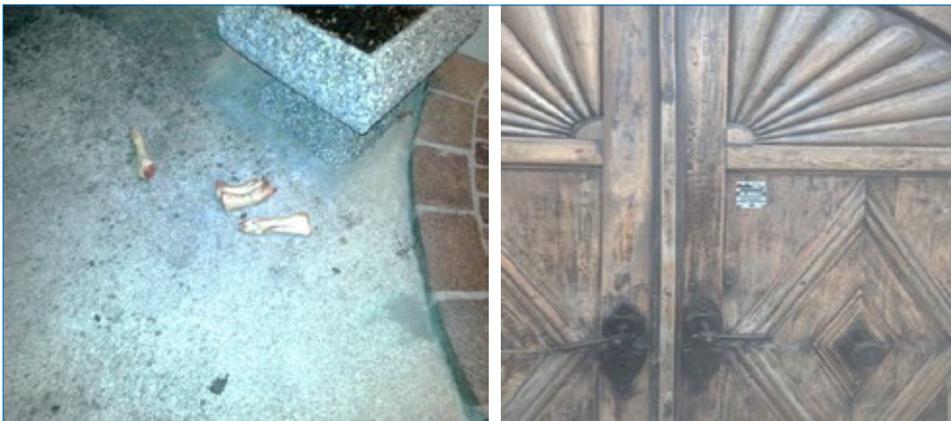


Figure 1: Islamophobic attacks on Islamic Community's premises in Koper and Kranj.³

Although not a physical or verbal attack explicitly, the formation of paramilitary groups, under the leadership of Andrej Šiško (Fig. 2), that gathered and performed exercises in the woods of the Štajerska region were heavily condemned by the wide public and political figures in Slovenia. Furthermore, charges were brought against the movement with the allegation of a threat to national security.⁴ Andrej Šiško is

3. Data retrieved from personal correspondence with the Islamic Community of Slovenia.

4. "Psihoterapevtka: Nujno je, da se družba jasno opredeli do tovrstnih pojavov kot nesprejemljivih" (Psychotherapist: It Is Imperative That the Society Clearly Defines These Phenomena as Unacceptable), Delo, 3 September 2018, <https://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/vojska-in-policija-nas-ne-moreta-braniti-88017.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019); "Prezelj: Formacija ima vse znake paravojaške enote" (Prezelj: The Formation Has All the Characters of a Paramilitary Unit), 24ur.com, 3 September 2018, <https://www.24ur.com/novice/slovenija/prezelj-organi-pregona-morajo-nemudoma-ukrepati.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

known for his nationalistic and xenophobic views. He also announced that similar groups and activities will soon be held in other regions of Slovenia. Andrej Šiško was a presidential candidate in the presidential elections in 2017, while in the past he was sentenced to imprisonment for attempted murder.⁵



Figure 2: Photographs of the paramilitary group during their gathering in the woods of the Štajerska region.⁶

On the night of 23 June, Nazi posters were placed around the city of Velenje (Fig. 3). The police found the perpetrator, who was a minor, in November 2018.



Figure 3: The text on the poster states "For the family, for the state and for the race" depicting a heterosexual family, the state of Slovenia, and a Nazi swastika respectively. The posters depict an officer of the German army with the Knight's Cross.⁷

5. "Edini nekdanji zapornik med predsedniškimi kandidati" (The Only Former Prisoner among the Presidential Candidates), 24ur.com, 18 October 2017, <https://www.24ur.com/novice/volitve/edini-nekdanji-zapornik-med-predsedniškimi-kandidati.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

6. "Psihoterapevtka: Nujno je, da se družba jasno opredeli do tovrstnih pojavov kot nesprejemljivih" (Psychotherapist: It Is Imperative That the Society Clearly Defines These Phenomena as Unacceptable), Delo, 3 September 2018, <https://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/vojska-in-policija-nas-ne-moreta-braniti-88017.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

7. "Nacistične plakate izdelal mladoletnik" (Nazi Posters Made by a Minor), Delo, 22 November 2018, <https://www.delo.si/novice/slovenija/nacisticne-plakate-izdelal-mladoletnik-116217.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

On 10 December, in front of the parliament a protest against the Marrakesh Declaration took place (Fig. 4). Protests were also supported by the president of Slovenian Democratic Party Janez Janša.⁸



Figure 4: Protest against the Marrakesh Declaration in front of the parliament.⁹

Employment

From last year there has been no crucial change in the employment area. Muslims still face problems since there is no legal framework (except for the religious rights as protected nominally by the constitution) guaranteeing the actual performance of their religious rights in the workplace (time and place for worship, possibilities of consuming halal food, celebration of Islamic holidays, and religious clothing such as headscarves). As official numbers for 2018 have yet to be published, I refer here to the official statistical report for 2017 which reports 3 cases (3.80%) of discrimination based on nationality; 10 cases (12.66%) based on race or ethnic origin; and 10 cases (12.66%) based on religion or belief. Most of these discrimination cases occurred in employment possibilities and working conditions but also in the area of social security, social protection, and education.¹⁰

Education

In the educational area, Muslims still face similar problems as in previous years.¹¹ However, because of the integration of migrant children, schools started to adopt multicultural curricula, to take action for the inclusion of different cultural habits and needs, and for the education of staff.¹² Since among the migrant children many

8. "Dogovor o migracijah potrjen, pred DZ protest proti sporazumu", (The Agreement on Migration Is Confirmed- Protests against the Agreement in Front of the National Assembly), Delo, 10 December 2018, <https://www.delo.si/novice/svet/dogovor-o-migracijah-potrjen-122165.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

9. Ibid.

10. Report of the Advocate of the Principle of Equality for 2017, April 2018, <http://www.zagovornik.si/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Report-of-the-Advocate-of-the-principle-of-equality-for-2017-final.pdf>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

11. Ana Frank, "Islamophobia in Slovenia: National Report 2017", *European Islamophobia Report 2017*, ed. Enes Bayraktli and Farid Hafez, (SETA, Istanbul: 2018).

12. "Vključevanje priseljencev v sistem vzgoje in izobraževanja", (Integration of immigrants in the education system), Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, http://www.mizs.gov.si/si/varno_in_spodbudno_ucno_okolje/spodbudno_ucno_okolje/vkljucjevanje_priseljencev_v_sistem_vzgoje_in_izobrazevanja/, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

are of Muslim faith, the adoption of multicultural curricula affects the life of Muslim families as well. These kind of programs and guidelines had been prepared in the past but they gained momentum during the increased migration and settlement of migrant families in Slovenia in the aftermath of 2015 according to the quota system. Some right-wing media spread Islamophobic and xenophobic discourse by misrepresenting the difficulties of certain schools during these adaptation processes. For example, Nova24 claims that “our children” suffer from lack of space, a changed curriculum, and peer violence due to the acceptance of “foreigners” into schools.¹³

Politics

Due to the national and local elections in 2018, many cases of Islamophobic discourse occurred in connection with the migrant issue with the aim of spreading fear among the population and thus gathering political support for right-wing parties which share xenophobic discourse. On 15 November, Janez Janša, the leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS), gave a speech about the Marrakesh Declaration on the regulation of migrations to which Slovenia is a signatory stating that “illegal migrants will easily break down the family and the nation, and this is why this document is harmful.”¹⁴ On 21 November, Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti, the president of the Slovenian National Party (SNS), gave a speech in the National Assembly about the threat of migrants to Slovenia. He depicted migrants as follows: “They cut heads, they rape young children of all sexes, slaughter on the streets - and they will do this even more. Great. Some people seem to prefer this.”¹⁵ In the imagination of the public discourse, migrant is synonymous with Muslim that is people coming from the Middle East and Africa. However, the connection of the migrant issue with Islam and therefore the Islamophobic discourse is more explicit in some media and the Internet.

Media

The issue of Islamophobia is closely linked to the issue of migration. Right-wing media in Slovenia heavily reported on “migrants arriving in Slovenia” (although there

13. “Stanje na osnovni šoli v Logatcu postalo nevzdržno: pouk poteka na tleh, zamaknjeni so urniki, pojavlja se medvrstniško nasilje!” (The Situation at the Elementary School in Logatec Has Become Unsustainable: Classes Take Place on the Ground, Hours Are Shifted, and Peer Violence Occurs!), Nova24TV, 26 November 2018, <http://nova24tv.si/slovenija/zaradi-migrantov-stanje-na-osnovni-soli-v-logatcu-postalo-nevzdrzno-pouk-poteka-na-tleh-zamknjeni-so-urniki-pojavlja-se-medvrstnisko-nasilje/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

14. [Video] “Janez Janša o marakeški deklaraciji: ‘Z ilegalnimi migranti bodo lažje razgrajevali družino in narod in zaradi tega je ta dokument škodljiv’ (Video: Janez Janša on the Marrakesh Declaration: ‘Illegal Migrants Will Easily Break Down the Family and the Nation, and This Is Why This Document Is Harmful’), Nova24TV, 15 November 2018, <http://nova24tv.si/slovenija/politika/video-janez-jansa-o-marakeski-deklaraciji-z-ilegalnimi-migranti-bodo-lazje-razgrajevali-druzino-in-narod-in-zaradi-tega-je-ta-dokument-skodljiv/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

15. “Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti v DZ: Migranti režejo glave, posiljujejo mladoletne otroke vseh spolov, koljejo po ulicah. Nekaterim v DZ je, izgleda, to povšeči!” (Zmago Jelinčič Plemeniti in the National Assembly: Migrants Cut Heads, Rape Minor Children of All Genders, Slaughter on the Streets. Some People in the National Assembly Seem to Prefer This!), Demokracija, 21 November 2018, <http://www.demokracija.si/slovenija/zmago-jelincic-plemeniti-v-dz-migranti-rezejo-glave-posiljujejo-mladoletne-otroke-vseh-spolov-koljejo-po-ulicah-nekaterim-v-dz-je-izgleda-to-povseci.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

were no large groups of migrants crossing the borders into Slovenia, except for a few individual cases or small groups) and announced that “migration pressure is rising” and that a “new migrational wave and a new catastrophe” is upcoming. They heavily reported that migrants wished to stay in Slovenia and not to head to Germany or other northern European countries. While reporting the media also used video material from 2015.¹⁶

The right-wing newspaper *Demokracija* has a news chapter entitled “Migrations” (*Migracije*) under which they publish various material and news regarding migration and migrants and depict them as a violent threat to Slovenia. They represent migration as an Islamic invasion.¹⁷ They cover topics such as migrant attacks, forced circumcision of Muslim girls (perceived to be a Muslim practice), theft, thousands of migrants crossing the border to Slovenia, illegal migrants from non-war zones, threats to democracy, etc. (Fig. 5).



Figure 5: The photograph depicts Muslims as a danger to European civilization and democratic political order.¹⁸

This type of media heavily reports on any activities undertaken by Muslims in Slovenia, scrutinizing any new group or event in a xenophobic and Islamophobic manner - for example the construction of another, informal (supposedly) Islamic center (besides the mosque with its adjacent Islamic center, which are officially built by the Islamic Community) (Figs 6, 7).

16. “[Prispevek Slovenija] 01.06.2018 Nova24TV: Migranti si želijo živeti v Sloveniji, ne v Nemčiji”, (Contribution Slovenia 01.06.2018 Nova24TV: Migrants Want to Live in Slovenia, Not in Germany), Nova24TV, 1 June 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xauqRzefYZE>, (Access date: 2 September 2019); Prispevek Slovenija 04.06.2018 Nova24TV: Migranti tudi v Prekmurju, (Contribution Slovenia 04.06.2018 Nova24TV: Migrants also in Prekmurje), Nova24TV, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S49GCEuJQ3Q>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

17. *Migracije*, *Demokracija*, 2018, <http://www.demokracija.si/migracije.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

18. “Anej Sam: Kdo bo v imenu Slovenije podpisal veleizdajo?”, (Anej Sam: Who in the Name of Slovenia Will Sign the Master Treason), *Demokracija*, 3 December 2018, <http://www.demokracija.si/migracije/anej-sam-kdo-bo-v-imenu-slovenije-podpisal-veleizdajo.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).



Figure 6: The construction of an Islamic center by a newly established Muslim group.¹⁹



Figure 7: The mosque in Ljubljana, which is financed by Qatar.²⁰

The newspaper *Reporter* spreads fear of a Muslim ghetto developing around the newly built mosque since the area around the mosque was allocated to build settlements and houses.²¹ The conservative Christian newspaper *Domovina*, with a slightly milder Islamophobic discourse, writes about the threat of Islam and Muslims to Europe; they are portrayed as jeopardising Christianity. According to *Domovina*, Christianity is disappearing, while Islam is spreading and increasing.²²

19. "Muslimani gradijo še en islamski center v Ljubljani: Vse za širitev islama in misijonarstva povsod po Sloveniji!", (Muslims Build Another Islamic Center in Ljubljana: Everything for the Expansion of Islam and Missionaries throughout Slovenia!), Nova24TV, 17 July 2018, <http://nova24tv.si/slovenija/politika/muslimani-gradijo-se-en-islamski-center-v-ljubljani-vse-za-siritev-islama-in-misijonarstva-povsod-po-sloveniji/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

20. "Gradnja džamije v Ljubljani se nadaljuje, bogati 'stric iz ozadja' ponovno Katar. Nas milijoni iz države s šeriatskim pravom lahko skrbijo?" (The Construction of the Mosque in Ljubljana Continues, the Rich 'Uncle from behind' Is Again Qatar. Can Millions from a Country with Sharia Law Worry Us?), *Domovina*, 18 July 2018, <https://www.domovina.je/gradnja-dzamiye-v-ljubljani-se-nadaljuje-bogati-strict-iz-ozadja-ponovno-katar-nas-milijoni-iz-drzave-s-seriatskim-pravom-lahko-skrbijo/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

21. "Džamija v Ljubljani: nastaja v prestolnici muslimanski geto?", (Mosque in Ljubljana: The Muslim Ghetto Is Being Built in the Capital?), *Reporter*, 21 October 2018, <https://reporter.si/clanek/slovenija/dzamiya-v-ljubljani-nastaja-v-prestolnici-muslimanski-geto-666298>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

22. "Spreminjanje verske identitete Evrope: cerkve so prazne, prihaja nova vera", (Changing Religious Identity of Europe: The Churches Are Empty, a New Faith Is Coming), *Domovina*, 24 July 2018, <https://www.domovina.je/spreminjanje-verske-identitete-evrope-cerkve-so-prazne-prihaja-nova-vera/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Nova24TV's columnist writes about the incompatibility of Islam and Europe. Bernard Brščič states,

Islam does not belong to Germany, does not belong to Europe and does not belong to Slovenia. European Islam is a contradiction in terms. Islam and Europe are separate and incompatible concepts in values. [...] Europeanness means denial of Islam. [...] Muslims do not demand subordination from themselves and their associates, but from all of us. [...] Islam is consequently in war with all great religions, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism. [...] The freedom that we enjoy and is guaranteed by the liberal-democratic system is threatened by Islam. This is not just about pursuing the ideals of the Enlightenment, such as secularism, freedom of speech, democratic decision-making, equality of men and women, the arbitrariness of sexual orientation, but also about trivial things, such as the right to enjoy pork sausages, ham or Kranjska sausage, drink *refošek* or *cviček*,²³ or the right to freely stray dogs accompanied by uncovered women.²⁴

Justice System

In October 2017, the Slovenian Muslim Community sent an initiative to the Constitutional Court to assess the constitutionality of the law and proposed the possibility that animals be slaughtered without stunning. They claim that their human rights have been violated and that the law violates the constitution's Article 7 (equality and freedom of religious communities) and Article 41 (freedom of conscience), as well as 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.

On 25 April, the Constitutional Court unanimously rejected the constitutional initiative of the Muslim Community for assessing the constitutionality of Article 25 of the Law on the Protection of Animals, which stipulates that every animal must be stunned before slaughter. According to the court, the aim of the second paragraph of Article 25 of the Law on the Protection of Animals is to ensure the welfare of animals. In the context of the present case, the judges relied on the constitutionally prescribed protection of animals against torture explicitly required by Article 72 (4) of the constitution. The definition of the constitutionally prescribed "protection of animals against torture" also includes the efforts of the legislator to prevent or al-

23. *Refošek* and *cviček* are two types of wine.

24. Bernard Brščič, "Islam ne sodi v Evropo", (Islam Doesn't Belong in Europe), Nova24TV, 6 May 2018, <http://nova24tv.si/kolumna/islam-ne-sodi-v-evropo/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

leviate the body's unpleasant feelings of pain, stress and fear caused by humans to animals. The goal of the stunning of animals prior to slaughtering is the protection of animal welfare and it is part of a morality understood as a set of rules that evaluate and guide the conduct of people on the basis of the concepts of good and bad. According to Article 9 (2) of the European Convention on Human Rights morality is an admissible cause of interference with religious freedom.²⁵

In January 2018, the Government Council for Religious Freedom Dialogue (*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. Muslim members of the army still do not have an official, full-time imam to guide them in their ritual performances.²⁶ They also discussed the question of circumcising Muslim boys and the possibility of performing this surgery in state hospitals, since the surgery is not allowed on the grounds of religious belief and parents are forced to search for other options abroad. The issues remain unsolved to date. Regarding slaughter and circumcision, the Jewish community is affected in the same way - in Slovenia, it is difficult to practice Orthodox Judaism.

Internet

A very active xenophobic group on the Internet called *Upor Slovencev* (Uprising of Slovenians) heavily reports on any activities undertaken by Muslims in Slovenia, scrutinizing any new group or event. The Internet page of *Upor Slovencev* published long articles²⁷ entitled "Muslims in Slovenia" where it was stated, "Slovenia wake up. We have only one state, we should not let contemporary Muslim occupiers take it!"²⁸ and "Islamization of Slovenia,"²⁹ where they represented Muslims as a threat to invade Slovenia.

The occupation of Muslims and Islam is known almost everywhere in Slovenia today. We can see more and more Muslims and women covered walking through Slovenian streets and cities. These are not just tourists, these are the occupiers who are spreading their Islamic faith and demanding rights for themselves.³⁰

25. Odločba Ustavnega sodišča št. (Decision of the Constitutional Court no.) U-I-140/14 z dne 25.4.2018, Ustavno sodišče Republike Slovenije, 23 May 2018, <https://www.us-rs.si/aktualno/novice/odlocba-ustavnega-sodisca-stu-i-14014-z-dne-25-4-2018/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

26. Government Council for Religious Freedom Dialogue, 3rd session minutes, 22 January 2018, http://www.mk.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/verske_skupnosti/Svet_vlade_za_dialog_o_verski_svobodi/zapisnik_3_seje_SDVS231017.pdf, (Access date: 2 September 2019). Legally there is a possibility of religious/spiritual care for members of all religions according to needs, but only a Catholic Christian military chaplain is fully employed within the Military Vicariate.

27. The exact date (launch) of the publication is not known, however, the articles and the page itself are constantly updated.

28. "Muslimani v Sloveniji", (Muslims in Slovenia), Slovenski Upor, <https://uporslovencev.wordpress.com/2017/02/21/muslimani-v-sloveniji/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

29. "Islamizacija Slovenije", (Islamization of Slovenia), Slovenski Upor, <https://uporslovencev.wordpress.com/2018/07/12/islamizacija-slovenije/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

30. Ibid.

According to such groups, the threat of Islamization is present in the form of the construction of mosques, halal food and slaughter, Islamic head covering (Fig. 8), Muslim religious holidays, connections of Slovenian politicians with Muslims, Muslims in the army, TV programs showing Muslim families and habits, Muslim women's groups, Islamic propaganda (Fig. 9), migrants, etc.



Figure 8: The photos were taken secretly by a visitor at a pool and posted on social media with Islamophobic discourse.³¹



Figure 9: Propaganda of Islam as reported by the group Uprising of Slovenians.³²

The Facebook group “STOP to Islamization of Slovenia” states that it is a group for all non-Islamic Slovenes who are aware of the danger of the Islamization of the world (Fig. 10).

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.



Figure 10: The profile picture of the Facebook group "STOP to Islamization of Slovenia."³³

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

On the political level, parties that openly express Islamophobic ideas belong to the right-wing conservative political spectre. These are the Slovenian Democratic Party (*Slovenska demokratska stranka*), New Slovenia (*Nova Slovenija*), and the Slovenian National Party (*Slovenska nacionalna stranka*). These parties have also established their own media that spread the same ideological messages (*Demokracija*, Reporter, Nova24TV, and *Domovina*). Many of the groups that spread Islamophobic/xenophobic discourse were established on the Internet during the mass transition of refugees across Slovenia in 2015. Some of these pages are still active such as *Upor Slovencev* (Uprising of Slovenians), Generation Identity Slovenia (*Generacija identitete Slovenija*), Radical Ljubljana (*Radikalna Ljubljana*), *Stop islamizaciji Slovenije* (Stop the Islamization of Slovenia).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

NGOs that are active in initiatives to counter Islamophobia are the Peace Institute (*Mirovni inštitut*), Slovene Philanthropy (*Slovenska filantropija*), Amnesty International, Society UP Jesenice (*Društvo UP Jesenice*), ROG Factory (*Tovarna ROG*), SLOGA - Slovenian Global Action, and PIC - Legal Informational Center. Humanitarian organizations and research institutes are also part of this network: Humanitas, Karitas, and the Slovenian Migration Institute (SMI). Muslims themselves also try to counter Islamophobia with their activities; there are two main Islamic communities in Slovenia: the Islamic community in Slovenia and the Slovenian Muslim Community.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In 2018, Slovenia was occupied with national and local elections, which gave rise to new Islamophobic discourses in connection with migrations. Right-wing media and

33. STOP islamizaciji Slovenije, Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/166900240168104/>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

Internet groups, in order to gather political support for right-wing parties, heavily reported on the supposed threat of new migrations and “violent” migrants, who are not willing to settle in other European countries, but instead enter and remain in Slovenia. Islamophobic discourse thus revolved around news about numerous migrants waiting on the borders of Slovenia, and the threat of the Islamization of Slovenia, as it is supposedly already happening through Islamic propaganda made by newly established Islamic groups on the Internet and in some local communities. Migrants (refugees, asylum seekers) are thus linked to Islam and Muslim identity and are believed to represent a physical and ideological threat. The results of the national elections (although the SDS could not form a coalition, it gained most of the votes and seats in parliament) also show that such xenophobic and racist discourses are widely accepted and gain support. Muslims living in Slovenia continue to experience difficulties in the fulfilment of their constitutional rights in all areas of political and social life. In practice nothing much has changed in the political and legal sense, since no new political or legal decision in favor of Muslims has been taken. Indeed, the Constitutional Court rejected the Slovenian Muslim Community’s claim for not stunning animals before ritual slaughter.

Taking into account the events and the status quo of Islamophobia, the following policy recommendations are offered:

- Raising 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.
- Improving the monitoring and collection of information about discrimination based on religious grounds in the employment area, education area, and social area.
- Implementing a legal framework for Islamic practices such as praying hours and designated spaces at the workplace; halal dietary regimes; spiritual care for Muslims in the armed forces; possibilities for safe circumcision of boys in hospitals.
- Facilitating visibility and participation of Muslims in political, economic, social and cultural life.

Chronology

- **18.01.2018:** Government Council for Religious Freedom Dialogue meets in its regular session to discuss the circumcision of boys and the necessity of imams in the army.
- **25.04.2018:** The Constitutional Court rejects the demand of the Islamic Community and stipulates that the stunning of animals is necessary before slaughter.

- **23.06.2018:** Nazi posters are placed around Velenje.
- **31.08.2018:** Pork is deposited in front of the Islamic Community's facility in Koper.
- **03.09.2018:** News about right-wing paramilitary groups (*Štajerska varda*) exercising in Slovenia.
- **05.11.2018:** Janez Janša's statement about the dangers of the Marrakesh Declaration for the nation and family.
- **21.11.2018:** Zmago Jelinčič delivers a speech in the parliament portraying migrants as violent.
- **30.11.2018:** The building of the Islamic Community in Kranj is covered with anti-Islamic stickers.
- **03.12.2018:** *Demokracija* publishes an article on the threat of migrations and Islam for Europe and European civilization.
- **10.12.2018:** Protest in front of the Parliament against the Marrakesh Declaration.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
SPAIN
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

In the political area, the year 2018 will be written in the history of Spain as the year that welcomed a new president of the government, Pedro Sánchez Castejón, after the motion of no confidence that ousted Mariano Rajoy. However, in relation to Islamophobia, the most relevant fact was the burst on the political scene of VOX, a far-right party born at the end of 2013 that grew exponentially after the independence issue in Catalonia and the weakening of the Popular Party. In its political programme, VOX states its intention to close the so-called radical mosques, the preference for immigrants whose way of living is compatible with “our” traditions and culture, i.e. Hispanic immigrants are preferred over those of Muslim origin, and the rejection of the historical era of Al-Andalus. Such an explicit message has never before been seen in the Spanish political arena in the democratic era. On another note, several important problems affecting the Muslim community remain unsolved such as the building of Muslim cemeteries and the religious assistance to inmates or members of the army. The teaching of the subject of Islamic religion has been implemented gradually even though occasionally it met some rejection by parents’ associations who see this as the exclusion of Christian principles. The physical attacks were mainly vandalistic acts to mosques and, except in a couple of cases of physical violence, the most frequent aggressions were verbal either in face-to-face communicative acts or, above all, insults via social media against Muslim citizens. The regulation of hate speech crimes is still an important issue that demands a solution together with the control of fake news that creates social alarm in a large sector of Spanish society prone to becoming Islamophobic mainly due to ignorance on the topic and the manipulation of the media.

Resumen Ejecutivo

En la esfera política, el año 2018 quedará escrito en la historia de España como el año en el que se invistió a un nuevo presidente de gobierno, Pedro Sánchez Castejón, tras la interposición de una moción de censura¹ a Mariano Rajoy. Sin embargo, en relación con el problema de la islamofobia, el hecho más relevante fue la irrupción en el panorama político de VOX, un partido político de ultraderecha que nació a finales de 2013 y que ha crecido de manera inusual a partir del conflicto de Cataluña y el debilitamiento del Partido Popular. En su programa político, VOX declara su intención de cerrar las mezquitas radicales, la preferencia por los inmigrantes de habla hispana en relación a los de origen árabe, así como su rechazo al reconocimiento y capital importancia de la época histórica de Al-Andalus. Un mensaje tan explícito de desaprobación del Islam no se había visto en el panorama político español tras la instauración de la democracia. Por otro lado, continúan sin solucionarse problemas como la construcción de cementerios musulmanes o la asistencia religiosa a reclusos y soldados. La asignatura de religión islámica se sigue implantando de manera gradual en los centros si bien es cierto que, en ocasiones, ha encontrado rechazo por comunidades de padres que ven en este hecho la exclusión de los principios cristianos. Los ataques físicos fueron, sobre todo, actos vandálicos a mezquitas y salvo algún caso de violencia a ciudadanos musulmanes, las agresiones más frecuentes fueron verbales bien en actos de comunicación cara a cara o a través de insultos en las redes sociales. La regulación de los delitos relacionados con el discurso del odio sigue siendo la gran asignatura pendiente junto con el control de las noticias falsas, grandes potenciadores de alarma social en parte de un sector de la población propenso a convertirse en islamóforo fundamentalmente debido a la ignorancia sobre el tema y a la manipulación de los medios de comunicación.

1. Miquel Alberola, "Pedro Sánchez, presidente del Gobierno tras ganar la moción de censura a Rajoy", El País, 1 June 2018.

Country Profile

Country: Spain

Type of Regime: Social and Democratic State of Law

Form of Government: Parliamentary Monarchy

Ruling Parties: PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) (Socialist Party)

Opposition Parties: PP (Partido Popular), Ciudadanos, Podemos

Last Elections: On 2 June, 2018, Pedro Sánchez Castejón became the president of the government after a non-confidence vote ousted Mariano Rajoy who had been the head of the government from 2011 to 2018.

Total Population: 46.7 million (according to the census of 2018).

Major Languages: Spanish. In 6 other autonomous communities there are other co-official languages: Catalan (Catalonia and Balearic Islands); Valencian (Valencian Community); Euskera (Basque Country and Navarra); and Galician (Galicia).

Official Religion: No official religion (Secularism)

Statistics on Islamophobia: In their 2017 report, the NGO *Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia* (Citizen Platform against Islamophobia) reported 546 Islamophobic incidents with an outstanding increase in the cyber hate crimes that make up 70% of all incidents. Other aspects are the political and institutional Islamophobia with mosques as the preferred target of Islamophobic attacks (by attacking the existing ones or preventing new ones from opening), and gendered Islamophobia (attacks on Muslim women stood for 21% of all incidents). The Observatory of Islamophobia in the Media reported that 48% of the news published in Spanish newspapers on Muslims and Islam was Islamophobic.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: N/A

Major Religions (% of Population): According to the data from July 2018 published by the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (Centre for Sociological Investigations), the percentage of Catholics in Spain was 67, agnostics stood at 5.5%, non-believers at 16.1%, and atheists at 10.7%. Members of other religions constitute 2.9% of the population. The remaining 2.7% did not know or did not answer.

Muslim Population (% of Population): 1,993,675, almost two million, according to the *Estudio Demográfico de la población musulmana of 2018* (Demographic study of the Muslim population). This is approximately 4% of the Spanish population.

Main Muslim Community Organisations: Unión de las Comunidades Islámicas de España, Observatorio Andalusi.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia, Red Islamofobia, Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia, Asociación de Jóvenes Musulmanes de España, Observatorio de la Islamofobia en los medios.

Far-Right Parties: VOX, Democracia Nacional

Far-Right Movements: Hogar Social

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A**Limitations to Islamic Practices**

- **Hijab Ban:** Schools and educational centres usually have legislation preventing any student from covering their head with caps, hats, or any other accessory. This has come into conflict with the veil in several cases in the last years. However, educational centres finally allowed Muslim students to wear the veil. In 2018, this was the case in a high school in Murcia. The incident in 2017 regarding a woman working at the airport of Palma de Mallorca who was dismissed for wearing the veil led to a sentencing as an indirect act of discrimination. According to the legislation, any private company can ban the hijab if there is a conflict with the professional activity carried out by the Muslim worker.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The demographic study of the Muslim population published at the end of 2017 by the *Observatorio Andalusi* (Andalusi Observatory) stated that the Muslim population in Spain was nearly two million (1,946,300), which means that 4% of Spanish citizens are Muslim. Once again, the biggest settlement is found in Cataluña (522,113), followed by Andalusia (314,980), Madrid (285,993), and Valencia (206,315). The significant presence of Muslims in Spain entails different attitudes towards them by the rest of the citizenship. In this report, several problems on specific areas will be pointed out; many of them were already stated in former studies but remained unresolved by the different governments in power.

A very meaningful fact, without doubt, is that Islamophobia lacks the status of hate crime for the Ministry of Home Affairs. While anti-Semitism is recognised independently from other generic categories of hate crimes such as xenophobia or racism, Islamophobia is included in the more generic category of “hate crimes for religious beliefs”², a fact that seems striking considering the number of Muslims living in Spain.

The Ministry of Home Affairs, Judge Grande Marlaska, held several meetings with different associations to design a plan to fight hate crimes in the near future and finally decided to keep the current taxonomy of hate crimes.

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

The year 2018 was another year in which physical and verbal attacks against Muslims or Muslim institutions took place. In relation to individual citizens, the most explicit act of physical violence was suffered by two young Moroccan men who were attacked by a group of neo-fascists in Denia.³ Verbal violence, however, was much more frequent and several videos in which Muslims were insulted or denigrated were made public. Those verbal attacks were addressed to average citizens and recorded by videos that became viral exposing the daily samples of racism members of the Muslim community experience.

Muslims well known in public life were also subjects of attacks, especially on social media such as the journalist Amanda Figueras when she published her last book or the politician Nadja Driouech who was harshly criticised on social media after her comments on VOX.

2. My deepest gratitude to the activist Aurora Alí who pointed out this fact to me. <http://www.interior.gob.es/web/servicios-al-ciudadano/delitos-de-odio>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

3. “Agresión xenófoba en Dénia: dos menores magrebíes acaban en el hospital tras apalazarlos un grupo de unos 15 ‘ultras’”, Kaosenlared, 16 November 2018.

As usual, the physical attacks on institutions mainly targeted mosques. Examples include the islamophobic graffiti on the mosques of Carrús, Hernani⁴, or the vandalization of a mosque in Japó Street in Barcelona by a group of neo-fascists⁵ the images below show some of these vandalistic acts. Both pictures highlight a frontal rejection of Muslims and the second an explicit wish to expel them.



Figure 1: Graffiti on the Great Mosque of Valencia "No Moors". 26 July 2018.
 Figure 2: Graffiti on the mosque of Hernani "Moors out". . 3 March 2018.

The building of a new mosque found strict opposition in RioSeco (Valladolid) and Pilar de la Horadada (Alicante). In Murcia and Badalona, Muslim organisations complained about the campaigns of fear among the citizens that were carried out by political groups.

Employment

As with other sectors of daily life such as renting a flat, the Muslim community complains about the discrimination experienced when they seek employment. The case is especially outstanding for women wearing the hijab. That was the case of Laila Ferroukh who brought to light her negative experiences when looking for a job. Laila's case was reproduced⁶ in the media, became viral, and gave origin to the Twitter hashtag *#unapersonacomoyo* (a person like me) through which (mainly) Muslim women shared their discriminatory experiences when trying to find a job. An area in which unemployment is very high for Muslims is definitely the field of education since 95% of Muslim teachers are still unemployed.

4. Aitor Guenaga, "Pintadas racistas en la mezquita de Hernani: Fuera Moros", *El Diario*, 3 March 2018.

5. Jesús Hierro, "Investigan a 7 neonazis por amedrentar a musulmanes ante la apertura de una mezquita", *ABC*, 8 March 2018.

6. Susana Ye, "Rechazada en una entrevista de trabajo por llevar velo: 'Los clientes no quieren tratar con personas como tú'", *El Mundo*, 28 June 2018.

Education

In 2018, only 5% of Muslim students⁷ had access to the subject of Islamic religion.⁸ This unacceptable fact led the Islamic Commission to tell the government of Catalonia they would sue them if the policy continues.⁹

In the autonomous community of Navarra, the provision of classes on Islam occurred in 6 educational centres to students from 3 years old onwards.¹⁰ The same is true in Extremadura where more than 400 students could study the Islamic religion from last September.¹¹

Another persistent problem related to Muslims and the field of education is the lack of halal menus in schools. In Valencia, the centres were given the possibility to deny halal menus to Muslim students because they have a different legal framework which is independent from the central government in certain areas.¹² The autonomous government finally committed to offering a pork-free menu to Muslims (even if not halal).¹³ As usual, controversy arose in some schools such as the public school Rocafonda in Mataró when it stated that all the meat would be halal. After the protests of some mothers, they offered two alternative menus: a halal and a non-halal one.¹⁴

The problem of female Muslim students wearing the veil affected a student from Murcia who was not allowed access to high school because the centre's rules did not allow any student to attend classes with their head covered.¹⁵

Politics

In the political field, the exit of Mariano Rajoy and the weakening of the People's Party (*Partido Popular*) due to the continuous cases of corruption and the internal divisions looking for power were the perfect circumstances for more extreme right-wing parties - among which VOX is the most outstanding representative - to attract

7. Despite the Agreements of 1992 that guaranteed the right of Muslim students to have a subject on Islamic religion, the implementation of the law has been too slow.

8. EFE Press Agency, "El 95% de los musulmanes no tiene acceso a clase de religión islámica", 20 minutos, 15 February 2018.

9. Carmen Hernández, "La Comisión Islámica de España alerta que denunciará a la Generalitat si no implanta su religión en colegios", El Mundo, 21 July 2018.

10. Iñigo González, "La religión islámica estará en al menos 6 centros navarros en 2018", Diario de Navarra, 27 February 2018.

11. Ana B. Hernández, "Más de 400 alumnos estudiarán Islam en el colegio a partir de septiembre en a una Extremadura", Hoy, 16 August 2018.

12. Mónica Ros, "Educación permite que los colegios se nieguen a ofrecer menús 'halal'", Levante, 24 August 2018.

13. Mónica Ros, "Educación garantiza un menú escolar sin cerdo para los estudiantes musulmanes", Diario Información, 26 July 2018.

14. Manuel Arenas, "Polémica en Mataró por la posible implantación de un menú único musulmán en un comedor escolar", El Periódico, 18 September 2018.

15. EP/ABC "Un colegio de Murcia impide el acceso a una alumna por llevar velo islámico", ABC, 14 November 2018.

the part of the conservative voters who felt somehow disappointed by what they considered the bland policy of the PP.

In relation to Islamophobia, Santiago Abascal, the president of VOX, argued the need to ban “radical mosques” and shared his opinion that Islam is incompatible with Spanish traditions, distinguishing a more preferred group of immigrants (South Americans) rather than Muslims.¹⁶ While the political campaign for the Andalusian elections was taking place in Córdoba, VOX said they will fight those who want to turn the cathedral into a mosque.

VOX usually talks about the “Reconquista” (Reconquest) of the country from the illegal immigrants and those who plan to defeat Spain as a nation.

After VOX’s great and unexpected success in the last Andalusian elections with 12 seats in the parliament, Santiago Abascal made very harsh comments against the Catalan independentist politician, Najat Driouech, a Muslim woman wearing a hi-jab who called VOX “male chauvinist” in the Catalan Parliament. Abascal’s reaction on Twitter was quick and inappropriate. He told her in a very rough language (using ‘this’ to refer to Mrs. Driouech rather than addressing her in a polite way), to look first at ‘home’ (meaning obviously her religion, not her city or hometown) before qualifying them as male chauvinists.



Figure 3: Tweet in which Abascal, leader of VOX, replies harshly to the comment made by Najat Driouech: “And this calls us male chauvinists... let her look first at her home”.

Xabier Albiol, former candidate for the city hall of Badalona and the relevant member of the PP in Catalonia, made other anti-Muslim statements when he said that the neighbourhood of Artigues did not need another mosque and opposed its construction.¹⁷

16. Canarias Ahora, “Abascal: ‘No es lo mismo un inmigrante hispanoamericano que la inmigración de los países islámicos’”, Youtube, 17 April 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jl43Neqlf3c>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

17. Jesús García, “Albiol agita a los vecinos contra una mezquita paquistaní”, El País, 17 May 2018. Albiol is a reoffender; he displayed the same kind of attitude in 2009. The current mayor of Badalona replied that she was going to sue him for hate speech.

Media

In 2018, *El Observatorio sobre la Islamofobia en los Medios*¹⁸ (Observatory for Islamophobia in the Media) launched a report on 1,600 articles analysed in 2017, concluding that 6 out of any 10 articles that were related to Islam or the Muslim community had Islamophobic traits in an active or passive way. The results of the analysis of the first three months of 2018 showed that 48% of the news were Islamophobic.

The TV documentary series *España mira hacia la Meca* (Spain looks at Mecca) was also very controversial. Certain Muslim communities did not feel they had been well portrayed or represented. This was enhanced by the fact that journalists try to show the negative side of the coexistence of several ethno-religious groups in Spanish cities.¹⁹ After the first episode aired, the Observatory for Islamophobia in the Media also highlighted that even though there were some positive aspects in the series, most of the content was Islamophobic.²⁰ The reaction of plenty of Muslims on Twitter was loud since they considered the documentary did not represent them in a fair way.²¹

Justice System

There were some controversial sentences in 2018. Once such case was that of a 19-year-old Moroccan woman shot at her home in her hometown of Oria as she witnessed a burglary. The fact that the accused told his friends he had shot a ‘mora’²² (moor), a word that the Royal Academy of the Spanish language admits as a common term for ‘Muslim’ but that usually has a negative connotation, was not a factor strong enough to persuade the judges of the racism underlying the action.

The lack of Muslim cemeteries in the country is still a very serious matter to be solved. Ninety-five per cent of the Muslim communities lack a cemetery to bury their dead. The Islamic communities of Badajoz and Tuy have been demanding this

18. Since 2017, Spain has an organisation that watches out for Islamophobia in the media, namely *El Observatorio sobre la Islamofobia en los Medios* (Observatory for Islamophobia in the Media). It is made up of several organisations from civil society and the University of Murcia. Their methodology is well stated on their webpage <http://www.observatorioislamofobia.org/> and they focus on the analysis of news related to Muslims and Islam reported by Spanish journalists or the editorial team of Spanish newspapers. The six national newspapers analyzed are *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo*, *La Razón*, *20 Minutos*, *El País* and *El Diario.es*.

The news is classified following the traffic light code. Hence red colour is for news that is actively Islamophobic; yellow indicates the passive Islamophobic news; and green is for news that is not Islamophobic. They also write quarterly qualitative and quantitative reports based on the statistics from the results.

19. Alberto R. Aguiar, “Indignación entre los ceutíes tras el estreno de ‘España mira a La Meca’”, *El Faro de Ceuta*, 16 October 2018, <https://elfarodeceuta.es/indignacion-ceuta-estreno-espana-mira-meca-telecinco/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

20. María Torrens, “La respuesta de Ana Terradillos a las críticas por ‘España mira hacia la Meca’”, *Salam Plan*, 4 November 2018, <https://salamplan.com/islamofobia/la-respuesta-ana-terradillos-las-criticas-espana-mira-la-meca/20181104>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

21. María Torrens, “Por qué ‘España mira hacia la Meca’ no representa los musulmanes”, *Salam Plan*, 4 November 2018, <https://salamplan.com/islamofobia/espana-mira-la-meca-no-representa-los-musulmanes/20181104>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

22. Real Academia Española, <http://dle.rae.es/?id=PqZDbAp>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

right for a long time even though it was guaranteed by the Cooperation Agreements of 1992.

According to the Demographic Study of Muslims in Spain from 2018 the religious assistance to Muslim inmates in Spanish prisons is a very insufficient 20 imams for all the number of Muslim inmates in Spanish prisons and 7 for the centres for foreigners.²³ Similarly, the number of military imams is zero for all the national territory even though there are some military units that are mainly made up of Muslim soldiers such as the *Unidades de Regulares* that used to have a military and *alfaquí* imam. Similarly, there is still not even one imam in any hospital in the national territory.

Internet

As Esteben Ibarra, president of the NGO *Movimiento contra la Intolerancia* (Movement against Intolerance), stated in their work from 2017 the attacks on the Internet raised in the last year and 70% of the cases reported happened on the web.²⁴

Most of the Islamophobic pages on Facebook and Twitter refer to the ‘invasion of Muslims’. The supposed progressive implementation of Islam is repeated by the following tropes: access to a halal menu in schools, the ‘imposition’ of the subject of Islamic religion in schools, or the opening of new mosques. The images frequently contain a medieval Christian knight conveying the image of a New Crusade against Islam, while historical heroes such as ‘El Cid’ are usually mentioned. Several accounts asking for the ban of Islam in Spain are very active such as *Stop Islamización de España* (Stop the Islamization of Spain) with more than 3,000 members or *Los españoles primero* (Spaniards first) with more than 7,000 members.



Figure 4: Image from a Facebook account ‘Don Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar y Mendoza. Islam out of Spain’

23. The religious assistance was regulated in the Agreements of 2006, 2007, 2008 (for Catalonia, a community with transferred competences on this matter) and 2015 for the regulation of religious assistance to centres for foreigners.

24. Alejandro Romero, “Los ataques islamófobos crecen en Internet”, *El País*, 2 March 2018.



Figure 5: Picture from the Facebook account *Stop Islamización de España*: “Rejecting Islam is not racism, it is patriotism”

On Twitter, Islamophobes tend to tweet news in which Muslims, usually of Moroccan origin, are involved in crimes against Spanish citizens. The hashtag *#defiendeEspaña* (Defend Spain) targets both Muslims and the supporters of the far left in a way equating them as enemies of Spain. Some such news are old or did even happened in Spain but are recycled in order to create social alarm.²⁵

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

Aside from the names mentioned in other sections already, there have been other central figures in the Islamophobia network, mainly the directors of webpages or news sites devoted to spreading fake news on Islam.

The type of news they spread follows the pattern of either inspiring fear among citizens or making up situations in which Muslims impose their traditions on the Spanish ones and, therefore, giving the wrong impression they are successfully and progressively ‘taking over’ Spain. One example is reproduced below in which the heading states that pork has been forbidden in Andalusian schools in order not to offend Muslims and the rest of students are forced to eat halal food.



Figure 6: Heading of *Caso Aislado* with the fake news that pork has been forbidden in Andalusian schools not to offend Muslims and that the rest of the children are forced to eat halal food.

25. The most popular hashtags on Twitter leading to Islamophobic comments are *#Stopislamización* (Stop Islamization); *#defiendeEspaña* (defend Spain); *#lospañolesprimero* (the Spaniards first); *#stopinmigrantes* (stop immigrants); *#stoprefugiados* (#stoprefugees).

Among the numerous examples that proliferate on the web, I will mention the websites *Caso aislado*, *Sevilla Digital*, *Alerta Digital* and *Mediterráneo Digital*. The director of the website *Alerta Digital* Armando Robles, also known as ‘the Spanish Trump’, was arrested and accused of the crime of hate speech against the Muslim community.²⁶

Organizations such as *Maldito Bulo* (bloody unfounded rumour) work to unveil the fake news concerning, among others, Muslims.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The initiatives of civil society, mainly organisations, NGOs, associations and communities, academics, artists, and some political groups, have been directed at three main areas: education, preservation of memory, and knowledge.

In relation to preventing current and future Islamophobia through education, different campaigns in schools and high schools were organised and launched to raise the youngest in more egalitarian and fair principles, like the workshop on cyber hate and Islamophobia organised by Jardín de Málaga High School in May.

To protect the preservation of the Muslim legacy in Spain in order to fight against the policy of denial of the historical and central role of Muslims in the history of Spain, many academic events were organised to show citizens (Muslim and non-Muslim) the amazing heritage of eight centuries of Muslim presence in Spain. To give a couple of examples, I will mention the project *Balansiya* which spreads the knowledge of Valencia in the Muslim period and the Foundation of Islamic Culture (FUNCI) through the history of Muslim Madrid initiatives which foster knowledge on Muslims and Islam so that the non-Muslim sectors of society get to know the Muslim community first-hand via social media campaigns or via local events in which Muslims can share their experiences, beliefs, and way of living.

A core task in fighting Islamophobia was the monitoring of hate crimes. In this sense, organisations such as *Musulmanes contra la Islamofobia* and *Plataforma Ciudadana contra la Islamofobia*, which is made up of three different organizations namely the Islamic Cultural Centre of Valencia, *la Junta Islámica* and *El Movimiento contra la Intolerancia*, worked extremely hard with a team of volunteers who checked the web looking for cases of Islamophobia and also collected the complaints of citizens. This is an essential role in two ways: to offer support to victims of hate crime and to record hate crimes that later crystallise in an annual report which offers a picture of the real state of the problem.

26. “Detienen al director de la web Alerta Digital por delito de odio contra el colectivo musulmán”, *La voz del Sur*, 16 October 2018.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

In the current delicate socio-political situation Spain is experiencing with the increasing presence in the political scene of parties of the extreme right and their explicit references to their immigration policy, the government should pay attention to the basic rights guaranteed by the law that many Muslims still cannot enjoy such as the possibility to bury their beloved or to be taught their religion at schools. Even though the latter aspect is being progressively addressed, the former is still a very serious issue totally neglected by the government institutions irrespective of their political orientation.

The monitoring of hate crimes that NGOs carry out should continue with special attention to hate speech online where the offenders find the easiest way to harass, offend, insult, and threaten individual Muslims or the whole community. Furthermore, the government should be strict with the prosecution of individuals with an agenda to spread fake news and propagate fear to a large sector of society, which due to misinformation, ignorance, and manipulation start to reject Muslims.

An essential aspect, without doubt, is the fact that Islamophobia lacks an independent status as a hate crime (and consequently more visibility) and falls under the more generic category of “hate crimes for religious beliefs”²⁷ - a striking fact considering the number of Muslims living in Spain.

In the long run, hope rests in investing in education. It is necessary that the government implements certain educational programmes for both future teachers of primary schools as well as for young children. It is essential that children grow up with respect for each other in order to have responsible citizens in the future.

Chronology

- **09.01.2018:** Fascist slogans are painted on a mosque in Carrus (Elche).²⁸
- **17.01.2018:** Controversy in Río Seco about the building of a mosque. Some citizens organise a signature collection to prevent its construction.²⁹
- **19.01.2018:** Controversy about a letter sent to schools to prevent potential “Jihadist radicalisation”. Muslim associations qualify the document as Islamophobic.³⁰
- **03.02.2018:** The Islamic community of Badajoz has been demanding a cemetery for 18 years.³¹

27. “Brochure on hate crimes”, Home Affairs Ministry, <http://www.interior.gob.es/web/servicios-al-ciudadano/delitos-de-odio>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

28. I. J. Iniesta, “Aparecen pintadas fascistas en la mezquita de Carrús”, *Diario Información*, 9 January 2018.

29. Polémica en Río Seco tras una recogida de firmas para impedir la construcción de una mezquita en la localidad”, *Tribuna Valladolid*, 17 January 2018.

30. Mar Ferragut, “Organizaciones musulmanas tachan el documento de ‘islamófobo’”, *E Diario de Mallorca*, 19 January 2018.

31. “La comunidad islámica de Badajoz lleva 18 años pidiendo un cementerio”, *Hoy*, 3 February 2018.

- **26.02.2018:** The imam of Badajoz reports fake prejudices about his demand for a cemetery.³²
- **03.03.2018:** Islamophobic graffiti appears on a mosque in Hernani.³³
- **08.03.2018:** Seven neo-Nazis are under investigation after the intimidation of Muslims during the opening of a new mosque.³⁴
- **12.03.2018:** Neo-fascists protest in front of the mosque in Japó Street, Barcelona.³⁵
- **06.04.2018:** Muslim women have problems renting flats in Bilbao.³⁶
- **10.04.2018:** The court of Almería does not see any racist motivation in the man who killed a young Moroccan man in his home.³⁷
- **19.04.2018:** Neighbours from Barcelona complain neo-fascists daily pester a mosque.³⁸
- **29.04.2018:** Sour debate about the opening of a mosque in Pilar de la Horadada (a town with more than 4,000 Muslims).³⁹
- **29.04.2018:** The mosque on Japó Street in Barcelona opens despite neighbours' protests.
- **10.05.2018:** The City Hall of Barcelona warns that the far right is growing in the city.⁴⁰
- **11.05.2018:** Muslims from Murcia accuse the political party *Ciudadanos* of frightening the neighbours about a new mosque.⁴¹
- **18.05.2018:** The leader of the fascist organisation *Hogar Social* is prosecuted for her Islamophobic discourse.⁴²
- **18.05.2018:** Xenophobic attacks on the Internet targeting MP Najat Driouech.⁴³

32. EFE Press Agency, "EL imán de Badajoz denuncia 'falsos prejuicios' sobre su demanda de cementerio", Hoy, 26 February 2018, <https://www.hoy.es/badajoz/iman-denuncia-falsos-20180226001312-ntvo.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

33. Aitor Guenaga, "Pintadas racistas en la mezquita de Hernani: Fuera Moros", El Diario, 3 March 2018.

34. Jesús Hierro, "Investigan a 7 neonazis por amedrentar a musulmanes ante la apertura de una mezquita", ABC, 8 March 2018.

35. "Protestas ultras ante la mezquita de la calle Japó de Barcelona", El Nacional, 12 March 2018.

36. Olga Saéz, "Eres marroquí; lo siento mucho, los propietarios no quieren alquilarlos pisos", Deia, 13 March 2018.

37. Europa Press, "Condenan a casi 20 años al asesino de la joven marroquí y el tribunal no ve móvil racista", 20 minutos, 9 April 2018.

38. Alfonso L. Congostrina, "Vecinos de Barcelona denuncian el acoso diario de 'ultras' a una mezquita", El País, 20 March 2018.

39. M. A. Rives, "El ayuntamiento quiere abrir en el polígono una mezquita y alquilarla a los musulmanes", Diario Información, 26 April 2018.

40. Carla Mercader, "La extrema derecha se expande en la ciudad de Barcelona", 20 minutos, 9 May 2018.

41. Islam en Murcia blog, <https://islamenmurcia.blogspot.com/>, 10 May 2018.

42. EFE Press Agency, "Procesan a la líder de Hogar Social Madrid por islamofobia", 20 minutos, 18 May 2018.

43. María Jesús Cañizares, "Ataques xenófobos contra la diputada de ERC Najat Driouech", El Español, 28 May 2018.

- **02.06.2018:** *Partido Popular*'s politician Xabier Albiol “poisons” the neighbours of Badalona about a Pakistani mosque while the mayor of the city threatens to sue him for a hate crime.⁴⁴
- **04.06.2018:** The Muslim community of La Rioja reports a number of fake documents about a number of applications requiring the subject of Islamic religion in schools.
- **04.06.2018:** The Security Forces (*Guardia Civil*) investigate thirteen people involved in a hate crime in a football match between youngsters.⁴⁵
- **06.06.2018:** The Muslim community moves the celebration of Ramadan to the Palacio de Congresos to avoid the controversy of the previous year's event held in a public square dominated by a statue of the Holy Virgin.⁴⁶
- **06.06.2018:** The association of Muslim girls from Elche considers the register for the A levels exam is selective as only girls wearing the hijab were frisked.⁴⁷
- **26.07.2018:** A pig's face is hanged and Islamophobic messages are written on the Great Mosque of Valencia.⁴⁸
- **29.07.2018:** The Spanish Immigration Network reports a “Le Penian” shift in the policy of *Partido Popular*.⁴⁹
- **27.08.2018:** The imam of Cambrils suggests the creation of a census of imams to avoid cases like the one in Ripoll with the radicalization of the terrorists of Las Ramblas⁵⁰
- **09.09.2018:** The General Direction of Police proposes to expel Lawyer Attaoui for 10 years for considering he is “a potential threat for public security”.⁵¹
- **20.09.2018:** The man who volunteered himself to kill immigrants, members of the security forces, and politicians in a video is arrested.⁵²

44. Jesús. García, “Albiol agita a los vecinos contra una mezquita paquistani”, El País, 17 May 2018.

45. V.C.T., “Cuatro detenidos por insultos racistas en un partido de juveniles de hace un año”, Levante, 4 June 2018.

46. L. Mingorance, “El Ramadán se traslada al Palacio de Congresos para evitar la polémica”, Granada Hoy, 6 June 2018.

47. Borja Campoy, “La Asociación de chicas musulmanas de Elche considera “selectivo” el registro a las jóvenes con velo”, Diario Información, 6 June 2018.

48. R.D., “Hacen pintadas islamófobas y cuelgan una careta de cerdo en la Gran Mezquita de Valencia”, Las Provincias, 26 July 2018.

49. EFE Press Agency, “La Red Española de Inmigración condena el ‘giro lepenista’ del líder del PP”, El Diario, 29 July 2018.

50. ACN, “L’Imam de Cambrils proposa fer un registre oficial d’imams que ajudi a evitar nous casos como el de Ripoll”, VilaWeb, 27 August 2018.

51. Europa Press, “España se plantea expulsar a un referente del colectivo musulmán al vele ‘una amenaza real’ terrorista”, La Vanguardia, 9 September 2018.

52. “Detenido un hombre que se ofrecía para matar inmigrantes”, Antena 3, 20 September 2018, https://www.antena3.com/noticias/espana/detenido-un-hombre-que-se-ofrecia_201809205ba3a4ea0cf2178900bb9246.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

- **16.10.2018:** The director of the website *Alerta Digital* is arrested for Islamophobic hate crimes.⁵³
- **25.10.2018:** Islamophobic incident against a young Muslim woman in a bus in Gran Canaria.⁵⁴
- **14.11.2018:** A student in Murcia is denied access to high school because she is wearing the hijab.⁵⁵
- **16.11.2018:** Two young Moroccan men are attacked by a group of 15 neo-fascists in Dénia.⁵⁶
- **14.12.2018:** A police sub-inspector spreads an Islamophobic tweet and a politician from the PP believes and shares it too.⁵⁷
- **19.12.2018:** The organisation Intercultura requires the expulsion from the police of the officers who beat a minor Muslim in Melilla.⁵⁸

53. “Detienen al director de la web digital ‘Caso Aislado’ por delitos de odio contra el colectivo musulmán”, *La Voz del Sur*, 16 October 2018.

54. “Video: Incidente racista en una guagua en Gran Canaria: ‘Terrorista, ¿dónde tienes la bomba?’”, *El Diario*, 25 October 2018, https://www.eldiario.es/canariasahora/sociedad/VIDEO-Incidente-Gran-Canaria-Terrorista_2_828737120.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

55. Europa Press, “Un colegio de Murcia impide el acceso a una alumna por llevar velo islámico”, *ABC*, 14 November 2018, https://www.abc.es/sociedad/abci-colegio-murcia-impide-acceso-alumna-llevar-velo-islamico-201811141117_noticia.html, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

56. “Agresión xenófoba en Denia: dos menores magrebíes acaban en el hospital tras apalizarlos un grupo de unos 15 ‘ultas’”, *La Marina Plaza*, 16 November 2018, https://lamarinaplaza.com/2018/11/16/agresion-xenofoba-en-denia-dos-menores-hospital-paliza-15-ultras/?fbclid=IwAR3cAU5KNtJPchZah9NL1BYpHCX_r6yKSN8yprd4ZPG-13d3EdoMoa_FviMI, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

57. “Un subinspector de Policía difunde un bulo islamófobo sobre la educación en Valencia un diputado del PP le da pábulo”, *El Diario*, 12 December 2018.

58. “Intercultura pide la expulsión del cuerpo para los responsables de la paliza al menor”, *Melilla Hoy*, 19 December 2018.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
**THE UNITED
KINGDOM**
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Disclaimer: Statements of fact and opinion in the national reports of the *European Islamophobia Report* are those of the respective authors. They are not the expression of the editors or the funding institutions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union and Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Directorate for EU Affairs.

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Executive Summary

In a year dominated by Brexit, Islamophobia received both unwanted and welcome attention in the UK during 2018. On the negative side, the upward trend in Islamophobic incidents in the UK continued in 2017-18 (the typical census period for official government data), with the number of cases recorded in official statistics rising by 17% and religion-specific cases by a staggering 40% (double the figure of 2015/16). Instances of vandalism directed at places of worship also recorded a significant (50%) rise in the same period. The government has belatedly recognised the dangers posed by the rapidly escalating far-right activity, supported by the operation of a decentred - and therefore hard to regulate, for both states and social media platforms - global online network. Islamophobia is also increasingly turning into a 'blind spot' for mainstream society. The year 2018 witnessed the transformation of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) into an openly Islamophobic party and an alarming rise of Islamophobic entanglements involving figures of the governing Conservative party. Meanwhile the 'othering' of Muslims is promoted by political and media narratives in key fields as security (long-standing association with terrorism), education ('takeover' of schools), the criminal justice system (disproportionate representation of Muslims in prison population), employment (higher unemployment of Muslims; barriers to promotion; discriminatory practices at work), and gender (depiction of Muslim women as victims of a 'non-western' culture).

On the positive side, the publication of a landmark report by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims has produced a consensus definition of Islamophobia as a form of racism and has generated significant momentum towards the official adoption of such a definition, in spite of government resistance. Civil society organisations too have continued to play a critical role in terms of both challenging stereotypes or inaccurate representations of Muslims and promoting a positive view of the Muslim contribution in British society. Finally, there has been a growing number of initiatives that seek to inscribe Islamophobia - while distinct in its characteristics and in need of discrete legal recognition - into broader pathologies that are rooted in racism and affect Muslims as part of wider oppressed and minoritised segments of British society.

Country Profile

Country: United Kingdom

Type of Regime: Constitutional Monarchy

Form of Government: Parliamentary Democracy headed by a Prime Minister leading the Executive.

Ruling Parties: Conservative Party (since 2010)

Opposition Parties: Labour Party (official opposition of Her Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition); Liberal Democrats; regional parties (Scottish National Party; Plaid Cymru; Democratic Unionist Party; Sinn Féin); Green Party; Change UK (since 2019).

Last Elections: 2017 Parliamentary Election: The Conservative party won 42.40% of the vote and 317 out of 650 parliamentary seats in the House of Commons, falling short of an outright majority; the Labour party came second with 40% and 262 seats, with the Liberal Democrats third (in votes) with 7.9% but only 12 seats and the Scottish National party fourth with 3% but with a larger share of 35 seats (all in Scotland). The Democratic Unionist party won 10 seats in Northern Ireland (0.2% of the vote) and provided support to the minority government formed by the Conservative party.

Total Population: 66,182,000 (2011 census) / 66,775,286 (2019 estimate)

Major Languages: English (98%), Scots (2.5%), Welsh (1%); Scottish Gaelic, Cornish, and Irish (all <0.1%)

Official Religion: Church of England (Anglican) in England only; no established religion in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Statistics on Islamophobia: The upward trend in Islamophobic incidents in the UK continued in the figures for 2017-18, with the number of cases recorded in official statistics rising by 17% and religion-specific cases by a staggering 40% (double the figure of 2015/16). There were 2,965 recorded cases of Islamophobic hate crime, representing 52% of all recorded religiously motivated hate crime offences.

The percentage of Muslim adults (16 or over) who were victims of religiously motivated crime in 2017-18 was nearly double that recorded for any other religious group (0.8%). In the London metropolitan area, Islamophobic hate crimes recorded a 25% rise in 2017-18 when compared to the previous year, reaching a total figure of 1,668 incidents.

A recent report published by the National Union of Students (NUS) reveals that one in three students with Muslim background have suffered attacks on university campuses. The number of Muslim prisoners also continues to grow disproportionately, representing more than 15% of the total prison population (nearly double the percentage figure from ten years ago), with an even higher figure of 28% among inmates of high security facilities.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: In 2018, 950 racist incidents were reported to the police, down 16% from 2017, which itself saw a fall from the 2,000 reported in 2016.

Major Religions (% of Population): Christianity (59.5%), No religion (25.7%), Islam (4.5%), Hinduism (1.3%), Sikhism (0.7%), Judaism (0.4%), Buddhism (0.4%), Other (0.4%) [2011 census]

Muslim Population (% of Population): 2,786,635 [2011 census], 3,372,966 [2017-18 Annual Population Survey]

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), Muslim Association of Britain

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: Muslim Council of Britain, Muslim Engagement and Development (MEND), Tell MAMA UK, Islamophobia Watch, Islamic Human Rights Commission, Islamophobia Response Unit (ISU), Cage, HOPE Not Hate

Far-Right Parties: British National Party (BNP), UK Independence Party (UKIP), National Front, English Democrats, British Democrats

Far-Right Movements: English Defence League (EDL), Britain First (deregistered in 2017), For Britain, Generation Identity, New British Union (NBU), Football Lads Alliance, Veterans Against Terrorism, Blood and Honour, British Movement

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: Combat 18, National Action (proscribed in 2016)

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** No, but schools have the right to determine their own dress code, which has led to some cases of hijab ban for particular student age groups.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

The recent relentless intensity of the Brexit topic in the UK's public domain left very narrow margins for other topics to creep up the list of 'newsworthy' items. Still, 2018 was also the year in which the UK authorities finally began to acknowledge the grave - and steadily growing - threat to community cohesion from the far right.¹ A report published by the HOPE Not Hate (HnH) campaign showed how a new, younger generation of far-right activists are driving an organisational change that leans heavily on online media and a different ideological profile that is far less dependent on neo-Nazi symbolism and steeped in anti-Muslim hatred.² Recent data from the government's counter-terrorism PREVENT programme revealed that the number of cases referred over concerns about far-right activity rose by a third; the proportion of those who were identified as being 'at risk' of radicalisation in the same group matches that of cases associated with what the programme identifies as 'Islamist' extremism.³

However, the increasingly significant role of Islamophobia in driving uncivility, hatred, and violence in the UK is not confined to the extremes of the political spectrum. In 2018, under its new leader Gerard Batten, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) underwent a transformation into a full-blown Islamophobic party. The uncertain future of the Brexit negotiations and above all the appointment of the high-profile far-right activist (and former leader of the English Defence League, EDL) Tommy Robinson as party advisor may provide UKIP with an unpredictable mobilising dynamic in the near future. Closer to the political mainstream, the governing Conservative party came under sustained criticism for its failure to tackle 'institutional' Islamophobia among its ranks, prompting calls for an independent inquiry into the extent of the problem.

A year after the publication of the Runnymede Trust's twentieth anniversary report on Islamophobia, the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims concluded its six-month investigation into "a working definition of Islamophobia". The final report recommended the adoption of a legal definition of Islamophobia as "rooted in racism and [constituting] a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness".⁴ The report's direct linking of Islamophobia

1. Imran Awan, "When Are We Going to Take the Threat of The Radical Right Seriously?" Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (blog), 17 July 2018. <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2018/07/17/when-are-we-going-to-take-the-threat-of-the-radical-right-seriously/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

2. "Hope Not Hate", *2018 State of Hate: Far Right Terrorism on the Rise* (HnH, London: 2018), <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/State-of-Hate-2018.pdf> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

3. "Is Far-Right Extremism More of a Threat than Radical Islam?", *The Week UK*, (Access date: 3 September 2019). <https://www.theweek.co.uk/98498/is-far-right-extremism-more-of-a-threat-than-radical-islam> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

4. APPG on Prevent British Muslims, *Islamophobia Defined. Report on the Inquiry into a Working Definition of Islamophobia / Anti-Muslim Hatred* (London: 2018), p. 11.

with anti-Muslim racism is welcome, echoing long-held views to that effect by the Runnymede Trust, Muslim bodies, NGOs, academics, as well as the European Islamophobia report itself.⁵ So far the British government has resisted these calls. Still, that this debate is gathering new momentum in a year so crushingly dominated by Brexit can only be a positive development.

Discussion of Islamophobia Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In 2017-18, hate crime in the UK continued a long-term upward trend, according to the official government statistics released annually by the Home Office for England and Wales in October, rising by 17% year-on-year to just above 94,000 offences. Figures for racially and religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police reveal that, after the peak observed in the summer of 2017, there was another swing upwards during the first three months of 2018. 'Racially or religiously aggravated offences' constituted the overwhelming majority of recorded incidents, with race (71%) and religion (8%) showing a significant degree of overlap (for example, adults with an Asian and Muslim background are far more likely to be victims of hate crime). The released data show that, where such information was recorded, the flag 'Muslim' applied to 52% of the 5,680 total religiously aggravated recorded offences.⁶ Overall, the number of hate crime offences explicitly linked to religion rose by 40% year-on-year and has nearly doubled since 2015-16.⁷ Figures for Scotland are released separately and show a somewhat more positive picture, with both 'religion' and 'race' flags recording a drop of 4% and 5% respectively in comparison to 2016/17.⁸

5. See indicatively: Runnymede Trust, *Islamophobia - 20 Years on, Still a Challenge for Us All* (Runnymede Trust, London: 2017), p. 1; Enes Bayrakli, Farid Hafez, "Introduction", *EU Islamophobia Report 2015*, (SETA, Ankara: 2016), <http://www.islamophobiaeurope.com/executive-summary/2015-2/>; Chris Allen, "Why UK's Working Definition of Islamophobia as a 'Type of Racism' Is a Historic Step," *The Conversation*. (Access date: 3 January 2019), <http://theconversation.com/why-uks-working-definition-of-islamophobia-as-a-type-of-racism-is-a-historic-step-107657>; and Scott Poynting and Victoria Mason, "The Resistible Rise of Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim Racism in the UK and Australia before 11 September 2001," *Journal of Sociology*, 43/1 (2007), pp. 61–86.

6. Home Office, *Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017-18. Statistical Bulletin*, 16 October 2018, p. 35-6.

7. Ashley Kirk, 'Hate Crime Linked to Religion Doubled in Three Years', *The Telegraph*, 16 October 2018 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/10/16/hate-crime-linked-religion-doubled-three-years/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

8. Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, *Hate Crime in Scotland, 2017-18. Statistical Bulletin*, 15 June 2018, <http://www.copfs.gov.uk/images/Documents/Statistics/Hate%20Crime%202017-18/Hate%20Crime%20in%20Scotland%202017-18.pdf> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

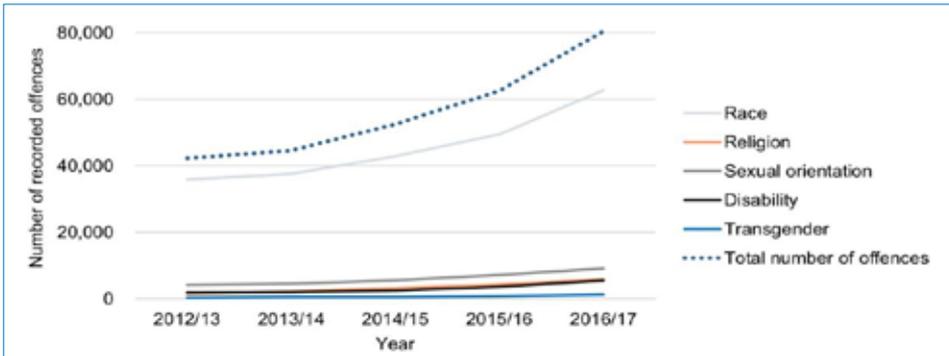


Figure 1: Hate crime recorded by the police according to motive, 2012-2017.⁹

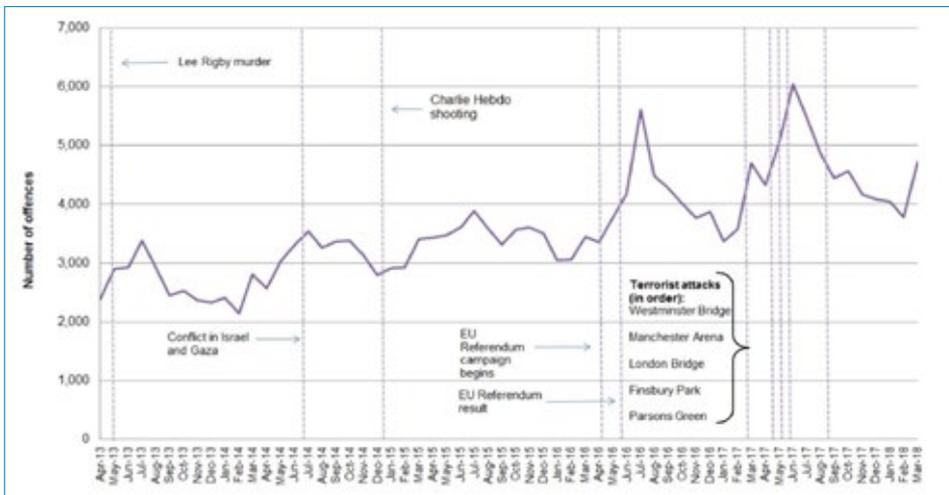


Figure 2: Number of anti-Muslim offences recorded by the Home Office, 2013-2018.¹⁰

The detailed annual Tell MAMA report on anti-Muslim hate crime, released in June, showed that there was an overall significant rise (26%) in verified reported incidents (a total of 1,201), with significant spikes (up to 700%) triggered by the Manchester and London Bridge terrorist incidents in May-June 2017. Alarming, the majority of incidents captured by Tell MAMA (70%) occurred offline - and overwhelmingly in public places (c. 64%), recording a rise of 30% for incidents occurring on the street;¹¹ they involved mostly abusive behaviour (52%) but also physical attacks (18%) and vandalism (10%); they were typically perpetrated by white males

9. Home Office, *Hate Crime, England's and Wales, 2016-17. Data Tables*, p. 6, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/651719/hate-crime-1617-hosb1717-tables.ods (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

10. Home Office, *Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2017-18. Statistical Bulletin*, p. 14.

11. Lizzie Dearden, 'Street Attacks on Muslims Rocket in UK as Perpetrators Feel "Embodied" by Political Rhetoric', *The Independent*, 23 July 2018 <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/attacks-muslims-uk-terror-islam-hate-crime-brexit-tell-mama-a8457996.html>> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

and targeted mostly women (60%) - largely due to their higher religious visibility - with an Asian background (40%); and they were disproportionately concentrated in the north-west of the country and in the Greater London area, with Yorkshire and West Midlands coming third and fourth respectively in the list of recorded anti-Muslim incidents recorded by region. When it came to online incidents, the Tell MAMA report showed the predominance of Twitter as the platform of choice for hate campaigns, with more than half of recorded and verified incidents, with Facebook a strong second (37%).¹²

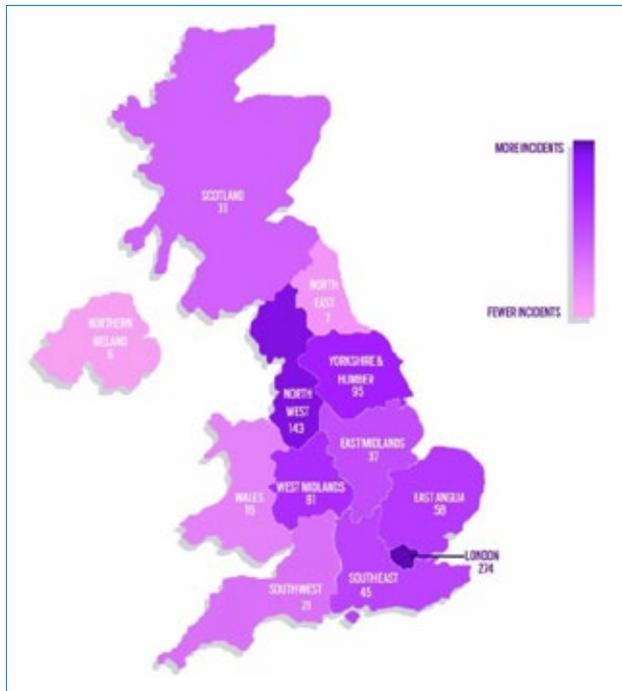


Figure 3: Number of anti-Muslim incidents per geographic region.¹³

Incidents of offline physical and verbal attacks also followed an upward trend from 437 in 2015 to 839 in 2017. The year drew to a close with a particularly horrific attack on a Syrian refugee pupil in Huddersfield that epitomised the rising racial and religious violence trend against immigrants and Muslims recorded in official data. In October, a video surfaced online showing a ‘waterboarding’-style torture ritual carried out by a 16-year-old boy against Jamal, a schoolboy of 15 years of age whose family had arrived in the UK fleeing persecution from the Syrian regime back in 2010. As it transpired, Jamal had suffered chronic abuse since arriving in the UK,

12.12 Tell MAMA, *Annual Report 2017. Beyond the Incident. Outcomes for Victims of Anti-Muslim Prejudice*, (Faith Matters, London: 2018), <https://tellmamauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Tell-MAMA-Report-2017.pdf>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

13. Tell MAMA, *Annual Report 2017*, p. 35.

including an incident of inflicted injury to his hand only weeks before the attack recorded on the video.¹⁴

Instances of vandalism recorded an annual rise of 50% in 2017 (rising to 81), mostly driven by a retribution mindset in response to triggers such as the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London.¹⁵ Provisional figures for the first half of 2018 have recorded a moderate drop from the peaks of 2017 (25 cases) but the trend in the second half of the year showed a renewed spike. Religious and educational institutions received the majority of these attacks. The typology of the recorded attacks against mosques ranged from symbolic acts of defacement (such as spraying graffiti: Heaton Mosque in Newcastle, in October;¹⁶ Anware Madina Mosque in Sunderland and Bait-ul-Lateef Mosque in Liverpool, in November; leaving bacon rashes on the door handle of Dunfermline Central Mosque in Scotland) to more co-ordinated violent attacks (using catapults to cause physical damage on the exterior of Masjid Qamarul Islam and Al-Hijrah Mosques in Birmingham in August) to arson attacks (Jamia Masjid Abu Huraira Mosque in Leeds in June; Al-Falah Islamic Centre in Manchester in December¹⁷). But the most serious incident of physical attack in a Muslim place of worship was recorded in Cricklewood, London, when three young men deliberately drove a stolen vehicle into pedestrians heading into the Al-Majlis Al-Hussain Islamic Centre on 19 September, injuring three worshippers. The hit-and-run attack was preceded by serial verbal taunts directed at Muslim passers-by.¹⁸ Offensive graffiti also appeared in many public locations: indicatively, in May, vile anti-Muslim slogans were sprayed on a wall in Small Heath Park, Birmingham; in June, a co-ordinated campaign in Horncastle, Lincolnshire saw numerous buildings defaced with racist and anti-Muslim slogans; and in July a series of Islamophobic graffiti were scrawled on the walls of High Level Bridge in Newcastle, with councillor Dipu Ahad linking them to a serious escalation of anti-Muslim hate in the city.¹⁹

14. Nazia Parveen, "Syrian Schoolboy 'Suffered Years of Abuse' in Huddersfield School," *The Guardian*, 5 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/dec/05/syrian-schoolboy-allegedly-suffered-years-of-abuse-in-huddersfield-school> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

15. Tell MAMA, *Annual Report 2017*, p. 44-6.

16. Sean Seddon, "Fury as 'Bacon' Is Scrawled on Walls of Mosque in 'Disgusting' Attack", *Nechronicle*, 2018, <https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/fury-bacon-scrawled-walls-newcastle-15212520>, (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

17. "Fire at Mosque Ruled as an Islamophobic Hate Crime, Police Launch Appeal", *Tell MAMA*, 2018 <https://tellmamauk.org/fire-at-mosque-ruled-as-an-islamophobic-hate-crime-police-launch-appeal/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

18. Danny Boyle, "Cricklewood Mosque 'Hate Crime' Crash: Three Hurt as Car Hits Crowd After 'Tirade of Racist Abuse'", *The Telegraph*, 19 September 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/09/19/cricklewood-mosque-hate-crime-crash-three-hurt-car-swerves-crowd/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

19. Katie Dickinson, "Anger as 'Vile' Islamophobic Graffiti Is Scrawled on High Level Bridge", *Chronicle Live*, 11 July 2018, <https://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/anger-vile-islamophobic-graffiti-scrawled-14897397> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).



Figure 4: Arson attack against the Jamia Masjid Abu Huraira Mosque in Leeds, June 2018.²⁰

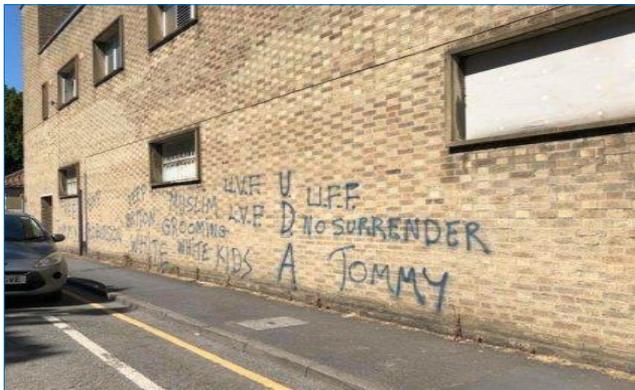


Figure 5: Anti-Muslim and pro-Tommy Robinson graffiti in Horncastle.²¹

But even the mere *threat* of an attack can have equally devastating effects on the lives of ordinary people and the social cohesion of their communities. In early March, an anonymous letter nominating 3 April as “Punish a Muslim Day” began arriving on the doorsteps of prominent members of Muslim communities, places of worship, and politicians with a Muslim background. The letter also contained direct threats against the safety of anyone belonging to the community and featured a grotesque points system for different kinds of violent attacks against physical and human targets. The campaign, which was also disseminated on social media (#PunishA-MuslimDay hashtag on Twitter) gathered momentum during the rest of March and early April, with the letters often containing (non-toxic but in some cases irritant, as it turned out) white powder.²² The impact of the campaign on Muslim communities

20. “Leeds Mosque and Gurdwara Arsons Treated As Hate Crimes”, BBC News, 5 June 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-44368474> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

21. Photo by BMP Media via Jen Mills, “Racists So Proud of ‘White Britain’ That They Spelled It Wrong”, Metro, <https://metro.co.uk/2018/06/29/far-right-graffiti-proud-white-britain-racists-spelled-wrong-7671896> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

22. Lizzie Biuchan, “Cabinet Minister Sajid Javid Becomes Latest MP to Receive Abusive ‘Punish a Muslim’ Letter”, The Independent, 16 March 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/sajid-javid-punish-a-muslim-letter-hate-crime-islamophobic-tory-mp-cabinet-minister-a8258606.html>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

across the UK was significant, especially since the authorities could not ascertain the credibility and source of the threat ahead of 3 April. It was only on 12 June that David Parnham, a 35-year-old British white supremacist with a long history of sending out hundreds of abusive, racist, and Islamophobic letters, was arrested and charged with soliciting murder and orchestrating a campaign of intimidation with intent to cause distress to Muslim communities.²³

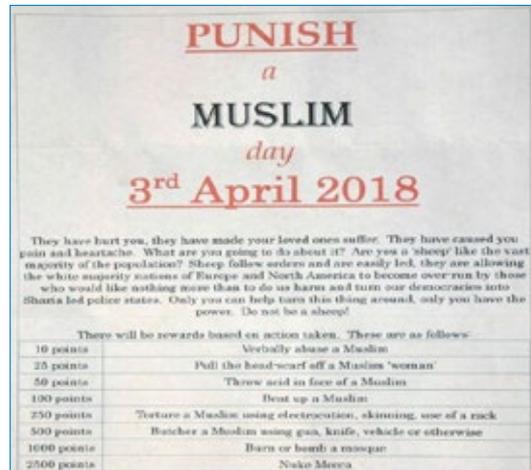


Figure 6: Copy of the 'Punish a Muslim Day' letter, showing the 'points system'.²⁴

Employment

In December, the daily broadsheet *The Guardian* published an extensive survey on racial bias in the UK. The survey collated evidence of such bias in all spheres and activities of public life with regard to British black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME) and then compared the figures to relevant experiences collected from white British. When it came to the workplace, the survey revealed that 57% of BAME respondents had found it harder to work because of their minority status, with four in ten claiming that they earned less than, or worked harder for the same money with, their white counterparts. Furthermore, 43% reported discriminatory practices when it came to job promotion. In all areas, respondents with a Muslim background intimated a more negative experience from other religious minority group.²⁵ A similar picture is given by the 2017 report by the Trade Union Congress (TUC), which found that 37% of BAME workers have experienced dis-

23. Jane Dolton, "Punish a Muslim Day' Hoaxer Who Also Threatened Queen Faces Jail", *The Independent*, 12 October 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/punish-muslim-day-queen-white-supremacist-david-parham-mosques-david-cameron-a8581806.html> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

24. Joe Roberts, "Man Arrested 'Punish Muslim Day' Letters", *Metro*, 12 June 2018, <https://metro.co.uk/2018/06/12/man-arrested-punish-muslim-day-letters-7626272/> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

25. Robert Booth and Aamna Mohdin, "Revealed: The Stark Evidence of Everyday Racial Bias in Britain", *The Guardian*, 2 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/dec/02/revealed-the-stark-evidence-of-everyday-racial-bias-in-britain> (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

crimination or harassment in the workplace, with a significant portion suffering psychologically and physically as a result.²⁶

With the UK government having stated back in 2016 that it has no intention to introduce any public restrictions to Islamic practices including the workplace (in spite of evidence of public opinion support for a ban on the ‘burqa’ in public places²⁷), the bulk of reported cases of discrimination in employment during 2018 have centred on conscious or unconscious bias in access to employment, conditions of work (including treatment by management and other employees), pay and promotion opportunities for employees with a Muslim background. Google UK was reportedly forced to settle a racial discrimination case for failing to protect a British contractor of Moroccan descent from harassment while working on a company project.²⁸ Google, as well as other big companies such as Starbucks and Amazon²⁹, have recently been implicated in collective complaints on a global scale about discriminatory workplace practices that affect minority groups.

In particular, the impact of the so-called ‘Muslim penalty’ in employment has been extensively documented in a series of reports published in the last two years. It is well known, for example, that the unemployment rate among members of the Muslim community in the UK is almost twice that of the national average index, with people with Pakistani and Bangladeshi background topping the list with a 10% unemployment rate.³⁰ Furthermore, British Muslims are the most under-represented religious group in top professional posts.³¹ Once again, however, the ‘Muslim penalty’ has a predominant intersectional dimension, with not only religion and ethnicity but also race, class, and of course gender multiplying the gap. A combination of factors such as the cumulative impact of austerity on the Muslim population

26. MCB, *Our Shared British Future. Muslims and Integration in the UK*, (MCB, London: 2018), p. 66-8, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/ukandnonukpeopleinthelabourmarket/may2018/pdf> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

27. Georgina Lee, “FactCheck: What Do Brits Think about Banning the Burqa?” Channel 4 News, <https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-what-do-brits-think-about-banning-the-burqa>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

28. Catherine Shu, “Google Reportedly Paid £4,000 to Settle a Racial Discrimination Lawsuit in the UK”. TechCrunch, <http://social.techcrunch.com/2018/11/25/google-reportedly-paid-4000-to-settle-a-racial-discrimination-lawsuit-in-the-uk/>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

29. “Muslim Amazon Workers Protest Claiming There’s No Time to Pray”. Mail Online, 17 December 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6505471/Muslim-Amazon-workers-protest-against-internet-giant-claim-dont-time-pray.html>; Change, Google Walkout For Real. “#GoogleWalkout Update: Collective Action Works, but We Need to Keep Working.” Medium, 8 November 2018, <https://medium.com/@GoogleWalkout/googlewalkout-update-collective-action-works-but-we-need-to-keep-working-b17f673ad513> (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

30. Department of Work and Pensions, “Unemployment”, 21 September 2018, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/work-pay-and-benefits/unemployment-and-economic-inactivity/unemployment/latest>. Office for National Statistics, “UK and Non-UK People in the Labour Market: May 2018”, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/ukandnonukpeopleinthelabourmarket/may2018/pdf> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

31. APPG, *Islamophobia Defined*, op. cit., p. 22; Anushka Asthana. “Islamophobia Holding Back UK Muslims in Workplace, Study Finds”, The Guardian, 7 September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/sep/07/islamophobia-holding-back-uk-muslims-in-workplace-study-finds> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

(over-represented in the 10% of the most deprived local authorities) and on women with BAME background³² have combined with well-entrenched religious, racial, cultural, and gender stereotypes to affect access to, and generate discrimination in, employment for people with a Muslim background.³³

Education

Especially since early 2014, when a letter allegedly outlining an extremist plot to ‘Islamise’ a network of schools in Birmingham was leaked to the press and gave rise to the government Operation ‘Trojan Horse’, education has been a key item in the public debate about radicalisation and Islamophobia. In 2018, as the dust on the scandal started to settle, it was time for reckoning and recriminations. In the end, although the investigation did uncover evidence that some schools ended up being run as faith institutions, there was no proof of an *organised* ‘conspiracy’, as right-wing press and the government had alleged. Of the expected 100 or more cases of professional misconduct, only 15 ended up with charges - and all but one eventually collapsed in bitter recriminations.³⁴ The handling of the investigation by the Department for Education and the education regulator Ofsted was widely criticised for giving in to a sensationalist approach to the matter that did lasting damage to community relations and added fuel to an Islamophobic climate in British society.³⁵

While the UK does not legally restrict any religious practice, the wearing of the religious dress in elementary schools proved a polarising item of public discussion in 2018.³⁶ The decision of an East London school to ban the hijab for pupils under the age of eight - which was subsequently rescinded³⁷ following not only pressure from parents and Muslim organisations but also a grotesque social media campaign against the school’s head teacher Neena Lall -,³⁸ touched raw nerves within British society and brought to the surface much broader tensions about the balance between

32. “International Women’s Day Reminds Us of Triple Penalty against Muslim Women”, Muslim Engagement and Development, 8 March 2018, <https://mend.org.uk/news/international-womens-day-reminds-us-triple-penalty-muslim-women/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

33. Aina Khan, “We’ve Got the Degrees, So Why Do Muslim Women Struggle to Get Jobs?”, *The Guardian*, 14 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/14/degrees-muslim-women-jobs-austerity-racism-islamphobia> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

34. Imran Awan, “I Never Did Anything Wrong’ – Trojan Horse: A Qualitative Study Uncovering the Impact in Birmingham”, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 39/2 (2018), pp. 197–211.

35. Samira Shackle, “Trojan Horse: The Real Story behind the Fake ‘Islamic Plot’ to Take over Schools”, *The Guardian*, 1 September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/01/trojan-horse-the-real-story-behind-the-fake-islamic-plot-to-take-over-schools> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

36. Christina Easton, “Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair”, *Journal of Education Policy*, 33/4 (2018), pp. 584–85.

37. “UK School Reverses Hijab Ban after Backlash”, *Study International*, 23 January 2018, <https://www.studyinternational.com/news/uk-school-reverses-hijab-ban-backlash/> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

38. Robin de Peyer, “St Stephen’s Head Neena Lall Likened to Hitler in Spoof Video as Row over Hijab Ban Escalates”, *Evening Standard*, 29 January 2018, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/education/st-stephens-head-neena-lall-likened-to-hitler-as-row-over-hijab-ban-escalates-a3752056.html> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

diversity and ‘British values’ in education. The right-wing press covered the issue mostly from the viewpoint of the headmaster’s right to uphold ‘fundamental British values’ in schools and her right to be protected from intimidation.³⁹ The old adage that wearing the hijab ‘sexualises’ young women was re-circulated.⁴⁰ Many, on the other hand, alleged that an attempt to restrict religious practice was using liberal pretexts to mask an underlying racism.⁴¹ But the isolated school case was transformed into a symbolic battleground, with the head of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, going as far as suggesting that “religious extremists” were active “perverting” education in UK schools.⁴² Spielman’s speech was nothing short of an unforgivable cliché parade, with the same vague calls in support of ‘fundamental British values’,⁴³ ‘muscular liberalism’ juxtaposed to ‘passive liberalism’, and a shallow invocation of ‘equality’ and ‘freedom’.⁴⁴

PREVENT continued to cast a shadow in the field of education with a 24% rise in referrals (totalling 2,462) in 2017/18 to the government’s flagship anti-extremism programme.⁴⁵ The need for critical thinking to counter destructive extremist narratives from both the far right and religious fundamentalists must extend to building resilience inside educational institutions as well as in the crucial field of reporting and news coverage. In a recent report published by the National Union of Students (NUS), the revelation that one in three students with Muslim background have suffered attacks on university campuses⁴⁶ should invite reflection on the corrosive effect of an uncritical approach to surveillance and the practical operation of PREVENT.

39. Paul Bracchi, “Extremists Who Bullied Head into Reversing Hijab Ban Unmasked”, Mail Online, 2 February 2018, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5346605/Extremists-bullied-head-hijab-ban-u-turn-exposed.html> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

40. Nimco Ali, “Hijabs Sexualise Little Girls and School Heads Are Right to Ban Them”, Evening Standard, 23 January 2018, <https://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/hijabs-sexualise-little-girls-and-school-heads-are-right-to-ban-them-a3747396.html> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

41. Richard Adams, “Hijab Ban Attempt Is ‘Racism Dressed up as Liberalism’, Teachers’ Conference Told”, The Guardian, 1 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2018/apr/01/attempt-to-ban-hijab-racism-dressed-up-as-liberalism-teachers-conference-told> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

42. Chris Allen, “What Possible Evidence Does Ofsted Chief Have to Suggest Religious Extremists Are ‘perverting’ Education?”, The Conversation, 5 February 2018, <http://theconversation.com/what-possible-evidence-does-ofsted-chief-have-to-suggest-religious-extremists-are-perverting-education-91137>. (Access date: 1 September 2019).

43. Carol Vincent and Myriam Hunter-Henin, “The Problem with Teaching ‘British Values’ in School”, The Conversation, <http://theconversation.com/the-problem-with-teaching-british-values-in-school-83688>. (Access date: 1 September 2019).

44. Hannah Richardson, “Extremists Trying to ‘Pervert Education’”, BBC, 1 February 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-42902864> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

45. Freddie Whittaker, “Prevent Duty Referrals from Education Rise 24% in 2017-18”, Schools Week, 13 December 2018, <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/prevent-referrals-from-education-rise-24/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

46. Eleanor Busby, “One in Three Muslim Students Attacked on Campus as Islamophobic Hate Crime Surges”, The Independent, 18 March 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/muslim-students-universities-islamophobic-national-union-students-nus-prevent-duty-a8260176.html> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

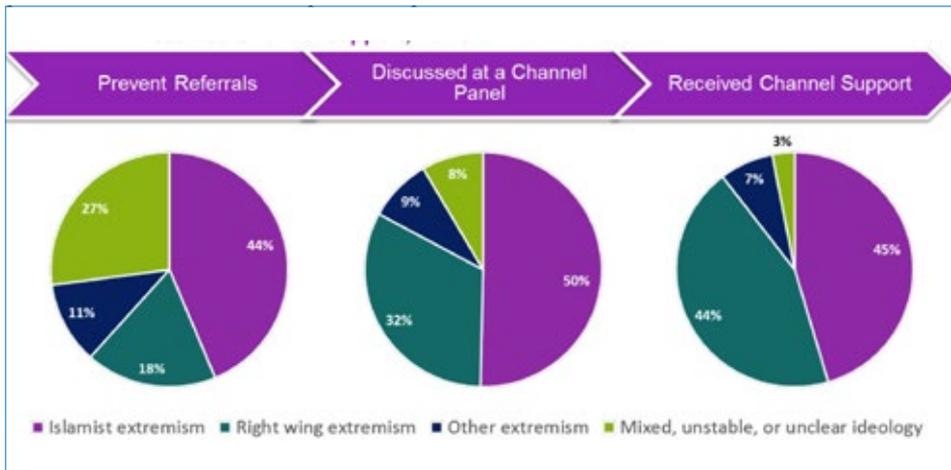


Figure 7: PREVENT referrals by type of extremist concern.⁴⁷

Politics

In August, the former foreign secretary Boris Johnson used his regular column in the broadsheet *The Telegraph* to comment on the recent Danish ban on the female Islamic dress. While he advocated that the UK maintain its current neutral legal attitude to religious dress in public, Johnson's article caused a public uproar because he called the dress "ridiculous" for making women "look like letter boxes ... and bank robbers".⁴⁸ In spite of wide condemnation and calls to offer a public apology even by the prime minister Theresa May,⁴⁹ Johnson refused to rescind his comments. Critics from across the political spectrum saw the comments as divisive, sexist, explicitly Islamophobic, and irresponsibly "pandering to the far right".⁵⁰ The matter was referred to the Equality and Human Rights Commission by the Labour MP Jess Phillips for constituting a violation of "at least two protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010" (religion or belief; and sex).

47. Home Office, "Individuals Referred to and Supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2017 to March 2018", Statistical Bulletin 31/18, 13 December 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/763254/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2017-mar2018-hosb3118.pdf (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

48. Boris Johnson, "Denmark Has Got It Wrong. Yes, the Burka Is Oppressive and Ridiculous – but That's Still No Reason to Ban It", *The Telegraph*, 5 August 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/08/05/denmark-has-got-wrong-yes-burka-oppressive-ridiculous-still/>, (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

49. "Johnson 'Won't Apologise' for Burka Comments", BBC, 7 August 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-45096519> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

50. Shehab Khan, "Boris Johnson Accused of 'Pandering to Far Right' with 'Inflammatory and Divisive Comments' about Muslims", *The Independent*, 7 August 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-niqab-islam-tory-latest-brexit-votes-islamophobia-muslim-far-right-a8481361.html> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).



Figure 8: Boris Johnson's article on the 'burka', published in The Telegraph, 5 August 2018.

In December, an internal Conservative party panel investigating Johnson's comments as a potential infringement of the party's code of practice cleared him of any wrongdoing and argued that his comments were essentially "respectful"⁵¹ But the incident, involving one of the most high-profile - and extremely popular with the party membership - Conservative figures, added further validity to claims that there is a much deeper problem of institutional Islamophobia in the Conservative party. The most consistent and vocal internal critic has been the Conservative peer Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, who has been arguing for long that Islamophobia is "very widespread" at all levels of her party.⁵² Warsi had actually called for an inquiry into Islamophobia in her party a month before the publication of Johnson's column.⁵³ The catalogue of infractions among the ranks of the Conservative party is long and consistently populated with fresh evidence of the extent of the problem: the Home Secretary was widely criticised for the language ("sick Asian paedophiles") that he used on Twitter in response to news that twenty people were convicted for the 'grooming crisis' in

51. Matthew Robinson, "Boris Johnson Cleared by Conservative Party over Burqa Remarks", CNN, 21 December 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/12/21/europe/boris-johnson-burqa-remarks-gbr-intl-scli/index.html>. (Access date: 4 September 2019).

52. Benjamin Kentish, "Islamophobia 'Very Widespread' in Conservative Party, Says Baroness Warsi", The Independent, 11 June 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/conservatives-islamophobia-tory-party-racism-baroness-warsi-a8394271.html> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

53. Sayeeda Warsi, "No More Excuses. Time for an Inquiry into Tory Islamophobia", The Guardian, 4 July 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/04/inquiry-tory-islamophobia> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

Rotherham;⁵⁴ councillor Jeff Potts' calls to "deport and repatriate all Muslims from the UK" resulted in his temporary suspension from the party that however came to the end in autumn 2018, when Potts was readmitted without further sanction;⁵⁵ another councillor, Karen Sunderland, claimed that Islam is a "totalitarian religion ... and has become the new Nazism";⁵⁶ the MP Bob Blackman, who has been repeatedly involved in anti-Muslim incidents in the past, was forced to apologise for retweeting - "in error" as he later claimed - an Islamophobic video posted by Tommy Robinson, the former leader of the EDL.⁵⁷

But it was UKIP that received the largest share of attention for its unabashed dalliance with Islamophobia in 2018. Following a disastrous showing in the 2017 parliamentary and 2017/2018 local elections and a series of internal crises that resulted in five leadership changes,⁵⁸ the party went through a phase of fundamental restructuring that saw it focus on a broader cultural agenda increasingly gravitating towards an extreme anti-Muslim message. At the same time, under the leadership of Gerard Batten, UKIP is fast dismantling the firewall between it and the British far right that its long-time leader until 2016, Nigel Farage, had put in place in order to establish UKIP as a mainstream political party.⁵⁹ Batten's flirtation with the far right was confirmed when he first threw his support behind Tommy Robinson, who was arrested and imprisoned between May and August 2018 for breach of peace. At a rally protesting Robinson's detention in August, Batten said that prophet Mohammed was "a paedophile who kept sex slaves".⁶⁰ In early September, and following Robinson's release on bail, Batten proposed a motion to the party's executive that would rescind the earlier ban on admitting former members of the EDL or the far-right British National Party (BNP). Vote on the motion has been subsequently deferred until March 2019 at the earliest; but this has not stopped Batten from hiring

54. Peter Walker, "Sajid Javid Defends Noting the Ethnicity of Child Grooming Gang," *The Guardian*, 3 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/dec/03/sajid-javid-defends-noting-the-ethnicity-of-child-grooming-gang> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

55. "Re-Admittance of Cllr Jeff Potts to the Conservatives Is Troubling", *Tell MAMA*, 7 November 2018, <https://tellmamauk.org/re-admittance-of-cllr-jeff-potts-to-the-conservatives-is-troubling/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

56. "Tory Candidate 'Compared Islam to Nazism'", *BBC*, 1 May 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-43959705> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

57. Shazia Awasn Scully, "As a Muslim Member of the Tory Party, I Saw Islamophobia Firsthand," *New Statesman*, 1 June 2018, <https://www.newstatesman.com/2018/06/muslim-member-tory-party-i-saw-islamophobia-firsthand>. (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

58. Rob Merrick, "'Virtually Dead' Ukip Puts Forward 75 per Cent Fewer Candidates for Local Elections", *The Independent*, 7 April 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/ukip-local-elections-nigel-farage-gerard-batten-brexit-collapse-a8293406.html>; Heath, Oliver & Goodwin, Matthew, "The 2017 General Election, Brexit and the Return to Two-Party Politics: An Aggregate-Level Analysis of the Result," *The Political Quarterly*, 88, (2017).

59. "UKIP Is Bouncing Back in an Altogether Nastier Form", *The Economist*, 19 July 2018, <https://www.economist.com/britain/2018/07/19/ukip-is-bouncing-back-in-an-altogether-nastier-form> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

60. Eleanor Busby, "Ukip Leader Gerard Batten Calls Muhammad a Paedophile at Tommy Robinson Rally", *The Independent*, 15 July 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/gerard-batten-ukip-mohamed-paedophile-tommy-robinson-protests-muslims-a8447741.html> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

Robinson as party advisor on “grooming gangs”.⁶¹ The move has divided the party, with a number of high-profile members (including former leaders Farage and Paul Nuttall⁶²) and MEPs resigning in protest; and with the former party chairwoman Suzanne Evans warning that the party is being taken over by a far-right faction led by Robinson with Batten’s full support.⁶³

UKIP’s transmutation into a far-right Islamophobic party⁶⁴ was given a significant boost following the approval of a new ‘interim manifesto’ at the party’s conference in September. The manifesto has signalled a lurch towards the far right, with calls for scrapping large segments of current equality and human rights legislation, “all-Muslim prisons”, banning sharia law courts and the funding of mosque construction by other countries, enhanced screening for immigrants from Islamic countries, and a national enquiry into “Muslim grooming gangs”. These measures are contained in a chapter titled “combatting Islamic literalist and fundamentalist extremism”, which openly associates key interpretations of Islam with terrorism.⁶⁵

The rise of Tommy Robinson in the public domain following his arrest and the #FreeTommy campaign have been pivotal in the revival of far-right mobilisation in the UK.⁶⁶ In June, a rally held in London calling for Robinson’s release attracted a 15,000-strong crowd and was addressed by the leader of the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) Geert Wilders.⁶⁷ The event and the subsequent campaign became the rallying point for a convergence of a number of UK-based (Generation Identity, For Britain, Football Lads Alliance, White Pendragons) and European (the Polish Wolność party and the Flemish Interest) far-right organisations.⁶⁸

61. “UKIP Appoints Tommy Robinson as ‘Grooming Gangs’ Expert”, *The Week UK*, 5 January 2018, <https://www.theweek.co.uk/98009/ukip-appoints-tommy-robinson-as-grooming-gangs-expert> (Access Date: 5 September 2019); “UKIP Leader Defends Hiring Tommy Robinson,” *BBC*, 23 November 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-46308160> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

62. Paul Dallison, “Nigel Farage Quits UKIP”, *POLITICO*, 4 December 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/nigel-farage-quits-ukip/> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

63. Benjamin Butterworth, “Former Ukip Deputy Chair Suzanne Evans Resigns over ‘Momentum-Style’ Takeover by Tommy Robinson Supporters”, *Inews*, 3 December 2018, <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/ukip-suzanne-evans-resigns-tommy-robinson-gerard-batten/> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

64. Sebastian Payne, “Ukip’s Transformation into a Far-Right Party Is Complete”, *Financial Times*, 23 November 2018, <https://www.ft.com/content/c43857ca-ef16-11e8-89c8-d36339d835c0> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

65. “UKIP”, *Interim Manifesto 2018. Politics for the People*, <https://www.ukip.org/uploads/UKIP%20Manifesto%20Sept%202018.pdf> (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

66. Paul Stocker, “Tommy Robinson and the Transformation of the British Far Right,” *Fair Observer*, 20 September 2018, <https://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/tommy-robinson-far-right-uk-europe-news-18291/> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

67. “Geert Wilders: ‘Freedom Is behind Bars. Tommy Is behind Bars. And That Is Totally Unacceptable’”, *Voice of Europe*, 9 June 2018, <https://voiceofeurope.com/2018/06/geert-wilders-freedom-is-behind-bars-tommy-is-behind-bars-and-that-is-totally-unacceptable/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019). The full text of Wilders’s speech is at <https://www.geertwilders.nl/in-de-media-mainmenu-74/nieuws-mainmenu-114/94-english/2118-videomessage-geert-wilders-freetommy-rally-london-july-14>.

68. Ryan Gallagher, “British Neo-Nazis Are on the Rise - And They’re Becoming More Organised and Violent”, *The Intercept*, 3 May 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/05/03/uk-far-right-terrorism-national-action/> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).



Figure 9: The leader of the Dutch PVV, Geert Wilders, addresses the #FreeTommy rally in London in June 2018.⁶⁹

Media

In February, the parliamentary Home Affairs Committee on hate crime extended its enquiry into the role of printed media in fostering a culture of demonisation of minority groups and institutional discrimination against them.⁷⁰ In April, the enquiry invited newspaper editors to the committee’s hearing. The sessions produced some remarkable statements. Quizzed about his newspaper’s long record of inflammatory front pages and op-eds, especially under the reign of its former editor Paul Dacre, the former deputy editor of the most widely read British tabloid newspaper *Daily Mail*, Peter Wright, largely exonerated printed media from any role in inciting racial or religious hatred. Wright blamed instead the “dreadful cesspit [of] social media” for the rise in Islamophobia in the public domain.⁷¹ Ian Brunskill, *The Times* associate editor, similarly rejected allegations of a deliberate campaign of misinformation in the British press to feed an Islamophobic moral panic. Andy Silverstein of *The Sun* tabloid newspaper rejected the prevalent association of the publication with anti-Muslim stories as “unfair”.⁷² The newspaper’s managing editor, Paul Clarkson, went even further, claiming that there was absolutely no issue with Islamophobia in the entirety of the British mainstream press.⁷³

69. “Geert Wilders: ‘Freedom Is behind Bars. Tommy Is behind Bars. And That Is Totally Unacceptable’”, *Voice of Europe*, 9 June 2018, <https://voiceofeurope.com/2018/06/geert-wilders-freedom-is-behind-bars-tommy-is-behind-bars-and-that-is-totally-unacceptable> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

70. “Committee Takes Evidence on Anti-Muslim Sentiments in the Print Media - News from Parliament”, UK Parliament, 20 February 2018, <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2017/hate-crime-campaigners-regulators-evidence-17-19/>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

71. Charlotte Tobitt, “Senior Daily Mail Editor Blames ‘Dreadful Cesspit’ of Social Media for Rise of Islamophobia as Newspaper Bosses Quizzed in Hate Crime Inquiry”, *Press Gazette*, 25 April 2018, <https://www.pressgazette.co.uk/senior-daily-mail-editor-blames-dreadful-cesspit-of-social-media-for-rise-of-islamophobia-as-newspaper-bosses-quizzed-in-hate-crime-inquiry/> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

72. Andy Silvester, “Supplementary Written Evidence Submitted by The Sun (OHC0025)”, 19 June 2018, <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/home-affairs-committee/hate-crime-and-its-violent-consequences/written/85615.pdf> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

73. “The Sun’s Managing Editor Says Islamophobia ‘Isn’t an Issue in the Mainstream Media’”, *New Statesman*, 24 April 2018, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/media/2018/04/sun-s-managing-editor-says-islamophobia-isn-t-issue-mainstream-media> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Such statements have been received with a healthy, much-needed dose of derision by those who have documented the corrosive role of printed media in fostering a culture of mainstream Islamophobia.⁷⁴ But it was Gary Jones, the recently appointed editor of *The Daily Express* and *The Sunday Express*, two tabloid papers with a long history of using inflammatory stories and language at the expense of Muslims and Islam,⁷⁵ who provided the surprising admission that some of his newspaper's front pages in the past were "downright offensive" and have "helped create an Islamophobic sentiment".⁷⁶ The problem is by no means confined to tabloid titles; it reaches deep into 'broadsheet' titles such as *The Telegraph* and *The Times*, as well as quality magazines like *The Spectator*. And it was deeply ironic that barely a day after its associated editor denied the existence of a problem with Islamophobia in front of the Home Affairs Committee that *The Times* was asked by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) to correct a "distorted" front-page story regarding a "Muslim foster home" in Tower Hamlets, London dating back in August 2017.⁷⁷

Of course the problem with Islamophobia in the British media is not just one of misinformation and distortion; it also has to do with the uncritical reproduction of stereotypes and biases about the Muslim communities. In 2017, British actor Riz Ahmed gave a speech to the House of Commons on how Muslims are inaccurately portrayed on film and TV, suggesting a five-question test to identify stereotypes (Muslims portrayed as victims or perpetrators? Male characters shown as angry and misogynistic or female characters as oppressed? Shown as culturally backward? Presented as a threat to 'western values'?⁷⁸). In September, the very popular terrorism-themed BBC series *The Bodyguard* was also accused of reproducing a stream of negative stereotypes about Muslim women.⁷⁹

Justice System

The UK criminal justice system (CJS) has continued to receive scrutiny and criticism with regard to its allegedly discriminatory practices. There is now a substantial body

74. Versi Miqdaad, "Islamophobia Not an Issue in the British Press? You've Got to Be Kidding", *The Guardian*, 27 April 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/apr/27/islamophobia-not-british-press-issue-got-to-be-kidding> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

75. Christopher Matthias, "How The British Media Helps Radicalize People Against Islam", *HuffPost UK*, 21 June 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/darren-osborne-islamophobia-in-uk-media_us_594982bee4b00cdb99cb01b9 (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

76. Tom Embury-Dennis, "Daily Express Helped Create 'Islamophobic Sentiment', Newspaper's Editor Admits", *The Independent*, 25 April 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/media/daily-express-islamophobic-sentiment-editor-gary-jones-home-affairs-select-committee-a8321026.html> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

77. "Times 'Distorted' Front Page Story on Muslim Foster-Care Girl – Press Watchdog", *RT International*, 25 April 2018, <https://www.rt.com/uk/425058-times-muslim-watchdog-foster/>. (Access Date: 1 September 2019).

78. "The Riz Test", <https://www.riztest.com>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

79. Tasnim Nazeer, "Memo to Bodyguard Writers: Muslim Women Are More than Victims or Terrorists", *The Guardian*, 24 September 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/sep/24/bodyguard-muslim-islamophobic-attacks-muslim-terrorist-stereotype> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

of evidence from different sources that underpins the narrative of racial and religious discrimination in the field of criminal justice. A recent in-depth study of data from 2006 to 2011 found that Muslims are far more likely, once stopped, to be searched, arrested, and prosecuted.⁸⁰ Research carried out by the Ministry of Justice, especially in the light of the recommendations of the 2017 Lammy Review, corroborated the trend that young BAME individuals (representing 41% of the young adults in the Criminal Justice System⁸¹) faced the highest levels of disproportionality in all levels of the operation of the CJS.⁸² David Lammy has followed up his review with an unwavering advocacy of urgent government remedial action, including a call for the collection of detailed ethnicity data. But Lammy has also described the problem as a “social time bomb”, in the sense that it adversely affects BAME individuals after and well beyond their entanglement with the CJS, limiting their future access to key fields such as employment and housing.⁸³

While 2018 figures for stop-and-search incidents have continued their downward trend (currently 5 per 1,000 people, down from an equivalent figure of 23 in 2009-10), the over-representation of BAME groups in the statistics is still striking, with black and Asian individuals well above the average figure (29 and 8 per 1,000 respectively) and with huge regional disparities in police practices.⁸⁴ The number of Muslim prisoners also continues to grow disproportionately, representing more than 15% of the total prison population (nearly double the figure from ten years ago), with an even higher figure of 28% among inmates of high security facilities.⁸⁵ The prevalent framing of the government’s PREVENT counter-extremism programme through a conveyor belt approach that leads from the ‘war on terror’ and ‘radicalisation’ of Muslims to terrorism has embedded a strong Islamophobic bias in its operations from systematic surveillance to referral.⁸⁶ A similar bias against Muslim communities has also extended from the public sphere into the private domain, with recent research pointing to underlying

80. Julian Hargreaves, “Police Stop and Search Within British Muslim Communities: Evidence from the Crime Survey 2006–11”, *British Journal of Criminology*, 58/6 (2018), p. 1281–1302.

81. “Bias against Ethnic Minorities ‘Needs to Be Tackled’ in Justice System”, BBC, 8 September 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-41191311>.

82. Ministry of Justice, “Tackling Racial Disparity in the Criminal Justice System”, 2018 Update, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/747335/tackling-racial-disparity-criminal-justice-system-2018-update-web.pdf (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

83. David Lammy, “The Racial Bias in Our Justice System Is Creating a Social Timebomb | David Lammy”, *The Guardian*, 8 September 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/sep/08/david-lammy-review-bame-children-face-prejudice-flawed-criminal-justice-system> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

84. The Home Office data on stop-and-search from 2018 can be accessed at <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

85. Colin Webster and Mohammed Qasim, “The Effects of Poverty and Prison on British Muslim Men Who Offend”, *Social Sciences* 7/ 10 (2018), p. 184.

86. Fahid Qurashi, “The Prevent Strategy and the UK ‘War on Terror’: Embedding Infrastructures of Surveillance in Muslim Communities”, *Palgrave Communications*, 4/17 (2018), <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-017-0061-9> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

assumptions that the Muslim home can be treated as a pre-violent space.⁸⁷ In the wake of the publication of the APPG's report *Defining Islamophobia*, Muslim communities have now officially asked the government for full *legal* protection against Islamophobia. The government has so far refused to respond affirmatively.

Internet

The UK online Islamophobic network is thriving as only a part of an increasingly complex and sophisticated global, largely de-territorialised network of message amplification. Recent studies by HOPE not Hate,⁸⁸ the Data&Society Research Institute,⁸⁹ and POLITICO⁹⁰ have painted a bleak picture of a powerful, extraordinarily effective, yet opaque in its workings and largely anonymous global operation, with partisan stories appearing online on even obscure far-right UK sites often amassing thousands or more 'likes' and shares within hours from launch. The network is based on a philosophy of deliberate secretive decentralisation, making it immensely hard to decipher its structure or operation, in contrast to more established outlets such as Breitbart. Fake stories with Islamophobic content and intent are easily and swiftly amplified through the shadowy network of news outlets, social media accounts, and numerous bots. Last November, Tommy Robinson admitted that he spread a fake story about the Muslim students including the Syrian refugee boy Jamal who had been filmed being bullied at his school in Huddersfield.⁹¹ Although there was a personal retraction from Robinson himself only hours after the publication of his Facebook post, the fake story still managed to gain considerable traction among far-right news/campaign sites and social media accounts. Similarly, the fake story that during his imprisonment Robinson was deliberately moved to another prison with 71% Muslim inmates was picked up by UKIP MEP Janice Atkinson and by former Breitbart editor and unsuccessful candidate for the leadership of UKIP Raheem Kassam, having been extensively amplified by the US far-right conspiracy-theory website InfoWars and numerous social media accounts through it.⁹²

87. Shereen Fernandez, "The Geographies of Prevent: The Transformation of the Muslim Home into a Pre-Crime Space", *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, 7/2 (2018), pp. 167-89.

88. Patrik Hermansson, *Bots, Fake News and the Anti-Muslim Message on Social Media*, (HnH, London: 2018), <https://hopenothate.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/HnH-Briefing-Anti-Muslim-Hate-On-Social-Media-2018-11.pdf> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

89. Alice Marwick and Rebecca Lewis, *Media Manipulations and Disinformation Online* (2017), https://centerfor-mediajustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/DataAndSociety_MediaManipulationAndDisinformationOnline.pdf (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

90. Tom McTague, "How Britain Grapples with Nationalist Dark Web," Politico, 17 December 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/article/britain-nationalist-dark-web-populism-tommy-robinson/> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

91. Katy Clifton, "Tommy Robinson Admits He Shared 'Fake News,'" Evening Standard, 30 November 2018, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/tommy-robinson-admits-he-shared-fake-news-about-muslims-attacking-boy-at-school-was-syrian-refugee-a4005301.html> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

92. Mikey Smith, "No, Tommy Robinson Hasn't Been Moved to a 71% Muslim Prison", Mirror, 14 June 2018, <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/politics/no-tommy-robinson-hasnt-been-12706229> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

POLITICO shed light on how obscure new far-right/Islamophobic sites are instantly plugged into an already well-oiled global operation of strategic message amplification. The example analysed is the news website PoliticalUK.co.uk, which appeared only in April 2018 with a relatively small daily output of online stories and rather basic user-interface design but still managed to amass social media interactions in the thousands per story within only months from its launch. Last summer, Twitter admitted that it had effectively lost control of the misinformation campaign waged through it by announcing that it had suspended a staggering 70 million fake accounts only in the course of two months.⁹³ Facebook and other popular social media platforms have appeared equally overwhelmed and unable to exercise meaningful control over an increasingly complex, active, and unpredictable matrix of hate propaganda.⁹⁴ A recent study showed a significant degree of cross-overs between racist, nativist, and anti-Muslim online groups, with Islamophobia functioning as the ideological common denominator for the majority of entanglements.⁹⁵

In 2018, the Digital, Culture, Media, and Sports Committee of the UK parliament turned its attention to the topic of “disinformation and ‘fake news’”. The role of the two dominant social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter, came under intense scrutiny, although Facebook’s CEO Mark Zuckerberg refused to heed two calls to provide evidence in person at a special committee session. Facebook did tighten its scrutiny procedures with regard to accounts that violated its rules about incitement of hatred via the platform. As a result, the pages of the far-right group Britain First and those of its leaders, Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen, were removed for their repeated anti-Muslim posts in March.⁹⁶ In November, PayPal took action against the payment account of Tommy Robinson, months after Twitter revoked his access following infringements of its new ‘hateful conduct’ policies.⁹⁷ Similar action was taken against InfoWars and other websites of the global anti-Muslim network in September.⁹⁸

93. David Lumb, “Twitter Reportedly Suspended 70 Million Fake Accounts in May and June”, Engadget, 7 June 2018, <https://www.engadget.com/2018/07/06/twitter-reportedly-suspended-70-million-fake-accounts-in-may-and/>. (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

94. Michael Edison Hayden, “Mark Zuckerberg Said Facebook Doesn’t Host Hate Groups; the Reality Tells a Very Different Story”, Newsweek, 20 April 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/facebook-anti-muslim-hate-groups-890338> (4 September 2019).

95. Megan Squire, “Understanding the Network of Anti-Muslim Groups on Facebook”, Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, 21 September 2018, <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2018/09/21/understanding-the-network-of-anti-muslim-groups-on-facebook/> (4 September 2019).

96. “Facebook Bans Far-Right Group Britain First for Inciting Hatred”, Reuters, 14 March 2018, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-britain-facebook-far-right-idUKKCN1GQ1JS> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

97. Matthew Field, “PayPal Stops Payments to Tommy Robinson in Latest Block on Far Right”, The Telegraph, 8 November 2018, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/2018/11/08/paypal-stops-payments-tommy-robinson-latest-block-far-right/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

98. “Tommy Robinson Banned from Twitter”, BBC, 28 March 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-43572168> (3 September 2019).

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

The British far-right agitator that goes by the nom de guerre Tommy Robinson emerged as the undoubted grandee of the UK's Islamophobic network in 2018. Robinson has extended his divisive portfolio of agitation from his original, fierce anti-Islam campaigning (now enriched with a cynical exploitation of the 'grooming gangs' theme⁹⁹) with the pursuit of mass mainstream respectability through his passionate defence of Brexit and his involvement with UKIP. With a Facebook army of more than a million followers and a well-oiled, truly globalised network of publicity strategic amplification¹⁰⁰, Robinson largely succeeded throughout 2018 in imprinting himself on public life, amazingly not only through his agitational presence but also via his temporary absence due to imprisonment. The #FreeTommy off- and online campaign has created a veritable far-right global martyr out of him, bringing together in his support an unlikely coalition of neo-Nazi and far-right networks with alt-right stars, avowed libertarians, and mainstream populist politicians.¹⁰¹

Tommy Robinson was one of the nominees in the UK category of the Islamic Human Rights Commission's (IHRC) annual Islamophobia awards, given to "politicians and figures of note within the UK who had flagrantly displayed the most Islamophobia".¹⁰² The award went instead to the Conservative party with "an honourable and special mention to Boris Johnson". Johnson's article on the 'burqa', his puerile refusal to offer a public apology for his comments, and his party's reluctance to call him out for his expressed views rendered the award defensible. The mayor of London Sadiq Khan has been a particular target of attacks by members of the party. It seems that the lessons from the grotesque Islamophobic campaign run by the party's candidate Zac Goldsmith in 2016 have not prevented the Conservative mayoral candidate for the 2020 elections, Shaun Bailey, from retweeting online anti-Muslim propaganda that described London's first Muslim mayor Sadiq Khan as the "mad mullah Khan of Londonistan".¹⁰³ In July, the Conservative MP Michael Fabricant tweeted a sexually-themed picture of London mayor Sadiq Khan as a pig in the

99. Helen Lewis, "How to Stop Agitators Such as Tommy Robinson Exploiting Child Grooming Trials", *New Statesman*, 24 November 2018, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2018/10/how-stop-agitators-such-tommy-robinson-exploiting-child-grooming-trials> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

100. Halliday, Josh, and Lois Beckett Caelainn Barr, "Revealed: The Hidden Global Network behind Tommy Robinson", *The Guardian*, 7 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/dec/07/tommy-robinson-global-support-brexit-march> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

101. Daniel Jones, "The Hidden Success of the Far Right's 'Free Tommy' Campaign", *Fair Observer*, 11 July 2018, <https://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/tommy-robinson-uk-far-right-radicalism-europe-news-16251/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

102. "Event Report: Islamophobia Awards 2018", IHRC, 27 November 2018, <https://www.ihr.org.uk/activities/event-reports/19489-event-report-islamophobia-awards-2018/> (Access date: 2 September 2019).

103. William Eichler, "Tory London Mayoral Candidate Accused of Islamophobia", *LocalGov*, 5 October 2018, <http://www.localgov.co.uk/Tory-London-mayoral-candidate-accused-of-Islamophobia-/46136> (Access Date: 3 September 2019).

margins of president Trump’s visit to London;¹⁰⁴ unlike Johnson, at least Fabricant apologised afterwards. As the MCB stated, the failure of the Conservative party to take meaningful action against the long list of Islamophobic infractions among its ranks is a dangerous mainstream “licence to bigotry”.¹⁰⁵



Figure 10: Conservative MP Michael Fabricant and his offensive tweet.¹⁰⁶

The recent debate around the APPG’s published report and its calls for the adoption of a legal definition of Islamophobia have provided a stepping stone for a number of mainstream figures and organisations with known links to the state to join in a chorus of criticism of the definition or even the very term ‘Islamophobia’. Policy Exchange, an influential London-based right-wing think tank whose agenda-setting role for the centre-right has been widely documented for more than a decade,¹⁰⁷ produced a hastily put-together 24-page publication authored by Sir John Jenkins, criticising the APPG’s definition. Trevor Phillips, the former chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, prefaced the publication with the accusation that equating Islamophobia with racism serves “the interests of sectarians and those hostile to integration ..., especially the Far Right and Islamists”.¹⁰⁸ The

104. Rob Price, “Michael Fabricant MP Accused of ‘Islamophobia’ over Crude Tweet of Sadiq Khan and a Pig”, Business Insider, 12 July 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/michael-fabricant-mp-tweets-photoshop-sadiq-khan-balloon-islamophobia-2018-7> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

105. “Boris Johnson Cleared for Saying Women in Burkas Look like Letterboxes”, Metro, 21 December 2018, <https://metro.co.uk/2018/12/21/boris-johnson-cleared-saying-women-burkas-look-like-letterboxes-8272084/> (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

106. Taken from Twitter, <https://twitter.com/vinnymcav/status/1017672124679557120>, 13 July 2018. Original tweet has been deleted by owner.

107. Arun Kundnani, “How Are Thinktanks Shaping the Political Agenda on Muslims in Britain?”, Institute of Race Relations, 2 September 2008, <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/how-are-thinktanks-shaping-the-political-agenda-on-muslims-in-britain/> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

108. Sir John Jenkins, “Defining Islamophobia. A Policy Exchange Research Note”, 18 December 2018, p. 7; <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Defining-Islamophobia.pdf#page8>, (Access Date: 2 September 2019).

Quilliam Foundation followed a similar line of direct criticism of the APPG's definition¹⁰⁹ but openly extended it to the term itself, with its International President Norman Benotman calling it "political poison convincing British Muslim communities that their religion is feared ... while compelling non-Muslim British society to believe that their Muslim counterparts have a special type of right".¹¹⁰ It therefore seems that the Islamophobia 'sceptics' within the broader British Muslim community have swiftly joined forces with like-minded mainstream sceptics from the press and from certain think tanks in a coordinated defence of the government's refusal to accept the APPG's proposed definition of 'Islamophobia'.

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

Civil society has played a central role in countering the rise of anti-Muslim prejudice and agitation in the past years - and its continuing, indeed increasing involvement in this direction is crucial in every meaningful effort to reverse the alarming trends noted in this report. The year 2017 had ended with the publication of a report by the APPG on British Muslims recording a wide range of community projects and initiatives carried out by Muslim charities in order to assist all citizens in need where they live and nationally.¹¹¹ In 2018, the PM and the UK's main political parties supported the 'Visit My Mosque' annual day events in February, during which more than 200 mosques across the country opened their doors to welcome visitors from the community and engage in dialogue about the role of

Islam in contemporary British society.¹¹² The 'Islamophobia Awareness Month' in November, which has been running with great success since 2012, is not only putting forward a positive view of the Muslims communities; it also offers an opportunity to chart and reflect on the deeper causes of contemporary anti-Muslim attitudes and behaviours. In March, the National Union of Students (NUS) published a report generated by the data collected in the context of its extensive 'Muslim Stu-

109. QuilliamOrg, Twitter, 30 November 2018, <https://mobile.twitter.com/drusamahasan/statuses/1068494042848264193>

110. Retrieved from <https://www.quilliaminternational.com/quilliam-files/euuk1126/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

111. APPG, "Faith as the Fourth Emergency Service British Muslim Charitable Contributions to the UK", December 2017, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599c3d2febbd1a90cffdd8a9/t/5ae09b288a922d758d2cd414/1524669250245/+Faith+as+the+Fourth+Emergency+Service+V3+Print.pdf> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

112. "Launch Event: Visit My Mosque Day 2018", MCB, 7 February 2018, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/launch-event-visit-my-mosque-day-2018/>; "Prime Minister and London Mayor Take Part in Visit My Mosque Day", MCB, 18 February 2018, <https://mcb.org.uk/press-releases/prime-minister-and-london-mayor-take-part-in-visit-my-mosque-day/>; Harriet Sherwood, "Jeremy Corbyn Attacks Islamophobia during Mosque Visit", The Guardian, 18 February 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2018/feb/18/jeremy-corbyn-attacks-islamophobia-during-mosque-visit>

dents' Survey'.¹¹³ The survey was launched in order to foster a better understanding of the range of issues facing Muslim students in higher education and to contribute to the fight against the normalisation of Islamophobia. In November, Faith Matters announced the 'Stand Against Hate' campaign, a desperately needed initiative to combat *all* forms of hate crimes against racial, religious, sexual, and other groups, by launching a crowdfunding campaign to raise funds for a series of posters asking people to 'be upstanders, not bystanders'.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, the contribution of all religious communities to life and society in contemporary Britain was recognised and celebrated in a number of events held as part of the UK Parliament and Interfaith Week in November.¹¹⁵ In November, the Muslim Council of Scotland and the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities came together in joint condemnation of hate crimes in a landmark case of concerted joint action to counter both Islamophobia and anti-Semitism in Scotland.¹¹⁶

The fight against counter-factual and - consciously or unconsciously - biased depictions of Muslims in the UK media is crucial for countering institutionalised Islamophobia, fostering social cohesion, and improving the aspirations of members of the UK Muslim communities. The role of Miqdaad Versi, head of the MCB's Centre for Media Monitoring, in forensically challenging and seeking to correct Islamophobic news stories in UK media has received the recognition that it deserves.¹¹⁷ Beyond, however, national organisations with a long and established record in efforts to counter the spread of anti-Muslim racism, a significant body of civil society organisations and local groups also made crucial contributions to their communities and society as a whole. Such groups offered important evidence and know-how to the research carried out by the APPG on British Muslims, in preparation for the publication of its significant report last November.¹¹⁸ Communities from across the country were also involved as consultation participants and shared with the group's members experiences that would have been impossible to capture otherwise. Their role in the formulation of arguably one of the most important contributions to the struggle for a legal definition of Islamophobia in the UK cannot be exaggerated.

113. "Our Research into the Experiences of #MuslimsInEducation @ NUS Connect", NUS, 18 March 2018, <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/our-research-into-the-experiences-of-muslimsineducation> (Access date: 5 September 2019).

114. "A Statement on the 'No2h8' Crowdfunding Campaign", Tell MAMA, 23 November 2018, <https://tellmamauk.org/a-statement-on-the-no2h8-crowdfunding-campaign/> (4 September 2019).

115. Mozzamel Haque, "Interfaith Meeting Held at the British Parliament", The Muslim Weekly, <http://www.themuslimweekly.com/News/Details/31577> (Access date: 5 September 2019).

116. "Jews and Muslims in 'Landmark' Stand against Hate Crime", BBC, 27 November 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-46355210> (3 September 2019).

117. Samantha Subramanian, "One Man's (Very Polite) Fight against Media Islamophobia", The Guardian, 18 October 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/oct/18/miqdaad-versi-very-polite-fight-against-british-media-islamophobia> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

118. APPG, *Islamophobia Defined*.

In addition, activities organised by local and regional civil society groups made a significant contribution to the fight against Islamophobia. In little over a month after the horrific attack on Jamal in Huddersfield, a GoFundMe crowdsourcing campaign to fund his relocation had raised more than £158,000, with funders not only from Britain but from more than fifty other countries.¹¹⁹ Similarly, individuals, community groups, and local/national organisations came together to provide reassurance, advice, and protection, off- and online, in the run-up to the ‘Punish a Muslim Day’ hate campaign in March-April.¹²⁰ In December, a local Muslim youth charity from Charing Cross, London, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Youth Association, delivered 7,000 meals to local homeless people, in addition to their normal weekly provision of 150 meals.¹²¹ The Leeds Muslim Youth Forum published a collection of posters as part of their forthcoming campaign ‘I am Muslim’, aimed to highlight the wide range of positive contributions made by members of the Muslim communities to British public life.



Figure 11: The ‘I am Muslim’ range of posters by the Leeds Muslim Youth Forum.¹²²

119. Alex Finnis, “More than £158,000 Raised to Relocate Bullied Syrian Boy – with Remainder Going to Refugee Charity”, *Inews*, 5 December 2018, <https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/bullied-syrian-boy-jamal-money-raised-relocation-huddersfield/> (Access Date: 4 September 2019).

120. “Communities Unite to Defy ‘Punish a Muslim Day’”, *BBC*, 3 April 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43626843> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

121. Anu Shukla, “Muslim Youth Charity Aims to Deliver 7000 Meals to Homeless by New Year’s Day”, *The Independent*, 31 December 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/muslim-charity-homeless-meals-homeless-ahmadiyya-new-years-day-a8705766.html>. (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

122. Taken from Twitter, <https://twitter.com/LeedsMuslimYF>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

Neither the rise of the far right nor the multiple expressions of institutionalised Islamophobia were problems created in 2018; but the year confirmed the challenges lying ahead in the fight against prejudice, discrimination, intimidation, and hate crime directed at the Muslim communities in the UK. Against the backdrop of profound political and social polarisation due to the overbearing discussion about Brexit, 2018 brought both significant welcome advances and disquieting setbacks in the efforts to arrest and reverse the trend of growing in scope and intensity Islamophobia. Rising hate crime figures; a depressing register of verbal and physical attacks both off- and online; the shadow cast by co-ordinated hate campaigns such as this year's 'Punish a Muslim' hoax; the intensifying activities of a decentred far-right national and global network; the deleterious effect of deep-seated anti-Muslim prejudice in segments of both tabloid and broadsheet press; the ongoing penetration of anti-Muslim rhetoric deep into mainstream politics, journalism, and everyday life; and the relentless 'penalty' against members of Muslim – and more broadly BAME – communities across all spheres of public life, illustrate the enormity of the challenge still lying ahead.

Nevertheless 2018 can also be celebrated as a year that generated momentum towards an accepted legal definition of Islamophobia. Last year's wish¹²³ has come that decisively closer to becoming a reality, in spite of continuing opposition from government and 'Islamophobia sceptics'. The report launched by the APPG on British Muslims in November has underlined the consensus among communities, NGOs, and experts on Islamophobia on an understanding of the problem of Islamophobia as a primarily intersectional one, where tributaries of religious, racial, cultural, and gender prejudices coalesce into a powerful, pernicious, and pervasive mechanism of 'othering' Muslims. Civil society too maintained an admirable output of initiatives to counter hate, provide relief to those affected, and promote a deservedly positive image of what Muslims can do and are doing in British society. In December, Newham Council in London became the first public authority in the UK to officially adopt the APPG definition as part of its efforts to combat hate crime;¹²⁴ others have followed since, adding to the awareness momentum that should be sustained.

- Proactively feed the momentum generated by the 2018 APPG report for a legal definition of Islamophobia as a distinct form of, but also subset of, racism by working closer with media, parliamentarians, and Muslim community organisations to maintain the 'noise' of the campaign.
- Review the state's counter-terrorism strategy, with a view to revising assumptions, processes, and provisions surrounding its PREVENT strand in

123. *EU Islamophobia Report 2017*, p. 704.

124. "Newham Council Endorses All-Party Parliamentary Groups Definition Islamophobia", Newham Council London, 17 December 2018, <https://www.newham.gov.uk/Pages/News/Newham-Council-endorses-All-Party-Parliamentary-groups-definition-Islamophobia.aspx> (Access Date: 5 September 2019).

particular. The transfer of responsibility for surveillance from the state to educational and health institutions, as well as citizens in the private sphere has diffused the institutionalisation of Islamophobia and undermined Muslims in every aspect of their everyday life.

- Deconstruct the framing of the discussion about Islamophobia as a ‘twin’ problem of supposed balance between censuring the far right and invoking the threat of ‘Islamist extremism’ in the same narrative. This logic needs to be robustly challenged as political, social, and state practice at every possible level.
- Encourage civil society organisations to enhance their constructive input in the process of generating a range of counter-narratives, especially those focusing on the plurality of positive contributions to, and engagement with, society as a whole.
- Provide training to a wide range of practitioners, from educators to journalists to police, with a specific focus on a better understanding of unconscious bias and the workings of institutional racism.
- Promote an understanding of Islamophobia in the UK as an expression of a wider dynamic that is fed by broader racial and cultural prejudices (e.g. immigration, BAME discrimination, colonial legacies) and is international in its dynamic of self-perpetuation. Closer co-operation of civil society organisations both nationally, internationally, and above all intersectionally is crucial for enhancing reach and effectiveness across the board.
- Strengthen the role and accountability of government regulators (especially the Independent Press Standards Organisation [IPSO]), watchdogs, and independent bodies, particularly in fields that remain central to the propagation and normalisation of Islamophobia (traditional media, education, Internet).
- More pressure needs to be put on social media organisations by state and parliament to take ownership of the problem of uncontrolled, shadowy dissemination of hate propaganda and to enhance their effective oversight of the online networks that propagate and amplify hate messages.
- Ensure that significantly more resources be made available for the gathering, processing, and presentation of evidence regarding incidents of discrimination and hate crime against Muslims and other vulnerable minoritised groups, both off- and online.
- Promote more effective awareness of, and action against, the undercurrents of inequality that continue to affect disproportionately communities with a Muslim background across the UK in tandem with other institutionally and socially oppressed groups in British society.

Chronology

- **01.02.2018:** Darren Osborne, the perpetrator of the Finsbury Park mosque attack in 2017, was found guilty of murder and attempted murder.
- **07.03.2018:** The leaders of the far-right group Britain First, Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen, were found guilty of religiously aggravated harassment.
- **09.03.2018:** The first ‘Punish a Muslim’ set of letters were received, calling for a day of violence against UK Muslims on 3 April.
- **13.03.2018:** Graffiti with the slogans ‘Kill all Muslims’ and ‘Pedo [sic] Muslim scum’ appeared on a wall in Birmingham, in the midst of a tense period caused by the stream of ‘Punish a Muslim’ letters nationwide.
- **03.04.2018:** The designated ‘Punish a Muslim’ day of violence passed without any major incident across the UK – but only after causing significant consternation among communities with a Muslim background and was responsible for a spike in anti-Muslim hate incidents off- and online.
- **25.04.2018:** Gary Jones, the new editor of *The Daily Express* and *The Sunday Express*, gave evidence in front of the Home Affairs Committee in which he acknowledged that his newspaper has systematically helped create an Islamophobic sentiment in the UK.
- **25.04.2018:** The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) upheld a complaint against the newspaper *The Times* for its coverage of a child foster case in Tower Hamlets, London back in 2017.
- **28.04.2018:** Bacon rashers were left on the door handle of the Dummerline Central Mosque.
- **05.06.2018:** An arson attack was carried out against the Jamia Masjid Abu Huraira Mosque, causing damage to its entrance, as well as the Guru Nanak Nishkam Sewak Jatha Gurdwara nearby.
- **09.06.2018:** A large #FreeTommy rally with the participation of UK far-right groups and European populist movements took place in London, in support of the then jailed former English Defence League leader, Tommy Robinson. An online campaign asking for his immediate release also gathered significant momentum since his imprisonment in May.
- **12.06.2018:** Police arrest David Parnham in relation to the national ‘Punish a Muslim’ hate campaign launched in February 2018 nominating 3 April as the day for launching the attacks.
- **24.06.2018:** The far-right group Generation Identity launched a co-ordinated campaign that covered female statues in niqab in a number of UK and Irish cities, calling simultaneously for a ‘ban on burqa’.
- **15.08.2018:** Two mosques in Birmingham, Masjid Qamarul Islam and Al-Hijrah, had their windows smashed after a co-ordinated attack carried out with catapults.

- **29.08.2018:** BRPI, an alleged far-right group, spread graffiti on the wall of a LIDL store in Worcester, demanding that the chain stop selling halal and kosher meat products, even if LIDL has made clear that the meat that it sells does not comply with such standards.
- **09.09.2018:** A car struck a number of pedestrians outside the Al-Majlis Al-Hussaini Islamic Centre in Cricklewood, North-West London, leaving one person injured.
- **20.09.2018:** UKIP launched its 'Interim Manifesto' at the party's conference, with a series of extreme anti-Muslim policies that confirmed its transformation into a far-right party under its leader, Gerard Batten.
- **28.09.2018:** It emerged on the day that he was confirmed as the Tory candidate for the London 2020 mayoral elections that Shaun Bailey had expressed himself as an opponent of multiculturalism and had retweeted offensive content targeting the incumbent, Sadiq Khan.
- **19.10.2018:** Home Secretary Sajid Javid uses the inflammatory "sick Asian paedophiles" in response to news that members of a 'grooming group' in Rotherham were convicted. The tweet was widely criticised but Javid defended it in response.
- **05.11.2018:** A video showing a cardboard model representing Grenfell Tower (an apartment tower block in London which burnt down on 14 July, 2017, causing 72 deaths and more than 70 injuries) with cut-outs of figures representing Muslim residents set on fire, with residents represented with clear racial references, was posted online from a group of people who were shown to laugh and emulate calls for help from the trapped residents.
- **10.11.2018:** Offensive Daesh-themed graffiti were sprayed on the walls of Bait-ul-Lateef Mosque in Liverpool.
- **12.11.2018:** DVDs containing defamatory material targeting Islam were sent to schools and Muslim community organisations in London and Yorkshire.
- **27.11.2018:** The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims launched its report *Islamophobia Defined*, following a months-long investigation and evidence collection. The report called the government to adopt its proposed definition of Islamophobia as 'anti-Muslim racism'.
- **November 2018:** A video showing a Syrian refugee pupil Jamal being tortured by another pupil was posted online, generating an online campaign to support and relocate him to another part of the country. It transpired that Jamal has been serially bullied in his school and had reached out to authorities for protection but nothing was done ahead of the incident shown on the video.
- **09.12.2018:** An arson attack was carried out against Al-Falah Masjid Islamic Centre in Cheetham Hill, Manchester.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN
**UKRAINE AND
OCCUPIED
CRIMEA**
NATIONAL REPORT 2018

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Executive Summary

The situation of the Muslim community in Ukraine is largely determined by the military-political conflict that began in 2014. The fact that the Crimea and part of the Donbass remain beyond the control of the Ukrainian authorities have deprived both state institutions and civil society from the possibility of observing the rights and freedoms of the citizens of these regions.

Despite the growing role played by the right and ultra-right forces in Ukrainian political life, a significant level of empathy for the Crimean Tatars and the problems of the occupied Crimea as a whole results in a tolerant attitude towards Muslims, and local incidents (searches of the Islamic cultural center, local confrontations) as a whole do not affect the status of the Muslim community in the country. In contrast, however, with the areas under the control of the Ukrainian authorities, the observance of the rights and freedoms of Muslims has considerably deteriorated in parts of the Donbass (the self-proclaimed “DPR”), where the SAUM “Ummah” community ceased to exist and is accused of “extremism”. In Crimea, continued repressions of the representatives of political Muslim movements and Crimean Tatar human rights activists have been observed.

In this situation, the “continental” part of Ukraine should be praised for the promotion of dialogue between the local authorities and Muslims, while respect for the rights of the Muslims in the occupied territories can only be ensured through the international pressure on the Russian Federation and the self-proclaimed “republics”.

Резюме

Ситуацію навколо мусульманської громади в Україні значною мірою визначає військово-політичний конфлікт, що розпочався у 2014 році. Перебування Криму й частини Донбасу поза межами контролю української влади позбавило як державні інституції, так і громадянське суспільство можливості дотримання прав і свобод громадян у цих регіонах.

Незважаючи на все більшу роль, яку в українському політичному житті відіграють праві й ультраправі сили, значний рівень емпатії до кримських татар і проблем окупованого Криму в цілому забезпечує толерантне ставлення до мусульман, а окремі епізоди (обшук в Ісламському культурному центрі, локальні протиріччя) в цілому не впливають на статус мусульманської громади в країні. На відміну, втім, від теренів, підконтрольних українській владі, ситуація з дотриманням прав і свобод мусульман значно погіршилася на частині Донбасу (самопроголошена «ДНР»), де припинила існування громада ДУМУ «Умма», звинувачена в «екстремізмі». У Криму продовжилися репресії проти представників альтернативних мусульманських рухів (передусім, «Хізбат-Тахрір аль-Іслямі») і кримськотатарських правозахисників.

У вказаній ситуації, на «материковій» частині України залишається важливим діалог місцевої влади із мусульманами, в той час як дотримання прав мусульман на окупованих територіях може бути забезпечене лише міжнародним тиском на Російську Федерацію.

Country Profile

Country: Ukraine and Occupied Crimea

Type of Regime: Democratic Republic

Form of Government: Parliamentary-Presidential

Ruling Parties: *Blok Petra Poroshenka “Solidarnist”* (Liberal Conservatism, Centre-Right, Pro-Europeanism)

Opposition Parties: Opposition Bloc.

Last Elections: 2019 Presidential Election (Volodymyr Zelens’kyi won the elections with 73.22% of the votes, enough to win in a single round; his closest competitor was Petro Poroshenko, who emerged with 24.45% of the votes); 2014 Parliamentary Election (Centre-Right: Petro Poroshenko Bloc, 132 seats [21.8%]; Yulia Tymoshenko’s “Fatherland”, 22 seats [25.5%]; Right Wing: Radical Party, 19 seats [7.44%]; “People’s Front”, 82 seats [22.4%]; “Self-Reliance”, 33 seats [10.97%]; Centrist: Opposition Bloc, 29 seats [9.43%]).

Total Population: 44.83 million (in 2017)

Major Languages: Ukrainian

Official Religion: No state religion

Statistics on Islamophobia: No statistical reports are available.

Statistics on Racism and Discrimination: According to the report by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on Ukraine (2017), data on hate crime, which does not distinguish between hate speech and hate-motivated violence, is collected by the Prosecutor General’s Office, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the State Department on Sentence Execution, and the State Statistics Committee. The ECRI notes that until very recently such data was not broken down according to the specific hate motive. In 2016, for the first time, the national police published hate crime data recorded by the police in the year 2015. This showed that, out of a total of 157 incidents, 31 were motivated by racism and xenophobia; three by bias against Roma and Sinti; 18 by anti-Semitism; 94 by bias against Christians and members of other religions; nine by bias against LGBT people; and two by bias against people with disabilities. The majority involved incitement to hatred accompanied by violence (45 in total), damage to property (32), and physical assault (30).

Major Religions (% of Population): A 2018 survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre found that 71.7% of the population declared themselves believers (67.3% Orthodox Christianity, 7.7% ‘Christian’ with no declared denominational affiliation, 9.4% Ukrainian Byzantine Rite Catholics, 2.2% Protestants, and 0.8% Latin Rite Catholics, 0.4% Judaism).

Muslim Population (% of Population): 0.5 million (1.1%) in 2018

Main Muslim Community Organizations: Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine, Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Ukraine “Ummah”,

Spiritual Administration of the Muslims of Crimea, Spiritual Administration of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Association Alraid, Association of the Muslims of Ukraine.

Main NGOs Combating Islamophobia: All-Ukrainian Association Alraid

Far-Right Parties: Svoboda, Ukrainian National Union, Social-National Party of Ukraine

Far-Right Movements: Right Sector, Azov

Far-Right Terrorist Organisations: N/A

Limitations to Islamic Practices

- **Hijab Ban:** Generally, it does not exist, but according to the internal regulations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine women have to remove their hijab for their passport pictures. However, following the efforts of the Muslim organisations, permission to keep the hijab on for passport photographs is expected to be released in the next year.
- **Halal Slaughter Ban:** No
- **Minaret Ban:** No (depends on local decision)
- **Circumcision Ban:** No
- **Burka Ban:** No
- **Prayer Ban:** No

Introduction

For Ukraine, Islam has been a part of religious life for many centuries starting from the end of the 9th century. In Crimea, after the final Islamisation of the Golden Horde (AD 1313/1314), Islam became politically and culturally predominant; as a result, the establishment of the Crimean Khanate in AD 1441 led to the incorporation of almost all present-day Southern Ukraine into the Muslim world. The Ottoman invasion (at the peak of its territorial development even part of Western Ukraine was Ottoman) not only succeeded in the Islamisation of the population but also in the development of religious networks, the establishment of institutions of worship (mosques), education (*medreses*), courts, etc. The Crimean Khanate (as well as the part of Ukraine directly belonging to the Ottoman Empire) was a powerful Islamic hub of the Post-Classical Islamic world, producing many pieces of valuable intellectual heritage. However, after the annexation of Crimea and Southern Ukraine to Russia (between 1783 and 1812), Islamic life in this area became integrated with the Russian Islamic environment (above all, Kazan). By the end of the 19th century, Crimea also experienced religious revival, outlined in the works of Ismail Gaspirali (Gasprinskiy) (1851-1914). This led to the mobilisation of both Muslim and nationalist movements among Crimean Tatars; first, during the Crimean Tatar revolution in 1917-1918 when such figures as Noman Çelebicihan (1885-1918) rose to the religious leadership. The communist era, despite some level of religious freedom in the 1920s (up to 1928/1929, when Soviet liberalization finally ended), was the biggest catastrophe for Crimean Tatars: in the 1930s, many of the Crimean Tatar leading figures were repressed and finally, in May 1944, almost all of the Crimean Tatars were deported to Central Asia. Despite the fact that some Crimean Tatars illegally returned to their homelands by the 1960s and 1970s, mass repatriation became possible only after 1989. Thus, after the Second World War, the only representatives of the Muslim tradition (being illegal or semi-legal, since any religious communities were registered in Soviet Ukraine) were Polish-Lithuanian Tatars living in present-day Vinnytska, Rivnenska, and Khmel'nycka oblast as well as Volga Tatars with their communities in the Donbass (Donetsk and other cities), Odessa, and Kyiv.

The year of independence (1991) became a starting point for Islamic religious revival in Ukraine. New religious institutions were established (Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims, Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian Muslims, Spiritual Administration of Ukrainian "Muslims" Ummah, Association of Ukrainian Muslims, etc.) as well as various Islamic NGOs (first of all, Alraid). The All-Ukrainian National Census of 2001 detected up to 400,000 people belonging to the nationalities following Islam (Crimean Tatars, Volga Tatars, Azerbaijanis, etc.). However, the Russian occupation of Crimea (since 2014) and the military conflict in the Donbass has affected the Islamic population in an extremely severe manner. Dozens of Crime-

an Tatars (20,000-30,000) left Crimea for the “continental part” of Ukraine, the activities of many Islamic organizations have ceased in the Donbass area, some of the religious administrations were closed, and a new one opened (Spiritual Administration of Muslims of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea with the center in Kyiv opposing the Spiritual Administration of Crimean Muslims as the “pro-Russian” institution in Crimea). In 2018, as the official statistics indicate, there are 254 registered Islamic communities (including 9 Shia) in the “continental part” of Ukraine; in Crimea, there are around 930 communities.¹

As a result, it can be stated that these three areas of present-day Ukraine should be addressed separately due to the different situation in relation to the political authority: the first one is the “continental” (state-controlled part of Ukraine), the second is the part of Donet’sk and Luhans’k region (self-proclaimed “DNR” and “LNR”), and the third is the occupied Crimea (where the Russian laws on religion are in effect).

Discussion of Islamophobic Incidents and Discursive Events

Physical and Verbal Attacks

In Crimea, on 19 June, the mosque in Bilohir’sk/Karasubazar was vandalised by unknown persons; black paint was used to graffiti the wall and Nazi symbols (a swastika, “SS”, “14/18”) were drawn.² No further incidents were reported. This was one of the many anti-Muslim episodes reported since 2000; usually no one takes responsibility for them.

Some Muslims, mostly from the Caucasus, were attacked by nationalist groups in Kyiv on 26 May. A brawl broke out in the market close to Lisovaya metro station (where an old man was beaten by some merchants); part of the market has been destroyed by pro-nationalistic forces (“C14” and other groups) insulting black people (*churki*, the offensive word used mostly for Middle Eastern and Caucasian nationalities).³

A physical attack also occurred in Vinnytsia city: spouses of Ukrainian women from the UAE and one of the men’s son were severely beaten in the centre of the city by two locals.⁴ Some tensions were also reported from Uzhgorod city (Zakarpattia

1. Mykhaylo Yakubovych, “Ukraine”, in *Yearbook of Muslims in Europe*, ed. Oliver Scharbrodt, Volume 9, (BRILL, Leiden-Boston: 2018), p. 690-702.

2. “U Krymu nevidomi namalyuvaly na ohorozhi mecheti svastyku”, Ukrinform, 19 June 2018, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-crimea/2483525-u-krymu-nevidomi-namaluvali-na-ogorzi-meceti-svastiku.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

3. “Pohrom hryanul: nacyonalysty nachaly hromyt’ ‘inorodcev’ na rynkax v Kyeve”, Narodnyj Korrespondent”, nk.org.ua, 28 May 2018, <http://nk.org.ua/ukraina/pogrom-gryanul-natsionalisty-nachali-gromit-inorodtsev-na-ryinkah-v-kieve-147116>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

4 “U centri Vinnyci poblyly sim’yu z Emirativ. Postrazhdali – tato i joho nepovnotnij syn”, 33 kanal, <http://33kanal.com/u-centri-vinnyci-pobili-sim-yu-z-emirativ-postrazhdali-tato-jogo-nepovnotnij-sin.html> (Access date: 1 September 2019).

region) and other places where the international students were accused of “inappropriate behaviour” and reported being assaulted by locals, primarily members of right-wing movements.

In August, an Ukrainian Muslim woman and her husband from Somalia were prohibited from entering a restaurant in Sumy; they were asked to show their IDs (“to confirm Ukrainian citizenship”). Revealing the story to the media, the woman denoted this refusal as racism.⁵



Figure 1: Mosque in Bilohir'sk/Karasubazar vandalised by unknown persons; Nazi-related inscriptions were painted on the wall⁶.



Figure 2: The Islamic Cultural Centre of Kyiv was raided by the Ukrainian Security Service and Police⁷

5. Tatyana NECHET, “V Sumax restoran, kuda ne pustylы nostrancev, zapodozryly v rasyzme”, Korrespondent, 29 August 2018, <https://kp.ua/incidents/616498-v-sumakh-restoran-kuda-ne-pustylы-nostrantsev-zapodozryly-v-rasyzme>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

6. “Вандалы изрисовали свастики мечеть в Белогорске”, Argumenti Nedeli Crimea, 20 June 2018, <https://an-crimea.ru/page/news/169346>, (Access date: 2 September 2019).

7. “The permitted and the forbidden: Ukraine’s security services turn their eyes to ‘banned’ Islamic literature”, Open Democracy, 26 April 2018, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukrainian-muslims-forbidden-literature/>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Employment

In general, no court appeal on the issue of Islamophobia in the field of employment is known. Some Muslim converts in Western Ukraine, however, reported having problems and being targeted at their workplaces. In Crimea, some of the Crimean Tatars feel discriminated in the “state service” (meaning the institutions established after the Russian occupation of the peninsula), with career priorities given to the Slavic nationalities regardless of their competence. A businessman from Kyiv, Said Magomedov, also claimed that in 2014–2015 his building company was closed due to his religion (he is Muslim); in 2018, he appealed to the court asking for criminal proceedings to commence. He also plans to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights.⁸

Education

Since religion is not usually taught in Ukrainian schools (only a non-compulsory Christian ethics course in some of the schools mostly promoting interreligious tolerance), there are no explicit anti-Muslim statements in the current school curricula. What could be a subject of discussion, however, is the focus of Ukrainian history on Christianity (usually Orthodoxy) while the history of the Crimean Tatars as well as other “Muslim nationalities” is mostly represented in a military light. Only limited data covering issues related to religion, culture, and other civilisational achievements of the Islamic parts of Ukrainian history is mentioned.⁹ In recently published textbooks (2018) even less space is dedicated to the Crimean Tatars and almost nothing is mentioned about the Muslim cultural contribution to Ukrainian history.¹⁰

Politics

In Ukrainian political discourse, Islam is mostly addressed in one (positive) context: the issue of the Crimean Tatars (claiming solidarity with those persecuted in Crimea). There are still no direct anti-Muslim statements in the political discourse.

Media

Most of the anti-Muslim statements (accusing Ukrainian Muslims of “extremist activities”) in the media were related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. First of all, Russian and pro-Russian sources posted some “analyses” on “Islamism in Ukraine” (for example, the article “Black Bottom of ‘White Islam’: Why Is Ukraine Loved by the Ideologists of the ‘Islamofascism’”, authored by Vladislav Maltsev).¹¹ Some of

8. Interview with S. Magomedov.

9. See, entry on Crimean Khanate in: Vlasov V., *History of Ukraine (for the 8th grade)* (GENEZA, Kyiv: 2016), p. 75–81.

10. See: Gisem O., Marnynuk O., *History of Ukraine (for the 8th grade)*, (Ranok, Kharkiv: 2018), p. 63–67..

11. Vladislav Maltsev, “Chernoe dno ‘beloho yslama’: Pochemu Ukrainy oblyubovaly ydeolohy ‘islamofashyzma’”, *Ukraina.Ru*, <https://ukraina.ru/exclusive/20180502/1020291157.html>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

the pro-Russian websites also “warned” Ukrainians against “activities in Odessa”, describing the traditional Husayniyah march of Shia Muslims, celebrated on Ashura day.¹² Few of the Russian media also accused Ukrainian authorities of cooperating with Islamists – a supposed kind of union between Ukrainian right-wing movements and Islamic militants.¹³ The same could be said about the news agency RIA Novosti (the article “Ukrainian Nationalists Embrace Islam”¹⁴). These web sources are popular in Crimea and occupied part of the Donbass, and are often reproduced by certain Ukrainian sources.

Central Ukrainian media (news agencies, TV, etc.) provided mostly a positive image of Islam, and for this year, no controversial statements about Islam on Ukrainian TV were reported. On the local level, however, some explicit anti-Muslim rhetoric appeared in Zakarpattya oblast. The local news portal “All the Truth from Zakarpattya” published at least three articles against the local Arab diaspora, accusing them of creating a “foreign spirituality” and “attacking Ukrainian culture” because of their plans to build a mosque (regardless of whether these plans are real or not), etc. These articles were “Activists Will Not Be Allowed to Make Our City into a Muslim Ghetto”,¹⁵ “Arab Criminals Destabilize Situation in the City”, and “Nationalists Raised against Arabs Who Feel Themselves to Be the Owners in Ukrainian Uzhgorod”.¹⁶ As our sources from this city reported, the real reason behind the conflict was the local tension between a group of Arab and Ukrainian businessmen with the further mobilisation of nationalist and anti-Muslim sentiments.

Justice System

No changes in the law concerning religion or any Muslim-related issues were reported this year. Moreover, there were some positive issues such as the promise of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to make changes in internal regulation for the allowance of passport photos with hijabs.¹⁷

The most controversial event happened on 6 March when the State Security Service (SBU), the police, and the prosecutor with his witnesses, a total of about 20 peo-

12. “Odesskyj xalyfat’: Ukrayncev napuhaly musul” mane, proshedshye pod chëtymy flahamy po horodu”, Russkaya vesna, <http://rusvesna.su/news/15375417206>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

13. Alina Nazarova, “Zaderzhannyj FSB boevyk rasskazal o verbovke SBU yslamystov dlya teraktov”, Vzglyad, 10 September 2018, <https://vz.ru/news/2018/9/10/941139.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

14. “Ukrainskie nacionalisty prinyimajut islam”, RIA Novosti, 24 September 2018, <https://ria.ru/20180924/1529113282.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

15. “Uzhhorodci zavayvly pro svoju radykal’nu pozyciyu: Aktyvisty ne dadut’ peretvority nashe misto na musul’mans’ke hetto”, Vsyia zakarpats’ka Pravda, <http://vsappravda.info/?p=98813> (Access date: 3 September 2019).

16. “Mizhnacional’ni rozbirky v Uzhhorodi: Nacionalisty povstaly proty arabiv, yaki pochuvayut’sya hospodaryamy v ukrayins’komu Uzhhorodi”, Vsyia Zakarpats’ka Pravda, 30 October 2018, <http://vsappravda.info/?p=98359>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

17. “ID Photos in Religion-Based Headwear: The Problem Is to Be Solved in 4 Months”, Islam.In.Ua, <http://islam.in.ua/en/ukrainian-news/id-photos-religion-based-headwear-problem-be-solved-4-months>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

ple, arrived with a search warrant at the Islamic Cultural Centre in Kyiv, the headquarters of the Association Alraid and SAUM “Ummah”. Security officers together with witnesses divided into several groups. While one group entered the library and the Islamic school, another group with a crowbar broke the door of the bookstore and conducted a search there without representatives of the Islamic Cultural Centre. At the same time, a search took place in the apartment of the person responsible for the library of Sheikh Tariq Sarhan.¹⁸ As a result, few books were taken “for the experts to assess their content in terms of incitement to violence”; a spokesperson for the Kyiv prosecutor’s office rejected any criticism, asserting that the measures were in accordance with the law. Three books were taken “for expertise” proceedings: one is the Russian translation of *Lawful and Unlawful in Islam* by Yusuf al-Qaradawi (published by the Association Alraid which operates the Islamic Cultural Centre), and the other two are the Russian translation of *Alteration of God’s Oneness* by Abd al-Aziz al-Rayyis and *Avoidance of Doubts* by Muhammad bin ‘Abd al-Wahhab. Mufti Said Ismagilov openly stated that the last two books were never used by the Muslims at the centres and the only way they could have appeared there was if they were secretly brought by the officers carrying out the search.¹⁹ A press conference was organised with the participation of some Ukrainian MPs, the head of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People Refat Chubarov, and Mustafa Nayyem and Oksana Korchyńska. To this day, however, no legal consequences have occurred or court decisions have been made. Ismagilov also reported a case when police cars with external cameras watched Muslims coming to the Friday prayer.²⁰

Another noteworthy event was the extradition of certain individuals to the Russian Federation. The most discussed case is that of the Russian citizen Timur Tumgoev, extradited to Russia on 12 September. This led to protests, while the prosecutor’s office claimed that Tumgoev is reported to be engaged in terrorist activity. Apart from this case, no further extradition to Russia was reported (at least openly),²¹ despite the fact that there are some new cases of citizens of Central Asian countries who face the same problem.²²

18. Uriy, “In the Islamic Cultural Center in Kiev Raided”, 24-my info, 3 June 2018, <https://24-my.info/in-the-islamic-cultural-center-in-kiev-raided/>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

19. “Muftij Ismahilov nazvav obshuk SBU v Islams’komu kul’turnomu centri v Kyjevi peresliduvannyam musulman”, Ukrayinski Novyny, 6 March 2018, <https://ukranews.com/ua/news/551330-muftiy-ismagilov-nazvav-obshuk-sbu-v-islamskomu-kulturnomu-centri-v-kyjevi-peresliduvannyam-musulman>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

20. “Yak zhyvut musulmany Kyjeva: propovidi pro lyubov do Bat’kivshhyny ta osoblyvosti Ramadanu v Ukrayini”, TSN, 1 June 2018, <https://tsn.ua/ukrayina/same-tak-mi-propoviduyemo-lyubiti-ukrayinu-ta-vivchati-movu-1164345.html>, (Access date: 5 September 2019).

21. Yu Butusov, “Zakonnaya vydacha cenov v zhyzn’. Ukrayna vydala sbezhavsheho yz RF cheloveka, kotoroho terroristy obvynayut v terroryzme”, Cenzor.YuA, 14 September 2018, https://censor.net.ua/resonance/3086213/zakonnaya_vydacha_tsenoyi_v_jizn_ukraina_vydala_sbejavshego_iz_rf_cheloveka_kotorogo_terroristy_obvynayut, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

22. Interview with A. Derkach.

In the Donbass (at least in the self-proclaimed “DNR”, the part of Donetsk region), some of the Muslim communities were raided by local “security services”. The community of SAUM “Ummah” (Al-Amal Mosque) was closed after being accused of extremism and of belonging to certain terrorist groups.²³ Thus, the only mosque now operating in the Donetsk is the Cathedral Mosque, while all other Muslim places were closed in 2017-2018. The same situation is observed in Crimea, where new accusations were raised against certain individuals who supposedly belong to the group Hizb al-Tahrir. Few searches in Crimean Tatar houses were also committed by Russian “authorities” in the peninsula in 2018.²⁴ By the end of 2018, at least 29 Muslims from Crimea were kept in prisons accused by the Crimean authorities of “belonging to an extremist organization”, etc.²⁵

Internet

In contrast to other European countries, there are no initiatives such as organised anti-Muslim groups in social media. The only point worth mentioning here is the activities of certain users sharing anti-Muslim content. An example is the case of the Reka family from Ukraine who were guests on the Polish-speaking television and who spoke against Islam because of the conversion of their 14-year-old daughter.²⁶ Members of Reka family were also active on Facebook, sharing anti-Muslim statements (“the one who associates himself with *busurmans* (an old Ukrainian word denoting Muslims) is against Ukraine”, etc.) and caused some discussion among Ukrainians in Ukraine and Poland.²⁷ Other statements, usually posted by individuals, had small impact on any political processes or society in general.

Central Figures in the Islamophobia Network

No systematic anti-Muslim initiatives are known, at least on the state-controlled territories, for parts of the Donbass and Crimea. However, the Russians (or pro-Russian “authorities”) impose their politics of supporting the “official Islam” (pro-governmental administration) and prohibiting any “parallel Islam” from any actions (various Muslim NGOs, movements, etc.).

23. “Hruppyrovka ‘DNR’ otchytalas’, chto nashla ‘Brat’ev-musul’man’ v Donecke”, Radyo Svoboda, 29 June 2018, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/donbass--realii/29328030.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

24. “Majzhe 95% obshukiv v okupovanomu RF Krymu pryypadayut’ na kryms’kyy tatar, - Dzhemilyev”, Cenzor. YuA, 10 July 2018, https://censor.net.ua/ua/news/3075766/mayije_95_obshukiv_v_okupovanomu_rf_krymu_pryypadayut_na_krymskyh_tatar_djemilyev, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

25. Interview with Fazil Amzaev.

26. Piotr Ślusarczyk, “Muzułmanie wywierają presję psychologiczną”, Fronda.pl, <http://www.fronda.pl/a/muzulmanie-wywieraja-presje-psychologiczna,117637.html?fbclid=IwAR2fhJbY-JcF7lbIE2fjqzSjHxLRpvdVXq6u3wG-dU6VGaSMJfjTXepAxB8>, (Access date: 4 September 2019).

27. Ciekawa Warszawa, “Shho ne tak, abo kroky islamizmu v informacijnij sferi”, Facebook, 13 September 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/notes/ciekawa-warszawa>, (Access date: 3 September 2019).

Observed Civil Society and Political Assessment and Initiatives

The State Department of Religion and Nationalities (Ministry of Culture of Ukraine) organised few field sessions of the expert council (in Zaporizzhya, Odessa, and Rivne areas), inviting also local religious leaders including Muslim ones.²⁸ Some of the Muslim NGOs like the Association Arraid were active in organising joint events for Muslims and non-Muslims to represent Eastern cultures in Ukraine.²⁹ The association is also active in promoting historical studies on the relationship between Muslim and Ukrainian cultures. Their publishing house has, among others, published *Tatars in Wolyn: History, Culture and Contacts*³⁰ and *Ukrainian Enlighteners and Islam*.³¹ A remarkable initiative was promoted by a team of leading Crimean Tatar activists and researchers and supported by the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation, namely “Crimea and South of Ukraine: Space of Culture” to combat popular historical myths and stereotypes about the “Muslim” part of Ukrainian history.³²

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The problem of Islamophobia in Ukraine is mostly related to the parts of the country which are currently beyond governmental control. This is, above all, related to the imposition of the Russian politics towards Islam and Muslims and, secondly, to the fact that these are the areas where most of the Muslims live. As for the rest of Ukraine, certain confrontations were observed, mostly related to aggression towards Muslim immigrants. The issue of putting pressure on the Islamic institutions (most importantly, the search of the Islamic Cultural Centre in Kyiv) poses some questions to be answered by the authorities. In terms of safety and the promotion of dialogue, the activities of the state and of NGOs in Western Ukraine should be carried out both in the area of culture and of local social interaction.

28. “Derzhavna polityka u sferi relihij”, Ministerstvo kul'tury Ukrainy, http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/control/uk/publish/officialcategory?cat_id=244949506, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

29. “Palestynskaya olyva y ukraynskoe zhyto — yz odnoj zemly”, Islam.In.Ua, 28 August 2018, <http://islam.in.ua/ru/east-fest-2018>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

30. Yakubovych M., Kraliuk P., Schepanskyi V., *Tatars in Wolyn: History, Culture and Contacts* [in Ukrainian], (Ukrainian Center for Islamic Studies, Kyiv: 2018), (Access date: 2 September 2019).

31. Vivchar S., *Ukrainian Enlighteners and Islam* [in Ukrainian], (Ukrainian Center for Islamic Studies, Kyiv: 2018).

32. “V Ukrayini zapuskayut' proekt, aby rozvinchaty mify pro pivden' Ukrayini”, Ukrinform, 23 October 2018, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-crimea/2564339-mip-zapuskae-proekt-abi-rozvincati-istoricni-mifi-pro-pivden.html>, (Access date: 1 September 2019).

Chronology

- **06.03.2018:** Islamic Cultural Centre of Kyiv is raided by the Ukrainian Security Service and police.
- **26.05.2018:** Attack on Caucasian merchants in Kyiv (market close to Lisovaya metro station).
- **19.06.2018:** Mosque in Bilohir'sk/Karasubazar was vandalised by unknown persons; Nazi-related inscriptions left on the wall.
- **27.06.2018:** Al-Amal Mosque closed in Donetsk after the raid by “DNR authorities”.
- **01.07.2018:** Two Muslim men from UAE attacked in Winnytsa.
- **04.12.2018:** Attorney Emil Kurbedinov arrested in Crimea, accused of “spreading extremist materials”.

By gathering 39 local scholars, experts, and civil society activists specialized in racism and human rights, the fourth edition of the *European Islamophobia Report* addresses a still timely and politically important issue. All 34 country reports included in this book follow a unique structure that is convenient, first, for comparing country reports and, second, for selected readings on a particular topic such as politics, employment, or education with regards to Islamophobia across Europe.

The present report investigates in detail the underlying dynamics that directly or indirectly support the rise of anti-Muslim racism in Europe. This extends from Islamophobic statements spread in national media to laws and policies that restrain the fundamental rights of European Muslim citizens. As a result, the *European Islamophobia Report 2018* discusses the impact of anti-Muslim discourse on human rights, multiculturalism, and the state of law in Europe.

This fourth edition of our report highlights how European societies are challenged by the rise of violent far-right groups that do not only preach hatred of Muslims but also participate in the organization of bloody terror attacks. The rise of far-right terrorist groups such as AFO (Action of Operational Forces) in France or the network Hannibal in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland confirms EUROPOL's alarming surveys on the growing danger of right-wing terrorism.

This year, SETA worked in cooperation with the Leopold Weiss Institute, an Austrian NGO based in Vienna dedicated to the research of Muslims in Europe. In addition, the European Union has funded the *European Islamophobia Report 2018* through the program "Civil Society Dialogue Between EU and Turkey (CSD-V)".

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.

